**WHS-CORE COMMITMENTS FOR GREECE Athens, 28.3.2018**

**Uphold the norms that safeguard humanity**

**Core Commitment 1**

Greece, as a strong supporter of all efforts aimed at improving respect for international humanitarian law, remains actively engaged in and takes part in all meetings held within the Geneva-based intergovernmental process on strengthening compliance with IHL, pursuant to Resolution 2 of the 32nd  International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

Moreover on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the adoption of Additional Protocols I and II to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, Greece organized, in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, a Conference on “The reaffirmation and development of international humanitarian law, 40 years later” in Athens , on 13 and 14 November 2017. The Anniversary Conference brought together government officials, policymakers, legal experts, academics and humanitarian organizations to discuss “the impact of the additional Protocols on the practice of parties to armed conflicts and their relevance for today”

**Uphold the norms that safeguard humanity**

**Core commitment 2:**

During the Third Committee of the 72nd Session of UN General Assembly (November 2017), Greece- along with a core group of countries, which included Argentina, Austria, Costa Rica, France and Tunisia- successfully submitted its national initiative, that is to say the Resolution A/RES/72/175 ON THEV “Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity”

**Political leadership to prevent and end conflicts**

**Core commitment 4:**

Greece successfully organized the 2nd International Conference on “Religious and Cultural Pluralism and Peaceful Coexistence in the Middle East” in Athens from 30 to 31 October 2017.

The conference overviewed the main features and developments regarding religious pluralism in the Middle East since the 1st Athens International Conference held in 2015. It also focused on the challenges which religious pluralism faces in the region , and on proposals for positive initiatives that promote religious co-existence.

The Conference brought together 168 political leaders and representatives of 38 countries and International Organizations as well as many Christian, Muslim and Jewish religious leaders.

**Leaving no one behind: a commitment to address forced displacement**

**Core commitment 1**

**A. Integration of migrants and refugees**

One of the key policy priorities of the Greek state is the integration of migrants and beneficiaries of international protection. Especially, now that the mixed migration flows have been stabilized and the basic needs of the newcomers have been successfully dealt with, there is a need for a policy shift and a focus of attention to the integration of this population. To this end, the Ministry for Migration Policy has drafted a New Strategy for the Integration of migrants and refugees. This new strategy will soon be subject to consultation.

It is important that the new Strategy foresees the co-operation and involvement of all policy levels (central, regional and local) and actors (national authorities, local authorities, organizations, NGOs, public and private sector), while it highlights the role of local authorities, which have a crucial role to play in diversity management and migrant integration. The policy areas of the new Integration Strategy include the fields of: Cooperation with local Government, Reception of applicants of international protection, Access to basic goods and services, Promoting integration into education system, Promoting labor market integration, Interculturalism, Civic Participation, Combating racism and xenophobia, Targeted policies for vulnerable social groups of migrants, applicants and beneficiaries of international protection, Targeted policies for second generation migrants.”

Some of the decided actions that are going to start shortly and form the core approach of the Ministry for Migration Policy and the cornerstone of the new integration strategy are:

- A **program of Greek language courses** addressed to international protection and asylum seekers of two age groups: 15-18 years old and 18+ years old. It is estimated that about 14.000 refugees and asylum seekers will benefit from this program. In the case of the first age group (15-18), there will also be a training program aiming at the development of the appropriate technical skills that will help their access to the labor market (in cooperation with the Ministry of Education). Both programs will include courses on civic education, European history and civilization and language courses of a second European language.

- A **program on assessing and mapping of the skills, educational background and work experience** of beneficiaries of international protection and asylum seekers. This project is extremely essential as the assessment and recognition of foreign qualifications, linked with bridging programs to get a host-country qualification or with training, re-skilling and up-skilling, contributes largely to the overcoming of obstacles that hinder migrants and refugees labor integration.

- A pilot **program of agricultural training** for refugees over 18 years old, aiming at helping them gain technical skills in order to access the labor market as well as to contribute to community purposes (in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture).

- **A holistic integration program in two Greek cities** hosting refugee population (Thiva and Livadia), by which a whole range of integration services (Greek language courses, civic orientation courses, vocational training, a range of activities aimed at labor market integration etc) will be applied, in collaboration with the local authorities. These two cities have been chosen because they apply different kinds of accommodation schemes (accommodation reception centre in one city, rented apartments in the other), in order to gather qualitative and quantitative data on the strengths and weaknesses of each case.

