



THE HELIOS PROJECT

The Necessity and the Benefits of Integration



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
Ministry of Migration & Asylum





HELIOS is the first countrywide holistic integration project in Greece, initiated in 2019, aiming to support the integration of refugees¹ in the Greek society and assist them towards their independent living. The HELIOS project is implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and its implementing partners, and is funded by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum².

IOM, founded 72 years ago in 1951, is the leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration. With 175 member states and a presence in more than 100 countries, IOM is committed to the principle that humane and smooth migration benefits migrants and society. The Organization cooperates with its international partners to help address the challenges of migration, to promote the understanding of migration issues, to encourage social and economic development through migration and to champion the well-being and human rights of all migrants.

¹ For the purposes of this brochure and for text simplification, the term 'refugee', when used in the text, implies the relevant target group of HELIOS which includes beneficiaries of international protection and beneficiaries of temporary protection.

² The HELIOS project was funded by the European Commission from June 2019 to December 2021 and is funded by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum since January 2022.



“From the first moment of its establishment, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum set the goal to bring under control the migration issue. With coordinated actions, we drastically reduced the effects of illegal migration on local communities and we took the necessary steps so that the needs of the Greek economy are addressed through legal migration, based also on the endurance of the Greek society. Utilizing European resources, such as for example the Recovery and Resilience Fund, we offered Beneficiaries of International Protection the opportunity to integrate through employment, while through the HELIOS Project, we provided a solution to the housing issue of these people. At the same time, we proved that in the framework of the European Union we can also deal with emergency migration flows as those occurred in the case of Ukrainians fleeing the war. With regulations, we ensure that our society and our economy will progress and develop with respect to the people and to national sovereignty.”

Notis Mitarakis
Minister of Migration and Asylum



“In order to meet the new challenges that come with the serious issue of integration, we moved quickly by enriching existing tools and creating new ones. Thus, we created the New National Strategy for the Social Integration of Asylum Seekers and Beneficiaries of International Protection. This National Strategy concerns the integration of asylum seekers and recognized beneficiaries of international protection and introduces a pre-integration phase for those with a refugee status. Its strategic objective is the protection of human rights, while simultaneously creating jobs in critical sectors of the Greek economy and increasing the GDP, so that Greeks and refugees benefit. On the basis of the National Strategy, we utilized resources from various Funds, with the Recovery and Resilience Fund prominent for the employment of Beneficiaries of International Protection. We cooperated with International Organizations and supported flagship integration programs such as HELIOS, which was expanded to include Ukrainian beneficiaries of temporary protection in summer 2022, thus providing a solution to their housing problem, while new educational subjects were added, such as the European way of life, gender equality, and the prevention of all forms of violence and human trafficking.”

Sofia Voultepsi
Deputy Minister of Migration and Asylum



“In recent years, the Greek government has placed great emphasis on the major issue of social integration and independent living of recognized refugees and beneficiaries of temporary protection in our country. Their integration into the Greek society, a state governed by the rule of law, but also fulfilling our obligation to support people who really found themselves in need due to war, violence and social exclusion, is for us a big pledge. A pledge which we achieve by continuing our efforts to reach the best possible outcome towards this direction. Thus, from the very beginning, we supported, and we continue to do so, financially and through our supervision, the HELIOS project, implemented by the International Organization for Migration, which reinforces our efforts and systematically supports the social integration of recognized refugees and beneficiaries of temporary protection through a wide range of integration areas, in which it is active.”

Patroklos Georgiadis
Secretary General of Migration Policy



“The successful integration of migrants is crucial for the future prosperity and cohesion of European societies. Although Member States are primarily responsible for integration, the European Commission supports national and local authorities with policy coordination, exchange of knowledge and access to financial resources. Our key priorities are ensuring inclusion for all, securing inclusive education and training, improving employment opportunities and skills recognition, promoting access to healthcare services, and maintaining access to adequate and affordable housing.”

Beate Gminder
Deputy Director-General in charge of the “Task Force Migration Management” in Directorate General Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission (DG HOME)



