



Radboud Universiteit

BRIDGING THE GAP

of

Social integration policies

for refugees and migrants seeking asylum in Europe

—

The Greens/EFA approach

by

Iason Paschalidis-Gerostergiou



Figure 1: “Asylum seekers arriving on the Greek island of Lesbos after crossing part of the Aegean Sea.”
(Konstantinidis/Reuters, 2020)



Figure 2: “Asylum seekers protesting conditions at Greece’s biggest migrant camp on Lesbos.”
(Moutafis, 2019)

Master's thesis: Bridging the gap of social integration policies for refugees and migrants seeking asylum in Europe – The Greens/EFA approach

Master's specialization in Conflicts, Territories and Identities

Human Geography

Nijmegen School of Management

Radboud University

Author: Iason Paschalidis-Gerostergiou

Student number: 4475852

Supervisor: Prof. dr. Huib Ernste

Research internship at: Oikologiki Symmaxia - Ecological Alliance

Table of contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Acknowledgments | 5 |
| Abbreviations | 7 |
| Executive Summary..... | 9 |
| Introduction | 10 |
| “Be Brave, Green Europe” | 14 |
| Research Questions and Sub-questions..... | 16 |
| Methodology | 23 |
| Chapter 1: Theoretical framework..... | 28 |
| Conceptual framework..... | 28 |
| Identity and Conflict..... | 30 |
| Geopolitics of Borders | 33 |
| Social Inclusion and Integration of minorities | 36 |
| Political Ecology..... | 38 |
| Chapter 2: The refugee crisis, Greece and the EU..... | 42 |
| Historical background..... | 42 |
| The European reaction to the phenomenon | 44 |
| Current situation | 47 |
| Chapter 3: Understanding the perspective of asylum seekers..... | 50 |
| Giving them voice | 52 |
| The Greek Forum of Refugees | 53 |
| Adding climate migrants to the equation..... | 56 |
| Chapter 4: The Greens/EFA approach..... | 60 |
| The Ecological perspective..... | 60 |
| The Greens/EFA group’s approach for an Ecological asylum system..... | 61 |
| Policy recommendations | 64 |
| Chapter 5: Empirical findings and results..... | 67 |
| Questionnaire to asylum seekers | 68 |
| Discussion of findings via the analysis of interviews to policy makers..... | 84 |
| Are asylum seekers trustful of the asylum procedures?..... | 88 |
| Which are the flaming issues that need to be addressed at the Greek and European institutions?.... | 89 |
| Chapter 6: Conclusion | 92 |
| “Be Brave, Green Greece” | 96 |
| References | 99 |
| Appendix | 108 |

Acknowledgments

Life can be a bumpy road and everyone's trip to their own Ithaca consists of different challenges and paths, but as they say, "*Fortuna Favet Fortibus*". I would add that the privileged should then favor the less lucky in life. Only then, we would all be living in a better world. When I started the trip of this Master in Human Geography and its specialization in Conflicts, Territories and Identities, I never thought it would be as challenging as it has been. However, I have also never imagined how educative and empowering it would be at the same time. It has become my strong belief, that we prosper in unity and that we flourish in our diversity, as this trip to my Ithaca could have never been accomplished without the vital support and contribution of many, to whom I would like to express my deep and sincere appreciation. To all of you who played a bigger or smaller role in the completion of my research, I would like to say a warm thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Beginning with my acknowledgements, I would like to recognize the courage of each and every one of those who completed my questionnaire and to express my gratitude for taking the time to express your perspective without fear. I admire your courage and I thank you for being a glimmer of hope in a world of division and conflicts. In extension, I would like to express my colossal appreciation to the Greek Forum of Refugees and its president Jean-Didier Totow Tom-ata, whose aid in the distribution and collection of my English and French survey questionnaire - during the difficult period of the COVID-19 pandemic - was vital for my research. It allowed me to bring forth the perspective of refugees and migrants seeking asylum in Greece, and to be able to utilize it in the development of my approach of Socratic questioning to the policy makers I interviewed, therefore aiding in my effort to produce concrete, inclusive and holistic results for my research in social integration policies and practices for asylum seekers in Greece and in extension, in the EU. At this point, I would like to extend my gratitude to the people who have agreed to be interviewed for my research. By random order, I must mention that without the contribution of, Dimitrios Deligiannis, Jean Lambert, Maria Giovanna Manieri, Georgios Dimitriou and, the aforementioned, Jean-Didier Totow Tom-ata, who were brave to face the facts with an honest and open approach, I could have never managed to get an in depth understanding of the problem at hand, the current problematic Greek and European policies and practices for the integration of the people from Middle East and Africa, who happened to be less lucky in life than most Europeans.

In continuation of my acknowledgements, I would like to mention two political organizations that played a key role in my adventure, as without them, my research would have never been completed, or perhaps even never be initiated. The first one is the Federation of Young European Greens, which has become my so-called "*Green Family*". Being a member of Neoi Prasinoi – Young Greens of Greece, the Greek Member Organization of the Federation, my participation in the "*Social Europe*", as well as in the "*Democracy and Inclusion*" working groups provided me with essential knowledge, and it was vital in my connection with the

Green policies and practices regarding the subject of social integration of refugees and migrants seeking asylum in the European continent. Moreover, the warmth and inner fire of each and every one of the ecologically and politically restless Young Greens I have met, or worked with, has been a gargantuan source of inspiration and motivation, showing me that there is indeed hope, as long as we care enough to act. The second organization, to which I will forever be indebted, is Oikologiki Symmaxia – Ecological Alliance, where I did my research internship, and which has become one of my closest “*Eco-Allies*” in the battle for a Greener Greece, alongside Neoi Prasinoi. Many fellow students around the globe may have sincere and important complaints about the conditions under which they had to do their research internship, but I consider myself in luck not to be one of them. My experience working with my internship organization was astounding, and I feel beholden to the people who made my wishes come true. I am honored to be considered your “*Eco-Ally*”.

Furthermore, I would like to highlight the important support and guidance I received from my thesis supervisor, Prof. Huib Ernste, who has been a wise and deeply understanding mentor throughout the whole process of my Master in the Science of Human Geography at Radboud University of Nijmegen. I feel grateful for his character and tutoring approach, from our introductory call to the very end of my studies. Here, I would like to extend my appreciation to the Faculty of Management, whose impeccable facilities and always-happy-to-assist staff members made my studies at the university a highly pleasant and educative experience.

At last, I would like to thank the people who hold the dearest place in my heart, those who have been shedding light on the darkest nights of my soul. My beloved family, whose constant and unconditional love and support has been the driving force behind my every step. You are my friends, my supporters, my mentors, and my reason to always want to try my best in becoming a better human being. Thank you for teaching me that “*Your smile is the mirror of your soul*”.

Abbreviations

AIDA – Asylum Information Database
BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation
CEAS – Common European Asylum System
CEO – Chief Executive Officer
CNI – Cities Network for Integration
COP – Conference of the Parties
COVID-19 – Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2
CFR – Charter of Fundamental Rights
EC – European Commission
ECRE – European Council on Refugees and Exiles
EFA – European Free Alliance
EGP – European Green Party
EASO – European Asylum Support Office
EU – European Union
EUAA – European Union Agency for Asylum
FRONTEX – European Border and Coast Guard Agency
FYEG – Federation of Young European Greens
GEF – Green European Foundation
GFR – Greek Forum for Refugees
IMF – International Monetary Fund
IOM – International Organization for Migration
IRC – International Rescue Committee
JHA – Justice and Home Affairs Council

LGBTI – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
MEP – Member of the European Parliament
NBA – National Basketball Association
NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation
OHCHR – Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PRC – Pew Research Center
RSF – Reporters Without Borders
SAT – Self Advocay Team
UK – United Kingdom
UN – United Nations
UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNFCCC – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNICEF – United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WG – Working Group
WWII – World War 2

*To my treasured family,
for your constant and unconditional love and support!*

Executive Summary

Peace, Human Dignity, Combating Discrimination, Equality for All and Solidarity. In the last few years the European Union (EU) and its Member States have failed to maintain the core European values through the refugee crisis that erupted after the Arab Spring. As it is specified by the Green European Foundation (GEF), in recent years there has been noticed a relentless crisis of the European refugee and migration policies, as the number of people around the globe, who were forced to leave their countries, is comparable to that at the end of World War II (WWII). The pandemic crisis due to the spreading of the novel coronavirus COVID-19 at the end of 2019 has been forcing the European countries to address the continuous power imbalance between the Central Western and Southern States and speed up the procedures of integrating refugees and migrants, especially in Greece, where the insufficient measures and unsanitary conditions in the camps hosting them have provoked the emergence of violent conflicts. This thesis examines the long-suffering case study of Greece, which served as Europe's shield during this crisis. By referring to the policies and practices of the Greens/EFA political group in the European Parliament (Greens/EFA), this project is an attempt to reignite the European ideals, by envisioning Greece once again as a beacon of wisdom and hospitality. Throughout a literature review in the fields of Identity and Conflict, Geopolitics of Borders, Social Integration, and Political Ecology, the theoretical part of this research aims to build the foundations for comprehending the notions, which will be utilized in its empirical part that includes the quantitative and qualitative research. The refugee crisis, or the European crisis as it is also known, has brought to light the urge for a system change toward a more cosmopolitan and inclusive European Union. An urge, which if not addressed immediately, may even bring the end of the European project. As it is also mentioned by GEF, the founding principles of the EU, such as the Charter of Fundamental Rights (CFR) and compliance with international law, are at gunpoint, and whilst there have been various calls from progressive European actors to address the issue, the number of cases concerning violations of human rights and discrimination against migrants, and refugees who seek asylum in the European societies remains high (Green European Foundation, 2020). Having as a basis of thought the fact that the European Union is only as strong as its weakest Member State, this thesis represents the quest for an Ecological transition from the current approaches taken, by focusing on the Greek State.

Introduction

The mass entry, of more than one million “*forced migrants*” within the European borders in 2015, is an event that brought significant consequences in the course of European history, at the same time as it is the culmination of a more general trend of increasing migration worldwide. The Aegean Sea, as part of the external borders of Europe, has a long experience of population movements; however, the large inflows it experienced during 2015 are unprecedented in recent decades, and left indelible marks on the Greek State and its population. The islands of the Eastern Aegean Sea, and in particular the island of Lesbos which received more than half of the refugees and migrants seeking asylum in the European continent through Greece, became a gateway for the geographical concentration of the largest population movement in Europe since the EU was formed. The Greek State and the rest of the European countries, that were still in midst of a financial crisis, were found deeply unprepared in handling another grave challenge in such a short period. Policy makers failed to see through the heart of the problem, and addressed the situation as a temporary mathematical problem. Rather than developing approaches on welcoming and integrating these people into the European societies, the focus was on policies of containment and exclusion, with the hope that sooner or later asylum seekers would return to their home countries. As a result, imaginative borders between “*us*” and “*them*” were created, leading eventually to a vicious circle of violent conflicts and divisive rhetoric, which, not only still lasts and causes great suffering to both “*us*” and “*them*”, but it is actually threatening the very own existence of the European project.

Yet even now, eight years after the first influx of asylum seekers, and despite the fact that the international politics of the Eastern Mediterranean are at the forefront of many national political agendas, the systematic research around the perspective of refugees and migrants on their social integration into the European countries, and in particular Greece, has been very limited. There is no doubt that the event, called by many the “*European refugee crisis*” (Papataxiarchis, 2016), spreads over time, since it is just a moment of the wider movements in the Mediterranean area, which started from the era of the “*wars on terror*” at the beginning of the 21st century and continue unabated with shifting geographic foci to date. It also diffuses in space, since it is a facet of a global phenomenon that still has as its geographical focus the “*Global South*”, i.e. countries outside the Euro-American metropolises. However, the great peak

of population movement due to the war in neighboring Syria, and the consequences it had mainly on the European societies through which the displaced passed, not so much because of the number of asylum seekers – which remains small in relation to the total European population – but because of the great political and social impact of the phenomenon, allow us to speak of a “*crisis*” with significant consequences for the European continent. Additionally, the use of the term “*crisis*” is anything but self-explanatory; as it has a series of implicit consequences in the way we know and talk about any historical phenomenon. To the extent that it refers to a crack in time, to a “*non-place*” and to a “*moment of truth*”, the concept of “*crisis*” instrumentally de-historicizes, that is, it removes on the basis of a general logic, the uniqueness of the historical phenomena on which is applied. In the concluding remarks of the “*Leave No One Behind Open Letter to MEPs*” (Federation of Young European Greens, 2020), conducted by the Federation of Young European Greens (FYEG) and sent to the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) on World Refugee Day 2020, it is mentioned that as European citizens, we may consider solidarity and equality to be founding principles upon which the European Union has been built, but the evidence of the track records of people in search of asylum in the EU Member States shows, that these principles “*are only meaningless words we like to believe in rather than we like to act on*” (Federation of Young European Greens, 2020). However, the signatory organizations of this letter, one of which is Oikologiki Symmaxia – Ecological Alliance, the Greek Ecological political organization that served as my internship organization for this research project, do not wish to transmit murky thoughts on the European institutions, but rather endeavor to develop an approach of critical thinking and a sentiment of European self-awareness, by declaring that

“By choosing the right path, we establish Europe as a leader on the Global Stage on how to look after refugees” (Federation of Young European Greens, 2020).

The mishandling of the phenomenon by European leaders and policy makers due to the limited willingness for cooperation among the Member States, and the negative impact that this mentality – which is partially caused by the power imbalance between the Central Western and Southern States – has had on the sovereignty of the EU, are widely accepted facts by politicians and citizens throughout the European continent. European citizens have been challenged by a crisis of vision and a crisis of unity, which are shaking the foundations of the European project. The refugee crisis that erupted after the Arab Spring (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023), mainly by the Civil War in Syria, has been described as the largest “forced migration”

event since the end of WWII, and more than a decade later, the refugee/migration phenomenon is continuing to test the stability of the European Union and its Member States. One of the countries which have been affected the most, as it is still recovering from the financial and socio-political turbulences that has been struggling with in the last two decades, is Greece. The economic vulnerability of the state and the unsanitary conditions in which the asylum seekers are still being hosted, urge for an immediate response, especially after the rise of tensions with Turkey, and in the aftermath of “*Brexit*”. This research on social integration policies and practices for refugees and migrants seeking asylum in European countries, and in particular in Greece, flourished by my personal experience on the ground in the Greek State, but evolved into a more comprehensive argument, when I delved into researching theories on Geopolitics of Borders and Conflict Resolution during my studies in the Master in Human Geography at Radboud University, and then later participated in FYEG’s Working Group (WG) on Social Rights in Europe. This WG was also the hub for co-writing the aforementioned letter to the MEPs on World Refugee Day in 2020. Furthermore, while researching literature concerning the conflict resolution mechanisms of the European Union, a Bueno Lacy’s research captured my interest. In his paper, he supports the notion that the countries of the EU are intrinsically developing deficient mechanisms, as they are falling victims of egocentric agendas, and this notion enstrengthened my drive to research on more inclusive and multicultural approaches regarding the social integration of asylum seekers in Europe (Bueno Lacy, 2011). In this quest of analyzing theories and practices, which can ensure that communication and solidarity among the various identities within the EU are fostered via the prism of a unifying European identity, and which could encompass the transformation of the European societies, in this case-study the Greek State, into truly welcoming, socially just, and inclusive communities, I consider that it is vital to adopt a constructivist approach. Moreover, this research takes into great consideration the significance of defending the democratic principles and the cosmopolitan ideal which are key components of the European values, in an era of nationalistic and exclusionary geopolitical narratives, which not only threaten the viability of the European project, but also obstruct the essential socio-economic growth of feeble European States, such as Greece, while being the cause of great human suffering. Jaupi, in his research of reflecting upon the future of Europe, argues that “*United in Diversity*” should not be a farfetched idea, but instead, it must be a process, aiming to satisfy the

“need for cooperation and communication, dialogue and resolution, as the European identity must be congruent to a self-understanding need for a cosmopolitan community”
(Jaupi, p.12, 2018).

Furthermore, my research paper also takes inspiration from political philosophers of Ancient Greece and their analysis of political systems in the quest for social utopias, in an attempt to utilize them as a lens, in the research for an approach that targets to bridge the gap between the Central Western and Southern European territory, by focusing on the social integration of refugees and migrants who seek asylum from Middle Eastern and African countries, and by fostering an Ecological transition in the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Within this framework, this research is attempting to construct a link between the voices of refugees and migrants currently seeking asylum in Greece, and the perspective of Greek and European policy makers and representatives from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), by asking the central question of how do refugees and migrants perceive the procedures of their social integration in Greece and other European Member States, and consequently whether or not, the Greens/EFA group’s approach for the asylum system in Europe can indeed provide a just, sustainable, unified, and above all, humane, European approach. Targeting to address the main goal of understanding the benefits of integrating refugees and migrants into the European societies, this research focuses on approaching these groups as a vital and integral component rather an external one, thus involving them in the decision-making processes and enabling the consideration of their perspective. By looking through the prism of theories on Identity, Social Inclusion, and Political Ecology, this paper is aiming at reconsidering the geopolitical and cultural concepts within the EU, and to suggest that, in order to revitalize the core values of hospitality, diversity, solidarity, and equality, and move toward a more cosmopolitan Greece and European Union, the European leaders and policy makers must realistically address the power imbalance among the Member States, support the active participation of refugees and migrants in the decision-making processes of their social integration, and work toward adopting Ecological policies and practices. For this to be accomplished, I will also argue that the European Member States and in this case-study Greece, must undertake an exhaustive historical reinterpretation of their past, in order to bring forth the reasons behind the re-emergence of nationalistic propaganda, which obstructs policy makers from a comprehensive analysis regarding the various aspects of the social integration of

minorities. Then, by referring to approaches within the field of Political Ecology, I will examine if the Green policies and practices can offer viable alternatives to the current norms in asylum policy and the social integration processes for refugees and migrants, and if they could potentially act as a driving force toward the transition of the Greek State and in extension the European Union as a whole, to a more prosperous, welcoming and peaceful era. To do so, I will present the theoretical groundings for a re-envisioned version of a Greener Europe and Greece, where asylum seekers are welcomed and considered as an integral part of the society, and I will bring forth in the debate the voices of refugees and migrants, who are currently seeking asylum in Greece, via a survey questionnaire distributed to these groups. In addition, the results of this questionnaire to asylum seekers will be cross-examined with experiences and viewpoints of policy makers and NGO representatives who are working on the matter at hand, at national and at European level.

“Be Brave, Green Europe”

Serving as one of Europe’s borders, Greece, which was still recovering from its deep financial and socio-political crisis, was once again facing another crisis in 2015, this time a humanitarian one, and the uncontrollable incoming flows of refugees and migrants searching for a safe place in the European continent via its borders, tested the country’s limits. Those who managed to survive crossing the Aegean Sea could not be adequately provided of shelter or healthcare provisions, leading the majority of them to sleep in tents in public spaces, with minimum protection from the weather conditions and hygiene risks. Two decades of continuous crises, the financial, the refugee, the pandemic crisis, and currently the impact of the ongoing Russian invasion in Ukraine. The tragic events of the last two decades, in combination with the inability of European leaders and policy makers to provide concrete solutions, have been devastating for the European Member States and their citizens. If we add to this equation, the rising threat of climate migration and its impact in the coming years, it becomes evident, that a drastic change in the current approaches is vital and urgent. It becomes apparent, that a successful Ecological transition in the European asylum and migration system, as well as in the general political way of thinking, is inextricably linked to the prosperity of the European citizens and perhaps, even to the very own integrity of the European Union. This is the reasoning behind the selection of focusing on the case of Greece and the Greens/EFA group’s recommendations for a fairer European

asylum system, in a research for an approach that can potentially bridge the current gap of national policies and practices, regarding the social integration of refugees and migrants from Middle Eastern and African countries who are seeking asylum into the European continent.

Alongside the crises, “*Brexit*” and the rise of nationalism have created imaginative borders within Europe, and this can be partially proven by the lack of coherence among the Member States in regard to the social integration policies and practices for the refugees and migrants who are seeking asylum in the European societies. Some steps forward were taken during the pandemic crisis due to the spreading of the novel coronavirus COVID-19 in the beginning of 2020, when the European countries were forced to speed up the procedures of integrating refugees and migrants from Middle Eastern and African countries, especially in Greece, where the overcrowded camps in which the majority of the asylum seekers were being hosted, lacked basic hygiene provisions. People were confined in a situation that was unsanitary, not only for those living inside these accommodation facilities, but also for the people who interacted with them. As a result, tensions rose within and outside the camps. A great example to provide an insight on this conflicting situation is the destruction of the country’s largest migrant camp, on the island of Lesbos, by fire that broke out on September 2020 during quarrels between the asylum seekers and the Greek authorities (BBC News, 2020). In the Moria camp, which hosted a number of people that was more than four times its capacity, the lockdown measures against the spreading of the pandemic disease sparked violent conflicts among the residents, leading eventually to a conflagration that burned the facility to the ground, and left its nearly 13,000 residents without shelter (BBC News, 2020). In addition, besides the intrastate conflicts due to the pandemic, Greece has also fallen prey to interstate conflict with its neighboring country Turkey, caused partially by the incapability of the European leaders to find an adequate response to the matter of equal distribution of asylum seekers throughout the European Member States, and mainly by the instrumentalization of asylum seekers by the Turkish government. Peak of this conflict so far, were the events in Evros River on March 2020, when a large number of asylum seekers were allegedly driven by the Turkish government to cross the border with Greece, with the false hope that they could soon after relocate to another country. Regarding the incident, and the violence against asylum seekers on the ground by the Greek authorities, the Greens/EFA made public a press release (Greens/EFA, 2020a), in which both co-presidents of the political group at the time, Ska Keller and Philippe Lamberts, denounced the violence

committed by the Greek military, as well as the instrumentalisation of these groups by the political regime of the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in order to push for his political aspirations (Greens/EFA, 2020a). They also noted in this press release, that European leaders must find a common ground, and strive to address realistically the matter of incoming refugees and migrants who are seeking asylum from Middle East and Africa, by proposing the development of a framework for the equal distribution of asylum seekers to all the countries of the EU, as Greece alone cannot attend to the phenomenon sufficiently (Greens/EFA, 2020a). On a later Greens/EFA press release (Greens/EFA, 2020b), concerning the development of a new socially, economically and environmentally resilient model, that ensures a brighter and greener future for the European Union, it was highlighted, that the pandemic crisis in combination with the refugee crisis have exposed the limited willingness of the European Member States to act in unison, highlighting that the initial phase of solidarity was gravely insufficient, with EU leaders being unable to develop a common framework for the equal share of the burden (Greens/EFA, 2020b). In this press release, the group is suggesting the adoption of a coordinated and responsible approach that guarantees EU's social, economic and environmental sustainability, as a necessary step forward (Greens/EFA, 2020b). For that to even become a possibility though, political leaders and policy makers, in Greece, and in extension in the European Union, must understand that it is imperative to reflect upon the European identity, and to address the anachronistic policies driven by neocolonialism and neoliberalism that obstruct the European cosmopolitan project from becoming a reality (Jaupi, 2018).

Research Questions and Sub-questions

As it has been aforementioned, the European Union is only as strong as its weakest Member State, and Greece can justifiably be characterized as one of the most problematic ones. As a native Greek who has lived for more than five years in the Netherlands, I have experienced first-hand the humongous gap in how these two states have been impacted by the refugees and migrants who were seeking asylum from Middle Eastern and African countries, or approach the issue of their social integration, and this fact has lit a fire under me to start the research quest of seeking a convincing argument for why the European Member States need a socially just and truly unified European approach on the matter. In search of a humane and holistic perspective, personal experiences and research have led me to the policies and practices of the European

Greens and the Greens/EFA in the European Parliament.

Berry (1997) explains that social integration is an amphidromous process. A process, that requires effort and willingness to make compromises by the people seeking to be integrated, but which, at the same time, requires the host society to be welcoming, inclusive and respectful toward all the cultural and ethnic groups that exist in it (Berry, 1997). In a spring 2018 survey conducted by Pew Research Center (2020), around 69% of Greeks responded in favor of providing support to people seeking asylum from countries with war and violent conflict, while it was also expressed, that the current approaches have significant flaws. Yet, in another survey conducted by PRC in spring 2018, Gonzalez-Barrera and Connor (2019) note, that a stunning 82% of Greek respondents, the highest share of any country surveyed, declared that Greece would be overburdened by welcoming additional asylum seekers, while 74% of this target group accused refugees and migrants of receiving job offers and social benefits at the expense of Greek citizens. Here it must be highlighted, that there is a potential connection between these survey results and the greed and grievancies caused by the grave financial and socio-political crisis in Greece that preceded the refugee crisis. During that, traumatic for the majority of the population, period, the imposition of strict regulations as a prerequisite for the financial assistance to the Greek State via the International Monetary Fund (IMF), among other negative effects, led to the alienation of the Greek citizens from the European institutions and the European ideal, and gave space for a dangerous rise in nationalistic and racist rhetoric. We therefore notice, that social integration is not the only amphidromous process that must be put under the microscope for the sake of this research. The process of ensuring that a Member State respects and implements EU policies can only be successful, when the citizens' needs and strengths are properly acknowledged and addressed via a socially just and unifying European approach. Here, one could potentially suggest, that the European citizens must be first re-integrated themselves into the European mindset, before one can hope for more inclusive approaches regarding the social integration of asylum seekers from Middle Eastern and African countries. It thus becomes apparent, that a change from the current norms is of paramount importance.