**- The development of a job profile of the intercultural mediator**

One of the main obstacles to migrants and refugees’ integration is not speaking the language of the host country and not being familiar with the local procedures, practices and codes of conduct. The role of intercultural mediators is crucial not only in the overcoming of linguistic barriers, but also in the bridging of cultural differences. However, intercultural mediators do not yet hold, in most countries, a chartered status (they do not have a relevant accreditation).

To this end, we are currently elaborating a job profile and a certified training program, in collaboration with the competent agencies and social partners. In other words, it is the intention of the Ministry to institutionalize the job of the intercultural mediator in order to reinforce the role of intercultural mediators, to improve the quality of services provided by workers in this field, as well as to enforce their credibility.

**-Migrant Integration Centers**

An important initiative at the local level are the newly founded Migrant Integration Centers (addressed to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees). So far 10 Migrant Integration Centers have been founded, through funding from the Regional Operational Programs of the Regions (the funding comes mostly from the European Social Fund).  Specifically, three Migrant Integration Centers operate in the region of Attica and Piraeus, two in the region of Thessaloniki, two in Central Greece, one in Western Greece, one in the island of Lesvos and one in the island of Crete.

Migrant Integration Centers follow the “one-stop-shop” model service, where foreign citizens can find a whole range of services “under one roof” (information on residence permits, legal advice, information about access in the labor market, about language learning and other integration projects and services in the country)[[1]](#footnote-1)[1]. We intend to establish a country-wide network in Greece, in order to improve the quality of migration and integration services offered to migrants and refugees at the local level.

**B.** **Protection of unaccompanied minor migrants**

In view of protection of migrants’ rights, Greece has adopted and implements measures to ensure the protection of migrants’ rights and their specificities, with particular respect on vulnerable groups of migrants. It should be here underlined, that the Migration and Social Integration Code (law 4251/2014, hereinafter Code) provides special protection to foreign minors, in particular in case they are unaccompanied. In particular according to the Code:

- Special care is provided by the Code to minor third country nationals, who are **victims of trafficking** **in human beings or smuggling of migrants**, **if they are unaccompanied minors** (Art. 49-56 of the Migration Code which had implemented Directive 2004/81/EC for human trafficking victims). They are entitled to **a residence permit** of limited duration upon decision of the Minister of Interior if they are recognized as such by act of the competent prosecutor’s office. In this case the competent authorities take the necessary measures in order to establish their identity and nationality and the fact that they are unaccompanied. They also make every effort to locate their families as quickly as possible and take the necessary steps immediately to ensure their legal representation including representation in criminal proceedings. The residence permit is of one year duration and renewable, if one of the conditions provided by law are met. It grants the right to health care and permits access to the labour market.

- Furthermore,Code provides for the issuance of residence permits for humanitarian reasons for vulnerable migrants groups, including among others, minors**.** In more detail, as provided by law:

**a)** According to a decision of the Minister of Interior a residence permit for humanitarian reasons is granted to minors third country nationals **i)** who are victims of domestic violence, **ii)** who have been employed as minors, **iii)** who attend an approved statutory mental dependency treatment program **iv)** whose application for international protection has been rejected, **v)** who are victims and witnesses of racist crimes or victims of racist violence.

**b)** According to a decision of the competent Decentralized Authorities of State a residence permit for humanitarian reasons is granted to minors third country nationals **i)** who need protective measures and are hosted by institutions or other charitable entities, **ii)** whose custody has been assigned according to a court decision in Greek families or in families of third country nationals legally residing in Greece or for whom an adoption is pending and **iii)** to minors in boarding schools operating under supervision of the competent Ministries.

The residence permits for humanitarian reasons may be renewed, provided that the same conditions are met. Third country nationals granted with the residence permit for humanitarian reasons are entitled to free of charge medical services and health care, as well as to access to the labor market.

**C. Fighting against racism/xenophobia**

National legislation concerning the direct or indirect combating of racial discrimination may be summarized as follows:

- According to Art. 21 of the Code, offences provided for in articles 1 to 3 of law 927/1979 (*on punishing acts or activities aiming at racial discrimination*) shall be prosecuted ex officio.

- According to the same Art. 21 of the Code, migrants who live legally in Greece are subject to the relevant social security system and enjoy the same rights as natives.