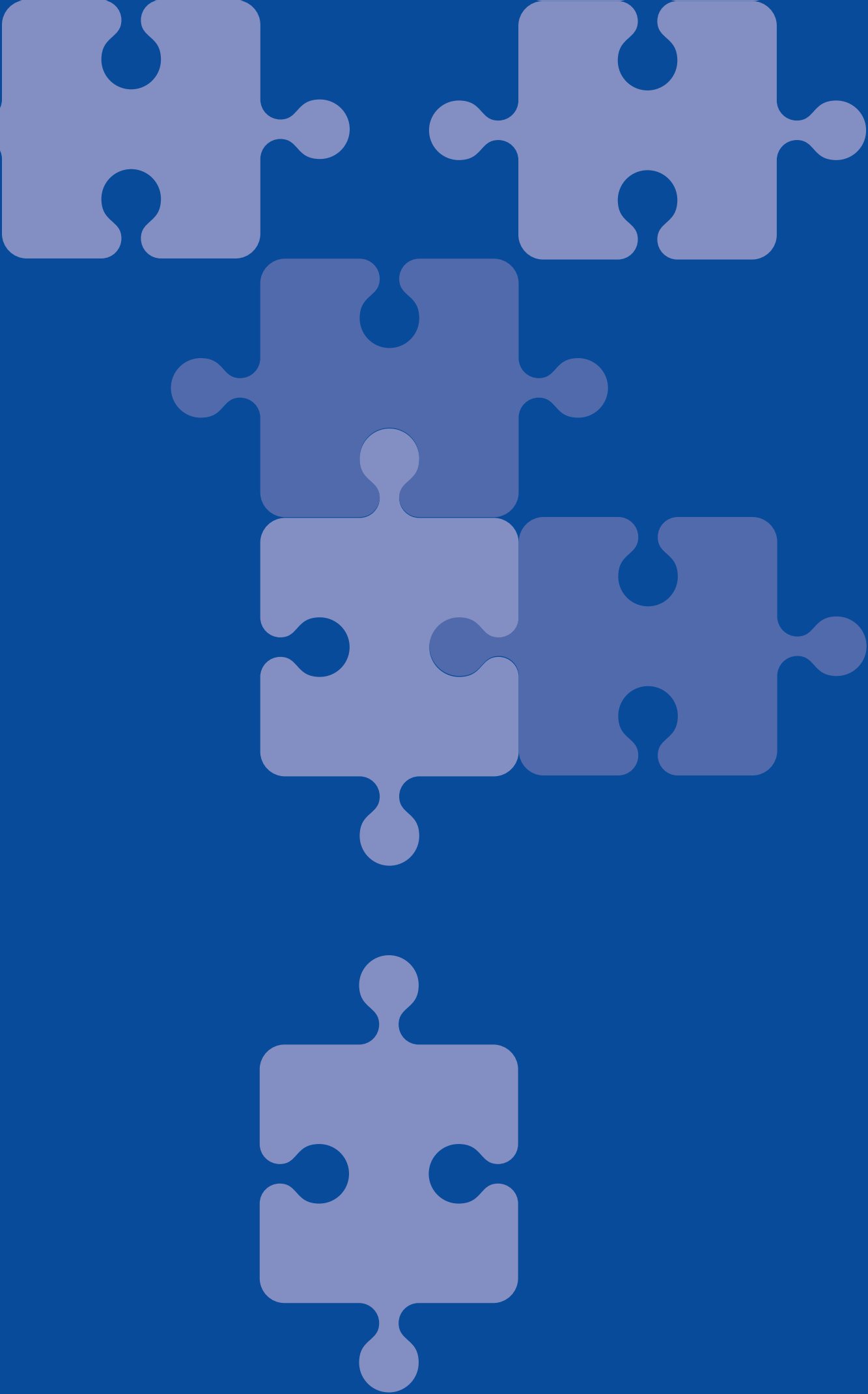
“Integration is a long and demanding process but it’s the only way for our society to achieve constant progress. Refugees bring with them new perceptions and prospects, and once they are able to become productive, they can help bring prosperity to the Greek society.”

Gianluca Rocco
Chief of Mission, IOM Greece



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THE NECESSITY

What is integration

Social Integration is achieved through a two-way process, which should be supported by cooperation, dialogue, and the engagement and participation of the host society in all stages, from reception to the completion

of integration.

According to the new action plan of the European Commission (2021-2027), successful integration is linked to interventions both at the early stage (prompt action) as well as later stages in the

following areas:

- Education and training
- Employability support and skills recognition
- Access to health
- Access to suitable and affordable housing.



"Regardless of the reasons why these people had to leave their countries and their homes, once they are supported and empowered to start living independently and integrate in the society, they quickly contribute in many ways to the community that welcomed them, hosted them, and gave them a fair chance to live their lives."

Milan Colic Humljan,
Senior Project Coordinator, HELIOS project, IOM Greece.

What is the Refugee Status

Refugee status is a form of international protection granted by a state to third-country nationals or stateless persons who cannot live in or return to their country of origin or permanent residence due to a well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political beliefs or belonging to a specific social group. People holding this status are referred to as "Beneficiaries of International Protection" or "Refugees".

After being recognized as a refugee, the person obtains a Residence Permit as well as important rights, such as access to the issuance of travel documents, access to the labor market, access to education, social welfare and health care, access to accommodation, access to integration services, as well as special benefits for children and vulnerable people.

International Protection in the form of "subsidiary protection status," with similar rights, is

granted by a State to third-country nationals or stateless persons who do not meet the conditions to be recognized as refugees but who have substantial grounds based on which it follows that if they return to their country of origin or, in the case of stateless persons, to their country of former habitual residence, they are at risk of serious harm.

People holding this status are referred to as "Beneficiaries of Subsidiary Protection".

Do you know: Approximately 34 million residents in the EU (8% of all EU residents) were born outside of the EU.

Source: European Union Statistics, 2020.



Do you know: 10% of young people (aged 15-34 years) born in the EU have at least one foreign-born parent.

Source: OECD, 2021.

What is the Temporary Protection Status

Temporary Protection is a procedure of an extraordinary nature. It is applied in the member states of the European Union by virtue of the relevant legislative framework. Temporary protection ensures, in the event of a mass influx, or if a mass influx

of displaced persons from third countries who cannot return to their country of origin is imminent, immediate and temporary protection to these persons. Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection are granted a free Residence Permit for as long as

they remain in this situation, while at the same time they enjoy important rights, such as access to the labor market, access to education and vocational training, access to social welfare and health care. Priority and special care is given to cases of people with vulnerabilities.



"There are dozens of everyday stories of people who are learning our language, our history, our traditions, and want to and can be productive. All of them are people that can become active members of society if their integration in the community takes place smoothly today."

Melina Daskalaki,
City of Athens Municipal Councilor, Special Advisor to the Mayor of Athens for Migrants and Refugees.

Why Refugees need integration support

Refugees need time to learn the language, find employment and start their independent life. During this process, they need to overcome various challenges such as the difficulty in communication, the lack of financial income, the risk of homelessness, the lack of a supportive social network and the difficulties in accessing the labor market. Holistic integration

support as well as initial financial provisions are both crucial during the period of their adjustment to new society norms.

The HELIOS project started in the summer of 2019, supporting the integration of beneficiaries of international protection. From July 2022 the project extended its eligibility criteria to accept beneficiaries of temporary

protection in Greece as well. Until December 2022, more than 4.800 Ukrainians have enrolled in the HELIOS project, which provides, among other services, support for accommodation, Greek language classes and employability support at the project's Integration Learning Centers in mainland Greece and in Crete.