Arguably, the dysfunctional and divisive approaches so far, have been one of the main causes for the rise in nationalistic rhetoric among the EU States, which only strengthens the negative perception of incoming asylum seekers, and makes the process of integrating these groups into the European societies an even more complex, or even perhaps utopic, scenario. In

addition, as the departure of the United Kingdom (UK) has shown, the growth of nationalism and the spread of divisive rhetoric not only obstruct the European processes, but threaten the future of the EU as a unified entity. However, the future of the European project can still be bright, or as some would call it, Green. The malcontent of European citizens for the way the mainstream political groups handled the fiscal, political, social and environmental issues that the European continent has been facing in the last two decades, has led to a growing demand for citizen empowerment and more inclusive decision-making processes. The Ecological or Green approaches are characterized for fostering social inclusiveness and environmental protection, with bottom to top strategies that promote the notion of active citizenship, which could explain why the Green parties have been gaining momentum in the last years. In the last elections for the European Parliament, in 2019, the European Green Party (EGP), or in short European Greens, recorded the highest number of elected MEPs in its history, while soon after, in national and municipal elections that followed in European Member States, like Germany and France, the Greens have become a significant force. The “*Green Wave*” (European Greens, n.d.-a), as it is also known, has shown the demand of European citizens for more inclusive and cosmopolitan European institutions, that foster social and environmental intersectional justice, and which have moved past colonial and nationalist ghosts. Here, an interesting detail that must be highlighted, and that should not be regarded as superstitious or irrelevant, is the connection between the fact that this “*Green Wave*” (European Greens, n.d.-a) has been mainly experienced in the Central West of Europe, but not yet in Greece or other European countries of the South, and the gap of Central Western and Southern Member States in social integration policies and practices for asylum seekers from Middle East and Africa. Van Houtum and van Naerssen (2002) suggest that the need for the guardianship of a country’s identity and of its financial prosperity from external threats can have as a consequence the development of imaginative borders, regarding anything and anyone that feels foreign to its citizens. In times of crisis, the necessity to defend these borders leads people to sympathize with nationalistic and racist rhetoric, which then under certain circumstances can cause the emergence of conflicts with the “*others*” (van Houtum & van Naerssen, 2002). As a result, the citizens of a state need to feel secure in their environment, before they are able to accept a change in their way of living, may it be an institutional change, a political change, or as this research focuses on, a societal change, even if it will benefit them in the long run. Therefore, it can be hypothesized, that the adoption of more inclusive and up-to-

date policies for asylum seekers from the Middle Eastern and African countries and the roots for the Ecological surge in the Central Western Member States are deeply linked to the sentiment of state stability that the citizens of these countries have, in comparison with the countries of the European South, and for this case study, Greece. Therefore, before working on establishing integration procedures for refugees and migrants, that respect the rule of law, citizens' trust must be regained in that European and national institutions can indeed be trusted of upholding the rule of law, and that Member States can truly stand together and cooperate on equal terms.

When Greece began to experience the impact of the refugee influx in 2015, the country was still dealing with the heavy consequences of the financial crisis and the strict regulations that were enforced by the IMF. No matter the limited resources or the detrimental state of the country's crisis response mechanisms though, the Civil Society stood up to cover for the areas the state was failing to show fast and adequate reflexes. Humanitarian actors, human rights defenders and simple citizens took initiative and concrete actions to protect the dignity of the people seeking asylum. As the memories of the Greco-Turkish War of 1919-1922 (Travlos, 2020), which resulted in the forced expatriation of Greeks living in the areas of Asia Minor, Eastern Thrace and the Black Sea region to the mainland of Greece, were still vivid in the minds of many, the majority of the Greek population felt close and could relate to the incoming asylum seekers, fact that made them significantly prone to tend to their needs. However, the situation changed drastically after the Greek Referendum in 2015 (Walter et al., 2018), and the EU-Turkey Deal on irregular migration (Terry, 2021). The latter, in the sake of preventing refugees and migrants from entering the European territory, enforced the lockdown of unsustainable numbers of people on the Greek islands, with devastating consequences on the mental health, as well as the relations of Greeks with the people seeking refuge. In addition, the impact that the Referendum of 2015, regarding the opinion of Greek citizens on the bailout conditions from the financial crisis that the country was facing, had at national and international level is noteworthy, as among others, it serves as exemplary evidence of how the unbalanced share of responsibility within the EU and the oppressive approaches, that do not put human dignity and solidarity at the forefront of attention, are only producing temporary solutions and at great cost. In fact, they are sustaining a vicious circle of conflicts, division, and mistrust, within the European borders, a fact that not only shows the fragility of the European Union as a working group of democratic partners, but it also constitutes the implementation of unified policies and practices an

increasingly impossible scenario. Moreover, the 2015 Greek Referendum also exposed how conservative and far right forces are exploiting the climate of uncertainty and the imaginative borders, which are created by the socially unjust and dead-end approaches, to increase their influence and promote their agendas (Sygkelos, 2015). As these forces are proclaiming to be the defenders of stability and security, fear and division keeps them relevant in the political scene, with young people and less cosmopolitan citizens more prone to support them. This is why, alongside other key topics, the continuing failure of the Greek State and the EU, to provide adequate and holistic alternatives to the current policies and practices for the social integration and inclusion of Middle Eastern and African refugees and migrants seeking asylum in Greece and other Member States, continues to be utilized to rally voters toward nationalistic agendas, and even worse, as an excuse to the human rights violations being committed to these groups. Hence, it becomes apparent and a driving force for my research, that a change in the mindset of Greek and European policy makers is essential. As this thesis proposes, the Greens/EFA group could lead by example toward that change.

Consequently, the question arises on whether or not the groups' proposals and strategies for asylum, integration and inclusion, are effective in turning the tide in the Greek State, and under which conditions they could be implemented, at European, as well as national level. In addition, a profile analysis of the refugees and migrants from Middle Eastern and African countries, and an assessment of how these groups perceive the procedures of their social integration in Greece, become worthy of investigation. Stemming from these points at issue, this research paper is attempting to seek answers to the following research questions and justify its primary argument.

Primary research questions:

- **How refugees and migrants from Middle East and Africa, currently asking asylum in Greece, perceive the procedures of their social integration?**
- **Could the Greens/EFA group's approach on the EU Asylum System provide a just, inclusive, sustainable, and unified European alternative to the current norms?**

Subsequently, from these central points of investigation, the following sub-questions are being derived, in an attempt to reveal hidden aspects and parameters, whose examination could support the main argument of this research:

- **Which are the consequences of the current norms regarding the social integration of Middle Eastern and African refugees and migrants, and in which countries asylum seekers would prefer to be integrated? Is the rule for the country of first entry creating more problems than solutions?**
- **Which are the flaming issues that must be addressed, in order to rebuild trust in the national and European institutions? What are the challenges regarding the implementation of the Greens/EFA group's policies?**
- **Which are the potential benefits of an active participation of refugees and migrants in the decision-making processes? Which are the challenges regarding their social integration and how these groups can be empowered to take initiative?**
- **How national governments can be prevented from implementing unilateral measures?**
- **How human rights violations being committed to asylum seekers by national governments can be better regulated and prevented?**
- **Could the Ecological values and ideals counteract the rise of nationalism, xenophobia and divisive rhetoric?**

Temple and Moran (2011) suggest, that the active involvement of refugees and migrants in the decision-making of policies, which concern their social integration into a country, is essential and it can be highly advantageous, as very often policy makers are driven by political agendas, while also having insufficient knowledge on terms of hidden aspects. Therefore, decision-making processes, that do not involve these groups as key contributors, are inadequate at providing holistic solutions. In research of a clear justification to the principal argument of this thesis, which supports that the Greens/EFA group's approach for the asylum and integration policies can provide a viable alternative to the current strategies and doctrines, the geographical area of the Eastern Mediterranean is of particular importance, and namely the Greek State, whose geostrategic position as a European frontier to refugee and migrant routes from Middle East and North Africa, and its cultural significance for the European identity, provides an exemplary study ground. The inclusion of asylum seekers in the decision-making processes can potentially ameliorate the chances of developing a holistic methodology, and thus, help the development of

mechanisms that ensure their smooth integration into a society. The case study of this research, Greece, has been chosen due to the continuing lack of success in the development and implementation of adequate social integration mechanisms for refugees and migrants, or other minorities, such as the Roma community, in addition to the growing evidence of violent deportation practices. (Lazaridis, 1996). My research project, which attempts to answer the question of whether Green policies and practices can serve as an antidote to the rise of horizontal and vertical inequalities in Europe, and as a driving force in moving past the nationalist propaganda and ensuring a truly just transition to the new era which commenced with the EU elections of 2019, is not an easy task. The Ecological approach seems too demanding and too fast-forwarding for the mainstream political powers, who are driven by national agendas and neocolonial narratives. Therefore, a key question that demands an answer is how a long dominated by white privilege European Union can accept people of other races and religions, as fundamentally equal European citizens. The answer could be the European youth. In the last years, young activists like Greta Thunberg are exponentially raising their voices and demand immediate action from state leaders on flaming issues, such as social and environmental justice, and it is not surprising, that this growing number of the European population is aligning with Green policies and practices in their quest for protecting human and environmental rights. I recur to the Green, or Ecological, perspective as a sustainable and humane approach to the issue of integrating Middle Eastern and African refugees and migrants into the European societies, and I consider its adoption vital for addressing the conflicting situation in the Greek State, due to my personal long time involvement with Ecological groups and policy makers, which has led me to experience in person what this research is attempting to ratify. People in need are being deserted in unsanitary accommodation facilities and they have been facing severe violations of their rights, and only a holistic approach, that treats every living being equally, could bring a change (Federation of Young European Greens, 2020).

“It makes no sense of having an agenda on promoting the European way of life, while ignoring the thousands of refugees and migrants who are even lacking water to wash their hands. Asylum is a human right and it cannot be put on hold for political purposes” (Federation of Young European Greens, 2020).

In the search for a political avenue that could lead to a more inclusive Greek State and EU, and one that can provide concrete measures to prevent the instrumentalization of human

lives, I strongly believe that, the Ecological perspective of considering the European borders being protected sufficiently when human lives are being protected on both sides of the border, can be the guide toward achieving such a breakthrough from the current stalemate. A key value of the European Union and its Member States is solidarity, so European leaders, policy makers and citizens across Europe, should stand united in providing support to the people who are seeking a better life in this continent (Federation of Young European Greens, 2020). To prevent the further rise of conflicts and to ensure a good quality for all, the focus of attention must be on the social integration of refugees and migrants from Middle East and Africa into the European societies, rather than on policies of securitization and exclusion which allow the construction of ghettos and fences by national governments. Acknowledging the significance of a sovereign Greek State within the European Union, and the beneficial impact that a change in perspective could potentially have in regard to the stability of peace in Eastern Mediterranean and on the European identity, I stand by the notion that structural classism and nationalistic rhetoric are inherently propagated, and I strongly believe that the pathway, toward a more cosmopolitan, inclusive, and environmentally just Greece and European Union, is indeed possible via the Ecological approach and the policies and practices of the Greens/EFA and the European Greens. As it is declared in the aforementioned letter conducted FYEG on World Refugee Day 2020, the European Union is lacking the mentality of a collective citizenship, and there is a growing urge for approaches that can aid in moving on from nationalistic ideologies (Federation of Young European Greens, 2020). By adopting the Ecological perspective, the EU and its Member States can be established on the Global Stage as a driving force on how to address the issue of social integration of refugees and migrants, but to do this, a transition from the current slow-paced, unilateral, and dead-end policies and practices is crucial (Federation of Young European Greens, 2020).

Methodology

This daring quest for a Greener and more inclusive European Union has its starting ground at the Member State that served as the cradle of the European civilization, in an attempt to re-envision the core values upon which the European project has been built. This country is Greece, whose ancient principles of hospitality and democracy laid the foundation for the current quest toward more welcoming, inclusive and socially just, political approaches. My personal background, as a

native Greek who has studied the theories of ancient Greek philosophers, such as Socrates and Plato, in combination with my personal experiences on the ground during the economic, socio-political and refugee crises that hit Greece in the last two decades, inclined me to test the efficiency of the current political processes in the Greek State and the EU, by using a research approach which derives from the Socratic Method (Meckstroth, 2012). This approach, inspired by the Socratic Questioning (Changing Minds, n.d.), was used in my interviews with policy makers and NGO representatives involved in the field of social integration policies for people from Middle East and Africa who are seeking asylum in Greece and other European Member States, in order to examine the ideas and reveal contradictions, in knowledge and perspective, for the questions at hand. The analysis of the results obtained from my interviews, was then utilized as a lens in my examination of the empirical findings acquired by the distribution of a survey questionnaire to Middle Eastern and African refugees and migrants who are residing in Greece. The purpose of this questionnaire is to bring forth the voice of these people, in an effort to attempt to comprehend the viewpoint of these groups regarding their social integration into the European States by focusing in the Greek State, as it is one of the countries of first entry and therefore, of particular importance to be investigated. The cross-examination of the collected data is targeting to shed light on the perspective of actors involved with the matter in question, for the purpose of providing justified and holistic answers to my research questions.

Oikologiki Symmaxia – Ecological Alliance, the political organization that offered me an internship position for the sake of conducting this research, has the following motto on its informational website:

“For the “Ecological Transition” in a society of sustainable prosperity. For humans, animals and the environment” (Oikologiki Symmaxia, n.d.).

This notion, in combination with theories that I have been taught during my Master in Human Geography, regarding approaches on addressing the vulnerability of a state to political and geographical conflicts, as well as to climate change, have enforced my belief, that the sustainability and prosperity of the European project and its Member States can only be ensured via strategic approaches which foster an altruistic respect for all variants of the matter in issue. In this point, it must be highlighted that this research does not aim to act as the savior of the EU, or Greece, but rather hopefully become the spark of imagination toward a more cosmopolitan, inclusive, prosperous, and unified European continent. A continent in which human dignity is

being respected, and in which solidarity is being shown to those in need, without compromises on the quality of life of some, in favor of others. To achieve this, my research will delve into the several academic debates and scientific research which precede it on the matter at question, in a concentrated effort to bridge theory and practice, by seeking to utilize preexisting academic narratives and scientific data regarding the topic, in search of adequate and objective results. The knowledge gained will then be used to support the causality of my research process, which is aiming at offering a comprehensive perspective of how the inclusion of asylum seekers in the designing processes of their social integration, into countries willing to host them, plays an integral role for the avoidance of future intrastate, or interstate conflicts, due to limited understanding of the situation on the ground. Moreover, in the process of searching for an answer to the principle research questions, and the various sub-questions that emerge, I will attempt to overcome my subjectivity and strive to be critical and aware of my limitations in providing objective answers, by acknowledging the fact that there is no absolute truth, only paths we are willing to follow. In relation to the objectivity of this research, the core of my data analysis process will be the analysis of the data via unbiased interpretations, through an approach that derives from the aforementioned Socratic Method and Socratic Questioning. The conducted questionnaire is built upon close-ended questions, but the interviews are built upon open-ended questions, aiming to add to the objective and Ecological spirit of this research for the sake of providing concrete findings. The purpose of using such an approach is to facilitate the exploration of complex ideas regarding the phenomenon of “*forced migration*”, and to aid in bringing forth hidden aspects of the situation. In addition, such an approach will assist in pinpointing to specific gaps and problems that need to be addressed at the Greek and European institutions, in uncovering assumptions, in analyzing concepts, and finally, in distinguishing what is known and what approach could be more beneficial in providing adequate and holistic answers to the research questions mentioned above.

The internship at Oikologiki Symmaxia – Ecological Alliance provided the bridge between practice and theoretical groundings and served as the backbone of my research, as it enabled the access to necessary archives and helped establish contacts with policy makers in the fields of refugee and migrant rights, as well as Political Ecology. Moreover, in the quest of bringing forth and understanding the perspective of Middle Eastern and African refugees and migrants who are residing in Greece, I came to the aid of the Greek Forum of Refugees. GFR is a

Non-Governmental Organization striving to build a solidarity network of refugee and migrant communities in Greece, as well as to advocate for the rights of these groups, in parallel with stateless persons who are residing in the country (Greek Forum of Refugees, n.d.-a). The organization is targeting to empower these communities via the framework of workshops on employability and sustainability, and supported me with the distribution of my survey questionnaire to the target audience. Here, it must be noted that the distribution period of the survey questionnaire coincided with the peak of the pandemic crisis due to the spread of the COVID-19 disease, which imposed a number of restrictions and constituted its distribution, as well as the collection of data, a significant challenge. For this reason, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to GFR, as the organization's contribution proved vital for the collection of the necessary data regarding the perspective of asylum seekers. Here, it is worth mentioning that, as the majority of Middle Eastern and African refugees and migrants in Greece know French as a second language, rather than English, the survey questionnaire was developed in two languages, English and French, to ensure the, as much as possible, inclusive representation of the groups being studied. Initially, the distribution strategy that would be followed was a digital process, with the completion of the questionnaire by 100 representatives from all the communities that the Greek Forum of Refugees is representing, via the Qualtrics XM software. However, due to technical challenges from the side of the groups that would be questioned, the questionnaire was distributed in a print format. The collected data was then scanned and sent to me via email, so the process of their analysis could be continued via the Qualtrics XM software. Moreover, two more critical challenges which led to necessary adaptations in the research process, was the extensive period of five months for the collection of the answers to the questionnaire, and the unwillingness of many refugees and migrants for the publication of their answers, even though the survey was anonymous. This problem led to the forced reduction of the number of representatives from 100 to 32. This unwillingness was justified by mistrust of the Greek authorities and fear of repercussions, and it was a fact that caused a significant setback in the data collection and analysis, but it is also fact that strengthens the justification for this research project.

Furthermore, the selected policy makers and NGO representatives who were interviewed were selected due to their active involvement with the topic of this thesis, in an attempt to construct a concrete viewpoint on all the issues which are examined in this research. Those who

accepted to express their opinion and provide their knowledge on the topic of social integration policies and practices for refugees and migrants that are seeking asylum in the European continent were the following five. *Dimitrios Deligiannis* – Former President of the Municipal Council of Larissa-Greece and former Deputy Mayor of Social Policy of the Municipality of Larissa-Greece, *Jean Lambert* – Former MEP with the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament, former member of the European Parliament’s Committee for Employment and Social Affairs, former member European Parliament’s Committee for Civil Liberties and former member of the European Green Party’s Committee, *Maria Giovanna Manieri* – Political Advisor on Migration and Asylum for the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament, Team leader Rights and Democracy and interim Team Leader for International Affairs for the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament, *Jean-Didier Totow Tom-ata* – President of the Greek Forum of Refugees and President of the Congolese Committee in Greece, and last but not least, *Georgios Dimitriou* – Elected representative to the Attica Regional Council in Athens-Greece and leader of the regional faction Oikologiki Symmaxia gia tin Periferia Attikis – Ecological Alliance for the Region of Attica. Here, it must be noted that, as with the process of distributing and collecting the survey questionnaire, the same mentality of “*Improvise, Adapt and Overcome*” was utilized in the interviews with the aforementioned policy makers. Due to restrictions caused by limited availability of time of the interviewees, and the lockdown measures that were enforced during the spread of the COVID-19 disease, Jean Lambert provided her answers in written format via email; the interviews with Maria Giovanna Manieri and Dimitrios Deligiannis were taken in a format of a video call, via the communications software Webex by Cisco and via the Zoom Video Communications software respectively; and the interviews with Jean-Didier Totow Tom-ata and Georgios Dimitriou were taken in a format of a phone call. In addition, it must be mentioned that Lambert and Manieri provided their answers directly in the English language, whereas Deligiannis, Dimitriou and Didier Totow Tom-ata expressed their views in the Greek language and their answers were then translated into English.

Chapter I

Theoretical Framework

Conceptual Framework

This research paper is attempting to comprehend how Greece, and the rest of the European Member States, can leave behind the ethnic fear and nationalist propaganda, which have been aggravated during the 21st century. By concentrating on the humanitarian issue of refugees and migrants from Middle Eastern and African countries, who are seeking asylum in the European continent and specifically in the Greek State, and while acknowledging the potential risk for a future climate crisis and the urgency to adopt sufficient strategies and measures to address it, this paper is seeking to understand the impact of the current policies and practices at national and European level, and to bring forth a new perspective. In this part, the thesis departs to its theoretical voyage, by exploring the scientific fields of Identity and Conflict, Geopolitics of Borders, Social Inclusion and Integration of Minorities, and Political Ecology. Its aim is to offer the theoretical background that serves as the foundation of this research, and to explain the approaches and perspectives provided in the fields of Conflict Theory, Politics, and Ecology, in order to support the reasoning for the questions at hand.

Almost a decade ago, European leaders and policy makers were confronted with the management of large numbers of incoming asylum seekers who were fleeing Middle East and Africa to find a secure place to continue their lives. To adequately address the situation, they made pledges to ameliorate the existing European policies and practices regarding asylum, and in particular, to reform the solidarity mechanisms that were adopted in the Dublin Regulation (European Commission, n.d.). However, all these years later, there has not been a lot of progress and there are still actions needed to be taken. In the case of Greece, the situation has been very challenging for many years, due to a weak asylum system in combination with financial constraints and the added pressure by the Greek-Turkish relations. The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) and the European Commission put considerable resources into helping the national governments virtually restart the system, as well as to provide support to local people and authorities in some parts of the country. Nonetheless, as a Greens/EFA report from 2018 showed, the deal done with Turkey to keep asylum seekers out of the EU has been gravely

problematic and the distortions to the EU asylum acquis on the ground have been obstructing from implementing adequate measures (Greens/EFA, 2018).

It can be suggested that the European and national institutions have basically remained immobilized, because in essence, the whole issue has been the balance among the Member States. The prolonged incompetence of the European Council in adopting a reformation of the Dublin Regulation, that can provide an adequate solution to the existing gaps and support the improvement of CEAS, serves as strong evidence of this chasm among the Member States and of their inefficiency in finding a common ground for the benefit of all, current and future European citizens. This fact has not allowed for the formulation of policies and practices that would cover the entire area of the European Union. Therefore, the strategies and measures that have been implemented thus far have been gravely inefficient, as they cast the burden unequally to national governments. Moreover, the logic of integration into the European societies, the Community acquis, has been seriously affected by the rise in far right rhetoric. At the moment, the mentality of the European institutions and of national governments for Middle Eastern and African asylum seekers can be summed up in the doctrine of *“preventing entry at all costs”*, in contradictory combination with a humanitarian approach and the founding values of the European Union. The numerous violent pushbacks committed in the Aegean Sea by the Greek government, in the name of protecting the Greek, and in extension European, borders, is a manifestation of this inhumane mentality. Ironically, at the same time that national and European officials argue that the policies being followed are preeminently pro-refugee and pro-migrant, and in contrast to the far right and anti-migrant cries, these policies and practices of closed borders are forcing thousands of asylum seekers to choose dangerous routes and to become victims of migrant smugglers. The impotence, in regard to offering protection and dignified treatment to people from Middle Eastern and African countries who are seeking asylum in the European continent, can be linked, among others, to this approach of deterrence and containment. The people seeking asylum are human beings not numbers, and therefore, to rectify the Common European Asylum System, European leaders and policy makers ought to put forward measures, such as the proposed approach of the Greens/EFA group, that protect and respect the needs and preferences of those in need without any discrimination, as it is of key importance in order to guarantee an asylum system that is efficient and humane. Examples of such preferences, needs and links, are, for instance, different family ties and cultural links. This shift in perspective, which goes beyond

the “*insiders*” versus “*outsiders*” mindset, and which has at its center the inclusion and active participation of refugees and migrants in the decision-making processes, can limit the human rights violations being committed to them, ameliorate their prospects of integration into the European societies, and in extension, reduce the irregular movements from one Member State to another.

Identity and Conflict

Demmers (2016) explains that Conflict Theorists are targeting to shed light upon the elements of conflict for the purpose of comprehending the contributing factors for its emergence. She further elaborates, that this goal is being achieved by putting under the microscope the imaginative borders which can be developed in one’s mind, and by investigating their correlation to the appearance of conflict among individuals, or groups (Demmers, 2016). As she notes, some researchers in this field opt for an “*outside observer*” approach, by examining the social structures, whereas opposing to the supporters of “*Positivist Structuralism*”, others, who belong to the “*Positivist and Interpretative Individualism*” school of thought, focus on the implications of actors (Demmers, 2016). For the purposes of my research, I will attempt to develop a hybrid approach, in order to build an, as much as possible, holistic methodology, in which I will attempt to shed light on hidden components from the situation of individuals on the ground, and of their impact on the institutions, while acknowledging that a thorough examination via a “*Structuralist*” prism is also necessary, in order to support that social structures can provide the guidelines upon which individual actors can be integrated into the institutions.

In the field of Conflict Theory, theorists around the globe are debating on the connection between ethnic, cultural, or religious distinctions and the emergence of violent conflict. The scientific community is trying to investigate the various types of human identity, and its potential implications in leading to an engagement in violent acts, as a result of conflicting interests among these types of identity. There are two main schools of thought concerning this debate. On the one side, conflict theorists, such as Kaplan (2014), consider the aforementioned categories of identity, as inherent personality traits and thus, people with differences in these traits are foreordained to engage in violent conflict with each other. In contradiction, supports of the other school of thought, such as Fearon and Laitin (2000), support the notion that these types of identity are not genetic traits, but rather, socially constructed labels, whose use is to classify the

various groups for the purpose of manipulation, very close to the Roman mentality of “*Divide and Conquer*”. Moreover, Fearon and Laitin in their research opt for the term “*Social Categories*” over that of “*Identity*”, thus allowing for a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the interactions among people from different ethnic, cultural, or religious backgrounds (Fearon & Laitin, 2000). For the purposes of my research, the second school of thought is preferred, as it offers the flexibility of detaching these types of identity from the incoming asylum seekers from Middle Eastern and African countries and the current residents of the European Member States. The aim is to perceive their relation via a lens, which is, as much as possible, focused on the core of human existence, and for the purpose of researching how conflicts can be emerge as a consequence of imaginative borders. This approach grants the possibility for the research to have as basis of theory construction the association of people due to the hereditary instinct of building prosperous and sustainable communities for the perseverance of the human species, instead of commencing the analysis by focusing on the diversity of contradicting human characteristics. I consider that this cosmopolitan lens, which accepts Sen’s (2007) notion regarding the simultaneous co-existence of various identities, is essential to be utilized in this research paper, as it allows for the development of a more constructive approach, which enables the modification of ethnic, cultural, or religious identities, by viewing them as manufactured social components and thus, convertible for the sake of human prosperity and sustainability.