- Additionally, according to the above mentioned Art., migrants being detained shall be informed about their rights and obligations in a language they understand, directly after their entry in a penitentiary institution.

- According to the same Art., migrants who legally reside in Greece, are subject to obligatory school attendance, such as Greek nationals are. Minor migrants, who attend all levels of education, have, without any restriction, access to school and educational community activities. These rights are not restricted for minors which are under the refugee status or under the protection of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, or they have submitted an application for asylum or they live in Greece, even if their legal residence status is still pending.

- According to Art. 26 of the Code, migrants legally residing in Greece have access to national health system. Hospitals, health centres and clinics are bound to supply their services to migrants who need to be hospitalised or minors.

Furthermore, as Responsible Authority of the European Integration Fund in Greece (2007-2013), the Social Integration Department, has planned and funded a series of projects aiming at fighting phenomena of racism and xenophobia (e.g. awareness raising campaigns, intercultural projects in schools, intercultural training programs addressed to civil servants dealing with migrants, intercultural mediation programs in hospitals, information campaigns addressed to third country nationals on their rights, etc).

**D. The setting up and monitoring of a Registry for NGOs**

On 5/12/2016 the Ministry for Migration Policy established the Register of Greek and foreign Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) active in the field of international protection, migration and social integration issues. The register includes data on:

• Identification details of the entity (name, geographic area of activity, etc.);

• Information on the establishment (documents constituting or evidencing the requisite power);

• Fiscal information (tax clearance and social security certificate);

• Financial information (balance sheets/ financial reports-annual budgets, etc.);

• Details of the legal representative in Greece;

• Services provided (beneficiaries/ target group/ areas of activities, etc.);

• Infrastructure

• Remunerated employees / volunteers and duration of their stay in the country and terms of employment;

• Actions undertaken (A summary report of projects implemented over the last two years, with details on: the operation of structures/ type/ name/ number of beneficiaries/operational costs, services provided through these structures, actions implemented over the last two years, number of activities implemented per category of actions/ titles of activities, beneficiaries, cooperation with other entities, current interventions).

This register should be updated regularly under the NGOs responsibility as they should also provide all information on any changes/ modifications (namely, ceasing operations, leaving the Greek territory or withdrawing from the field of actions).

In order to get registered, civil society entities have to comply with all the following conditions combined:

i) possessing a legal personality evidenced by a Statute published according to the law/ legal documents

**ii)** Developing activity in the areas of

• Social and humanitarian support,

• International protection,

• Migration, and

• Social integration

by virtue of specific articles of the Statute.

The Register holds a crucial role in policy design and in fostering the co-operation between stakeholders in the best interest of migrants and refugees.

Currently, 223 NGOs have requested to be recorded to the Register (via the online platform mko.ypes.gr.), 147 of which are Greek and 76 are foreign. So far, registration has been approved for 48 organizations.

**Leaving no one behind: a commitment to address forced displacement**

**Core commitment 1**

**E. Education**

1. **International level**

* *Decision for Education for refugees at the UNESCO Executive Board*

This Decision has been included in the provisional agenda of the 200th session of the Executive Board at the request of Greece supported by France, Greece, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden and the United States of America. The Decision invites Member States to support, through extra budgetary resources, UNESCO activities to provide lifelong learning opportunities for forcibly displaced people. Furthermore, Member States are invited to coalesce around existing platforms, such as the Education Cannot Wait fund launched at the World Humanitarian Summit 2016, and to ensure joint responses that make the humanitarian system work more efficiently to provide better education for more children in protracted emergencies. It Recommends Member States to integrate refugee and Internally Displaced Populations (IDPs) in their education data systems and urges Member States to include learning needs among refugees and IDPs in Education Policy Plans and in Humanitarian Response Plans.

* *UNESCO Associated Schools Network*

The Greek school-members of the UNESCO Associated Schools Network (ASPnet) implement projects with focus on: Peace and Human Rights, Education for Sustainable Development, Intercultural Education, Global Citizenship and World Cultural Heritage.