"The HELIOS project has supported and helped me a lot with settling in Greece. I have encountered many problems as a migrant here and several times I heard negative comments due to my ethnicity and my color. However, I always try to overcome them with positive thinking. For two years now, I work as a nurse in a well-known nursing home here in Athens and I really like that I can help my fellow human beings and support them."

Samuel Adusei,
Refugee, living in Athens.



Do you know: Migrants' contribution to the national income through the taxes they submit (2.5 trillion USD in 25 OECD countries in 2017) is higher than what they receive in benefits, health, and education (2 trillion USD in the same countries during the same period).

Source: OECD, 2020.



Do you know: It is estimated that 50% of European citizens consider that the integration of most migrants is successful in the area in which they live, but a relatively equivalent proportion (47%) believe that integration is unsuccessful at a national level.

Source: Special Eurobarometer – The integration of migrants in the European Union, 2022.



The cost of non-integration of refugees

The cost of a failed integration process - economically, socially, and politically - is detrimental for any country. In the long run, unsuccessful integration can lead to the marginalization, homelessness, exploitation, and

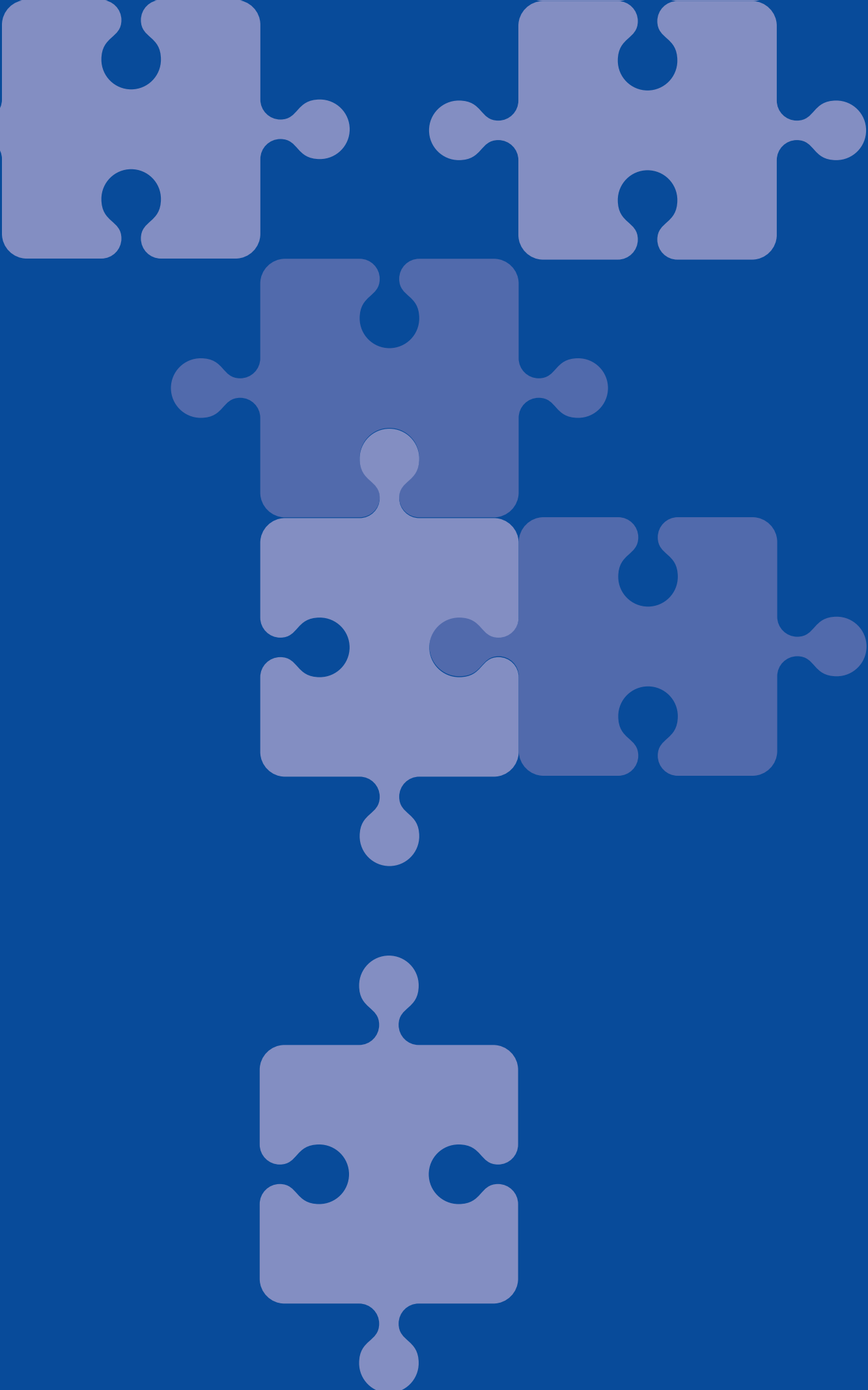
social isolation of refugees. Often, the absence of integration policies and practices can lead to an escalation of social tensions and fuel phenomena of marginalization and radicalization. To increase the prospects of success, the

integration of refugees needs to take place in a timely, structured, targeted, and efficient manner, and the resources invested to achieve this should constitute a long-term investment benefiting the country.



"Refugees carry with them an enormous amount of knowledge and skills, the certification of which most of the time is lost, either because of the circumstances under which people fled their countries or because it is overlooked in the host communities. It is to the benefit of the Greek society, under a long-term economic crisis, to make use of this knowledge, economically and socially."

Lefteris Papagiannakis,
Director of GCR (IOM Implementing Partner for the HELIOS project),
Athens.