Further in the field of conflict analysis, Perry and Slim (2008) propose that every individual can incline into violent conflicts given the right circumstances, while commenting, that these circumstantial factors are often utilized, or even produced by the groups in power, in their tactics for public manipulation. By referring to the scholarly results on people’s violent behavior and the “*80 per cent rule*”, they are attempting to comprehend under which conditions a group of people could be driven to resort to violence in a conflicting situation, and they identify one such method of public manipulation, that of “*dehumanizing the enemy*” (Perry & Slim 2008). Opposing this notion, Whitehead (2007) endorses the belief, that violence has moral and cultural origins, and by suggesting that concepts, such as identity or violence, are social constructions through a society’s history of existence, he states that violence is not a natural component of humans, hence supporting the notion of this thesis that a peaceful, cosmopolitan and united EU is not a utopian project, but rather a work under progress. According to Whitehead (2007), a

civilian's attitude toward violence varies in each society, with cases where violence is culturally legitimized and others where it's frowned upon, a fact that can easily be confirmed by studying the cultural and historical backgrounds of people within the European countries, and witnessing the difference in perspective between authoritarian and democratic states, or political narratives and agendas. In the current era, the European project is plagued by uncertainty and one can witness a gradual legitimization of public suppression and violence that has been extended from targeting minorities, to civilians of all types, for example those who dare to dream of a more cosmopolitan, socially and environmentally just Europe, and who decide to stand against the authorities when internationally adopted laws are being infringed in favor of political agendas. Specifically in Greece, the conservative/liberal government of New Democracy, which has the parliamentary majority since June 2019, has provided great evidence of how a government can drive its citizens toward violent conflict. The party's propaganda through the various affiliated press and media, with continuous references to the risk of not securing the country's borders from external threats, while emphasizing on the instrumentalization of asylum seekers by the Turkish government, created an ethnic frenzy, which led to violent incidents such as the event, when an individual farmer used his agricultural spraying machine to repel migrants and refugees, who were gathering at the external side of the Greek border. This mentality of protecting the country from external threats and at all costs, though, has also had intrastate impact, with thousands of Greek citizens protesting against the violent response toward asylum seekers. Inherent or not, what can be acknowledged is that violent acts will eventually lead to more violent acts, and the need to construct a peaceful, unifying and multicultural European identity is lately more urgent than ever.

As De Swaan (2015) proposes, the potentiality of acting violent also depends on the specific situation, personal experiences and other contributing factors, such as personality, while Humphreys and Weinstein (2005) argue, that in order to understand why a civilian could be driven to use violence, it is important to study the implication of structures as well, rather than exclusively concentrating on individuals, by noting that heterogeneity or homogeneity in identity within groups can be a contributing factor in the emergence of violent acts (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2005). Therefore, in consideration of all the aforementioned theories, it must be pointed out that, whether people are naturally bound to violence or not, the sentiment of someone's security can prevent, or ease, upcoming tensions among identity groups. In line with

the theory that identity is a social construct, the issue of designing adequate measures regarding the social integration of refugees and migrants seeking asylum from Middle Eastern and African countries, and that this thesis is attempting to investigate, could be addressed by designing highly inclusive and open structures, which can incorporate and address the individual perspectives and needs of these groups, while fostering a redefined European identity.

Geopolitics of Borders

Defining spatial borders derives from political aims and thus, the field of Geopolitics is aiming to understand and deconstruct the impact behind geopolitical claims. Newman and Paasi (1998) note, that borders are social constructs of certain selected narratives in order to define the homogeneity of a nation's socio-spatial territory, in the quest of achieving its securitization and cultural sustainability. An example to this notion is given by van Houtum and van Naerssen (2002) who suggest, that any effort to protect a country's identity, or to secure its financial prosperity lead to the creation of imaginative borders in the minds of its population. They further elaborate on this suggestion, by defining borders as a socially constructed term, with the purpose of establishing division among identities (van Houtum & van Naerssen, 2002). Campbell (1992) and Sibley (1995) note, that this constructed distinction is an integral component in the development of divided political identities, for the purpose of being influenced by superior political forces to support their interests. Therefore, it can be acknowledged by analysing these viewpoints, that borders, physical or imaginative, have undoubtedly the power to shape the sense of one's identity, as well as to affect the relationship with neighboring identities. This research paper is attempting to comprehend how the relationship of Greek citizens and of asylum seekers from Middle East and Africa, who are currently residing in Greece, is being affected by the imaginative borders that have been created in their consciousness, in an attempt to bring forth undetected aspects and suggest an adequate approach that could improve the situation, and thus, ameliorate the prospects of the social integration of Middle Eastern and African refugees and migrants into the Greek society.

The rise of tensions between Greece and Turkey due to each government's approach on the refugee/migration phenomenon, the political rhetoric of securing the European borders, and the malcontent of other countries, such as Italy, for the management strategies and mechanisms of the European institutions in regard to the incoming asylum seekers, can serve as examples of

how imaginative borders in human consciousness can prevent from achieving sustainable solutions, and in cases lead to violent conflict. This thesis examines how fear for the “*Other*” and social injustice can be magnified during periods of crises, and attempts to seek for an answer on how Greece and the European Union can overcome this era of xenophobia and foster a transition toward a more inclusive and multicultural European identity, by utilizing the perspective promoted by Political Ecologists on the matter at hand. Popescu (2011) explains, that any physical or imaginative border has the role of an intermediating instrument in the interactions of humans, and that bordering has been utilized as a power strategy to design distinctions between what feels familiar and what is being considered unfamiliar in a specific area. Popescu (2011) also supports, that these physical or imaginative borders are not definitive, but they are instead convertible through time and space. This thesis utilizes and supports this notion, alongside the belief that identities are also convertible for the sake of a state’s sustainability and prosperity, as they give hope for the positive outcome on the adoption of approaches that encourage more cosmopolitan and inclusive policies and practices.

The first step into comprehending the role of imaginative borders on the emergence of conflicting situations, departs from the two main approaches on conflict analysis. On the one side of the debate lies the school of “*Positivism*”, which states, that in the quest for objective research the world must be studied from the outside. Theorists of this school of thought, such as Korf (2006), consider the world as a pre-given and independent from our senses. According to Positivists, one’s actions can be estimated and thus, monitored (Korf, 2006). On the other side, conflict theorists prefer the approach of “*Constructivism*”, which considers the world as a social construct, and their focus of attention is the implicating role of individual actors (Cramer, 2006). Cramer (2006) criticizes both these approaches, noting that the one “*Truth*” of “*Positivism*” obstructs researchers from adequately addressing specific conflict contexts, whereas “*Constructivism*” cannot offer a universal solution. This research paper supports Cramer’s (2006) critique, and as it has been aforementioned, a hybrid research approach is been used for the purpose of developing a methodology that can bring forth hidden aspects of an individual situation, while fostering a scheme that can be applied in a broader range. In relation to this thesis, the inadequacy of developing a sustainable and universal approach on addressing the emergence of conflicts associated with refugees and migrants from Middle Eastern and African countries, can describe the background behind the incapability of European leaders to find a

common ground on addressing the social integration of incoming asylum seekers, and serves as evidence of why the European project has failed, so far, to lead to Victor Hugo's "*United States of Europe*" (Metzidakis, 1994).

Further in the field of Geopolitics, political researchers are targeting to analyse and unravel the political narratives throughout the globe, via the three main methodological approaches of "*Realism*", "*Liberalism*" and "*Constructivism*". As Walt (1998) and Verbeek (2011) explain, "*Realism*" and "*Liberalism*" express a state-focused methodology, whereas supporters of "*Constructivism*" defend the belief that the individual actors should be the prime focal point. Considering, that a central authority is nonexistent, "*Realists*" and "*Liberalists*" suggest that each state must rely on its own capabilities, with "*Realists*" supporting that the perpetuation of conflicting situations is an inherent component in the quest of empowering a country in order to ensure its survival, and "*Liberalists*" prioritizing mechanisms of collaboration, while acknowledging that the focus of attention must be the prosperity of citizens, rather than state power (Walt, 1998; Verbeek, 2011). Opposing to these two branches of research methodology, "*Constructivists*" acknowledge the importance of a state with strong international bonds, but concentrate on the role of the various identities within a country in regard to its sovereignty, as they argue, that the focus of attention should be on empowering the various identity groups within a country, by cultivating bottom to top intrastate cooperation strategies (Verbeek, 2011). This research paper attempts to utilize a hybrid research approach that favors the "*Constructivist*" perspective, while also acknowledging the importance of using the approach promoted by "*Liberalists*", for the sake of developing sustainable and holistic strategies.

Bueno Lacy and Van Houtum (2013) in their paper, "*Europe's Border Disorder*", raise intriguing points in regard to the European project, by arguing, that the once romantic dream of a unified Europe, is now distancing from becoming a prosperous reality due to the lack of long-term political visionaries (Bueno Lacy & van Houtum, 2013). As Agnew (2003) explains, the roots for the contemporary bitter feelings on EU's core values and future have their ground on the failure to develop an ontological security in Europe, and the space given for the cultivation of populist/nationalistic narratives. This notion, if used as a lens to study the current socio-political situation in Greece, can explain the country's socio-political history, since it declared its independence from the Ottoman Empire. The incapability of the political powers at the time, to have a healthy cooperation for the sake of building strong institutions, the political corruption

that led to the assassination of Greece's first governor Kapodistrias, and the detrimental political decisions of national and international actors that followed, laid the foundation for a general sense of unease toward foreign interference, as well as for mistrust of the national political scene. In the years that have followed up to the current era, the Greek political scene has been deficient in providing with trustworthy long-term political visionaries, who could have overcome the public feeling of political and ontological insecurity, while the harsh European policies in order to address the financial, and later the refugee crisis, have aggravated the situation. Alas, Greece which was known for its core values of hospitality, cosmopolitanism and political philosophy, came to be the state of failing political personas, Golden Dawn, historical illiteracy, poverty, and a haven of socio-political corruption in the sake of the "*Greece belongs to Greek Christians*" mentality. As De Nevers (2007) argues, further research must be done, on how identities and state interests can shape political agendas, and influence the acceptance of norms. I believe it is a crucial task in the quest of reimagining Greece and the EU as havens of multicultural enlightenment and social justice, and I align with Gerald Jaupi's statement that, for the purpose of reinvigorating the ideal of a cosmopolitan and welcoming European Union, we must address

"the necessity for a stress free borderland which does not differentiate, subordinate, and impose" (Jaupi, p.26, 2018).

Social Inclusion and Integration of Minorities

Ager and Strang (2008) argue that in the last two decades there has been a profound shift toward the topic of the social integration of refugees and migrants in the public discourse and at the institutional level. Grievously, despite the positive narratives, the impact of the last two decades has led to an aggravation of ethnic fear, nationalistic rhetoric and dangerous Euroscepticism. As Kramsch (2011) supports, the European project faces a "*crisis of vision*", which consequently became fertile ground for the cultivation of social and political insecurity within Europe, as the power imbalance between the Central Western and Southern Member States grows larger. Antecedent to developing a sustainable and unified approach in regard to the social integration of refugees and migrants seeking asylum in the European continent, the EU Member States must address adequately the ongoing antagonisms within the European Union, which might escalate to worse consequences than the departure of the United Kingdom. Deleuze (1992) suggests that there must be a pivotal shift in the border management of the European Union, from the current

neocolonial practice of remote border control, a practice that has also been witnessed by the perception of Greece as a European wall against the unregulated incoming flows of asylum seekers from Middle East and Africa. This mentality of securitization from “*outer threats*”, and the normalization of violence on the altar of protecting the European interests is catastrophic, not only for the integrity of the EU, but at national level as well, notably for Greece, which due to its location is being confronted by the nationalistic narrative of the Turkish government of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in conjunction with its detrimental financial and socio-political situation.

Fox (1994) expresses the viewpoint, that in order to secure the sovereignty of a state, political leaders and policy makers must strive toward a “*State-structure*” – a term explained by Feickert (2016) – which fosters political independence from state authorities. By introducing the term “*Clientelism*”, Fox (1994) criticizes the nature of the political democratization process and supports the standpoint, that the path toward state sustainability and prosperity is firmly tied to the inclusion of citizens in the decision-making processes, noting, that the citizens of a state ought to be capable of self-organizing in order to defend their interests (Fox, 1994). This standpoint explained further, highlights as the basis of a political democracy the active engagement of citizens and the respect of civil rights, such as the right to protest against governmental decisions which are harmful to the interests of the citizens, and the freedom of press (Fox, 1994). As it is being suggested in this thesis, this standpoint should be extended to the inclusion of the future citizens of a state, and in this case study the refugees and migrants who are fleeing to the European societies from Middle East and Africa. The political decisions of the government of New Democracy, such as the introduction of an anti-protest law on July 2020, in the framework of combatting the COVID-19 pandemic, that restricts the freedom of public expression and assembly, or the normalization of police violence against citizens or minorities, serve as evidence of a failing democracy, and highlight the urge for a rejuvenation of the Greek identity, which has been transformed from cosmopolitan and democratic, to deeply ethicist and authoritarian (Reuters, Reuters Staff, 2020).

Further in the debate of social inclusion and minority integration, Ager and Strang (2008), whose analysis is being favored and utilized in this research paper, argue that there is a concerning gap in the various approaches being applied by policy makers around the world, which prevents from the implementation of sufficient approaches in regard to the integration of migrants or other types of minorities. In their paper, they deconstruct the topic of social

integration and suggest four key components in the quest of developing adequate state policies and procedures (Ager & Strang, 2008). They identify as fundamental, the research on the processes of social connection between and within the minority groups of a country, the deconstruction of structural barriers, such as culture, language, or the local environment, the analysis of access to public sectors, and finally, the research on state practices related to citizenship and rights (Ager & Strang, 2008). Furthermore, Ugland (2018) points to the urgency of addressing the current divisive integration policies and procedures within the EU, by stating that even Member States which have been fostering cosmopolitanism, and which have been pioneering in migrant integration policies, such as Sweden, have been heavily affected by the rise in nationalistic narratives and the practices of social oppression and exclusion in other European countries, fact which, besides prolonging human suffering, can also eventually contribute to the decadence of the European project. The EU Member States must be considered as safe asylums for migrants and refugees from Middle Eastern and African countries, by reflecting in practice the core components of the European identity, and not just as romantic ideals. Lamentably, despite the grave toll of drown asylum seekers in the Mediterranean Sea, or of the numerous refugees and migrants who lost their lives after they managed to enter Greece, the European leaders and policy makers are still failing to adopt and implement a coherent and socially encompassing asylum policy concept, which is aggravating even further the antagonisms among the European States in the cost of human lives. European Greens have been denouncing the situation with a number of members and representatives researching and reporting the situation on the ground, in Greece and across Europe, while they have been persistent in demanding a series of actions toward the adoption of humane and sustainable European policies and procedures for the matter at hand, and for this reason, the implementation of such policies and practices is being promoted as a positive step forward in this thesis (European Greens, n.d.-b).

Political Ecology

The term “*Ecology*” defines the science responsible for the study of the relations between organisms, and between organisms and their environment, and was introduced by the German biologist Ernst Haeckel in 1866, who did not delve though into further research (Maniatis, n.d.). In his article “Ti einai h Oikologia” [What is Ecology], Maniatis (n.d.) is explaining that the term

is composed by the Greek words “Oikos” and “Logos”, meaning *house* and *reason* respectively, highlighting the interdependent relation of an organism and its environment. According to a number of historians, the term has its origins in Ancient Greece, as early as 4th B.C., when Theophrastus, student and successor of the renowned Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, examined the interactions of organisms with each other and with their environment, and noticed that the appropriate habitat is vital for plants to flourish (Maniatis, n.d.). This gave birth to the realization that organisms must have a harmonious relationship with the environment they exist in, and among themselves, in order for their prosperity to be ensured. However, it was more than two millennia later, when the Danish botanist Eugenius Warming developed the first Ecological textbook, which paved the way for a more in depth analysis of the concept, and established him as the founder of modern Ecology (Maniatis, n.d.). Furthermore, as Maniatis (n.d.) states, organisms can be researched at different levels, from the level of molecules to the level of populations, societies and ecosystems, even at the level of the entire biosphere, fact that entrenches Ecology as an interdisciplinary and holistic science, as it is relying on various scientific fields, such as Geology and Geography, or even Sociology and Political Science, for the purpose of achieving an all-inclusive study of all levels of life organization. Ecology as a science is not in position to enact upon “*right*” or “*wrong*” practices, nor to take position against or for a political movement. However, this holistic view of nature, led to the development of the philosophical concept of an ecosystem, which highlights the importance of comprehending the multiple environmental consequences of human activities, and urges for the development of practices and policies that can ensure the harmonious relationship between humans and the environment, and eventually paved the way for the creation of an Ecological movement of scientists, activists and policy makers by the end of the 20th century, who acknowledged the impact of the environmental problems that emerged in the aftermath of the industrialization era (Maniatis, n.d.).

Furthermore, Maniatis (n.d.) elaborates that, the immediate predecessors of this Ecological movement are considered to be the Anti-nuclear movement, which emerged in the middle of the Cold War, as well as the various forms of counterculture of the 1960s, such as the book “*Silent Spring*” by Ferguson and Carson (1963). He argues that it was then, when the perception of Earth as a single and vulnerable ecosystem, something that was made clear especially after the first images of Earth from space, was envisaged in the public opinion for the

first time, as up until then, every new technological achievement was characterized in the public discussion as a tool toward the perpetual goal of economic growth and social prosperity (Maniatis, n.d.). He explains that concepts such as Biodiversity, Food Chain and Carbon Cycle, established the scientific foundation for the expression of the Ecological movement's objectives, which adopted the term Ecology, and from the 1970s onwards, the term encompassed a political and philosophical meaning, leading eventually to the development of the field of Political Ecology (Maniatis, n.d.). Consequently, although the academic literature on models of Democracy and government is vast, with theories examining models such as Representative, Participatory, Direct, Parliamentary, Liberal, Socialist, Presidential, Semi-presidential, Electronic, Elite Democracy, Totalitarian, Oligarchic or Monarchical, limited research has been done regarding the Ecological model (Dimitriou, 2015). In his article "*Prasino*" *kratos kai Oikologiki Dimokratia* ["Green State" and Ecological Democracy], Georgios Dimitriou (2015), a founding member of Oikologiki Symmaxia – Ecological Alliance and one of my interviewees, states that the distinction is on a structural and functional level. He argues, that all the traditional approaches concerning the concept of Democracy have been focusing on the relations within the human community, while on the contrary, those of the "*Ecological Democracy*" and of the "*Green State*" require the unconditional acceptance of the environmental concept, and its consideration as an inherent component of the human life (Dimitriou, 2015).

According to Dimitriou (2015), the "*Green State*" seeks to combine and reimagine the visions and practices of the Ecological and environmental movement, with modern theories of Democracy, Justice and Institutional Structuring, via a transcendence of the Liberal Democracy to a state of Post-liberal Ecological Democracy. He depicts the model as the institutional pathway toward the Ecological transformation of society, while denouncing the conventional liberal democratic approaches, the welfare perspective of indiscriminate continuous development, and the neoliberal democratic methods of governance, which, as he supports, are heavily influenced by the "*market*" perspective (Dimitriou, 2015). In the minds of Political Ecologists, a state is legitimized only when it provides social security and ensures economic prosperity while concurrently upholding the environmental values, and for this reason this perspective is highly favored in this research project. As Dimitriou (2015) further elaborates on the concept of the "*Green State*", he argues that the Ecological perspective promotes a reformulation of the concept, structure and functioning of the state, by supporting the expansion

of the moral boundaries of the human communities, in order to include the natural environment in which they are integrated. In contrast to the examples of Neoliberal institutions, the “*Green State*” proposes a critically creative and procedurally multilateral model of governance with a transnational, Post-capitalist and Post-liberal character, and fosters the Ecological vision through the language of public ethics and democratic legitimacy, which stem from socially inclusive participatory processes, uncompromised information, and political representation that must remain open to the institutional requirements of the future generations and non-human world (Dimitriou, 2015). Although it is Post-liberal and it is influenced by the Liberal democratic model, with its Liberalism stemming from the perspective of a genuine Participatory Democracy, according to him, the “*Green State*” may depend upon the taxation of private wealth, but all economic decisions concerning investment, production, consumption, and ultimately social and individual prosperity, are inspired by established socio-ecological norms (Dimitriou, 2015).

The model of Ecological Democracy is founded on the acceptance and implementation in practice, of a set of 10 principles, categorically opposed to the contemporary democratic state-building systems and it is defined by sustainability at institutional level, in theory and in practice. It seeks sustainability in every way, at every level and aspect of life, not only as a policy approach, but as a genuine political perspective, that embraces sustainability as the primary driving force in the quest of achieving a harmonic balance between the ecosphere and human activities, between the political, economic and social interactions within the human communities, and between them and the biosphere (Dimitriou, 2015). As he further explains, it is a framework of horizontal governance, in which every individual and every community are entitled to participate in the decision-making processes, and a framework that is formed exclusively in the field of sustainability, by embodying a cultural and ecological sensitivity for the sake of achieving social and environmental justice (Dimitriou, 2015). Moreover, Dimitriou (2015) elaborates on the Ecological approach of governance by highlighting the aforementioned set of 10 Ecological Principles. These principles are referring to the functional integrity of ecosystems, social equality and justice, socially inclusive and participatory political processes, social responsibility in regard to ecological integrity and socio-economic justice, multiculturalism and protection of biodiversity, solidarity, adaptability and finally, the interactive correlation between all the environmental, economic, social, political, and cultural prerequisites, that are essential for the achievement of sustainable prosperity (Dimitriou, 2015).

Chapter II

The Refugee crisis, Greece and the EU

Historical background

The refugee crisis of 2015, also known as the “*European migrant crisis*”, which has been threatening the stability of the European Union since then, was not unexpected (Chouliaraki et al., 2017). As reported by Popescu (2011), its roots can be traced in the European countries quite earlier, in 2011, when citizens of the European South opposed against the harsh austerity measures proposed by the European lobbyists. Popescu (2011) further explains, that the refugee crisis may have been mainly triggered by the Syrian Civil War, but the tensions in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya, the poor quality of life in the South-Eastern European States, and the accession of the Islamic State, have also been contributing factors to the heightened refugee and migrant flows from Middle Eastern and African countries into Europe. The year 2011 can be described as a tumultuous one, bringing an upheaval on how the public views and approaches its political leaders. Having been heavily affected by the financial crisis of 2008, citizens from the most afflicted Southern European Member States, such as Greece, Spain and Italy, who were aggravated by the political corruption in their respective governments, went out to the streets in order to demand a better quality of life (Cavatorta, 2012). As Cavatorta (2012), as well as Campante & Chor (2012), support, the spark that lit these historic political events in the European Mediterranean societies was the Arab Spring, which forced a number of authoritarian and oppressive Arab States to transcend into more democratic and inclusive political systems (Cavartota, 2012; Campante and Chor, 2012). According to Cavatorta (2012), this event that stigmatized 2011, and which has had a major impact on the years that have followed, was brought by the Arab youth, who decided to openly oppose the ruling elites. He explains, that the political tensions which emerged in the Arab world, galvanized many European citizens into revolting against the strict economic policies that were enforced to address the impact of the financial crisis and thus,

“from the “Indignados” in Spain, to the violent Greek demonstrations, and from the Tunisian youth demanding “Dignity, Bread and Freedom”, to Syrian citizens defying Bashar al-Assad’s security services, societies were awakening across the region”
(Cavatorta, pp.75, 2012).

However, even though the public awakening of the Arab world was welcomed by the Europeans, as they dreamed of ameliorating their relations with their Mediterranean neighbors, the European Union and its Member States were caught off guard by its impact inside the European borders (Cavatorta, 2012). Cavatorta (2012) further elaborates, that the European institutions lacked the necessary influence on the neighboring countries in conflict, and the lethargic approach by using the traditional tools and frameworks in foreign affairs, instead of studying and comprehending the situation on the ground, backfired, as it failed to promote a sustainable pathway to a democratic transformation of the Arab States. Furthermore, the Eurozone's financial crisis added to the insufficiency of the European leaders and policy makers to develop a qualifying approach, while the violent intrastate power struggles, sparked by the Arab Spring, exposed the vulnerability of EU Member States in conflict prevention and crisis management, facts which can explain why Europeans were found inadequate in contributing determinedly to the stabilization of the Mediterranean region, by not managing to offer the essential money, market access and mobility that was required, leading eventually, in early 2015, to the biggest mobilization of people since WWII (Cavatorta, 2012). As Popescu (2011) states, the refugee crisis, caused by the conflicting situation in the countries of Middle East and North Africa, shook the foundations of the European Union, and it is believed by some, that this social and political phenomenon which has undoubtedly been one of the flaming issues of the last decade, was utilized by Russia as an instrument to obstruct the US strategies for the region. As it was aforementioned, the refugee crisis may originate back in 2011, but it was in the beginning of 2015 when the European States begun to be heavily affected by its effects and consequences (Popescu, 2011). At the official website of the European Parliament, on a briefing regarding asylum and migration in the EU, it is reported that in 2015 the number of refugees and migrants who came to the European continent seeking for asylum rose to more than a million, and brought to light significant weak spots of the European Union's asylum system (European Parliament, 2022). The EU Member States failed to adopt a unified approach, fact that damaged the EU's credibility on addressing adequately the phenomenon (Popescu, 2011). According to a BBC article in 2016, this situation provoked a significant sentiment of division and disagreement between the Member States (BBC News, 2016). As a result, the year 2015 brought the alarming question in the public discussion of whether or not the refugee crisis can signify the end of the European project as a union of equal partners. The issue of distributing these refugee and migrant

influxes in the European States has been taken upon consideration at almost ten summits to the date; however no viable solution has been endorsed by the EU leaders so far (BBC News, 2016). Popescu (2011) explains that according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the asylum seekers have been using different paths to come to the European continent, either by sea or by land, mainly via Greece and Italy, or via Turkey and Albania. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that the majority of these people decide to come to Europe due to the right to asylum, as stated in Article 18 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and the right to non-refoulement, which is mentioned in Article 19(2) of the same Charter (Official Journal of the European Communities, 2000). Here, it must be highlighted that the road to Europe is a dangerous one, with people usually being exploited by smugglers (International Organization for Migration, 2014). In Libya, asylum seekers can experience imprisonment in detention centers (Amnesty International, 2015), while the journey via Turkey and then Greece is also perilous, as refugees and migrants can become the victims of organized criminals while being smuggled on their way to the Aegean Sea coasts (Albahari, 2015). Finally, in addition to the perils that these people have to withstand, the current asylum systems in Greece and Italy have been proven insufficient in coping with the number of incoming asylum seekers and therefore, a humane and sustainable approach is urgent to be developed (Migration Watch UK, 2016).