1. **Regional level**

* *European Qualifications Passport for Refugees*

As far as refugee’s access to Higher Education is concerned, a special qualification assessment scheme is the process of being developed. The Council of Europe has launched the Pilot project “European Qualifications Passport for Refugees” in which the Greek Ministry of Education is a key partner. This project aims to support refugees by promoting a methodology to assess refugees’ qualifications in absence of full documentation. The European Qualifications Passport for Refugees is a document providing an assessment of the higher education qualifications based on available documentation and a structured interview. It also presents information on the applicant’s work experience and language proficiency. The applicants are interviewed by credential evaluators, members of ENIC/NARIC centers and the document provides reliable information for integration and progression towards employment and admission to further studies. It does not guarantee admission to studies or employment. Neither is it a formal recognition act. The methodology being piloted is intended to help refugees to progress in their studies or employment – to continue with their lives and the idea is that this information should be accepted and easily interpreted in any European country.

The second phase (2018-2020) project is being developed based on lessons learned from the pilot phase but also on the increased interest from new countries. The second phase project will last three years and will focus on:

- Refugees and the assessment of their qualifications based on onsite evaluations sessions in Greece, in Italy, the Netherlands and in any other requesting country but also based on online evaluations.

- In addition to assessments, and based on a lesson learned from the previous project, holders of the EQPR will actively participate in some of the activities and an Alumni network of EQPR holders will be created;

- ENICs/NARICs and the development of their capacities regarding the EQPR methodology including a creation of a pool of trained credential evaluators; - Communities (including higher education institutions, employers, local authorities and NGOs) in order to facilitate refugees’ integration into their new host societies.

1. **National level**

Pursuant to international conventions and Article 16 of the Greek Constitution, every child living in Greece is entitled to a free state education, thus providing refugee children with access to education services is an obligation of the State.

* *Educational Priorities Zones*

In the context of Intercultural Education objectives for effective integration of all students including immigrants and refugees regardless of educational, social, cultural or other differences in the mainstream education system, the institution of Educational Priorities Zones has been established, aiming at the improvement educational outcomes in regions with a low total educational indicator and low social/economic indicators.

* *Refugee Education Reception Structures (D.Y.E.P. in Greek)*

Since the school year 2016-2017, the Ministry of Education has established *Refugee Education Reception Structures* (D.Y.E.P) where introductory classes are provided to children residing in Refugee Accommodation Centers, with a view to achieving the integration of refugee children into the Greek educational system. These structures operate within public primary and secondary education establishments. As far as preschool education is concerned, children aged 4-5 years residing in Accommodation centers can attend *Refugee Education Reception Structures* operating within the centers. It is also planned to gradually extend the compulsory pre-primary education to children between 4-5 years of age, starting the implementation from municipalities that already have the infrastructure and the means to put in place childcare facilities. During the school year 2017-2018, 85 D.Y.E.P operated throughout the country with 1793 students and 353 teachers.

During the current school year, refugee children that, following a diagnostic test, are deemed able to participate in mainstream education classes, are attending the standard education program. Children in need of further educational support, are being taught various disciplines with their classmates (Math, I.T., Physical Education, Foreign Languages, Music, Visual Arts), while they attend additionally, tutorial classes of Greek language, in order for their integration in the morning mainstream programs to be facilitated and accelerated. The morning Reception Classes (684classes, 4.582 refugee students and 738 teachers) operate within the Educational Priority Zones, integrating most refugee children in the mainstream school system, while offering them additionally, intensive tutorial classes focused on the Greek language during the first two hours of their timetable. For the facilitation of the implementation of the education plan for refugee children, 62 Refugee Education Coordinators (RECs) were appointed for the school year 2016-2017, and 68 RECs for the school year 2017-2018, in the Educational Regions of the country. RECs operate as facilitators of communication between the Ministry, the schools where refugee children attend classes and the parents of the children residing in Accommodation Centers.

* *Extra-curricular activities*

In all levels of education schools implement projects on immigration, refugee and asylum issues, taking into account the need for awareness rising on refugee issues among the student population.

1. [1] The main tasks and activities that will be performed by the Migrant Integration Centers are:

   1. Provision of information, support and counseling to migrants / refugees on integration issues.

   2. Cooperation with and directing to other relevant structures and services (MICs, Migrants/ Refugees Associations, NGOs, Social Services, etc.).

   3. Undertaking of activities such as: Greek language courses, awareness-raising campaigns, promotion of volunteerism, and participation of migrants / refugees in groups and organizations, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, projects promoting migrants’ access to the labor market, networking with other centers e.t.c. For the implementation of these projects, other actors will also be involved (e.g. NGOs, academic institutions, etc). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)