THE HELIOS PROJECT



HELIOS Integration Learning Centers



1. *Kato Petralona,
Athens*

2. *Metaxourgio,
Athens*

3. *Athens*

4. *Tavros, Athens*

5. *Thessaloniki*

6. *Thessaloniki*

7. *Thessaloniki*

8. *Ioannina*

9. *Heraklion, Crete*

10. *Chania, Crete*

11. *Sitia, Crete*

12. *Larissa*

13. *Livadia*

14. *Kilkis*

15. *Katerini*

16. *Tripoli*

THE HELIOS PROJECT

HELIOS is the first countrywide project offering holistic integration support, initiated in 2019, aiming to support refugees in their integration into the Greek society. The project is implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and its implementing partners, in close cooperation with the Directorate of Social Integration of the General Secretariat of Immigration

Policy of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, that is also funding the project.

The objective of the project is two-fold:

- to increase refugees' prospects towards self-reliance and support them in becoming active members of the Greek society, and
- to support the Greek authorities in establishing a sustainable integration mechanism

for refugees in Greece, as part of the overall migration management system of the country.

The project, since 2019, offers holistic support for the integration of beneficiaries of international protection into the Greek society, while from July 2022 onwards, beneficiaries of temporary protection in Greece also have the right to register in the project.



"The city of Trikala welcomed the first refugees back in 2016. The co-existence of the local population together with the refugees is smooth and fruitful for both communities. Also, the refugees here in Trikala are mostly young and they have certainly given a new impetus to the development of the city. Of course, to realize the benefits of integration, certain mechanisms and policies need to be in place - and it is crucial that the HELIOS project is leading this process."

Dimitris Papastergiou,
Mayor of Trikala.

Do you know: According to available empirical data, any EU country applying a full integration policy for migrants and refugees can expect an annual long-run increase in its GDP by up to 1.4% above baseline growth, and some of the top-performing EU countries are also the countries that have received the highest number of refugees in recent years.

Source: JRC Report, European Commission, 2017, EU Statistics.



Do you know: From 01/06/2019 until 15/12/2022, more than 42.320 beneficiaries enrolled in the HELIOS project, of which more than 4.800 are from Ukraine.

Source: IOM Greece, 2022.

In close collaboration with national authorities and experienced Partners³, the HELIOS project aims at promoting the integration of beneficiaries of international protection and temporary protection into the Greek society, providing the following services:

- Accommodation support towards independent living in apartments with rental contracts leased in the beneficiaries' name, including contributions to rental and move-in costs, and networking with apartment owners.

- Educational courses in Integration Learning Centers set-up across Greece. Each course cycle lasts for approximately 6 months and consists of modules on Greek language learning, cultural orientation, job readiness and life skills.

- Employability and job readiness support, including job counseling, entrepreneurship support, access to job-related certifications, inclusion in specialized job fairs, and networking with private employers.

- Monitoring of the integration progress of beneficiaries to ensure that they are able to interact with confidence and autonomously with Greek public services.

- Activities towards the sensitization of the host community, such as workshops, focus group discussions and events aiming to create exchange occasions between the project beneficiaries and the local communities, highlighting the benefits of the integration of migrants into the Greek society.

³ Currently, IOM's implementing partners for the HELIOS project are: Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Danish Refugee Council Greece (DRC Greece), Greek Council for Refugees (GCR), Solidarity Now, INTERSOS, Major Development Agency Thessaloniki S.A (MDAT), METAdrasi, PLOIGOS and KEDHL.



"The HELIOS job counselors were very helpful. They supported me emotionally in the process of making the final decision and practically with all the documents needed to be able to start my own business. I could hardly do it without them. I started learning the Greek language from the very first days I arrived in Greece. Now I am proud to have obtained A2 certification, also through courses I attended within the framework of the HELIOS project."

Eskadar Davoodabadi,
Refugee, living in Crete.

ACCOMMODATION

The HELIOS Accommodation Component provides beneficiaries with information and support needed for the identification of suitable and affordable housing options. It also provides financial subsidies to facilitate their transition from temporary reception accommodation

facilities to entering into lease agreements with private house owners. HELIOS is in contact with apartment owners and real estate agencies and verifies the suitability of the apartments so that they can be included in the HELIOS houses pool and in the dedicated website www.heliospiti.com. Beneficiaries

are assisted with house search, apartment visits, and in dealing with administrative formalities through tailored meetings and workshops. Upon securing their home, beneficiaries are also assisted with transportation and moving to their newly rented apartments.