The European reaction to the phenomenon

The European Commission (EC) declared on a March 2019 press release that the European Union had achieved a significant breakthrough on terms of migration management and border protection (European Commission, 2019). In this press release, it is highlighted that the EU, with its successful endeavors regarding the saving of lives of millions of people and the dismantlement of smuggling networks, managed to reduce drastically the number of unregulated arrivals to the European continent (European Commission, 2019). EC Vice-President Frans Timmermans stated:

“Over the past four years the EU has made significant progress with tangible results in addressing the challenge of migration. In very difficult circumstances, we acted together” (European Commission, 2019, March 6).

That however, is not entirely true. The European Member States may no longer encounter the

influx of asylum seekers that they were confronted with in 2015 however; structural problems still linger on (European Commission, 2019). Timmermans also stated in that press release, that the European Member States must stand united, as they ought to continue striving toward a concrete approach, which fosters the fair sharing of responsibility to protect and care for those asking sanctuary inside the European borders (European Commission, 2019). Despite the European Commission's optimistic press release, evidence shows that, not only the European institutions were found deficient in coping with the humanitarian disaster within the European territory, but also, the European leaders have been found inadequate in being capable of agreeing on the adoption of sustainable and unified solutions to address the impact of this tragedy. Moreover, the pandemic crisis, due to the spread of the COVID-19 disease, reaffirmed the claim that there are still many imaginative and physical borders among the Member States, which must be overcome for the sake of a prosperous future for all who reside in the European countries.

When the grave impact of the Arab Spring reached the European continent, the EU Member States took a passive stance and did not immediately support the Italian and Greek coastguards, who were facing the rapidly growing number of sinking boats carrying asylum seekers who were trying to flee the turmoil in their countries by entering Europe from its Mediterranean borders. As Borger (2015) mentioned on in article published by The Guardian, the Italian operation "*Mare Nostrum*" in 2013 was significantly insufficient, due to lack of political and financial provision on a pan-European level. It was not before the drowning of at least 1,000 people in the Mediterranean waters during the period from October 2014 to April 2015, when the European leaders finally decided to develop a collective response to the problem. As it is explained further by Emmott and Croft (2015), the European leaders eventually took action by adopting collective measures, i.e. the expansion of mechanisms for the search and rescue of asylum seekers, but not before the death of almost 1,000 people near Libya's coasts (Emmott & Croft, 2015). As Albahari (2015) notes, according to the International Rescue Committee (IRC), this was an insignificant response toward addressing the refugee crisis, as the proposals which were adopted to tackle the uncontrollable incoming flows of asylum seekers by the European Commission, could not be unilaterally accepted on a pan-European scale. This was mainly caused by the lack of desire by the European leaders to create a strong European network of support, stemming from the mistrust of the European institutions, or due to conflicts of interest (Albahari, 2015). Explicated further, it was noted that the agreement for the relocation of

refugees and migrants seeking asylum by the Justice and Home Affairs Council, provided provisions for only a number of almost 22,000 refugees out of the 59,5 million people who were forced to relocate at that time (Le Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2015). This decision was taken soon after the proposal from the European Commission for a scheme that would put forward the resettlement of around 40,000 refugees and migrants from Greece and Italy to other European countries within the next two years, which was also faced with criticism by the leaders of the Member States (Traynor, 2015). As it was noted by Traynor (2015), the European leaders only agreed upon adopting voluntary targets and did not opt for mandatory quotas which could reduce the vulnerability of the European Union to the impact of this phenomenon. Thus, the agreement upon the relocation of 40,000 people from Syria and Eritrea who were seeking asylum in Italy and Greece was insignificant considering the total of 381,000 asylum seekers in these two countries (Traynor, 2015). Furthermore, the insufficient and out-of-date Dublin System forced the rise of irregular traveling of refugees through the European continent, having as a dire consequence the loss of trust by European citizens and citizens around the world on the EU institutions and capabilities. The lack of provision of concrete solutions was recognized globally as evidence that the European Union did not have the necessary instruments, or will of cooperation among its Member States, to act as a pioneer in addressing this humanitarian crisis.

Furthermore, it is stated in a policy briefing by the Trocaire agency (2015) that some months later, the European leaders agreed on the resettlement of an additional 22,504 asylum seekers in September 2015. However, the leaders of the Member States failed to conclude on a common approach regarding the distribution of these people, and the decision for their relocation was postponed until the end of 2015 (Trocaire, 2015). As a result, the failure to adopt a common approach and the continuing increase of incoming asylum seekers from Middle Eastern and African countries led to significant tensions within the European institutions and between the Member States (Trocaire, 2015). Consequently, a number of European countries were driven to adopt anti-migration policies, one of them being Hungary. The government of Hungary did not consent to the refugee quota, and in addition, decided to implement the construction of a metal fence to prevent irregular arrivals, the closure of the country's borders with Serbia and Croatia for any incoming asylum seeker, and the mobilization of soldiers and tanks in order to defend the borders from unregulated entries. In response to these decisions, the European Commission

initiated the adoption of legal actions against Hungary for its failure to implement the EU law. Besides Hungary, the European Commission took the same decision for Croatia, Italy, Greece, and Malta, with the same reasoning of violating the EU law for a common asylum system. This conflicting situation brought to the surface significant divisions among the European countries and was detrimental in regard to the future of the EU project. A rising number of voices reignited the discussion on the inequalities among the Union and started challenging the power balance between the Member States and the decision bodies of the EU. This led to situations such as the refusal by the UK of the proposed EU quota system for the number of asylum seekers that would be hosted in the countries, and laid a path for a “*full-frontal civil war*”, with many Member States questioning whether or not they should remain members of the Union. The issue was that this time it was not the economically incapacitated Greece that was leading the debate of a potential leave, but the United Kingdom. The crisis reached its peak with a scenario that many feared, but hoped that it would not eventually become a reality. The departure of the UK from the EU, or as it was also known the “*Brexit*”. After a long 4-year negotiation process, which sparked even more problems for the integrity of the EU, the United Kingdom had ceased to be a European Member State, and the threat for a potential dissolution of the European Union was now more real than ever, with Italy threatening to take the same decision as well.

Current situation

In 2020, on September 23, the European Commission (2020) released its recommendations for a reformed agreement on migration and asylum policies. The so-called “*New Pact on Migration and Asylum*” was introduced in a challenging period and promised a “*fresh start*” (European Commission, 2020). Unfortunately, as the Greens/EFA’s MEP Damian Boeselager mentioned in his article, “*One year after the EU migration pact, a better future for refugees?*”, on September 23, 2021, a pact that, as it was presented by the European Commission, could untie the Gordian knot of a “*fresh start on migration*”, has not managed to lead to concrete results so far (Boeselager, 2021). More than a year after Boeselager’s (2021) article, the situation remains unchanged. This “*fresh start*” that was so much advertised by the European Commission, has not become evident yet.

The European Member States and the European Council continue the same deterrent and containment policies of exclusion, that deprive asylum seekers from human dignity, rather than

showing meaningful willingness to reach a common ground for the benefit of all. The asylum and migration policy of the European Union has been degraded into “*national efforts to avert people from entering the European borders at all costs*”, with the construction of fences and detention centres, or as continuous reports show, with violent pushbacks which have become the norm in several Member States, especially in Greece (Boeselager, 2021). Although some initial pledges were made to relocate asylum seekers to other European countries, the solidarity mechanism has remained largely inactive (Boeselager, 2021). Additionally, as it is mentioned in an article published by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) on June 11, 2021, the restrictions regarding Turkey’s designation as a safe third country forced a lot of refugees and migrants to fend for themselves (European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2021). Furthermore, the time that has followed the publication of the “*New Pact on Migration and Asylum*” has been particularly eventful, exposing the shortcomings in the current approach of the European Union on asylum, as well as the barbaric political choices of the Greek government. Particularly, the pandemic crisis, due to the spread of the COVID-19 disease, augmented the impact of the already inhumane and humiliating conditions in which asylum seekers are subjected to, the majority of them being hosted in camps on the Greek islands, and proved that the problem of protecting and integrating people who seek asylum in European Member States has not been solved yet, nor it can be addressed with the current approaches. The government’s approach was to contain these groups, rather than taking measures to deal with the alarming overcrowding, the inadequate medical care and access to water, as well as the limited provision of sanitation and hygiene products. As if these groups were the cause of the disease, the government took strict measures, such as allowing people to leave the camps only to buy food and other necessities, which adversely affected their mental health. Thus, it becomes evident, that even if some of the EU Member States have made great efforts into providing more resources to ensure better life conditions and security for refugees and migrants from Middle Eastern and African countries who are seeking asylum in the European continent, the present approaches on a European level do not sufficiently address the roots of the problem such as, exclusion, human rights violations, lack of hygiene, mental health and so on. The integration of asylum seekers into the European countries could be highly beneficial, but as the perceptions and approaches on migration and the social integration of these groups are heavily influenced by the divisive rhetoric of nationalist and far right groups, the implementation of humane and

sustainable policies and practices is being obstructed. Therefore, it becomes apparent that a change in mentality and the current approaches is necessary in order to tackle the impact of the phenomenon that, among others, is still causing significant problems in regard to cohesion and conflicts within the European Union, at national and at international level.

The proposed direction of the New Pact is not providing concrete solutions, and given the latest developments within the European territory and beyond the EU borders, it has become clear that the current approaches are inefficient in holistically addressing the situation on the ground (Boeselager, 2021). Additionally, the difficulties faced by the Member States in the South of Europe are also not attended by the current set of recommendations. As Boeselager stated,

“the ‘New Pact on Migration and Asylum’ creates further loopholes for Member States to avoid sharing responsibility” (Boeselager, 2021).

Furthermore, he argues that the new solidarity mechanism is realistically worthless, as it is complex and lacks commitment to solidarity, and that the European Commission’s proposal for a *“Crisis and Force Majeure mechanism”* contains derogations that increase pressure on the Southern Member States which are the first point of entry, while further aggravating the already tense situation of the people in search for asylum within the European borders (Boeselager, 2021). Regarding the current situation in Greece, one can speak of a meteoric situation, where an organized framework for the integration of asylum seekers has not been developed yet. There have been limited efforts to help them learn how the state operates, to learn the Greek language and culture, and to facilitate their interaction with the local communities. It seems that the Greek government and the Greek society do not want to promote the logic of *“let’s go to Greece because it is a welcoming place”*, and at the same time, no concrete steps are being made to realistically deal with the challenges that asylum seekers from Middle Eastern and African countries are facing. It seems as the Greek State is waiting for time to magically sort this situation out; that eventually these people will leave the country without any support. The Greek government is focusing on finding some temporary solutions, but as the refugee/migration issue is a social phenomenon and therefore something beyond a simple problem of numbers, it requires a more holistic approach. To understand this phenomenon, one must consider it an issue produced as an outcome of a social change, a political upheaval or a political conflict. A phenomenon that requires urgently an appropriate response before it is too late.

Chapter III

Understanding the perspective of asylum seekers

Asylum seekers, may they be refugees or migrants, are a serious issue worldwide, and it's the big challenge of the future. This challenge, of course, does not only concern Greece. Globalization is not just about moving capital, goods and ideas; it is about the movement of people. It is a complete lie that the borders can be completely sealed. Migration is like water. It will find a crack somewhere and it will pass. The request for asylum within the European continent has never been greater. At the same time, the number of countries that are willing to accept those who leave their country out of necessity is decreasing. It is unspeakable that in the year 2023 European countries are filling closed camps for refugees and migrants, the so-called “hotspots”, rather than focusing on their integration into the European societies. The whole system for asylum and social integration of minorities needs to be radically reformed. The categorization of mobile populations is the subject of debate in the scientific community, with serious arguments, both in favor of the generalized use of the category “migrant” regardless of the economic, political or environmental reasons for the movement, and in favor of maintaining the category “refugee” due to the of institutional and legal guarantees (protection and provision of asylum), that it incorporates in favor of the people who are forced to emigrate and cannot return to their homes.

Currently, we recognize the historically relative nature of these categories, their grounding in formal discourses such as international law, the social and political consequences of their use in a variety of contexts, and the wide diffusion of their boundaries. However, to the extent that we are interested in population movements not as such, but with reference to the institutional, legal and political realities that shape them, as well as being shaped by them, we stick to the legal category of “refugee” established by the United Nations (UN), and distinguish it from that of “migrant”. The distinction between the terms “refugee” and “migrant” is often blurred. So, if a refugee is the one who leaves their country because their life is threatened, it seems ironic that the same does not apply to those who emigrate from a country that cannot feed them. For example, the question arises on what category the people who are leaving their country due to the consequences of the climate crisis should fall into. There are of course some criteria

for distinguishing refugees and migrants. But until a person is categorized in one of these two groups, Greece and the rest of the EU Member States are obliged to accept and host anyone who arrives and seeks asylum. And above all, there must be a modern, effective and protective mechanism for their rights, and a system that fosters their integration into the society they choose to stay. The big problem in the case of the Greek State is that many people are trapped and stagnant in Greece, without adequate mechanisms to decide on their request for asylum and social integration. It must be decided within a few months whether the first instance decision on the asylum application of a person is admissible or not, and their right to a second instance appeal must be guaranteed. All these are obligations based on international and European treaties that the Greek State has signed, however, the excruciatingly bureaucratic system and the unwillingness of the Greek government to deal with the asylum seekers from Middle East and Africa constitute the procedures of granting asylum, and of their social integration, a lengthy process. In many cases, asylum seekers have to wait for years until their request is addressed. The Greek government claims that the majority of foreigners coming to Greece are now migrants and not refugees. This is not the case, because it only refers to the Syrian refugees who are currently a minority. In addition to people from Syria, there are also others who are coming from war zones and areas of insecurity, conflict, and human rights' abuses, such as asylum seekers from Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Somalia, or Congo. But beyond that, the country of origin must not be the only criterion for the provision of asylum. For example, if a homosexual from Iran who is being persecuted for this reason comes, he is entitled to asylum. Thus, the process for granting asylum requires serious mechanisms, and specialized people with knowledge of local languages. Moreover, a serious issue that needs to be resolved, is the access of refugee/migrant children to Greek schools, without exclusions, for as long as they remain in the country, while ensuring the protection of vulnerable people, such as unaccompanied children, people with health problems, etc. The Greek government has agreed that 50,000 refugees can remain in the country as part of the accepted overall European distribution, and the latest government law problematically limits the criteria of vulnerability. Therefore, there must be policies and measures for their integration into the Greek society, for which there is European funding and support from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. However, the country still needs a big improvement in regard to temporary accommodation structures, social housing, sanitary conditions, provision of medical care, etc.

Giving them voice

For Greece, the critical turning point in dealing with refugee and migrant flows was the closure of the country's northern border, and the EU-Turkey agreement that came into force on March 20, 2016 (Stavrakakis, 2018). As Stavrakakis (2018) notes, this agreement was of pivotal importance, because from that moment on Greece shifted from a country of transit - or temporary residence - into a country of semi-permanent settlement. This agreement stated four main points. If a refugee would return from the Greek islands back to Turkey, another ought to be transferred for resettlement at another European country in acceptance of international and European law, and the respect to the asylum application procedures became obligatory. Moreover, Turkey would receive funding of three billion euros for the refugees and finally, the European Member States should provide voluntary assistance to keep the borders with Turkey closed (Stavrakakis, 2018). This agreement, however, had also some significant consequences for the institutional treatment of asylum seekers. It de facto abolished the Geneva Convention, which had been signed by almost all the countries in the world and ensured the provision of food, shelter, asylum, and medical care for all who are regarded as refugees. In addition, the racial segregation of migrants and refugees was institutionalized, as those who managed to cross the border before March 20, 2016, but did not originate from Syria, were automatically considered “*irregulars*”, and they were being transferred to detention centers until the administrative decision for their deportation was issued, or until their asylum claim was examined, and finally, the express procedures for examining asylum claims undermined the vested right to asylum (Kourkoulas, 2016).

However, this is not enough to explain the refugee crisis in Greece. As Stavrakakis (2018) suggests, the causes can also be traced to the reproduction of a dominant racist and xenophobic discourse that speaks generally and vaguely about “*potential terrorists*”, or about the “*danger of Islamization*”. Even more so, to the attempt to connect refugees and migrants from Middle Eastern and African countries with the economic conditions imposed by harsh neoliberal policies, as from a simple numerical approach, the approximately - according to UNCHR data - 60,000 refugees who were trapped within the Greek territory, in an European Union with a then population of around 500,000,000 inhabitants, meant that their equal distribution to the rest of the EU Member States was certainly not a problem (Stavrakakis, 2018). The reasons are more

political and have to do with the correlation of power in the wider region of the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean, and this is one of the main issues that this thesis is attempting to bring forth. In addition, by giving voice to the refugees and migrants seeking asylum in Greece and analyzing their perspective, this research is aiming at promoting sustainable and humane solutions which are adjacent to their needs. It is not just about governmental policies, but about a set of power mechanisms and social relations that emanate from them. The official policy for the settlement of refugees and migrants in camps has a common characteristic in Greece: 27 camps in the hinterland and 7 camps on the islands, the majority of them being outside or on the borders of the urban fabric, with the sole exception perhaps of the camp at Elaionas in Athens (Papadimitriou, 2018). The question of why this choice occurs can neither be overlooked, nor be considered trivial. As Stavrakakis (2018) notes, in a country with 11 million inhabitants, the settlement of a new population of around 60 thousand people outside the urban fabric of the cities, cannot be justified quantitatively. A population increase - even if steep - of about 0.005% can be manageable, so any argument based on the general scheme “*others don't fit*” can be believed or accepted only either out of naivety or deceit.

The Greek Forum of Refugees

The Greek Forum of Refugees, the organization which aided in the distribution of the questionnaire for this research, is an NGO formed by refugee and migrant communities, as well as individual actors and professionals, who are working together to provide support to refugees, migrants, and stateless people who are seeking asylum in Greece (Greek Forum of Refugees, n.d.-a). The organization was established in the city of Athens in 2013 and has as its primary objective to empower these communities in Greece so they can experience a smoother process of social integration in their new host society, as well as to support them with their requests to the Greek State (Greek Forum of Refugees, n.d.-a). Having as its motto the “*By the refugees, with the refugees, for the refugees*” the Greek Forum of Refugees operates steadily as the intermediary body between the communities, the Greek State, and the Civil Society organizations who are involved in the field of refugees and migrants seeking asylum in the country (Greek Forum of Refugees, n.d.-a).

The core values of GFR are those of non-discrimination, mutual respect, and the acceptance of every identity. In addition, the Forum seeks to aid in any way possible with the

further democratization of the Greek society, for the purpose of achieving a harmonious integration of asylum seekers into the Greek and European societies (Greek Forum of Refugees, n.d.-a). Based on the aforementioned values and goals, the Greek Forum of Refugees (n.d.) is striving to bring forth the perspective of refugees and migrants, and to promote the intercultural dialogue at national and European level. It supports the active participation of refugees and migrants in the public affairs and strives to ensure the engagement of these groups in the social affairs, by contributing to a better understanding and perception of the institutional framework (Greek Forum of Refugees, n.d.-a). Furthermore, the Greek Forum of Refugees (n.d.-a) collaborates with the communities that have obtained a legal status, and provides assistance to the groups that are organized formally, so that they can act in a more structured way. These refugee and migrant communities are formed on the basis of common factors that play a key role in the initial steps of their social integration, such as origin, language, and legal status (Greek Forum of Refugees, n.d.-a). These communities include, among others, asylum seekers from Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, the Republic of Guinea, the Republic of Uganda, or the Republic of Cameroon, and GFR is progressively representing additional communities that want to be established and work for the integration of their members into the Greek society (Greek Forum of Refugees, n.d.-a). The principles of mutual respect and non-discrimination, the acceptance of otherness, the balance between the sexes and everything related to the defense of fundamental human rights, are main components of the GFR's strategy in consulting and organizing these communities, and it cooperates with various institutions and organizations which are active either in at national or at international or at national level (Greek Forum of Refugees, n.d.-a). For this purpose, the Greek Forum of Refugees (n.d.-a) is working within national and European networks in order to fulfill its strategic goals, exert institutional pressure, and to advocate for the optimization of policies and practices regarding the reception, acceptance, integration and empowerment of the communities it represents, in Greece and other European countries. For example, the GFR collaborates with the National Council Against Racism and Intolerance, the Hellenic Network for the Right to Housing, the European Migration Forum, the EU Agency For Fundamental Rights, the European Civic Forum, the European Council on Refugees and Exiles, and various other networks, organizations, and experts, that are related to its strategic goals and ambitions (Greek Forum of Refugees, n.d.-a).

Moreover, the Greek Forum of Refugees is aiding asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants, with administrative services such as the provision of legal support, assistance with housing and healthcare structures, access to education, employment agreements, or psychological support (Greek Forum of Refugees, n.d.-a). In addition, GFR is striving to raise awareness by implementing information campaigns, cultural events, or various other programs and events that promote the intercultural dialogue, and strengthen the interaction of its members with the Greek and European societies (Greek Forum of Refugees, n.d.-a). Furthermore, based on the organization's experience in mobilizing and empowering refugee and migrant communities in the city of Athens, GFR (n.d.-b) created the "*Self-Advocacy Team*" (SAT), which is the advocacy group of the Greek Forum of Refugees, in order to assist in the political integration of the groups it represents. Most integration measures and initiatives promoted by policy makers and civil society organizations in Greece focus primarily on social and economic integration. Of course, these two types are essential conditions toward achieving the holistic integration into a society, and in this case, the Greek society. However, the issue of the political integration of refugees and migrants is decisive for all parties involved. Primarily, for the refugees and migrants themselves, but also for the Greek citizens, as the understanding of the political system and the institutional structures of a host country is a critical element for the integration of a person, and of course, it is highly beneficial for the society itself. GFR's advocacy group is composed of members of various nationalities, and it supports a holistic social inclusion that is based on their active political participation, with the aim of influencing policy makers, while facilitating, at the same time, the self-organizing of migrant and refugee communities (Greek Forum of Refugees, n.d.-b). So far, SAT members went through various workshops, held information meetings for their communities, had the opportunity to work in the workshops, and they were invited as keynote speakers at various conferences, at national or at European level (Greek Forum of Refugees, n.d.-b). Gaining valuable experience in matters of organization, public presence, or managing to raise awareness among refugee and migrant communities about the constant changes in the political landscape, are some of the benefits obtained by the work of GFR's advocacy group (Greek Forum of Refugees, n.d.-b). GFR's main aim is to support, in the best possible way, all SAT participants, in order to with the right skills to make use of the available advocacy tools (Greek Forum of Refugees, n.d.-b). Moreover, the Greek Forum of Refugees is steadily strengthening the interaction between the advocacy group

and reference actors who are representing national authorities, European organizations and institutions, while enhancing the relations between the communities it embodies (Greek Forum of Refugees, n.d.-b). Aiming to thoroughly inform advocacy team members, it provides the potential representatives of the Forum and the refugee and migrant communities with useful tools and in-depth content on critical issues of public life and interest (Greek Forum of Refugees, n.d.-b).

“The philosophy of the advocacy group of the Greek Forum of Refugees is based on the principle that the best representation of refugee and immigrant communities emerges from within the communities themselves and their members. Solutions can come from refugees, with refugees, for refugees, and always in the context of strengthening the social, political and economic cohesion of the host country” (Greek Forum of Refugees, n.d.-b).

To realize this philosophy, GFR has also been working on various projects besides the SAT. These initiatives include examples such as, the “*So-Close*” project which is focused on social inclusion and aspires to combat the marginalization of refugees and migrants through art and digital tools, the development of a Training package for the empowerment of the communities in need, the “*Support for Employability and Social Entrepreneurship*” program, the creation of the football team of the Greek Forum of Refugees (GFR F.C.), the “*Hands on Refugees’ Talent and Sustainability*” initiative, the “*Information and Awareness about the Context of Statelessness*” project, which aimed at consolidating and disseminating knowledge to strengthen Civil Society organizations and representatives of refugee and migrant communities that are involved with issues related to the context of statelessness in Europe, and the “*ERMES II*” program which focused on the training of mediators, especially in regard to mental health issues (Greek Forum of Refugees, n.d.-c).

Adding climate migrants to the equation

In 2013, the Greens/EFA group released a position paper on migration due to climate change (Greens/EFA, 2013), where it is suggested, that the Lisbon Treaty allows for a revision of current asylum and migration policy of the European Union, in order to incorporate “*forced migration*” due to climate related issues. In this paper, the group supports the adoption of circular migration mechanisms, with a focus on providing employment opportunities to people who are moving

from areas that are facing a severe impact from climate change (Manieri, 2020). Having witnessed the conflicting nature of approaches related to migration and asylum, it is not difficult to imagine, that the development of schemes to address climate migration will also be a challenging task for European policy makers. At the moment, climate change has not been recognized on a large scale as a considerable factor for “*forced migration*”, but it is increasingly being discussed in the public sphere and at academic debates. In addition, research and predictions show that, once again, it will be the long-suffering Member States of Southern Europe which will be affected the most, both from the migrant/refugee influxes and from the impact of climate change, with severe droughts and extreme weather conditions. If there is one political force, which can understand this issue and be able to provide a fresh and concrete approach that is the Greens/EFA group.

