

Facilitating access to the labour market: How SN teams facilitate Greeks, migrants and refugees with access to employment opportunities?

Earning a stable income is a necessary condition for the empowerment of people to reach their potential. For SolidarityNow, linking people with the labour market and enabling them to find a job is the ultimate goal of the comprehensive efforts for their social integration, decreasing dependency on state/NGO assistance and providing opportunities for personal development.

Context

One of the first consequences of the socio-economic crisis afflicting Greece was the increase of unemployment. Recent OECD data² reveals that the unemployment rate, at 23.2%, is the highest among OECD countries, despite a moderate decrease since late 2013, with youth still being the most affected (48%).

Asylum seekers in the country, although eligible to legally seek employment as soon as they apply for asylum, face significant barriers to actually get employed in a shrinking market. A research among young Syrians, carried out by SN, showed that only 7.25% are currently full-time employed in Greece, of which more than half work without social security.

Access to job market as a mean of social integration

SN considers equal access to the job market as an integral and necessary condition for social and economic integration, both for people of diverse ethnic backgrounds but also for Greeks who continue to be affected by the ongoing socio-economic crisis. However, employability support alone cannot provide all the support, assistance, and guidance needed to reach the desired outcome. A complex set of underlying and contextual factors contributes to the exclusion of individuals from the labour market and SN, through its holistic support:

a Ensures that people have access to shelter and basic goods and services

b Provides psychosocial support by addressing the mental-health issues

c Provides educational support, language learning and access to vocational training, including certification

d Enables understanding of the administrative context and links between social groups and NGOs

e Provides dedicated and exhaustive employability support, which includes services such as CV building, job interview preparation, matching job announcement with beneficiaries' skills and links with labour market and social partners

Success in finding a job

SN has identified employment facilitation and empowerment services to access the labour market as an integral part of its interventions since the establishment of the Solidarity Centers.

Athens Solidarity Center

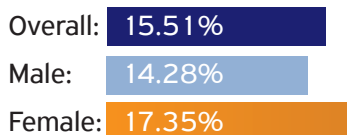
Since 2014, employability services at the Athens Solidarity Centre have reached 1,996 people (through the NGO Praksis), with 15.4% of them finding employment, despite the challenging circumstances of the Greek labour market.

Thessaloniki Solidarity Center

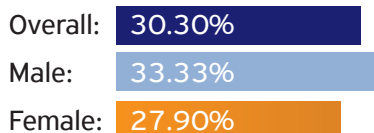
Since July 2016, employability services are also provided by the Thessaloniki Solidarity Center. SN has provided 728 employability counseling sessions to 303 beneficiaries (approximately 60% men, 40% women). The majority of those who received counseling were from Greece (26.62%), followed by Syria (24.03%), Nigeria (20.45%), Pakistan (3.57%) and Georgia (3.24%). The overarching majority of those who received counseling were non-Greeks (73.93%); of which 13.2% were invited for a job interview. 37.5% of those who were invited for a job interview were women whilst 62.5% were men.

{securing employment figures through TSC}

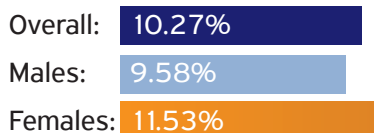
General beneficiaries' population:



Among Greeks:



Among non-Greeks:

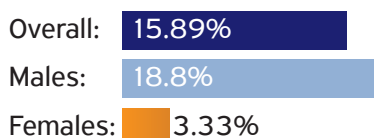


Blue Refugee Center

From December 2016 onwards, through targeted activities for refugees in the Thessaloniki-based Blue Refugee Center (BRC), SN has offered 550 counseling sessions to 195 beneficiaries (70.25% were asylum seekers and 14.87% recognized refugees). These beneficiaries were mainly from Pakistan (19.48%), Syria (15.89%), Afghanistan (12.82%), Eritrea (12.82%), Turkey (6.66%) and Iran (5.13%). The majority of those who received counseling were men (84.61%).

Those counselling sessions led to job interviews for 17.40% of the beneficiaries.