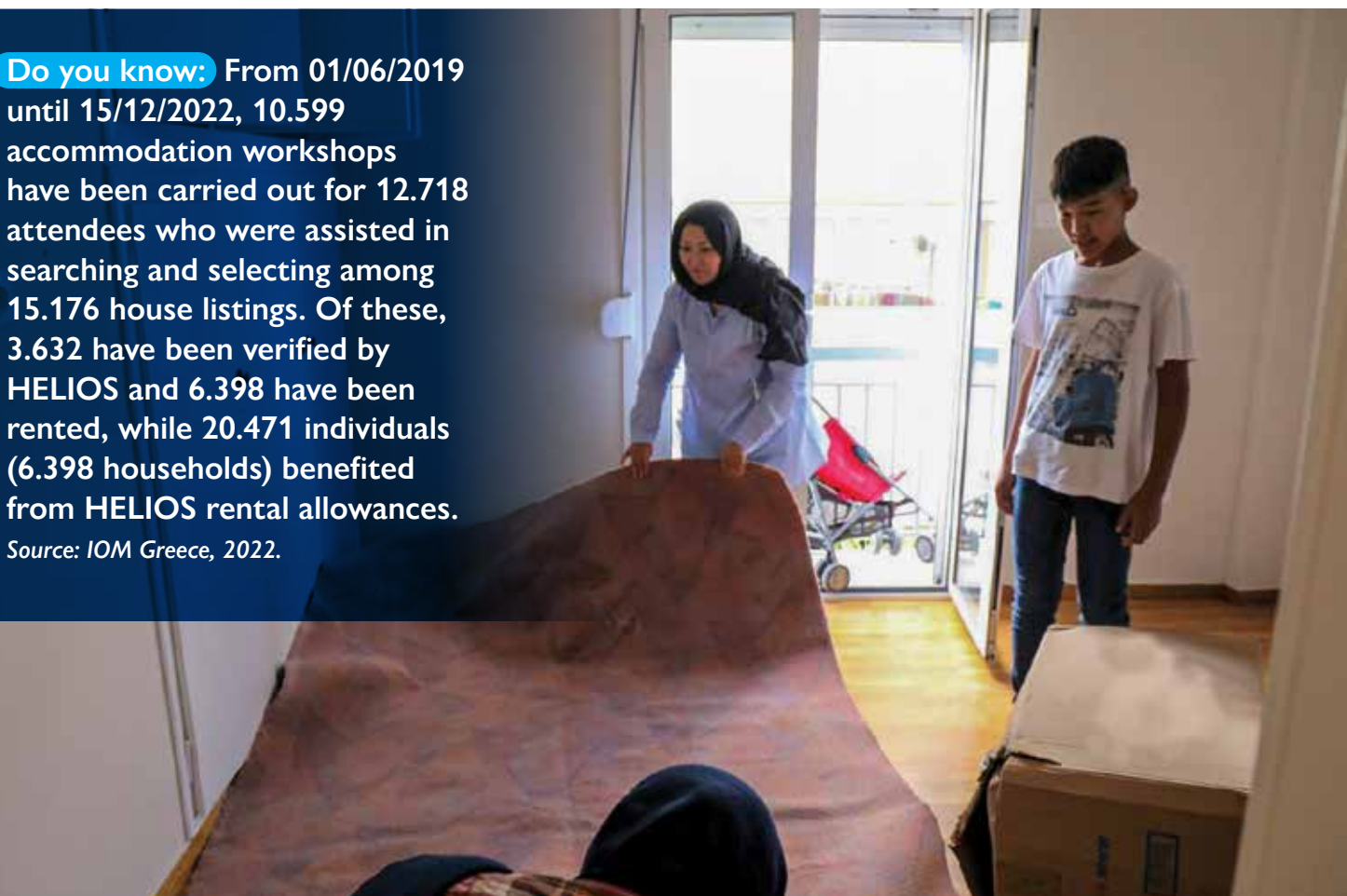


"With the support I received from HELIOS, now we have an apartment in Kilis which we can call our own and finally we feel that we are settled, we have new roots here. I am happy because people here have embraced and welcomed me, and I made a lot of Greek friends."

Amee Gada,
Refugee, living in Kilis.

Do you know: From 01/06/2019 until 15/12/2022, 10.599 accommodation workshops have been carried out for 12.718 attendees who were assisted in searching and selecting among 15.176 house listings. Of these, 3.632 have been verified by HELIOS and 6.398 have been rented, while 20.471 individuals (6.398 households) benefited from HELIOS rental allowances.

Source: IOM Greece, 2022.



Do you know: Overcrowding and overly high rental costs are significant problems in the EU. However, these problems are more apparent among the non-EU born compared to the EU-natives. The overcrowding rate is at 27.6 % for non-EU born vs. 14.2 % for EU-natives. The overly high rental cost rate is at 19.1% for non-EU born vs. 8.8% for EU-natives.

Source: European Parliament, 2019.

Accommodation solutions contributing to economic prosperity since the very beginning of integration

The financial support in the form of rental subsidies that refugees receive during the 12 months of their participation in HELIOS is directly returned into the Greek economy through the rental of apartments across the country.

This also contributes to enhancing the local housing market in regions with small populations and low housing demand. Additionally, refugees contribute to local economies as consumers in the local markets, thus supporting the

economic cycle. Furthermore, once the new members of society start living independently, this lessens government spendings addressing potential long-term homelessness, unemployment, marginalization, and social exclusion of refugees.



"The integration of refugees into the society is a process that requires the involvement of the new members of society, as well as that of the local host community. Ioannina has traditionally been a welcoming city to migrants, and this has led to the intercultural and liberal character of the city. Respect for diversity, tolerance and fairness must become central in our existence and only through these qualities can a society progress."

Moses Elisaf,
Mayor of Ioannina.

We have been honored to work very closely with Moses Elisaf, a committed supporter of the HELIOS project, from the very beginning of the project until his decease in February 2023.

EDUCATION

The HELIOS Education Component was designed to create an integration framework for the project's beneficiaries, aiming at increasing intercultural awareness, facilitating interaction with the host community, providing the necessary tools for independent living in the Greek society and encouraging confidence in communicating and living autonomously in Greece. The integration courses are provided

in person in the Integration Learning Centers located in different regions throughout Greece, and via an e-learning platform specifically developed for this purpose. Beneficiaries of international protection over 16 years old, except for some specific categories, are obliged to attend integration courses when they receive rental subsidies. The educational plan consists of 360 teaching hours in total.

The specialized, regularly updated curriculum includes Greek language lessons, lessons concerning the Greek culture, as well as modules for the development of soft skills, life skills and job readiness. In addition, "discussion groups" and "conversational cafes" are organized, where participants can share their ideas, experiences, and attitudes about specific topics and practice their language and communication skills in small groups.