The terms “*Climate Refugee*” and “*Climate Change Induced Displacement*” are the most popular wordings in regard to the challenge of “*forced migration*” due to climate change (Manieri, 2020). As Manieri, who is another policy maker I interviewed for this research project, further elaborates, according to the UN’s 1951 Geneva Convention where the status of refugees was discussed,

“a refugee is the person who has crossed an international border owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (UNHCR, n.d.),

however, the international community has still not adopted a legal status for those who are being forced to flee their home countries due to climate related causes, even though the phenomenon is currently being observed in many parts of the world, and it is progressively intensifying with every day that passes (Manieri, 2020). It thus becomes crucial to work toward the development of a framework that could potentially bridge the current protection gap, as according to the existing legal clauses, only those who are trying to escape from unexpected environmental disasters are eligible to be offered asylum, or to receive humanitarian aid. In any other case, they are considered as economic or voluntary migrants (Manieri, 2020). For this to happen though, policy makers, activists, and citizens all over Europe, must embrace the need for an Ecological transition in our political systems and overall mindset. Here, it must be highlighted that the phenomenon of migration due to climate related causes intersects with starvation and poverty, a fact that was heavily debated in the last Climate Change Conference of the United Nations,

commonly referred to as COP27, which took place in Egypt in November 2022. The financially challenged areas are more vulnerable to the impact of climate change, as there are limited resources to address the problems that arise. Currently, the majority of those who are displaced due to uninhabitable living conditions (including those who can be considered as climate migrants) tend to move domestically, rather attempt to flee to other countries. Therefore, it falls within the responsibility of national governments to address the situation, though in most cases, there are not enough resources, or political will, to adequately do so. Thus, it becomes essential to develop approaches of international cooperation. A good example of such an approach, though still problematic, is the agreement that was achieved by world leaders in COP27 (UNFCC, 2022). This agreement establishes the concept of “*Loss and Damage*”, which is a fund dedicated to provide financial resources by advanced countries to developing states that are being affected by climate hazards (UNFCC, n.d.). Nonetheless, this fund must not serve as an excuse to put aside the development and adoption of institutional mechanisms and legal measures to holistically attend to the phenomenon.

In addition, as Manieri (2020) supports, in regard to approaches at the European level, there must be a structural reorganization to enhance the work opportunities for migrants and refugees who are seeking asylum in the European continent, as from an Ecological perspective, such a reform could offer additional support to people affected by climate related causes, and ameliorate the current policies and practices for asylum seekers, whether they are being regarded as migrants or refugees (Manieri, 2020). Climate change and migration are two phenomena that are not affected by borders, and thus, international cooperation is vital in order to concretely address any conflicting situation that is being caused by them. A positive step toward that direction could be the implementation of UN’s “*Global Compacts*” in the European framework, as they promote the fair sharing of responsibility among countries (UN Global Compact, n.d.). As Manieri (2020) explains, the “*Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration*” recognizes that climate change can become a cause for “*forced migration*”, and endorses international collaboration for the development of measures to address migration generated by climate related reasons, while restating the urgency of tackling the impacts of climate change in order to prevent people from fleeing their areas or residence. This urgency could be attended by the “*Global Compact on Refugees*”, which incorporates mechanisms for a more adequate response to those who are being forced to leave their place of origin (Manieri, 2020). However,

their implementation is facing significant barriers, with one of the biggest challenges being the identification of the next steps both at European and at national level. Here, the Greens/EFA group has the opportunity to become the driving force for the development and implementation of concrete approaches within the European Union, but for such a scenario to become a reality, Manieri (2020) highlights, that the group must strive for purposeful political compromises in the European Parliament, with a broad spectrum of political groups. This fact reinforces the notion that in order to tackle European and national challenges more sufficiently, leaders and policy makers must adopt sustainable cooperative mechanisms and cultivate the reinvigoration of the concept of European solidarity, not only among the political powers in the European Parliament, but also among the European Member States (Manieri, 2020). As it was mentioned before, migration, and in extension climate migration, is a multi-faceted phenomenon that knows no borders, nor can be constrained. Therefore, the ratification of an approach that links policies and practices for the reduction of climate vulnerability with measures for sustainable development and prevention of intrastate and interstate conflicts, could potentially contribute to the development of an advantageous framework that facilitates the improvement of the existing mechanisms for climate adaptation, migration, asylum, and social integration of minorities (Manieri, 2020).

Chapter IV

The Greens/EFA approach

The Ecological perspective

The European Union may be considered as a welcoming and desirable place to live, in comparison to other places in the world. Nonetheless, even in the European countries, not everyone can live in dignity. Moreover, in addition to all the other challenges that the people who reside in the European continent have been facing during the last decade, the growing impact of climate change, which can threaten our very own existence as a species, is becoming a crucial issue in the public and scientific discourse. According to many who are involved in the field of Political Ecology, the threat of a potential collapse of biodiversity, and of the extreme weather conditions that can constitute many areas of the planet uninhabitable, is a threat that must be acknowledged and realistically addressed, before it is too late. Political ecologists also support, that the looming climate crisis due to human activities is inextricably linked to social inequalities and human rights violations, and they argue that climate justice cannot be achieved without social justice. To the supporters of Political Ecology, the terms “*Ecology*” and “*Solidarity*” are intertwined and for this reason, political actors such as the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament, besides advocating for environmental causes, they are also standing for a society in which everyone is included and can be provided of dignity, without discrimination caused by religion, race, age, gender, or sexual preferences (Greens/EFA, n.d.-a).

The world is facing a period of high insecurity. A period, when the rise of far right and divisive rhetoric is threatening the democratic values, outside and within the European borders. We are witnessing a rise in social inequality of European citizens and everyone who is residing in the European continent. Civil liberties are being oppressed, and the number of those who are experiencing inequality in terms of income, working conditions, healthcare, education, gender, or race, is growing constantly. Wealth and power are being concentrated in a decreasing minority of people, mental health problems are on the rise, and the European governments are implementing more authoritarian policies and practices with every crisis. We are witnessing an increasing social polarization, an escalation of violent conflicts, and a European Union that is gradually becoming a fortress that must be protected from external threats at all costs, rather than being a

haven of peace and prosperity. We live in a period when a “*tweet*” by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) could overthrow a government. However, all hope is not lost yet. Across Europe, a growing number of individuals and groups are taking a stand against fear, hatred and injustice. Local initiatives, movements and youth organizations, such as the Yellow Vests (*Gilets Jaunes*), Extinction Rebellion, Fridays for Future, or Young European Greens, are putting pressure on politicians and policy makers to act in the interest of all without any discrimination. Leaders like Lukashenko, Orbán, or Greece’s Mitsotakis, are witnessing citizens’ resentment, with almost daily protests against political corruption and the violation of liberties and fundamental rights. Moreover, big corporations are being confronted about their tax evasion methods, and fossil fuel industries are being challenged for their close ties with European politicians. In this mood for societal and political change, Ecological organizations and Green parties are gaining momentum, and political actors, such as the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament, are having the potential for becoming the driving force toward that change. This brings the Greens/EFA group into a position of significant importance, where it has the possibility to take the role of the political force that expresses this strong desire of many European citizens for a transition from the current social norms and political approaches.

The Greens/EFA group’s approach for an Ecological asylum system

The interconnections between climate change and “*forced migration*” are intricate, and the development of mechanisms to address the phenomenon of incoming asylum seekers in the context of climate change pose a number of significant challenges for policy makers who are involved in the field of asylum, migration, and social integration, both at European and at national level. Nevertheless, there are also many management solutions that can be implemented in order to respond to the challenges caused by climate disasters and migratory movements, such as humanitarian visas and regional or bilateral agreements for free movement. Thus, the complexity of the two phenomena must not prevent policy makers and European leaders from addressing them with a common approach. As rising evidence shows, displacement due to climate related causes is already a grave problem and it will keep on getting worse in the coming years, a fact that urges for a better understanding of the existing gaps in current policies and practices for asylum, management of migratory influxes and social integration of the people who are fleeing to the European continent.

It becomes apparent, that a change of approach is needed without any further delay. A change to an approach that addresses the problem holistically and which respects human rights without discrimination. To a rising number of European citizens the answer to this question is the Greens/EFA group's approach. The group's proposal "*For a Fair and Efficient Asylum System in Europe*" provides complementary insights regarding the deficiency of the existing border procedures and the redistribution mechanisms of the Dublin rule for asylum, and gives insightful information about the group's proposals regarding the European Member States and their compliance with the EU law on asylum (Greens/EFA, 2020c). As it is proposed in this position paper, in order to ensure the development and adoption of politically and socially just policies and practices, that respect human rights without any discrimination, European leaders and policy makers must prioritize the fair sharing of responsibility among the European countries, and the social integration of asylum seekers in the Member States they reside (Greens/EFA, 2020c). In this paper, the group suggests that in order to move forward from the current stalemate, a series of measures must be implemented, such as the registration of asylum seekers in open centers than closed camps, the development of a European database system that is available to the EU Agency for Asylum, but also to all Member States, and the profiling of incoming refugees and migrants from Middle Eastern and African countries to ensure their appropriate allocation (Greens/EFA, 2020c). Moreover, the Greens/EFA group (2020c) is proposing the implementation of a two-stage system, in which all Member States will share responsibility, with positive incentives to enhance solidarity among the Member States, while ensuring a fair allocation for asylum seekers. For this system to be successful, the group also states that the notion of voluntary solidarity must be promoted, as the regional and local communities play a key role in the successful integration of the people in need (Greens/EFA, 2020c). In addition, the development of a warning system – the yellow card procedure – is recommended, that promotes the adoption of extra measures from the Member States in the case that voluntary pledges do not suffice, while the active support from the European Commission is also recommended in the case that these extra measures are insufficient (Greens/EFA, 2020c).

Before all these suggestions are successfully adopted though, a lot of compromises are necessary to be made, most importantly on a European level, and the current power balance of the political forces in the European Parliament does not allow for much hope. For instance, regarding FRONTEX the Greens/EFA group is trying to introduce amendments in the current

European framework, but the current circumstances in the European Parliament do not permit it (Greens/EFA, 2020d). The far right is significantly powerful and “*Brexit*” lowered significantly the number of Green and left-wing MEPs. At the same time, the situation at the national level is equally challenging, with more and more Member States experiencing a rise in the numbers of conservative and far right political groups. One such example is Italy, where the nationalist and ultra-conservative political party “*Fratelli d'Italia*” (Brothers of Italy) won the majority in the last Italian general election. This trend is slowly affecting Greece as well, causing challenges in international cooperation and aggravating an already troublesome situation. For instance, as the freedom of press is progressively being suppressed in Greece, a lot of violations on human rights of asylum seekers remain hidden from the European audience. The accusations for violent pushbacks in the Aegean Sea is only the tip of the iceberg. The big problem is that Greece is not the only country with problems on migration, asylum procedures, and social integration practices for minorities. There is a significant lack of successful policies on most of the European countries. Specifically for Greece, the most important problem is the situation on the islands, which are hard to check for violations on human rights and asylum procedures. Moreover, as my interviewee Maria Giovanna Manieri – Political Advisor on Migration and Asylum for the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament – brought up in our discussion, since the conclusion of the EU-Turkey agreement, Greece has become a “*Guinea pig*” for a very complex bilateral return agreement, and the social struggles in combination with the COVID-19 pandemic have been exacerbating the economic problems and civil unrest (Manieri, personal communication, 2021). She also noted that better integration policies are needed, and that, currently, there is no EU law regulation, which causes significant problems to an already troubling situation (Manieri, personal communication, 2021).

According to Manieri (personal communication, 2021), there is an urgency to implement a European framework that ensures the proper monitoring of the violations of human rights, at the external borders of the European Union. Additionally, she believes that a European monitoring system on asylum and migration laws must be established, and that the implementation of the EU law by the Member States must be guaranteed (Manieri, personal communication, 2021). As another one of my interviewees, Jean Lambert – former MEP with the Greens/EFA – noted, in order to adequately support the refugees and migrants who are seeking asylum in the European continent, the Greens/EFA group proposes a set of priorities that should be identified and

addressed, such as a simplified procedure for the examination of asylum claims without prejudice to the applicants (Lambert, personal communication, 2021). Additionally, in regard to the concept of voluntary solidarity, Lambert (personal communication, 2021) referred to the “*Europe Welcomes*” campaign, and the importance of allowing local actors to take initiative. The purpose of this campaign is to build pressure and advocate for municipalities to be involved in the EU decision-making on asylum, and it has led to the development of the “*Europe Welcomes Map*”, which is an online interactive map of more than 1000 municipalities, initiatives, and pledges from individual citizens, with the aim of putting pressure on national governments to take concrete measures for those who are being contained under undignified and inhumane conditions in Greece, and other European countries (Fragapane and Piacentini, n.d.). As Lambert (personal communication, 2021) mentioned, in comparison to their governments’ mentality of building walls and fences, there are numerous citizens and municipalities who are eager to support asylum seekers and welcome them in their societies. Therefore, Lambert explained, that instead of building fences and camps, the Greens/EFA group proposes the facilitation of relocating the people in need in accordance to this map (Lambert, personal communication, 2021). She further elaborated, that in order to pressurize EU leaders and policy makers toward that direction, the group is running the “*For a Welcoming Europe*” campaign, which complements the “*Europe Welcomes*” campaign (Lambert, personal communication, 2021).

Policy recommendations

The first thing for which the Greek State is essentially inexcusable as a state, and the European gap is also visible here, is that there are still camps. Camps are a temporary situation, as they provide immediate solutions to an accommodation issue. It's obvious that they were needed in 2016 and 2017, but the fact that they still exist today is unthinkable and clearly, a political choice. The Greens/EFA group’s vision on how to make Europe an open and inclusive society, could offer a viable and fair alternative to the current political choices on European, as well as national level (Greens/EFA, n.d.-a). The groups suggests, that in order for the European Union and its Member States to achieve a transition from the approach “*fortress Europe*” to that of “*welcoming Europe*”, an approach that mirrors the founding values of the EU, a series of policy changes ought to be developed and adopted (Greens/EFA, n.d.-b). The group adds that for this transition to be successful, solidarity mechanisms to welcome asylum seekers must be put in

place, both at European and at national level, stating that

“Europe must be a continent of sanctuary that is able to welcome people in dignified and humane conditions and to treat everyone as full citizens” (Greens/EFA, n.d.-b).

According to the Greens/EFA (2020c) group’s proposal for an improved European asylum system, this Ecological transition in the European asylum system can be driven by the following key policy changes:

“For a fair and efficient asylum system in Europe

- *Asylum seekers arriving at the EU’s borders will be registered in common and open registration centers and undergo security checks.*
- *Asylum files will be registered and processed in a common database system accessible to national asylum authorities and the European Union Agency for Asylum.*
- *Asylum seekers will be interviewed shortly after their arrival to identify specific needs and determine the Member State of allocation.*
- *The European Union Agency for Asylum will be responsible for a final decision on allocation and management of the allocation mechanism.*
- *Responsibility for asylum seekers will not be allocated to a Member State on the basis of the principle of first entry. Instead, all Member States will share responsibility.*

To fairly allocate asylum seekers, a two-stage system with positive incentives to enhance solidarity will be implemented:

- *Voluntary solidarity, drawing heavily from the willingness of regional and local communities to welcome asylum seekers. All real costs will be subsidized by the EU.*
- *“Solidarity by all”, if voluntary pledges do not suffice in capacity, Member States should either create new allocation places or financially contribute to the overall expenses related to welcoming asylum seekers. If pledges fall short, the European Commission should trigger a warning system - the yellow card procedure - and take further measures in case Member States fail to respond.*

To avoid that asylum seekers move irregularly from one Member State to another, the system will focus on incentives to stay, rather than on coercion:

- *Personal links and preferences of asylum seekers are taken into account when determining a country for allocation within the available capacity.*
- *A level playing field for asylum seekers will be created in all Member States by ensuring full compliance with the Common European Asylum System through a transparent monitoring mechanism.” (Greens/EFA, 2020c).*

Chapter V

Empirical findings and results

The Greek State had been struggling to provide a good quality of life for the population residing in the country for many years before the refugee crisis that erupted in 2015. Political corruption, highly problematic institutional bureaucracy, financial distress, inadequate education system, strong influence by the Greek Orthodox Church, and a number of other factors at social and political level, constituted the country and its citizens gravely vulnerable in times of crisis. This fact gave space to a rise in far right rhetoric when the arrivals of asylum seekers began to increase and led to the emergence of violent conflicts between the citizens and the people in need, as well as among the Greek population. As a result, rather than focusing on the protection and social integration of refugees and migrants who were coming from Middle Eastern and African countries, policy makers addressed the problem with policies and practices of expulsion and confinement. The results of my data collection show, that in order to move past from this quagmire that has devastating effects on the refugees and migrants, as well as the Greek citizens, the Greek State needs to formulate a long-term strategy that has at its center of focus the integration of refugees and migrants into the socio-economic life of the country, in line with other European countries. At the same time, the European leaders must agree on the establishment of asylum and migration mechanisms that are respectful to humanitarian values, and that ensure smooth management procedures by fairly distributing responsibilities to all European Member States, in a spirit of solidarity.

Questionnaire to asylum seekers

Social integration policies for refugees and migrants seeking asylum in Europe

Respondents in total: 32

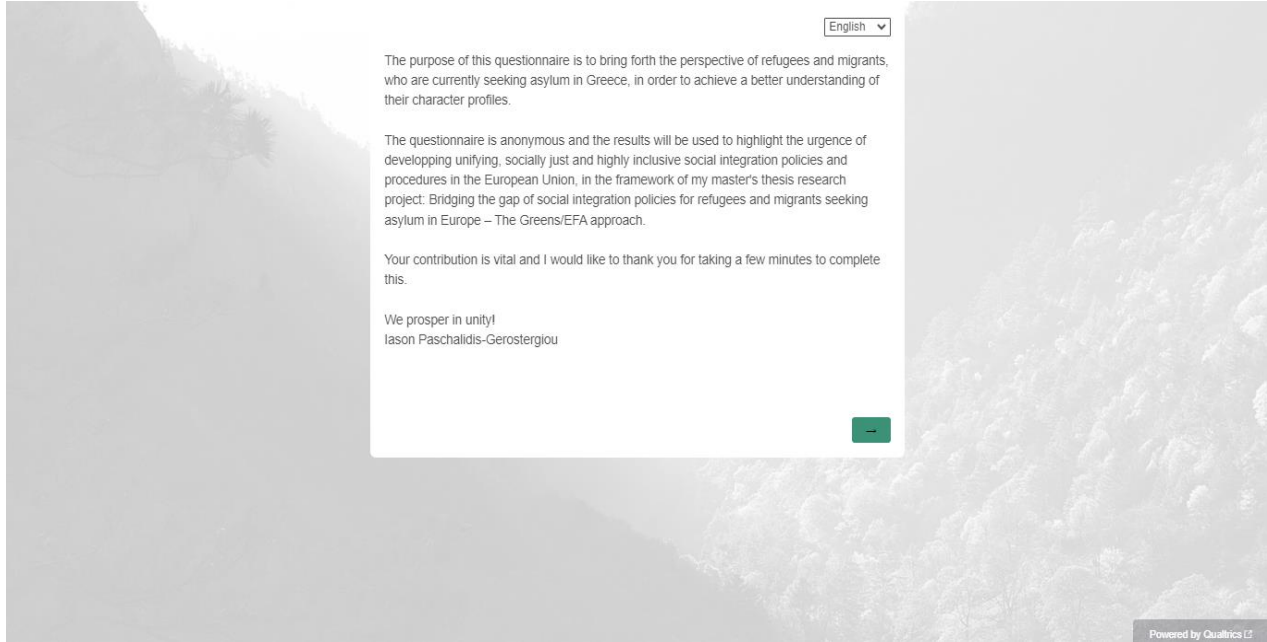


Figure 3: Screenshot taken from the English version of the questionnaire that was developed with the Qualtrics XM software.
(Iason Paschalidis-Gerostergiou, 2023)

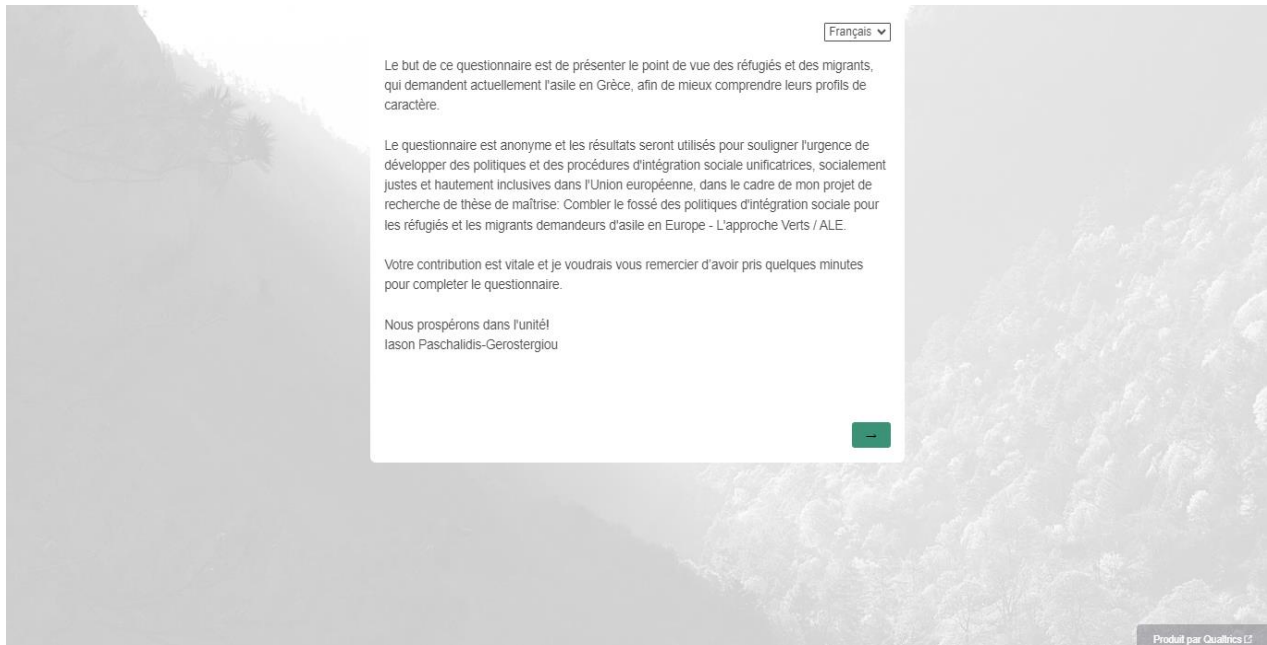


Figure 4: Screenshot taken from the French version of the questionnaire that was developed with the Qualtrics XM software.
(Iason Paschalidis-Gerostergiou, 2023)

Q1 - Country of origin:

Democratic Republic of the Congo: 32 Respondents.

Country of origin/ Pays d'origine:
DRC

Age/ Âge:

- Under/ Moins de 18
- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64
- 65 or older

Affirmed gender/ Sexe:

- Male/ Masculin
- Female/ Féminin
- Non-binary / Third gender/ Non-binaire / Troisième sexe
- Prefer not to say/ Je préfère ne pas le dire

Marital status/ État civil:

- Single/ Célibataire
- Married/ Marié, Mariée
- Married with children/ Marié, Mariée avec des enfants
- Widowed/ Veuf, Veuve
- Divorced/ Divorcé, Divorcée
- Separated/ Séparé, Séparée

Reason for seeking asylum/ Raison de la demande d'asile:

- Political/ Politique
- Social/ Sociale
- Economic/ Économique

Highest level of education/ Niveau d'éducation:

- Less than high school/ Moins que l'école secondaire
- High school graduate/ Diplôme d'études secondaires
- Professional degree/ Diplôme professionnel
- College degree/ Diplôme universitaire
- Master's degree/ Maîtrise
- Doctorate/ Doctorat

Occupation in country of origin/ Profession dans le pays d'origine:
No job

Country of origin/ Pays d'origine:
DRC

Age/ Âge:

- Under/ Moins de 18
- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64
- 65 or older

Affirmed gender/ Sexe:

- Male/ Masculin
- Female/ Féminin
- Non-binary / Third gender/ Non-binaire / Troisième sexe
- Prefer not to say/ Je préfère ne pas le dire

Marital status/ État civil:

- Single/ Célibataire
- Married/ Marié, Mariée
- Married with children/ Marié, Mariée avec des enfants
- Widowed/ Veuf, Veuve
- Divorced/ Divorcé, Divorcée
- Separated/ Séparé, Séparée

Reason for seeking asylum/ Raison de la demande d'asile:

- Political/ Politique
- Social/ Sociale
- Economic/ Économique

Highest level of education/ Niveau d'éducation:

- Less than high school/ Moins que l'école secondaire
- High school graduate/ Diplôme d'études secondaires
- Professional degree/ Diplôme professionnel
- College degree/ Diplôme universitaire
- Master's degree/ Maîtrise
- Doctorate/ Doctorat

Occupation in country of origin/ Profession dans le pays d'origine:
Avec des professions

Figure 5: Screenshot taken from a scanned questionnaire that was distributed as a hard copy and was completed in English.

(Iason Paschalidis-Gerostergiou, 2023)

Figure 6: Screenshot taken from a scanned questionnaire that was distributed as a hard copy and was completed in French.

(Iason Paschalidis-Gerostergiou, 2023)

In figures 3 and 4 we see the two versions of the questionnaire, that was developed with the Qualtrics XM software, and in figures 5 and 6 we can see that the development of the questionnaire in the English as well as in the French language was essential for the collection of the necessary data from asylum seekers, as the younger ages know English, whereas refugees and migrants of older ages are more comfortable in reading and speaking in French.