At the BRC, the employment rate (calculated as beneficiaries of the employability service finding employment) stands as follows:



Refugee specific barriers

1 out of 3 Greek and one out of 6 non-Greek beneficiaries of SN employability services have found a job. This impressive outcome integrates a gap between the two sociodemographic groups. According to more than half of refugees, the prime factor for not finding a job in the country and therefore their slow social integration is linked to lack of understanding of the Greek language is, with the second reason, however far behind, being their legal status.

According to the same study, female refugees and asylum seekers who receive employability assistance through the Centers seem to have a lower employment rate than Greek nationals.

However, such an analysis needs to also consider the additional cultural barriers these women have to overcome; in this sense even their participation in educational activities and their willingness to find a job should itself be considered as a success. In a project implemented by SN on the island of Tilos, almost all adult females had found employment, even before their husbands, marking a shift in gender roles. This success is a result of women's higher engagement in language trainings and their interaction with local community, where women are equally contributing to income generating activities.

How has SolidarityNow supported access to labour market so far?

- Supported and operated employability services in the Athens Solidarity Center², the Thessaloniki Solidarity Center³ and the Blue Refugee Center⁴, as an integral part of the holistic services offered
- Supported an improvement in marketable skills through access to ICT and English language training and certification for 100 Greeks and refugees, with the support of UNHCR/ECHO
- Provides intensive training in professional interpretation techniques for 100 Arab and Farsi speakers to improve their chances to successfully enter the labor market with the support of Guerilla Foundation
- Kicks off a project aiming to strengthen the market-related skills for 330 refugees, migrants and Greeks through targeted education, technical assistance and mentoring, with the possibility for some to get a business start-up grant, with the support of IRC
- Partners with academic institutions in order to analyse job market trends and employability prospects for its beneficiaries,
- Assisted 18 new social enterprises and cooperatives during their start-up phase, through the cooperation with NGO Ergani
- Supported the first microcredit scheme for new entrepreneurs in Greece, through a grant to Action Finance Initiative

Success stories paving the way stories paving the way

L. is a 37 years old Kurdish man from Iran. At his hometown, he was working as a pastry chef for his family business. As a result of the difficult situation and following tough journey, he arrived in Greece in March 2017. In Thessaloniki, L. was informed about the Employability Service of Blue Refugee Center and decided to attend Greek and English language classes. Through the guidance of the Employability Advisor, he presented his CV in all pastry shops of the area. The Employability Advisor supported him throughout this process, from CV building to job interview preparation. These efforts resulted in him succeeding to get a job at a pastry shop.

It was very important for me, as within two weeks, I was offered a permanent job contract. My life has dramatically changed since I was in the Chios camp.

Y. is 21 years old from Komotini and lives in Thessaloniki. He was referred by a social worker to the Thessaloniki Solidarity Center's Employability Service, when he expressed his willingness to find a job. In less than two months, Y. found a job in a meat processing business and decided to continue his interrupted education, by joining a Second Chance School.

Now, thanks to the efforts of the Employability Advisor, I know how to present myself and what to say during a job interview. She taught me how to control my stress and affirm my motivation in the specific job. Being a closed character, this coaching was really helpful.

His dream is to prepare pastries and sweets from Iran for Greeks, Asian tourists and those who wish to discover new, exotic tastes.

² ASC is funded by Open Society Foundations and EU DG Employment/E@SI program

³ TSC is funded by Open Society Foundations

⁴ BRC is funded by UNHCR/ECHO and UNICEF/ECHO

Our agenda for change

- Remove existing barriers and bureaucratic obstacles so that all people, and especially youth, can access jobs more easily
- Establish partnerships with the private sector so that people with skills can be absorbed more easily. Build links between employers, schools and universities to enhance young and people from marginalized groups employment prospects
- Facilitate refugees' access to higher education and automatic skills recognition
- Create transnational partnerships so that young people with skills that cannot be used in one country can travel to and work in countries where their skills are needed
- Establish and consolidate funding mechanisms supporting the establishment of new enterprises