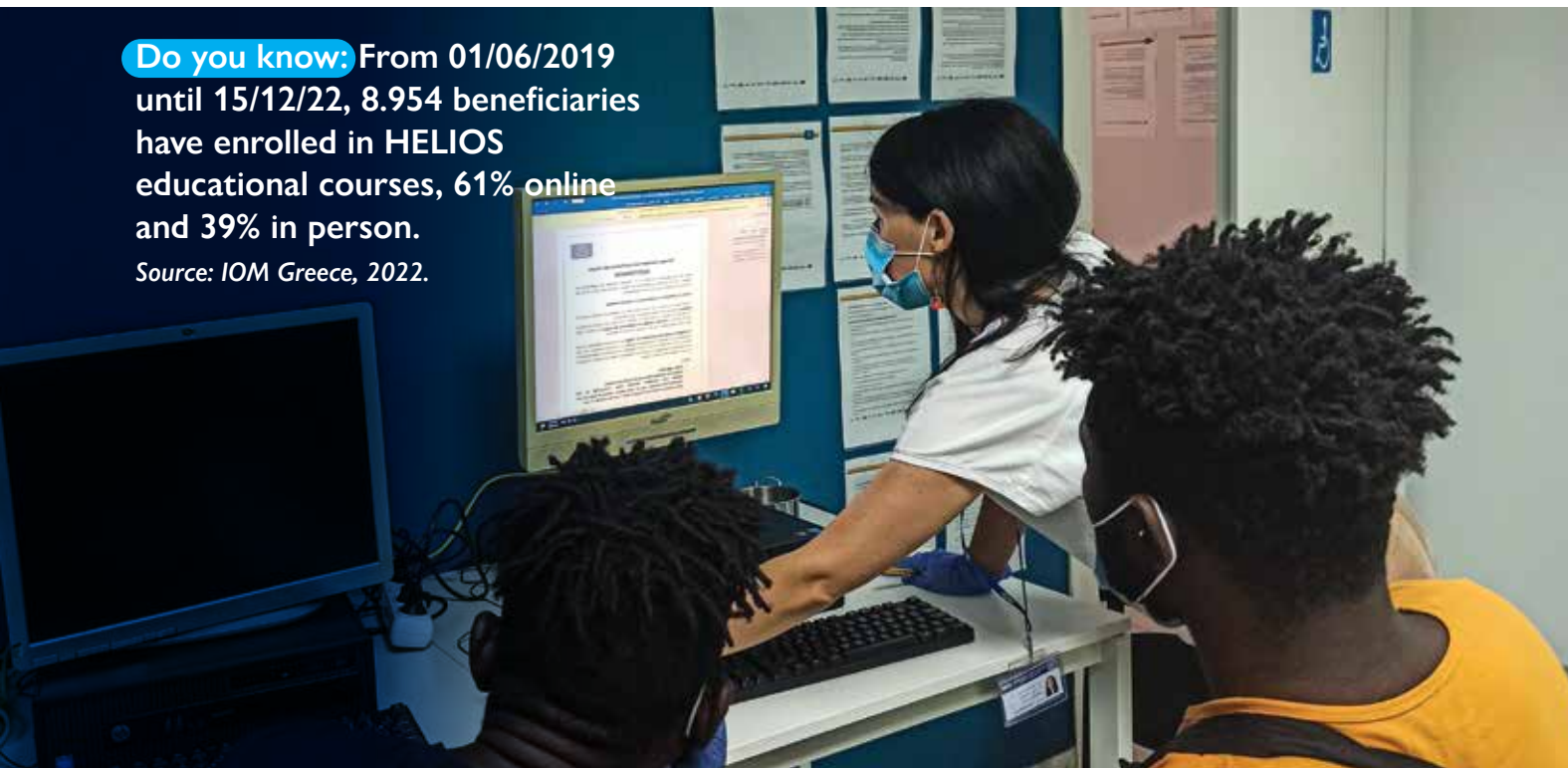


"Things were challenging for me at the beginning in Greece, as my financial situation was not viable and I found it really hard to find a job. The language was a big barrier as I didn't speak Greek and for most jobs this was a requirement. The HELIOS project helped me substantially and things now are getting better for me."

Al Janabi Hakeem,
Refugee, living in Ioannina.

Do you know: From 01/06/2019 until 15/12/22, 8.954 beneficiaries have enrolled in HELIOS educational courses, 61% online and 39% in person.

Source: IOM Greece, 2022.



Do you know: Around 27% of migrants (aged 25-64 years) are highly educated, but they often are not able to put their skills to use. Almost 40% are overqualified for the job they do.

Source: EU Statistics, ISCO, 2019.

Education enabling independence, active participation of refugees, and intercultural respect

Successful integration, empowered through education, contributes to the creation of a culturally welcome and respectful environment where the presence

of new cultures, languages, knowledge, and skills facilitates progress. Once refugees manage to become independent, active society members, who speak the

language of the host community and earn their own income, they actively contribute towards the economic prosperity of the country, by being productive.



"Projects like HELIOS help a lot in learning the language. They give confidence in the future. When you start to understand people, you are not so afraid anymore. I am very glad that I am learning the Greek language because it is not only about the knowledge of the language, but also about understanding the culture of the Greek people."

Alla Lukinova, Yevhennii Lukinov,
Refugees, living in Athens.

EMPLOYABILITY

Beneficiaries' access to the labor market is facilitated by the HELIOS project through individual job counselling sessions. During these sessions, job counsellors help beneficiaries develop their career plan and build their professional profile, and guide them through resources on career information, referring them to educational and work opportunities. The HELIOS

project also provides beneficiaries who have relevant education and experience with an opportunity to obtain professional driving licenses, ECDL certifications and foreign language certifications, in order to increase their employment potential. In addition, individual consultations are provided to those who wish to establish their own business. In parallel, the HELIOS project

receives and assesses requests from employers looking for candidates with specific profiles and skills and connects them with beneficiaries who fulfil the set requirements. Such matching actions respond to needs from different sectors and locations in Greece, as the migrant community carries experiences from a wide range of professional disciplines.



"Being a migrant or a refugee, is not these people's only identity. They are also teachers, social workers, doctors, artists, athletes, farmers, professional drivers, construction workers... There are many examples of worldwide award-winning scientists, artists and athletes that were migrants or refugees – prime illustrations of how inclusion, cohesion and solidarity can work to the benefit of society as opposed to marginalization and social exclusion."