Q2 - Age:

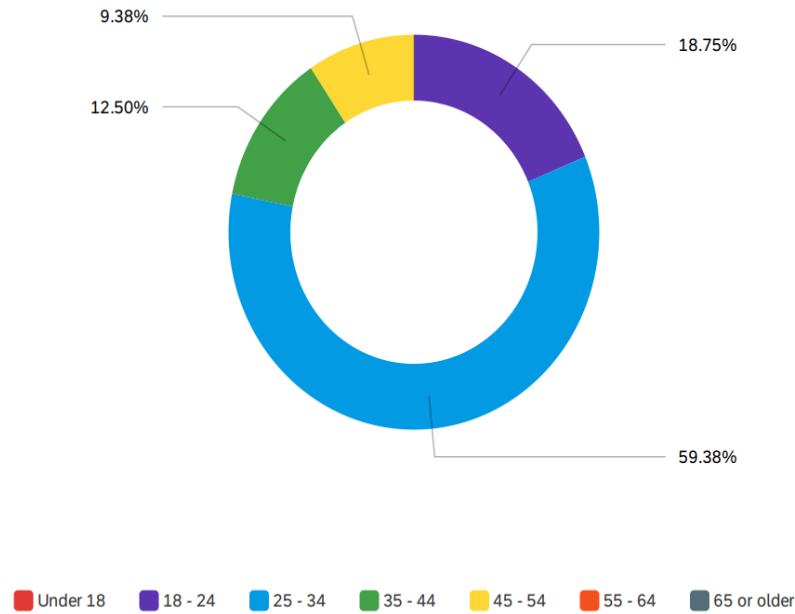


Figure 7: Age of respondents.

| # | Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count |
|---|-------------|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|
| 1 | Age: | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.13 | 0.82 | 0.67 | 32 |
| # | Answer | % | Count | | | | |
| 1 | Under 18 | 0.00 % | 0 | | | | |
| 2 | 18 - 24 | 18.75 % | 6 | | | | |
| 3 | 25 - 34 | 59.38 % | 19 | | | | |
| 4 | 35 - 44 | 12.50 % | 4 | | | | |
| 5 | 45 - 54 | 9.38 % | 3 | | | | |
| 6 | 55 - 64 | 0.00 % | 0 | | | | |
| 7 | 65 or older | 0.00 % | 0 | | | | |
| | Total | 100 % | 32 | | | | |

In figure 7 it can be noticed that the majority of refugees and migrants are between the ages 25-34, fact that constitutes their social integration in Greece and other European countries highly beneficial, as it can aid, among others, on terms of having a younger European workforce.

Q3 - Affirmed gender:

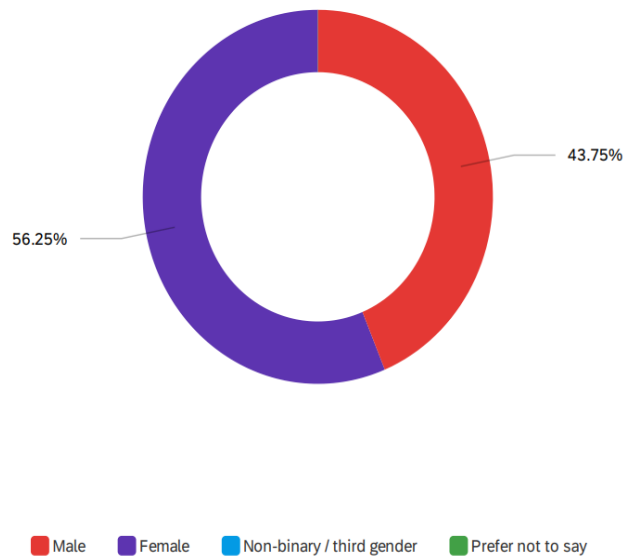


Figure 8: Affirmed gender of respondents.

| # | Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count |
|---|---------------------------|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|
| 1 | Affirmed gender: | 1.00 | 2.00 | 2.00 | 0 | 0 | 32 |
| # | Answer | % | Count | | | | |
| 1 | Male | 43.75 % | 14 | | | | |
| 2 | Female | 56.25 % | 18 | | | | |
| 3 | Non-binary / third gender | 0.00 % | 0 | | | | |
| 4 | Prefer not to say | 0.00 % | 0 | | | | |
| | Total | 100 % | 32 | | | | |

In figure 8 it can be observed that the incoming asylum seekers are almost equally divided between males and females, fact that debunks the claims that the majority of those who are coming to the European continent to seek asylum are “*an army of males in disguise of people in need*”.

Q4 - Marital status:

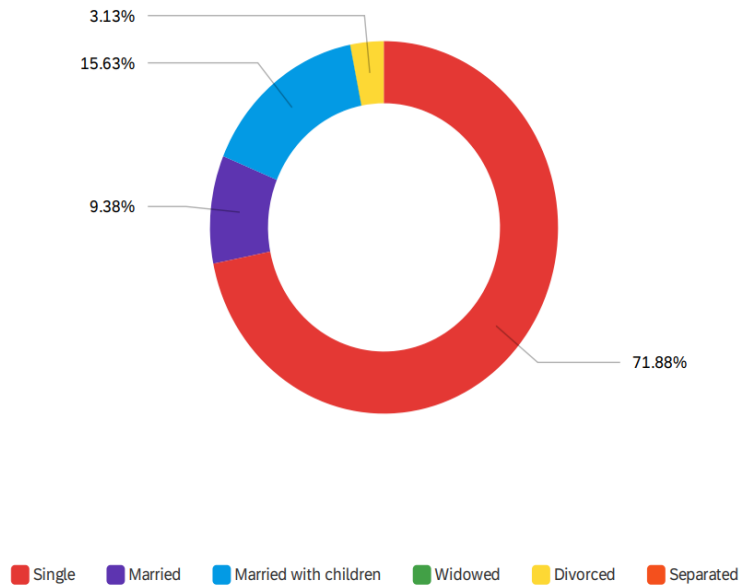


Figure 9: Marital status of respondents.

| # | Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count |
|---|-----------------------|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|
| 1 | Marital status: | 133.00 | 137.00 | 134 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 32 |
| # | Answer | % | Count | | | | |
| 1 | Single | 71.88 % | 23 | | | | |
| 2 | Married | 9.38 % | 3 | | | | |
| 3 | Married with children | 15.63 % | 5 | | | | |
| 4 | Widowed | 0.00% | 0 | | | | |
| 5 | Divorced | 3.13 % | 1 | | | | |
| 6 | Separated | 0.00% | 0 | | | | |
| | Total | 100% | 32 | | | | |

In figure 9 we can see that the vast majority of the respondents are single, fact that reinforces the benefits of their social integration, as an increase in mixed marriages could potentially help tackle the negative population growth in Greece and other European countries.

Q5 - Reason for seeking asylum:

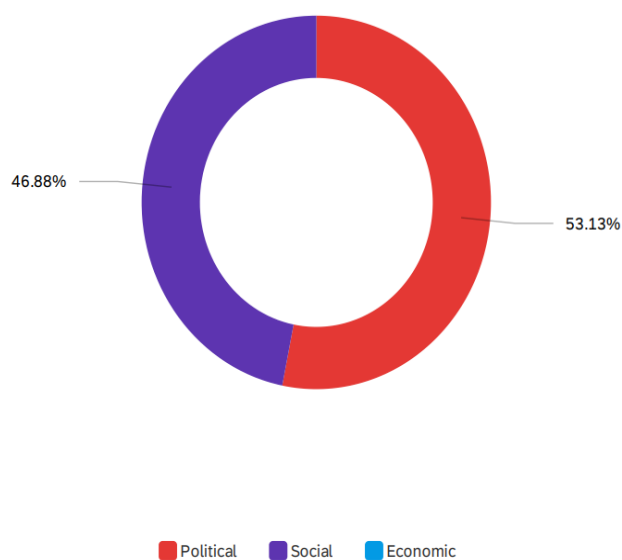


Figure 10: Reason of respondents for seeking asylum.

| # | Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count |
|---|----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------------|----------|-------|
| 1 | Reason for seeking asylum: | 1.00 | 2.00 | 1.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 32 |
| # | Answer | | | % | Count | | |
| 1 | Political | | | 53.13 % | 17 | | |
| 2 | Social | | | 46.88 % | 15 | | |
| 3 | Economic | | | 0.00 % | 0 | | |
| | Total | | | 100 % | 32 | | |

In figure 10 it can be noticed that none of the respondents decided to choose financial problems as a reason for leaving their countries, fact that shows that the people who are seeking asylum in the European continent are coming from places where they feel highly unsafe. Thus, their decision is not a simple choice of moving for a better life, but a forced decision in order to save their lives.

Q6 - Highest level of education:

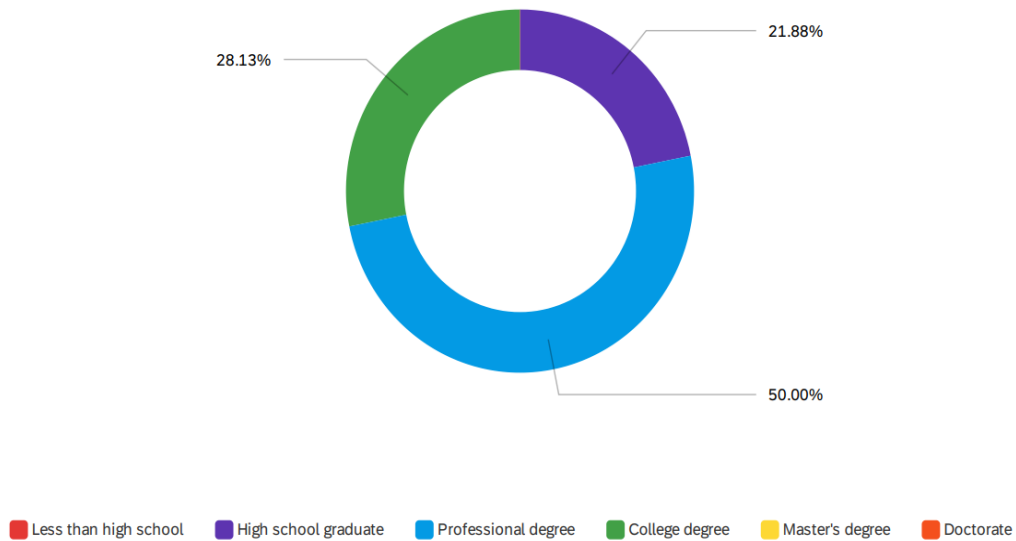


Figure 11: Highest level of education of respondents.

| # | Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Standard Deviation | Variance | Count |
|---|-----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| 1 | Highest level of education: | 2.00 | 4.00 | 3.00 | 1.00 | 0.00 | 32 |
| # | Answer | | | % | Count | | |
| 1 | Less than high school | | | 0.00% | 0 | | |
| 2 | High school graduate | | | 21.88 % | 7 | | |
| 3 | Professional degree | | | 50 % | 16 | | |
| 4 | College degree | | | 28.13 % | 9 | | |
| 5 | Master's degree | | | 0.00% | 0 | | |
| 6 | Doctorate | | | 0.00% | 0 | | |
| | Total | | | 100% | 32 | | |

In figure 11 it is shown that the majority of the respondents are equipped with knowledge and professional skills, that could prove to be useful in regard to strengthening the workforce in Greece and other European Member States, and thus, the incorporation of the educational background as a key parameter in the asylum and social integration strategies can be highly beneficial for financial reasons, besides the social justification.

Q7 - Occupation in country of origin:



Figure 12: Occupation of respondents in their country of origin.

| |
|-------------------|
| Unemployed |
| Seller |
| Unemployed |
| Unemployed |
| Unemployed |
| Electrician |
| Catering industry |
| Unemployed |
| Dress maker |
| Unemployed |
| Forex trader |
| Seller |
| Unemployed |
| Unemployed |

| |
|-------------------|
| Seller |
| Bus driver |
| Unemployed |
| Prefer not to say |
| Seller |
| Prefer not to say |
| Unemployed |
| Prefer not to say |
| Dress maker |
| Mechanic |
| Unemployed |
| Engineer |
| Seller |
| Seller |
| Unemployed |
| Unemployed |
| Driver |
| Student |

In figure 12 it can be seen that the majority of the respondents were unemployed before arriving in Greece. However, even though it is clear that most of them were facing financial challenges in their country of origin, as it has been aforementioned in the description of figure 10, none of the respondents chose the economic reason as a cause for fleeing to the European continent, fact that puts greater emphasis on the notion that these people were forced to leave in order to save their lives, rather than just to improve them.

Q8 - Health conditions:

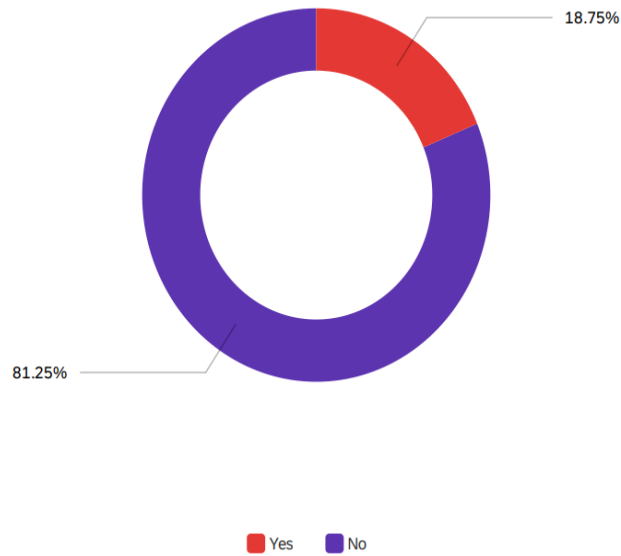


Figure 13: Health conditions of respondents.

| # | Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count |
|---|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------------|----------|-------|
| 1 | Health conditions: | 1.00 | 2.00 | 2.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 32 |
| # | | Answer | | % | Count | | |
| 1 | | Yes | | 18.75 % | 6 | | |
| 2 | | No | | 81.25 % | 26 | | |
| | | Total | | 100 % | 32 | | |

In figure 13 we can see that, fortunately, the vast majority of those who decided to answer the questionnaire are not suffering from major health problems. However, this fact does not mean that they should not be provided of good quality health services.

Q9 - Time in Greece:

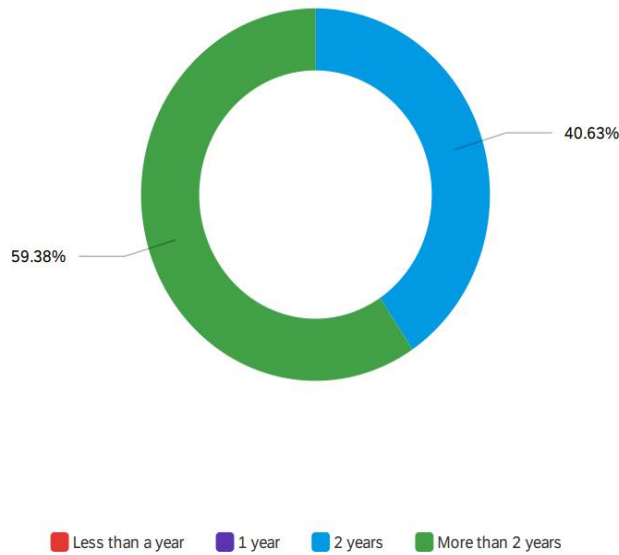


Figure 14: Time of respondents in Greece.

| # | Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count |
|---|-----------------|-------------------|---------|---------|---------------|----------|-------|
| 1 | Time in Greece: | 3.00 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 32 |
| # | | Answer | | % | Count | | |
| 1 | | Less than a year | | 0.00 % | 0 | | |
| 2 | | 1 year | | 0.00 % | 0 | | |
| 3 | | 2 years | | 40.63 % | 13 | | |
| 4 | | More than 2 years | | 59.38 % | 19 | | |
| | | Total | | 100 % | 32 | | |

In figure 14 it can be noticed that all of the respondents are residing in Greece for at least 2 years, whether they want to live permanently in the country or not, fact that pinpoints to the bureaucratic nature and ineffective management structure of the Greek and European institutions.

Q10 - Opinion on current social integration processes:

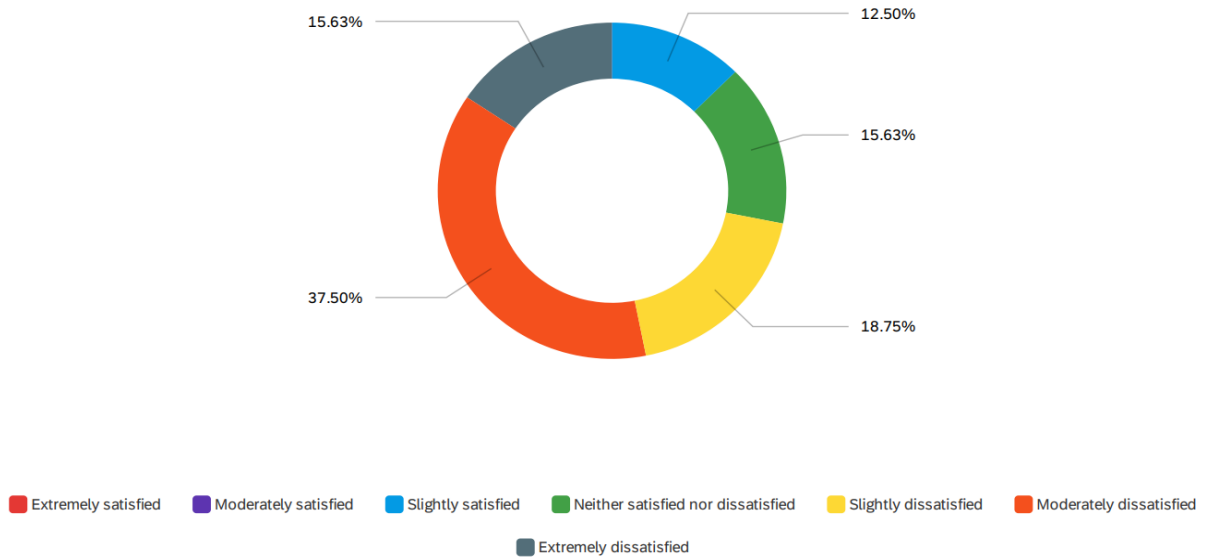


Figure 15: Opinion of respondents on the current social integration processes.

| # | Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count |
|---|--|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|
| 1 | Opinion on current social integration processes: | 3.00 | 7.00 | 5.00 | 1.00 | 2.00 | 32 |
| # | Answer | % | Count | | | | |
| 1 | Extremely satisfied | 0.00 % | 0 | | | | |
| 2 | Moderately satisfied | 0.00 % | 0 | | | | |
| 3 | Slightly satisfied | 12.5 % | 4 | | | | |
| 4 | Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 15.63 % | 5 | | | | |
| 5 | Slightly dissatisfied | 18.75 % | 6 | | | | |
| 6 | Moderately dissatisfied | 37.5 % | 12 | | | | |
| 7 | Extremely dissatisfied | 15.63 % | 5 | | | | |
| | Total | 100 % | 32 | | | | |

In figure 15 it can be observed that the vast majority of the respondents are dissatisfied with the current processes in regard to their social integration in Greece, which highlights the urgency of adopting a better-adjusted approach in this matter, and strengthens the justification for this research project.

Q11 - Treatment by the local communities:

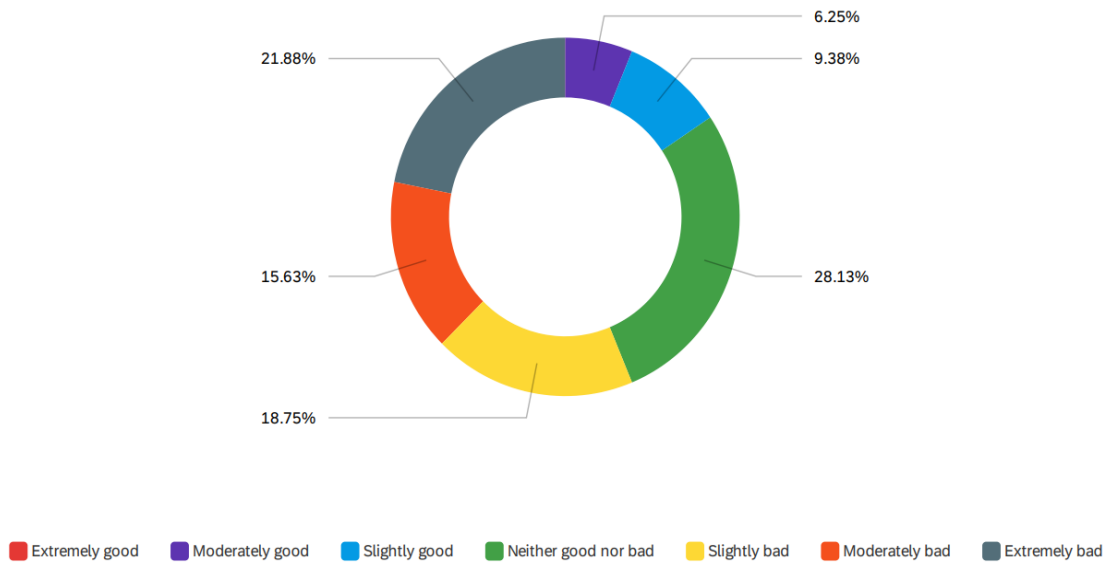


Figure 16: Treatment of respondents by the local communities.

| # | Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count |
|---|-------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------------|----------|-------|
| 1 | Treatment by the local communities: | 2.00 | 7.00 | 5.00 | 1.00 | 2.00 | 32 |
| # | Answer | | | % | Count | | |
| 1 | Extremely good | | | 0.00 % | 0 | | |
| 2 | Moderately good | | | 6.25 % | 2 | | |
| 3 | Slightly good | | | 9.38 % | 3 | | |
| 4 | Neither good nor bad | | | 28.13 % | 9 | | |
| 5 | Slightly bad | | | 18.75 % | 6 | | |
| 6 | Moderately bad | | | 15.63 % | 5 | | |
| 7 | Extremely bad | | | 21.88 % | 7 | | |
| | Total | | | 100 % | 32 | | |

In figure 16 it can be noted that the opinion of the respondents regarding their treatment by the local communities varies and it is not firmly negative, fact that shows that the challenges of their social integration mainly lie with the institutions and the approaches taken by policy makers so far.

Q12 - Would you like to stay in Greece?

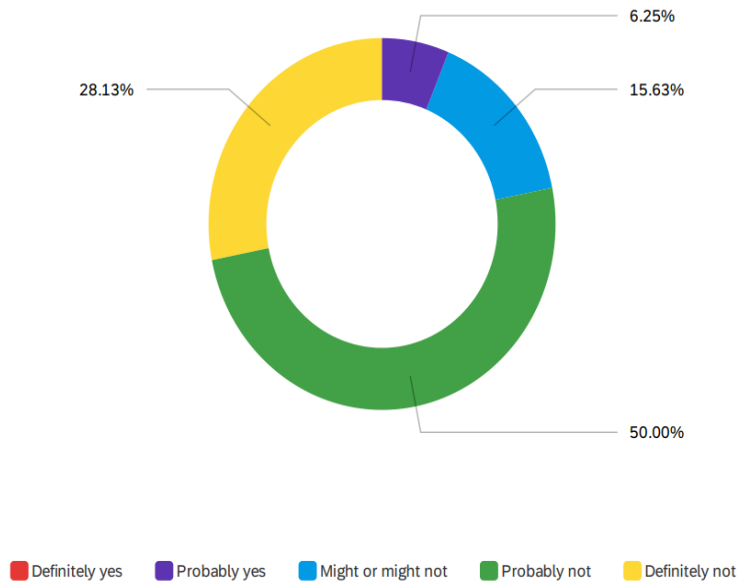


Figure 17: Opinion of respondents regarding their permanent residency in Greece.

| # | Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------|---------|---------|---------------|----------|-------|
| 1 | Would you like to stay in Greece? | 16.00 | 19.00 | 18.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 32 |
| # | | Answer | | % | Count | | |
| 1 | | Definitely yes | | 0.00 % | 0 | | |
| 2 | | Probably yes | | 6.25 % | 2 | | |
| 3 | | Might or might not | | 15.63 % | 5 | | |
| 4 | | Probably not | | 50 % | 16 | | |
| 5 | | Definitely not | | 28.13 % | 9 | | |
| | | Total | | 100% | 32 | | |

In figure 17 it can be observed that the vast majority of the respondents do not want to permanently stay in Greece, fact that pinpoints to the problematic nature of the “*First Entry Principle*”, and to the importance of adopting a united European approach which includes concrete measures that can facilitate their movement and a fair distribution to other European countries.

Q13 - In which EU State you would like to be integrated?



Figure 18: Preference of respondents regarding their integration into an EU State other than Greece.

| |
|---------|
| Belgium |
| France |
| Belgium |
| France |
| Belgium |
| Germany |
| France |
| Belgium |
| France |
| France |
| Belgium |
| Belgium |

| |
|-------------------|
| France |
| Switzerland |
| Belgium |
| France |
| Germany |
| Prefer not to say |
| The Netherlands |
| Belgium |
| France |
| Prefer not to say |
| Belgium |
| Belgium |
| The Netherlands |
| Belgium |
| France |
| The Netherlands |
| France |
| Undecided |
| France |
| Belgium |

In figure 18 it is being noticed that the respondents favor Belgium and France as the countries in which they would prefer to reside permanently, and thus, policy makers and European leaders should adopt measures and mechanisms that facilitate their movement and fair distribution primarily in these two European Member States. Following Belgium and France, the respondents opted for the Netherlands and Germany, and therefore, the approaches taken should include them as alternative destinations for the distribution of refugees and migrants from Middle East and Africa.

Discussion of findings via the analysis of interviews to policy makers

The refugee crisis has gone through different phases in Greece and circumstances play a big role. For instance, between 2016 and today there were two different governments with different views. In addition, the issue is firstly political and secondarily technocratic and goes beyond the Greek territory. In 2016, the big issue was the closing of the borders and thousands of people being literally on the street. In that first phase, solutions had to be found in time and in a way that is as substantial as possible. It is obvious that some solutions were found which were temporary. There were politicians and there were municipalities and regions that found themselves involved in the problem, without necessarily being their choice.