Claudia Samaras,
National Project Coordinator, HELIOS project, IOM Greece.

Do you know: From 01/06/2019 until 15/12/2022, with HELIOS project, 6.448 beneficiaries were profiled in terms of their professional and educational background, 9.896 individual sessions were conducted and almost 12.300 job advertisements were disseminated referring to all regions in Greece, while more than 40 employability and entrepreneurship events have taken place.

Source: IOM Greece, 2022.



Do you know: The percentage of migrants working in agriculture in Greece is 6 times higher than that of Greek nationals.

Source: European Parliament, 2019.

Employability support, filling in gaps in the labor market and promoting productivity

Refugees can immediately provide solutions in sectors of the local market facing labor shortages, such as agriculture, tourism, construction, elderly care, and other sectors. According to relevant research at the European level⁴, refugees can add to a country's overall productivity and enhance growth. HELIOS facilitates these positive effects

in the labor market and in productivity through the educational support, the skills identification, the networking of the beneficiaries for finding matching job opportunities, and the employability support services provided in the framework of the project. Once refugees are employed, they become part of the national taxation system,

and thus they pay taxes that raise state income, which is in turn re-invested in the Greek economy in the form of subsidies, grants, pensions, state infrastructure, and other social provisions. HELIOS contributes to the legal employment of the refugees, which facilitates the abovementioned process, while it helps avoiding refugees' exploitation.

⁴ An Economic Take on the Refugee Crisis: A Macroeconomic Assessment for the EU, Institutional Paper 033, 2016, European Commission.



"The primary agricultural sector in Greece is facing many challenges; one - and perhaps the greatest one - is finding workers to cover its needs. That is why the direct economic benefits of including and integrating refugees in this sector in our rural areas are more apparent than elsewhere."

Christos Yiannakakis,
President of the National Interprofessional Organization of Stone Fruits.

INTEGRATION MONITORING

The HELIOS project provides individualized guidance and support to its beneficiaries in taking the necessary steps for the beginning of their independent living in Greece. The individualized support provided within this framework consists of regular assessments

of the integration progress of the beneficiaries and of the provision of guidance concerning their access to public services in relation to administration matters, health, community interaction, school enrollments, and other daily challenges they face. HELIOS

Integration Monitors also assess potential risk factors of individuals and families facing difficulties - such as the eventual lack of social support networks, specific vulnerabilities, and health conditions - and provide support and counselling for them to build resilience.



"It is our legal and humanitarian obligation to respect and support all our fellow human beings that were forced to leave their homelands for whatever reason, and often under the violent conditions of war. Particular attention needs to be paid to their integration into the society, and this is the only sustainable way forward."

Meric Ozgunes,
Program Manager, MDAT (IOM Implementing Partner for the
HELIOS project), Thessaloniki.



Do you know: It is estimated that 69% of European citizens believe that actively promoting the integration of migrants is a necessary investment for their country in the long run.

Source: Special Eurobarometer - The integration of migrants in the European Union, 2022.

Do you know: The Integration Monitoring team of HELIOS supports beneficiaries in a series of their daily challenges, such as enrolling their children in school, or arranging a medical appointment. In fact, from 01/06/2019 until 15/12/2022, 15.584 beneficiaries have received individualized guidance and support in 26.499 sessions, related to their access to healthcare, administrative procedures, school enrollments and other daily challenges they face.

Source: IOM Greece, 2022.



Integration of refugees across Greece, enhancing and balancing economic growth

As empirically proven in the EU⁵, integration is a long-term process and the relatively higher the investment in the successful integration of migrants, the greater the economic benefits of integration. In fact,

integration support can be seen as an investment in the host country, because refugees contribute to the socio-economic development of a country as workers, entrepreneurs, innovators, taxpayers, consumers,

investors etc. Importantly, the HELIOS project encourages the settlement of refugees in rural areas and in areas with low population levels and supports their integration in those communities.

⁵ Long-Term Social, Economic and Fiscal Effects of Immigration in the EU: The role of the Integration Policy (JRC Report, European Commission, 2017).



"Refugees can participate in the labor market and strengthen the economy as workers, consumers, and taxpayers. Moreover, their inclusion in society can enhance social resilience, innovation, and optimism, that refugees bring even unintentionally through their struggle to reclaim their lives for themselves and their families."

Katerina Downward,
Head Of Education and Integration Department, METAdrasi (IOM
Implementing Partner for the HELIOS project), Athens.

SENSITIZATION OF THE HOST COMMUNITY

Acknowledging that integration is a two-way process, the HELIOS project aims at supplementing the efforts of the beneficiaries by raising social awareness on the importance and benefits of integration. To achieve this, endeavors at the local level are crucial to address both the challenges related to the successful socio-economic inclusion of refugees, as well

as the creation of inclusive communities. The HELIOS project organizes and supports activities at the local level that create exchange occasions between the project beneficiaries and the local communities, ultimately aiming at preparing local communities to keep supporting integration on a long-term basis. Visibility activities such as awareness campaigns

are also regularly carried out in various media outlets, not only to promote the project but to also sensitize the host community towards the importance of integration and its benefits. The HELIOS project steadily ensures stable synergies and collaboration with other integration projects and with local authorities, who are key actors for any successful integration effort.



Do you know: It is estimated that less than 4 in 10 European citizens (38%) believe they are well informed about the integration of third-country nationals. Source: Special Eurobarometer – The integration of migrants in the European Union, 2022.



"An important aspect of the HELIOS project is to bring the refugees together with the local host community, and this is achieved through a series of cultural and educational events, which are beneficial not only to the refugees but also to the local Greek community. These events would not be possible without HELIOS. The HELIOS project has two faces – it is an integration project, but it also facilitates social progress."

Dimitris Demertzis,
ILC Coordinator, OMNES (IOM Implementing Partner for the HELIOS project), Kilkis.