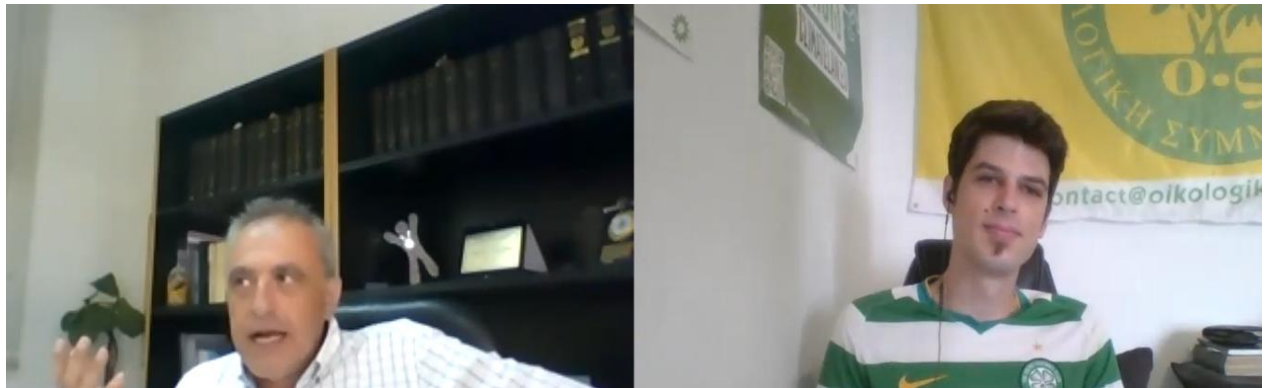


Figure 19: Screenshot taken from the interview with Dimitrios Deligiannis via the Zoom Video Communications software.
(Iason Paschalidis-Gerostergiou, 2023)

The vast majority of municipalities did not want to deal with the issue, even if the problem was outside their house. A special case, of course, is the case of the islands which were in the eye of the cyclone, with no options for dealing with the situation. In that first phase, the aim was to build the first camps, the first accommodation structures. According to one of my interviewees, Deligiannis,

“Some municipalities took more initiatives, such as the municipalities of Trikala and Larissa, which undertook to create camps themselves, until the Greek army then created them and until the Greek State created the more permanent accommodation structures. For example, the municipality of Larissa built a mini camp very soon in Tempi, with the help of many city agencies, in an old factory” (Deligiannis, personal communication, 2021).

He mentioned that then the municipality got actively involved in running a reception center, even

if there were objections to the way it was done, as it was a rushed solution in an old camp far from the city, about 20-25 kilometers away, and between villages which were very conservative, with a large number of followers or voters of the Golden Dawn and whatever this may entail. Initially, there were not many actors who dared to enter such a process (Deligiannis, personal communication, 2021). One of them was Deligiannis, who is former President of the Municipal Council of Larissa in Greece, and former Deputy Mayor of Social Policy of the Municipality of Larissa, and who was a representative in the coordination center of the hosting center where the municipality tried with other agencies, such as the police or the army, to put a filter on the attempts of the NGOs to get involved at the time, setting conditions on how, where and under what conditions. Evidently, this happened in many camps in the country where each municipality chose whether to intervene and how. In this first phase, Deligiannis noted that there were many challenges, but that it was also

“a heroic period - in quotes heroic of course - where we tried with various agencies to form some frameworks and some actions for the integration of these people, in collaboration with museums, with educators and NGOs, where we ran various programs and faced various challenges” (Deligiannis, personal communication, 2021).

In fact, as various problems such as drug use, social issues, and others appeared, Deligiannis referred to the example of an initiative where the Municipality of Larissa went to organize a football action in collaboration with KETHEA, which is the Center for the Treatment of Addicted Persons in Greece, at the premises of KETHEA (Deligiannis, personal communication, 2021). There,

“The municipality of Larissa, based on the “The Learning City program”, decided to create an initiative in collaboration with UNICEF, so that they could train the staff of the camps in the matter of reaching out to people facing drug addiction or abuse. The municipality also supported a kindergarten and built a daycare center” (Deligiannis, personal communication, 2021).

Moreover, Deligiannis (personal communication, 2021) also mentioned that he was involved in programs for the inclusion of children in various actions of the municipality, such as the “*Summer Camp in the City*” project or actions in museums etc. This was the first phase, the phase of camps. Then, there was the second phase, where approximately 12-13 municipalities throughout Greece accepted to host the first “*ESTIA*” program, which aimed at providing better

housing conditions and adequate supportive services (Ypourgeio Metanasteusis kai Asylou, n.d.). In collaboration with the UN High Commission, it was a decision which - at the city level - was very important, because, as Deligiannis highlighted in our interview,

“The fact that, in Larissa, this program was accepted as a proposal by the entire municipal council, showed that there was political will to address the situation and served as a good example of a unified political choice. Even conservative forces within the city council accepted this proposal, initiating the “ESTIA” program as a municipality and not as some NGO - which is of key importance - for a number of about 90 apartments and with a capacity to accommodate about 400 refugees in the city of Larissa, beyond the 1500 that were being hosted in the camp” Deligiannis (personal communication, 2021).

The situation at the camps is another story, as Deligiannis (personal communication, 2021) noted, where there were too many conflicts. Deligiannis mentioned that he participated in an effort to oppose an attempt to increase the number of accommodated refugees over the proposed limits as it would be dysfunctional, by emphasizing that

“The logic of integration should go through programs like “ESTIA”, where people enter within the social fabric, they have rights and of course they also have obligations, in order to defend the smooth running of the camp” (Deligiannis, personal communication, 2021).

As stated by him,

“Refugees and migrants must send their children to schools, they must themselves have a contact with the Greek culture, understand that they can co-exist with the Greek population and that there are privileges, but there are also rules, something that he considers very basic for the social integration of these groups” (Deligiannis, personal communication, 2021).

It is therefore also no coincidence that the Municipality of Larissa undertook another program with apartments, this time for the city's homeless, in a logic that a city should take care of every person in its area and not just to take care of refugees or only the Greek citizens. According to Deligiannis (personal communication, 2021), this mindset led to the very decisive step of creating the *“Network of Cities that Care for Social Inclusion”* (CNI), as well as the development of problem-solving programs. For example, he mentioned that

“When conflicts appeared in schools in the municipality of Larissa, with parents who

did not want refugee and immigrant children - either from the camp or from the “ESTIA” program - the Municipality stood by actors from the healthcare and the education sector in order to convince the Associations of Parents and Guardians to discuss with the parents and slowly normalize this situation, through the active participation of the Municipality” (Deligiannis, personal communication, 2021).

However, as Deligiannis (personal communication, 2021) further explained in our interview, at the moment, we are in a phase where the municipalities have very little involvement which, among others, it is quite polarizing for the municipalities. For example, the camp in Larissa has finally a commander, but he is ex-military, something that of course points to a political choice and lack of political will for logics of inclusion (Deligiannis, personal communication, 2021). Instead, Deligiannis suggested that

“We should be moving toward developing more programs with apartments rather than creating camps, which as it was seen in the midst of the pandemic, function thereafter as ghettos, where people are locked behind closed doors to protect the general population from contamination. Practices like these naturally create negative reflexes and aggravate tensions within the camps” (Deligiannis, personal communication, 2021).

The incident with the burning down in 2020 of the Moria camp, Greece's largest refugee and migrant accommodation facility at the time, serves as concrete evidence on why such approaches can be destructive (BBC News, 2020). Certainly some procedures have been speeded up regarding the granting of refugee status, the services have been better organized and the decision-making time is shorter, but the orientation is always specific. That is, to try not to integrate the asylum seekers into what we call local society, but simply to throw them in the camps and give them refugee status, while waiting for when they will leave the country. This, of course, cannot be considered an integration policy. Undoubtedly, their integration also depends on what the asylum seekers themselves want, on whether they think there is a future for them in Greece. However, even though the Greek government re-examined the issue of having a ministry that takes care of such issues, even though there are now EU programs that have an integration character, even though there is the “*HELIOS*” project - which in Deligiannis’s opinion it is “*ill-formed and operates in the absence of local communities*” - it becomes apparent, that the current state policy is not to have any integration policy (Deligiannis, personal communication, 2021).

Are asylum seekers trustful of the asylum procedures?

I align with what Lambert stated in our interview,

“No. The system (as it operates in Greece and many other countries) is often poorly explained and people lack legal and other support to help them through the system. Asylum claims can take a long time to process and people lose hope and do not believe that their claim is being properly treated” (Lambert, personal communication, 2021).

Obviously, everyone has their own personal story and has seen the positive and negative examples. It is clear that when we talk about people, we talk about human stories. There are people who made the journey to Greece easier and there are people who made it more difficult. Besides, let's not forget that they also come from societies that were not homogeneous. Obviously, a wealthy or an educated person faces this situation differently, and a person, who in any case took their belongings and came to places where they had neither heard of nor even cared about them. On the other hand, I think that this back-and-forth that exists at the European, regional and local level obviously creates insecurities for everyone regardless. It obviously shapes logics and strategies of personal survival and I think that's a big problem that policy makers have to deal with. When we speak of refugee communities, they are not communities of people, meaning that they usually come together when there is a problem and they need to face it by claiming their rights all together, but then everyone is on their own again. This is a big problem, as they don't have people to talk to and plan with. Everyone focuses on taking care of themselves and their family. Thus, a collective consciousness, is not created, and therefore, these people are extremely vulnerable; they are people whose instinct for personal survival is very keen, and obviously, they are people who are worried, who are at risk, who are afraid, and who feel threatened. And this, I think, makes it even more difficult to communicate with them. Because as Deligiannis mentioned,

“As long as a collective consciousness and a consciousness of inclusion is not formed, through an institutional framework which is both protective and helpful, and above all a framework which respects that for which it has become, we pave the way for radicalization, we pave the way for bigotry, and we feed a rhetoric that validates the rhetoric of hate from the other side” (Deligiannis, personal communication, 2021).

It is a self-feeding crisis, which causes the development of phobias, groups of people who become fanatical and who adopt a radical agenda, and who can at some point be a real danger to

European societies. Violence begets violence, hate breeds hate. I think that a phenomenon that you do not treat as a phenomenon, at some point becomes a problem, and then the solutions will not be accepted. At the moment, the logic of forming structures that are for everyone and not the creation of ghetto structures, centers or communities only for refugees, educational structures only for refugees and so on, exists in only a few organizations and NGOs, and the general climate does not help the logic of inclusion. It may be convenient for NGOs and for people dealing with their problems, but most agencies do not follow the logic of inclusion. Moreover, it seems as all the programs are in a waiting phase. In a phase where the Greek government and the actors involved have tried to upgrade the camps via, as Deligiannis (personal communication, 2021) suggested, “*A military type approach*”. Here, it is also important to highlight that the camps fall under the authority of the Greek Ministry of Civil Protection. Beyond that, there is a limited number of municipalities that try to run some integration programs, sometimes successful and sometimes less successful, on the topic of work. For instance, one big issue is undeclared work. In addition to being exploited, very often the refugees or migrants themselves do not want to acquire any commitment, as they have in mind of ways to leave the country.

Which are the flaming issues that need to be addressed at the Greek and European institutions?

The analysis of the data collected from the questionnaire to asylum seekers and from the interviews to policy makers proves both the urgency of bridging the existing gap among the EU Member States, regarding the social integration policies for refugees and migrants, as well as the urgency for an Ecological transition in the European way of thinking. In order to bridge this gap and achieve a fair and efficient asylum system that upholds the European values, European leaders and policy makers should work on the adoption and implementation of the Greens/EFA group’ approach. To address the current flaming issues at the Greek and European institutions and achieve this so desired Ecological transition, there are a number of steps that must be taken, such as the subsequent recommendations that were provided to me in my interview with Lambert.

Lambert suggested the following:

“To stop containing people on the islands and move them to the mainland. This would

remove the heavy pressure on asylum seekers, islanders and administrative and support services – and the island environment”

“To invest in an effective and fair asylum system. EASO, the EU and some Member States have provided support to start constructing this (given Greece’s historically inadequate system) and that work should not be lost. This means investment in an effective and fair system”

“To stop the criminalization of humanitarian activities and activists”

“To step back from the oppressive legislative changes and have a system that treats asylum seekers as human beings not objects”

“Solidarity in terms of other member States taking asylum seekers from Greece and processing claims fully and fairly”

“An end to the EU-Turkey arrangement (and other such ‘outsourcing’ arrangements) which treats other countries as prison-warders”

“Continue (and increase) financial solidarity, support and co-operation with other countries in the region who take responsibility for many thousands of refugees”

“Reforming legislation, such as the Dublin Regulation, to treat asylum seekers and refugees as human beings with agency and rights and to design a system that works for them and member-states”

“For the EU to step back from militarising borders and ensure FRONTEX performs to human rights criteria”

“To ensure that family-reunion actually works”

“To protect unaccompanied minors throughout the whole asylum process and beyond”

“To work with member states to ensure that statelessness checks and remedies are present and effective I declare an interest as a Trustee of the European Network on Statelessness, but this is also EP policy and was a priority of the Luxembourg Presidency”

“Ensure that all asylum seekers have a sound and fair examination of their claim, whether in Greece or another member state acting in solidarity. That is the basis of the Dublin Regulation”

“Ensure the protection of unaccompanied minors”

“Ensure the effective operation of family reunion (that’s why Safe Passage is present as an NGO)” (Lambert, personal communication, 2021).

“Remove the pressure on the islands by opening up more reception facilities on the mainland. This also makes it easier for effective legal representation and civil society assistance. The EU needs to make finance available to assist this”

“Enable rescue-at-sea, not pushbacks”

“Control FRONTEX”.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

Greece has been a melting pot of cultures since ancient times and every Greek family has stories of refugee or immigration to this day. Lately, all of Greece is proudly celebrating the success of the NBA champions, Giannis and Thanassis Antetokounmpo, while forgetting though that thousands of children do not have the Greek citizenship, although they were born in the country, like the Antetokounmpo siblings. For this reason, policy makers and political leaders must turn their attention to those who do not have such luck and who are still struggling to be integrated in the Greek societies. Conditions in the camps, such as in Moria, are appalling, delays in the system are well-known and access to healthcare and other necessities are limited, at best. The current situation is a huge cause for increased concern. Whereas the left-wing government of SYRIZA was looking for some more humanitarian solutions, the government of New Democracy clearly decided that an even more repressive approach is needed. The changes in asylum and integration practices have been destructive and do not fulfil Greece's obligations under EU law. In addition, the use of law to prosecute humanitarian workers is a retrograde step, although not limited to Greece (Greens/EFA, 2021). The use of violent exportation practices is an abdication of the state's responsibility to allow the lodging of claims for protection from those seeking sanctuary (Greens/EFA, 2020d). The use of violence – including the use of live ammunition – has been shocking. As Lambert stated in our interview,

“The use of the “safe third-country” concept to remove state obligations toward certain asylum seekers seems like political sophistry. There must still be an examination of the concept, as it cannot be assumed that a country is “safe” for all asylum seekers. A general assumption around faith, for example, shows little understanding of the political tensions in the modern world” (Lambert, personal communication, 2021).

Furthermore, as Lambert also mentioned,

“Asylum claims can take a long time to process and people lose hope, as they do not believe that their claim is being properly treated. There is then the chance that people will abandon the system and make their own way to somewhere they feel they will be treated with dignity. This also leaves them open to exploitation and abuse by criminal gangs. For

example, there is evidence that unaccompanied minors go missing in the system, with all the risks of trafficking and sexual abuse that are well-known. All of this, plus the ever-present fear of being exported is causing most asylum seekers to not trust the asylum system or the Greek institutions” (Lambert, personal communication, 2021).

The quest to reach the European continent is an extremely dangerous one with fatal tragedies being recorded almost on a daily basis, as the crossing of the Mediterranean Sea is happening under adverse conditions with unsafe vessels and in dangerous waters. Even worse, the difficult journey, for the luckiest ones who manage to survive it, does not when the people in need reach the shores of Europe. It is then, when a time-consuming and humiliating process of identification, registration, detention and/or relocation begins. Most migrants and refugees from Middle East and Africa who are seeking asylum, they are entering Greece by following the South-Eastern Mediterranean Sea route in order to sail to the North Eastern Greek islands of the Aegean Sea, mainly in Lesbos, Kos, Chios, Samos and Leros. After arriving on a Greek island, they are forced to walk several kilometers, or in the best case scenario take a bus, that will take them to a registration point. Currently, the registration process is being completed faster, however, according to reports, it is often a matter of luck, as police authorities are constantly changing rules and procedures. Some may only wait a day to be registered, while others may have to wait for more than a week. In the meantime, they are being forced to stay in reception centers, or on the streets and beaches without proper shelter from the weather conditions. The overcrowding has created intolerable and unhygienic conditions, both inside the reception centers and in various other places on the islands. As a result, Greece is being considered a transit country and it is rarely chosen for a place of permanent residence. The difficult economic situation in conjunction with the time-consuming process of examining the applications and the absence of substantial benefits even after the granting of asylum by the Greek authorities, are preventing new arrivals from submitting an application for asylum, and they are limiting the number of those who wish to be integrated and stay in the country. Deterrence policies and the increase in pushbacks at the Greek border endanger the lives of the people trying to reach the country.

The pandemic crisis reduced drastically the refugee and migrant flows to the European Union, as the movement restrictions that were implemented, led to a reduction in both legal and

illegal migration. However, the number of arrivals began to increase again in 2021 and 2022 and as the problems in the asylum and integration mechanisms remain unsolved, there is urgency of drastic action, before the situation in the European continent becomes worse, with the arrival of climate migrants or other unpredictable factors. The “*New Pact on Asylum and Migration*” was introduced in 2020, but to date, the members of the European Parliament are still debating on proposals that could ameliorate its regulations and policies, before it can be adopted and implemented. Currently, the majority of refugees and migrants are coming from areas hit by political or social challenges and the number of those who seek asylum in the European continent may have dropped significantly, but the rising impact of climate-related issues is highly likely to reinforce this tendency, and thus, the establishment of a well-functioning and humane European asylum system, and the adoption of better adjusted integration policies and practices in the European societies, are of the essence. At the moment, the biggest problem for governments is the growing influence of the far right, which has been fueled by social and political insecurity. Something, which is essentially a vicious circle, a self-sustaining crisis. The hardening of governments, which at first appeared to have a different approach, such as the Greek government of New Democracy for example, is not accidental. It is no coincidence that the logic of politicians such as Orbán seems to affect more and more governments, as the pressure from people affected by social or financial uncertainty has been increasing. A political trend that must be addressed before it becomes permanent, as it is also provoking the increase in crime and violent acts. In a period of crisis these phenomena exist and the more impoverished someone is, the closer they are to having an aggressive behavior. At the moment, it seems that the preferred European approach is to build warehouses of people through agreements, even though, if one looks at it at the level of numbers and at the level of resources, these issues can be dealt with much more ease, and with approaches that ensure human dignity to all. Approaches which can aid the “*aging*” countries of the European Union that are in dire need of a workforce, and for which a unified perception and a unified approach to problems is a condition for their survival. An existential threat that became evident once more during the pandemic, when this philosophy of unified Europeans and of European solidarity that has been cultivated came close to fading away, with countries seizing the vaccines that were meant for others. It therefore seems that we are at a critical crossroads, where the European Member States will have to decide whether they will continue to be a union of equal partners, and whether this union will have the

power to deal with issues such as the refugee/migration matter as social phenomena and not as problems that can be solved simply with economic formulas. However, a great challenge that must be overcome before any concrete hope can be generated, is to address the rise in far right and divisive rhetoric. After a financial and a social crisis, and an introductory collapse or retreat of the social democratic approaches that brought a balance and that gave an impetus to what is called the European Ideal, at this moment, the conservative governments, under the pressure of the growing pervasiveness of far right rhetoric that exists in all societies, they are forced to be implementing even more conservative agendas. As, Deligiannis stated in our interview,

“And at some point, trying to face the beast, you look in the mirror and you seem to get used to it and identify with it. And you see that you have changed in relation to who you are” (Deligiannis, personal communication, 2021).

Therefore, the issue is not how to ask each politician for change, but to realize that, what is really at stake in this period is to decide what kind of society, and what kind of European Union its citizens want. That is, to give a clear meaning to the proclaimed European values, rather than waiting for them to be adopted. Historically, this concept of European values has been interpreted in many different ways. As easy as it is for some to refer to Plato, Aristotle and Socrates, it is easier for others to talk about Nietzsche's “*Superman*” and the white race. It is too easy to blame and to try to be protected from the “*invaders*” who are outside the European Ideal. Therefore, the problem is not that there are some values and some principles that need to be protected. Each era has given meaning to these European values and these principles in a different way, and there are many different traditions in what is called Europe. What is needed is for the European citizens to face their history critically and to try to make sense of the present. They need to understand and remember that every time the European leaders tried to provide solutions that had the characteristics of protecting the “*European way of life*” in a crisis, they neither avoided the war nor they managed to prevent the European cities from turning to ruins. The discussion that is taking place at the moment about sustainable, resilient or healthy societies - there are many terms that can be used - is a condition of survival in order to shape resilient European societies. There are two ways to deal with this issue. One option is to face the crises with solidarity and cohesion, and the other is to “*let everyone save themselves*”, and as history has shown, every time that European leaders tried to choose the second path, it was proven to be a path of collapse and despair.

“Be Brave, Green Greece”

The conservative Greek government of New Democracy has been violating European and international legislation in the field of asylum policy. Greek security forces have repatriated thousands of refugees and migrants who had been seeking asylum from Middle Eastern and African countries to Turkey over the past years, without being afraid to show brutality. On many occasions, they treated them as slaves during these illegal repatriations; they kidnapped people seeking protection on the Greek islands and abandoned them to be stranded at sea and on dangerous rafts, in order to push pressure on the Turkish rescue services. Greek officials seem unaccountable for their crimes at the border and rather, what often happens is that the people recording these incidents are under suffocating pressure to discard any evidence. For example, Spiegel journalist George Christidis was discredited as an agent of the Turkish government, in the pro-government Greek media, after he published a story - which was later withdrawn by Spiegel - on the death of a 5-year-old Syrian girl on an islet on the Greek-Turkish natural border of Evros River (Antonopoulos, 2020). When the story broke out, not only the Greek authorities refused to offer help by supporting that the islet was part of the Turkish territory, but the government went a step further by criticizing Christidis that he allegedly gained illegal access to the victim's parents (Antonopoulos, 2020). Here, it must be noted that there may be some doubts regarding the fact that the Greek authorities refused to provide assistance to the group. Be that as it may, it remains simply one of the numerous examples that show the lack of political will to treat asylum seekers as equals, and of this inversion of responsibilities that has been happening in Greece and at the European level. The Greek State sees itself as the cradle of Democracy. However, the Greek government is increasingly resorting to authoritarian and discriminatory practices. For example, Spiegel and various other media and organizations have documented the illegal pushbacks of refugees and migrants in detail and the European anti-corruption agency has confirmed them. And yet, even today, the Greek authorities claim without shame that such practices are not being conducted.

Moreover, another error in the approach of the Greek authorities is the treatment of the refugee/migration phenomenon as a residency problem. However, as it has been mentioned before in this paper, this issue is not a mere problem of numbers but a social phenomenon, and it must be addressed as such. Deligiannis mentioned in our interview that

“The refugee/migration phenomenon should have already been handled as a matter of social inclusion, and social inclusion means people who have conditions of “social normality”, that is families where their children go to school, they themselves work – even in temporary jobs – by being provided legal protection and health insurance, who themselves learn the Greek language and who, if they are going to move somewhere else at some point, can prepare to go where they want” (Deligiannis, personal communication, 2021).

Deligiannis (personal communication, 2021) also noted that as long as they are in the country they should not be treated as invisible, there should be structures that accommodate them, structures that they themselves maintain, and at the same time, they should have full knowledge of both their rights and obligations. At the moment, the Greek State is supporting refugees and migrants from Middle Eastern and African countries through various programs, but without allowing them to take much responsibility themselves. Additionally, their children have huge problems in education, an issue that can be detected in other vulnerable groups as well. Deligiannis (personal communication, 2021) mentioned that the inability to formulate a strategy for the part of the education of Roma children, for example, is indicative of the inability of a society to formulate education in student-centered terms. It becomes therefore evident, that there are significant problems in the formulation of integration policies and potentially, a pathogenesis of the Greek political system or even worse, of the way Greek citizens perceive the functioning of a society. This pathogenesis was also brought to the surface during the pandemic crisis. The pandemic was first and foremost a disease that did not have a class marker. But it appeared that when it happened to a middle-class person it was treated as an individual problem, while when an asylum seeker, or a person living in a Roma community, had the same problem, it led to the exclusion of the entire district or accommodation facility. Obviously it's about lifestyle, but it's basically the logic of ghettos, where when there's a problem it's being activated. It's the logic of the *“fortress Europe”*. An incident in the city of Larissa that Deligiannis (personal communication, 2021) mentioned in our interview is indicative of this situation. Deligiannis (personal communication, 2021) stated that,

“At the time of the pandemic crisis, there was a camp in Larissa with around 1500 asylum seekers and a Roma district with around 3000 Roma people. When some cases of infection by COVID-19 were identified among the Roma community, the political decision was to put the whole neighborhood under lockdown restrictions, while at the same time a decision was made without the detection of infected people, to put in

lockdown the refugee/migrant camp for months”.

As Deligiannis (personal communication, 2021) explained, the fate of both groups seems to have been common regardless of identity, regardless of religion, regardless of nationality. What united them was that they lived in ghetto style areas. The logic of ghettos is unacceptable. Asylum seekers should be integrated into the social fabric, they should be supported in the education of their children and consequently, they should be supported with policies of inclusion in the labor market, even with temporary jobs. As long as these people work illegally and at the same time do not want to appear to have a job, because they are afraid that they will not be able to escape from the camps, as long as their children do not go to school and learn the language, so they don't learn the functioning of the local society, and at the same time they live in houses that are not houses, well, I think then we shouldn't expect to have effective integration policies either. Additionally, the need for a comprehensive refugee-centered healthcare is vital to ensure both the long-term and short-term integration of refugees in host countries. The process of leaving one's home and seeking shelter elsewhere is psychologically intense and traumatic. Refugees often have little or no access to mental health care upon arrival and settlement in Europe. The complicated bureaucracy and uncertainty, the long waiting times, the inhumane living conditions, the constant dehumanization in the media, all further aggravate their traumas. All people, regardless of where they come from, must have the right to seek asylum, humane living conditions and human dignity. All people, regardless of where they come from, must have the right to claim asylum, humane living conditions, and the right to be fully integrated into the community they live in.

That is why, European leaders and policy makers should move past the current approaches taken in regard to asylum and social integration of refugees and migrants, and focus on developing and implementing policies and practices which foster an Ecological transition in the European societies. That is why, as this thesis proposes, the Greens/EFA approach could be a positive step forward toward this direction, which ensures a fair and beautiful future for all who reside in Greece, and the rest of the European continent.

“Living in a society that makes sure to remind you every day that it doesn't want you is inhumane. Social exclusion is exhausting. We're supposed to have the energy to start a new life from scratch in an environment that tells us they'd prefer it if we died before we got here, and they shut us out because we didn't” Anonymous refugee.

References

- Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). *Understanding integration: A conceptual framework*. *Journal of refugee studies*, 21(2), 166-191. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fen016>
- Agnew, J. A. (2003). *Geopolitics: Re-visioning world politics*. Psychology press.
- Albahari, M. (2015). *Europe's refugee crisis*. *Anthropology Today*, 31(5), 1–2. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8322.12196>
- Amnesty International. (2015). *'Libya is full of cruelty': Stories of abduction, sexual violence and abuse from migrants and refugees*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/MDE1915782015ENGLISH.pdf>
- Antonopoulos, P. (2020, May 9). *Der Spiegel Supports Turkish Propaganda Against Greece, But There Are Major 'holes' In Their Narrative*. *Greek City Times*. <https://greekcitytimes.com/2020/05/09/der-spiegel-supports-turkish-propaganda-against-greece-but-there-are-major-holes-in-their-narrative/>
- BBC News. (2016, March 4). *Migrant crisis: Migration to Europe explained in seven charts*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>
- BBC News. (2020, September 9). *Moria migrants: Fire destroys Greek camp leaving 13,000 without shelter*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54082201>
- Berry, J. W. (1997). *Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation*. *Applied psychology*, 46(1), 5-34.
- Boeselager, D. (2021, September 27). *One year after the EU migration pact, a better future for refugees?* Greens/EFA. <https://www.greens-efa.eu/dossier/one-year-after-the-eu-migration-pact-a-better-future-for-refugees/>
- Borger, J. (2015, April 15). *EU under pressure over migrant rescue operations in the Mediterranean*. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/15/eu-states-migrant-rescue-operations-mediterranean>
- Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2023, May 19). *Arab Spring*. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Arab-Spring>
- Bueno Lacy, R. (2011). *The unexpected embrace of Europa: Conflict resolution and the unintended consequences of the European neighborhood policy*. <http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/2937>
- Bueno Lacy, R., & van Houtum, H. J. (2013). *Europe's Border Disorder*. <https://repository.ubn.ru.nl/bitstream/handle/2066/126523/126523.pdf>

- Campante, F. R., & Chor, D. (2012). *Why was the Arab World Poised for Revolution? Schooling, Economic Opportunities, and the Arab Spring*. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 26(2), 167–187. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41495309>
- Campbell, D. (1992). *Writing security: United States foreign policy and the politics of identity*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Cavatorta, F. (2012). *Arab Spring: the awakening of civil society: a general overview* (pp. 75-81). School of Law and Government, Dublin City University. <https://www.iemed.org/publication/arab-spring-the-awakening-of-civil-society-a-general-overview/>
- Chouliaraki, L., Georgiou, M., Zaborowski, R., & Oomen, W. A. (2017). *The European 'migration crisis' and the media: A cross-European press content analysis*. https://www.academia.edu/33647366/The_European_migration_crisis_and_the_media_A_cross_European_press_content_analysis
- Changing Minds. (n.d.). *Socratic Questions*. Retrieved in 2023, from, http://changingminds.org/techniques/questioning/socratic_questions.htm
- Cramer, C. (2006). *Categories, Trends and Evidence of violent conflict. Civil war is not a stupid thing; Accounting for violence in developing countries*. London: Hurst & Company, 49-86.
- Deleuze, G. (1992). *Postscript on the societies of control*. October, 59. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/778828>
- Demmers, J. (2016). *Theories of violent conflict: An Introduction*. In Routledge eBooks. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315715025>.
- De Nevers, R. (2007). *Imposing international norms: Great powers and norm enforcement*. *International Studies Review*, 9(1), 53-80. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4621777>
- De Swaan, A. (2015). *Ordinary Perpetrators and Modernity: The Situations Consensus*. In *ibid., The Killing Compartments. The Mentality of Mass Murder* (pp. 19-47). New Haven: Yale University Press. <https://doi.org/10.12987/9780300210675>
- Dimitriou, G. (2015, November 19). «Πράσινο» κράτος και Οικολογική Δημοκρατία [“Green” State and Ecological Democracy]. *Prasino Velos*. https://prasinovelos.blogspot.com/2015/11/blog-post.html?fbclid=IwAR0pN4JtBevqWUrevVZFH-JHQCI-1UiGOpVh_fjwje5nWCMRt1iucJpHrzg#more.
- Emmott, R. & Croft, A. (2015, April 20). *EU promises to act over migrant crisis after Mediterranean disaster*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-eu-idUSKBN0NB11020150420>

- European Commission. (n.d.). *Country responsible for asylum application (Dublin Regulation)*. Migration and Home Affairs. Retrieved in 2023, from, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/country-responsible-asylum-application-dublin-regulation_en
- European Commission. (2019, March 6). *The European Agenda on Migration: EU needs to sustain progress made over the past 4 years*. European Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_1496
- European Commission. (2020, September 23). *New pact on migration and asylum*. European Commission. https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en
- European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE). (2021, June 11). *Greece: While the Designation of Turkey as Safe Country and Pushbacks Undermine Protection in Greece, the Country is Criticised for not Preventing Secondary Movement*. ECRE. <https://ecre.org/greece-while-the-designation-of-turkey-as-safe-country-and-pushbacks-undermine-protection-in-greece-the-country-is-criticised-for-not-preventing-secondary-movement/>
- European Greens. (n.d.-a). *The Green Wave reaches the European Parliament*. European Greens. Retrieved in 2023, from, <https://europeangreens.eu/news/green-wave-reaches-european-parliament>
- European Greens. (n.d.-b). *Adopted resolution on defending refugees' human rights*. European Greens. Retrieved in 2023, from, <https://europeangreens.eu/content/defending-refugees%E2%80%99-human-rights>
- European Parliament. (2022, May 8). *Asylum and migration in the EU: facts and figures*. European Parliament. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20170629STO78630/asylum-and-migration-in-the-eu-facts-and-figures>
- Fearon, J. D., & Laitin, D. D. (2000). *Violence and the social construction of ethnic identity*. *International Organization*, 54(4), 845–877. <https://doi.org/10.1162/002081800551398>.
- Federation of Young European Greens. (2020). *Leave No One Behind Open Letter to MEPs on the World Refugee Day*. FYEG. Retrieved in 2021, from, <https://www.fyeg.org/news/leave-no-one-behind-open-letter-meps-world-refugee-day>.
- Feickert, H. (2016). *Enforcing Central Authority: Nuri al-Maliki and the Tradition of Iraq's Authoritarian State*. In *Handbook of Research on Transitional Justice and Peace Building in Turbulent Regions* (pp. 233-252). IGI Global.
- Ferguson, D. E., & Carson, R. (1963). *Silent Spring*. *Copeia*, 1963(1), 207. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1441323>

- Fox, J. (1994). *The difficult transition from clientelism to citizenship: Lessons from Mexico*. *World politics*, 46(2), 151-184. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2950671>
- Fragapane, F. & Piacentini, A. (n.d.). *Europe Welcomes Map*. Europe Welcomes. Retrieved in 2023, from, <https://europewelcomes.org/>
- Gonzalez-Barrera, A., & Connor, P. (2019, March 14). *Around the World, More Say Immigrants are a Strength Than a Burden: Publics Divided on Immigrants' Willingness to Adopt Host Country's Customs*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2019/03/14/around-the-world-more-say-immigrants-are-a-strength-than-a-burden/>
- Greek Forum of Refugees. (n.d.-a). *About us*. Greek Forum of Refugees. Retrieved in 2023, from, <https://refugees.gr/about-us/>
- Greek Forum of Refugees. (n.d.-b). *Advocacy*. Greek Forum of Refugees. Retrieved in 2023, from, <https://refugees.gr/advocacy/?lang=undefined&cy=undefined>
- Greek Forum of Refugees. (n.d.-c). *Projects*. Greek Forum of Refugees. Retrieved in 2023, from, <https://refugees.gr/projects/?lang=undefined&cy=undefined>
- Green European Foundation. (2020, January 30). *Refugees & Migration*. GEF. <https://gef.eu/focus/refugee-migration/>
- Humphreys, M. & J. M. Weinstein (2005). *Handling and manhandling civilians in civil war: determinants of the strategies of warring factions*. *American Political Science Review*, 100 (3), pp. 429-447. doi:10.1017/S0003055406062289
- International Organization for Migration (2014). *Fatal Journeys: Tracking Lives Lost during Migration*. IOM Publications Platform. <https://publications.iom.int/books/fatal-journeys-tracking-lives-lost-during-migration>
- Jaupi, G. (2018). *EUnfinished, waiting for Godot, reflections on "l'avenir" of Europe and the Western Balkans*. Academia. https://www.academia.edu/43186381/EUnFINISHED_WAITING_FOR_GODOT
- Kaplan, R. D. (2014). *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*. Picador.
- Konstantinidis, A. (2020, March 2). *Migrants arriving on the Greek island of Lesbos on Monday after crossing part of the Aegean Sea from Turkey*. Reuters, in *The New York Times*. Retrieved in 2023, from, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/02/world/europe/migrant-death-greece.html>
- Korf, B. (2006). *Cargo cult science, armchair empiricism and the idea of violent conflict*. *Third World Quarterly*, 27(03), 459-476.

- Kourkoulas, Th. (2016, April 14). *Η ρατσιστική απανθρωπία της συμφωνίας ΕΕ – Τουρκίας* [The racist inhumanity of the EU-Turkey agreement]. RPROJECT. <https://rproject.gr/article/i-ratsistiki-apanthropia-tis-syufonias-ee-toyrkias>
- Kramersch, O. T. (2011). *Along the borgesian frontier: excavating the neighbourhood of “Wider Europe”*. *Geopolitics*, 16(1), 193-210. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2010.493786>
- Lazaridis, G. (1996). *Immigration to Greece: A critical evaluation of Greek policy*. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 22(2), 335–348. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.1996.9976542>.
- Le Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg [The Government of the Grand Duke of Luxembourg] (2015, July 21). *JHA Council - Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs reach an agreement on the relocation mechanism for asylum seekers*. <https://www.eu2015lu.eu/en/actualites/articles-actualite/2015/07/conseil-jai-relocalisation/index.html>
- Maniatis, L. (n.d.) *Τι είναι η Οικολογία;* [What is Ecology?]. *Oikologos*. Retrieved in 2022 from, https://www.oikologos.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=115:issue18
- Manieri, M.G. (2020, January 2). *Asylum in a Climate-Changed World: Bridging the Protection Gap in the EU*. Heinrich Böll Foundation European Union. <https://eu.boell.org/en/2020/01/02/asylum-climate-changed-world-bridging-protection-gap-eu#1>
- Meckstroth, C. (2012). *Socratic method and political science*. *American Political Science Review*, 106(3), 644–660. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0003055412000263>
- Metzidakis, A. (1994). *Victor Hugo and the idea of the United States of Europe*. *Nineteenth-century French studies*, 72-84.
- Migration Watch UK. (2016, April 11). *The Migrant Crisis in the EU*. Migration Watch UK. <https://www.migrationwatchuk.org/briefing-paper/372/the-migrant-crisis-in-the-eu>
- Moutafis, G. (2019, October 1). *A migrant holds a placard as refugees and migrants take part in a demonstration against living conditions at the Moria camp on the island of Lesbos, Greece, October 1, 2019*. Reuters. Retrieved in 2023, from, <https://www.reuters.com/news/picture/migrants-struggle-in-overcrowded-camp-on-idUSRTX75U5A>
- Newman, D., & Paasi, A. (1998). *Fences and neighbours in the postmodern world: boundary narratives in political geography*. *Progress in Human Geography*, 22(2), 186–207. <https://doi.org/10.1191/030913298666039113>

- Official Journal of the European Communities. (2000, December 18). *CHARTER OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION*. European Parliament. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf
- Oikologiki Symmaxia – Ecological Alliance. (n.d.). Retrieved in 2023, from, <https://oikosymmaxia.blogspot.com/>
- Papadimitriou, J. (2018, January 12). *Elaionas: a refugee camp in the heart of Athens*. InfoMigrants. <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/6988/elaionas-a-refugee-camp-in-the-heart-of-athens>
- Papataxiarchis, E. (2016). *Being 'there': At the front line of the 'European refugee crisis' - part 1*. *Anthropology Today*, 32(2), 5–9. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8322.12237>.
- Perry, R. L., & Slim, H. (2008). *Killing Civilians: Method, Madness, and Morality in War*. *Naval War College Review*, 61(4), 21. <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1994&context=nwc-review>
- Pew Research Center. (2020, September 4). *Fast facts on how Greeks see migrants as Greece-Turkey border crisis deepens*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/03/10/fast-facts-on-how-greeks-see-migrants-as-greece-turkey-border-crisis-deepens/>
- Popescu, G. (2011). *Bordering and ordering the twenty-first century: Understanding borders*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Reuters, Reuters Staff. (2020, July 2). *Thousands of Greeks protest against bill to regulate demonstrations*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-greece-protests/thousands-of-greeks-protest-against-bill-to-regulate-demonstrations-idUSKBN2432YL>
- Sen, A. (2007). *Identity and violence: The illusion of destiny*. Penguin Books India. <https://www.community-relations.org.uk/files/communityrelations/media-files/Identity%20and%20Violence.pdf>
- Sibley, D. (1995). *Geographies of exclusion: Society and difference in the West*. Psychology Press.
- Stavrakakis, C. (2018). *Προσφυγική κρίση, αστική περιθωριοποίηση και ημιμόνιμοι πληθυσμοί*. [Refugee crisis, urban marginalisation and semi-permanent populations]. Εθνικό Μετσόβιο Πολυτεχνείο [National Technical University of Athens]. <https://dspace.lib.ntua.gr/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/48118/diplomatiki-stavrakakis-18.pdf?sequence=1>
- Sygelos, Y. (2015). *A Critical Analysis of the Greek Referendum of July 2015*. *Contemporary Southeastern Europe*, 2(2), 1-6. <https://unipub.uni-graz.at/cse/content/titleinfo/865355/full.pdf>

- Temple, B., & Moran, R. (2011). *Doing research with refugees : issues and guidelines*. In Policy Press eBooks. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BB08730256>
- Terry, K. (2021, April 8). *The EU-Turkey Deal, Five Years On: A Frayed and Controversial but Enduring Blueprint*. Migration Policy. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/eu-turkey-deal-five-years-on#:~:text=European%20Commission%20President%20Ursula%20von,politics%20as%20much%20as%20geography>
- The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2023, May 19). *Arab Spring: History, Revolution, Causes, Effects, & Facts*. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Arab-Spring>
- The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament. (n.d.-a). *Our vision*. Greens/EFA. Retrieved in 2023, from, <https://www.greens-efa.eu/en/what-we-stand-for/our-vision>
- The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament. (n.d.-b). *For a Welcoming Europe*. Greens/EFA. Retrieved in 2023, from, <https://www.greens-efa.eu/en/campaigns/migration>
- The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament. (2013, May). *Climate Change, Refugees And Migration*. European Greens. Retrieved in 2023, from, <https://europeangreens.eu/sites/europeangreens.eu/files/news/files/Greens%20EFA%20-%20Position%20Paper%20-%20Climate%20Change%20Refugees%20and%20Migration.pdf>
- The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament. (2018, June 6). *New study shows how EU-Turkey deal is turning refugees into detainees*. Greens/EFA. <https://www.greens-efa.eu/en/article/press/new-study-shows-how-eu-turkey-deal-is-turning-refugees-into-detainees>
- The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament. (2020a, February 3). *Europe must protect human rights and the rule of law*. Greens/EFA. <https://www.greens-efa.eu/en/article/press/europe-must-protect-human-rights-and-the-rule-of-law/>
- The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament. (2020b, April 28). *Greens/EFA Recovery and Resilience Plan*. Greens/EFA. <https://www.greens-efa.eu/en/article/document/greens-efa-recovery-and-resilience-plan/>
- The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament. (2020c, December 5). *For a fair and efficient asylum system in Europe*. Greens/EFA. <https://www.greens-efa.eu/en/article/document/for-a-fair-and-efficient-asylum-system-in-europe>
- The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament. (2020d, January 12). *FRONTEX hearing on illegal pushbacks*. Greens/EFA. <https://www.greens-efa.eu/en/article/press/FRONTEX-hearing-on-illegal-pushbacks>

- The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament. (2021, November 15). *Greens/EFA MEPs call for end to criminal charges against Humanitarian Workers*. Greens/EFA. <https://www.greens-efa.eu/en/article/press/greens-efa-meps-call-for-end-to-criminal-charges-against-humanitarian-workers>
- Travlos, K. (2020). *Salvation and Catastrophe: The Greek-Turkish War, 1919–1922*. Lexington Books.
- Trocaire (2015, September). *European Migration Crisis: Failing Policies, Fatal Journeys*. Trocaire. <https://www.trocaire.org/sites/default/files/resources/policy/migration-policy-briefing-2015.pdf>
- Traynor, I. (2015, May 27). *EU countries to take in 40,000 asylum seekers in migration quota proposal*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/27/eu-countries-take-40000-asylum-seekers-migration-quota-syria-uk>
- Ugland, T. (2018). *Policy learning from Canada: reforming Scandinavian immigration and integration policies*. University of Toronto Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3138/j.ctt2166953>
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. (n.d.). *Loss and damage*. *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*. UNFCCC. Retrieved in 2023, from, <https://unfccc.int/topics/adaptation-and-resilience/the-big-picture/introduction-to-loss-and-damage>
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. (2022, November 20). *COP27 Reaches Breakthrough Agreement on New “Loss and Damage” Fund for Vulnerable Countries*. UNFCCC. <https://unfccc.int/news/cop27-reaches-breakthrough-agreement-on-new-loss-and-damage-fund-for-vulnerable-countries>
- UN Global Compact. (n.d.). Retrieved in 2023, from, <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/>
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (n.d.). *What is a refugee?* UNHCR. Retrieved in 2023, from, <https://www.unhcr.org/what-is-a-refugee.html#:~:text=The%201951%20Refugee%20Convention%20is,group%2C%20or%20political%20opinion.%E2%80%9D>
- Van Houtum, H., & Van Naerssen, T. (2002). *Bordering, ordering and othering*. *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie*, 93(2), 125-136. <https://henkvanhoutum.nl/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/TESG2002.pdf>
- Verbeek, B. (2011). *Does Might Still Make Right? International Relations Theory and the Use of International Law Regarding the 2003 Iraq War*. *Netherlands Yearbook of International Law*, 42, 193-214. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-6704-849-1_8

- Walt, S. M. (1998). *International relations: One world, many theories*. Foreign policy, 29-46.
https://www.davidmlast.ca/nepdp-2020F/download/walt-1998-international_relations_one_world_many.pdf
- Walter, S., Dinas, E., Jurado, I. G., & Konstantinidis, N. (2018). *Noncooperation by Popular Vote: Expectations, Foreign Intervention, and the Vote in the 2015 Greek Bailout Referendum*. *International Organization*, 72(4), 969–994.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020818318000255>
- Whitehead, N. L. (2007). *Violence & the cultural order*. *Daedalus*, 136(1), 40-50.
<https://doi.org/10.1162/daed.2007.136.1.40>
- Ypourgeio Metanasteusis kai Asylou [Ministry of Migration and Asylum]. (n.d.) *Πρόγραμμα ESTIA* [ESTIA program]. Ministry of Migration and Asylum. Retrieved in 2023, from, <https://migration.gov.gr/en/ris2/filoxenia-aitoynton-asylo>

Appendix

Questionnaire to asylum seekers

Social integration policies for refugees and migrants seeking asylum in Europe

English text

The purpose of this questionnaire is to bring forth the perspective of refugees and migrants, who are currently seeking asylum in Greece, in order to achieve a better understanding of their character profiles.

The questionnaire is anonymous and the results will be used to highlight the urgency of developing unifying, socially just and highly inclusive social integration policies and procedures in the European Union, in the framework of my master's thesis research project: Bridging the gap of social integration policies for refugees and migrants seeking asylum in Europe – The Greens/EFA approach.

Your contribution is vital and I would like to thank you for taking a few minutes to complete this.

Texte français

Le but de ce questionnaire est de présenter le point de vue des réfugiés et des migrants, qui demandent actuellement l'asile en Grèce, afin de mieux comprendre leurs profils de caractère.

Le questionnaire est anonyme et les résultats seront utilisés pour souligner l'urgence de développer des politiques et des procédures d'intégration sociale unificatrices, socialement justes et hautement inclusives dans l'Union européenne, dans le cadre de mon projet de recherche de thèse de maîtrise: Comblar le fossé des politiques d'intégration sociale pour les réfugiés et les migrants demandeurs d'asile en Europe - L'approche Verts/ALE.

Votre contribution est vitale et je voudrais vous remercier d'avoir pris quelques minutes pour compléter le questionnaire.

We prosper in unity! Nous prospérons dans l'unité!

Iason Paschalidis-Gerostergiou

1) Country of origin/ Pays d'origine:

2) Age/ Âge:

- Under/ Moins de 18
- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64
- 65 or older

3) Affirmed gender/ Sexe:

- Male/ Masculin
- Female/ Féminin
- Non-binary / Third gender/ Non-binaire / Troisième sexe
- Prefer not to say/ Je préfère ne pas le dire

4) Marital status/ État civil:

- Single/ Célibataire
- Married/ Marié, Mariée
- Married with children/ Marié, Mariée avec des enfants
- Widowed/ Veuf, Veuve
- Divorced/ Divorcé, Divorcée
- Separated/ Séparé, Séparée

5) Reason for seeking asylum/ Raison de la demande d'asile:

- Political/ Politique
- Social/ Sociale
- Economic/ Économique

6) Highest level of education/ Niveau d'éducation:

- Less than high school/ Moins que l'école secondaire
- High school graduate/ Diplôme d'études secondaires
- Professional degree/ Diplôme professionnel
- College degree/ Diplôme universitaire
- Master's degree/ Maîtrise
- Doctorate/ Doctorat

7) Occupation in country of origin/ Profession dans le pays d'origine:

Health conditions/ Maladies préexistantes:

- Yes/ Oui
- No/ Yes

8) Time in Greece/ Temps en Grèce:

- Less than a year/ Moins d'un an
- 1 year/ 1 année
- 2 years/ 2 années
- More than 2 years/ Plus de 2 ans

9) Opinion on current social integration processes/ Avis sur les processus actuels d'intégration sociale:

- Extremely satisfied/ Extrêmement satisfait, satisfaite
- Moderately satisfied/ Moyennement satisfait, satisfaite
- Slightly satisfied/ Plutôt satisfait, satisfaite
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied/ Ni satisfait, satisfaite ni insatisfait, insatisfaite
- Slightly dissatisfied/ Légèrement insatisfait, insatisfaite
- Moderately dissatisfied/ Moyennement insatisfait, insatisfaite
- Extremely dissatisfied/ Extrêmement insatisfait, insatisfaite

10) Treatment by the local communities/ Traitement par les communautés locales:

- Extremely good/ Extrêmement bon
- Moderately good/ Moyennement bon
- Slightly good/ Plutôt bon
- Neither good nor bad/ Ni bon ni mauvais
- Slightly bad/ Légèrement mauvais
- Moderately bad/ Moyennement mauvais
- Extremely bad/ Extrêmement mauvais

11) Would you like to stay in Greece/ Souhaitez-vous rester en Grèce?

- Definitely yes/ Définitivement oui
- Probably yes/ Probablement oui
- Might or might not/ Peut-être ou pas
- Probably not/ Probablement non
- Definitely not/ Définitivement non

12) In which EU State you would like to be integrated/ Dans quel État de l'UE vous souhaiteriez d'être intégré/intégrée?

Interviews

- **Interview with Dimitrios Deligiannis (Δημήτριος Δεληγιάννης)** – Former President of the Municipal Council of Larissa-Greece, former Deputy Mayor of Social Policy of the Municipality of Larissa-Greece.
- **Interview with Jean Lambert** – Former MEP with the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament, former member of the European Parliament’s Committee for Employment and Social Affairs, former member European Parliament’s Committee for Civil Liberties, former member of the European Green Party’s Committee.
- **Interview with Maria Giovanna Manieri** – Political Advisor on Migration and Asylum for the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament, Team leader Rights and Democracy and interim Team Leader for International Affairs for the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament.
- **Interview with Georgios Dimitriou (Γεώργιος Δημητρίου)** – Elected representative to the Attica Regional Council in Athens-Greece, leader of the "Ecological Alliance for the Attica Region" «Οικολογική Συμμαχία για την Περιφέρεια Αττικής».
- **Interview with Jean-Didier Totow Tom-ata** – President of the Greek Forum of Refugees and President of the Congolese Committee in Greece

Questions that were posed to interviewees

- What is your opinion on the current situation in the Greek state?
- Which are the flaming issues that need to be addressed at the Greek institutions?
- Which are the flaming issues that need to be addressed at the EU institutions?
- Are asylum seekers trustful of the asylum procedures?
- Which are the urgent steps that need to be taken in Greece and the EU?