Do you know: From 01/06/2019 until 15/12/2022, 233 focus group discussions have been completed in the scope of HELIOS project across 32 Municipalities, during which beneficiaries and members of the host community discussed on specific topics such as employability, education, access to services and gender equality, while 84 sensitization activities have been completed in cooperation with several actors in 20 Municipalities.

Source: IOM Greece, 2022



Broadening the specialization of local public services, sensitizing the host communities, and increasing intercultural interaction

With the creation of specialized integration services, the capacity building and intercultural awareness-sensitization programs for public service employees are enhanced. The exchange of know-how and good international practices through peer-to-peer trainings and networking further facilitates this process. At the regional planning level, international networks focused on integration, such as the European Integration Network (E.I.N.), Eurotowns

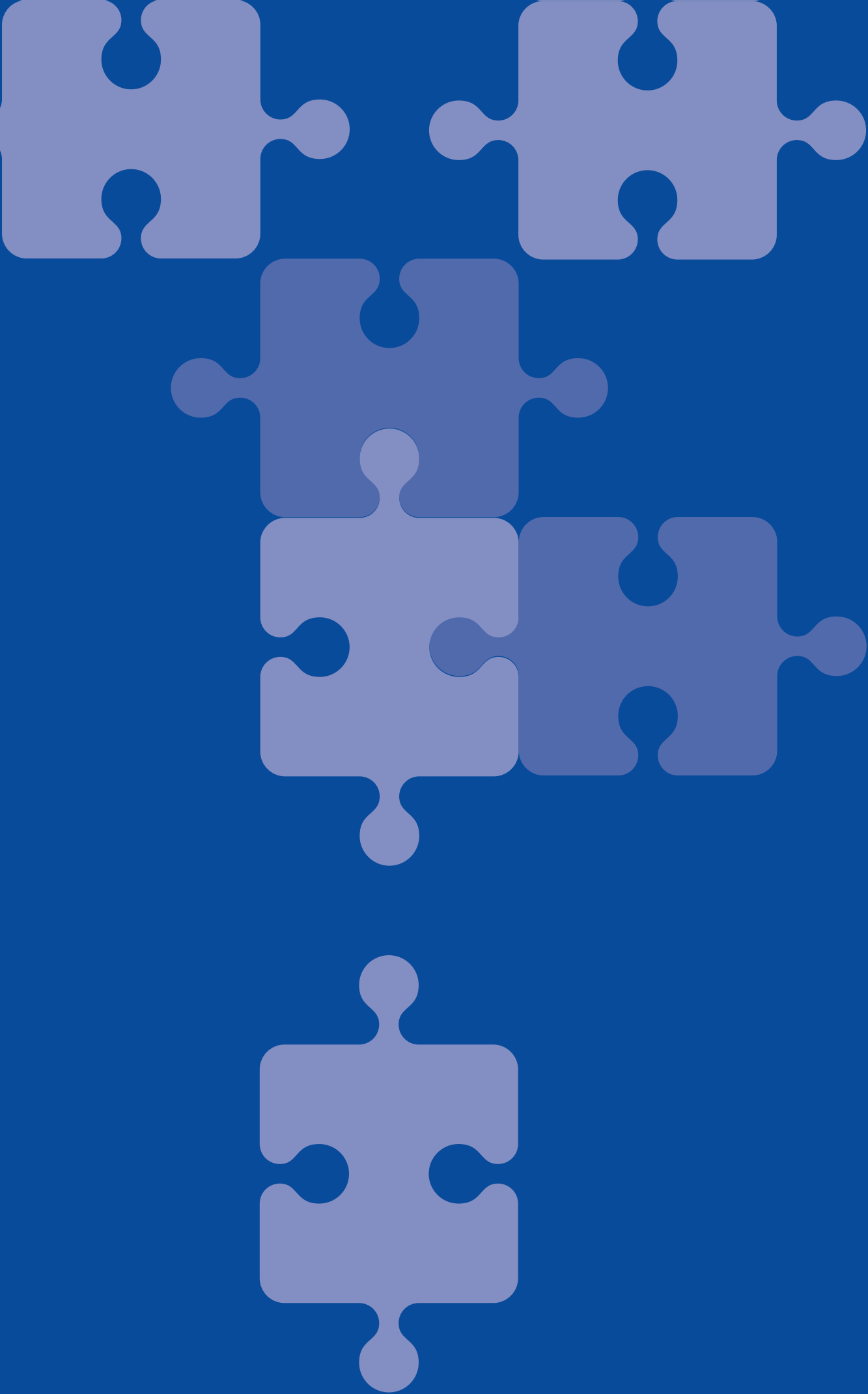
and Eurocities, enhance regional development through the exchange of best practices, the creation of working groups, the assignment of projects and research, and access to additional funding mechanisms. In parallel, the need to develop and extend integration support services often generates new jobs locally. Furthermore, integration activities encourage dialogue and interaction between the communities. Within the framework of integration

programs and their focus on encouraging interaction between the refugees and the host communities, educational and interactive events are organized around issues universally crucial such as environmental sustainability and the fight against gender-based violence and any form of discrimination. These events bring together the refugees and the host community, thereby facilitating mutual understanding and solidarity for the benefit of the wider society.



"The promotion of the integration of refugees is a priority for the Municipality of Katerini and is achieved through the provision of a complete network of services as well as through our close cooperation with the HELIOS project, aiming at the smooth operation of individual services and the smooth integration of refugees in the community. The continuous training of our employees through different sources, including HELIOS, contributes to delivering quality services to our fellow citizens."

Konstantinos Koukodimos,
Mayor of Katerini.



The HELIOS project was funded by the European Commission from June 2019 to December 2021 and is funded by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum since January 2022.

This brochure is the result of a collective work of IOM's HELIOS project team, with the kind support of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum and local Municipalities, as well as HELIOS project's partners and other Integration actors in Greece.

This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Ministry of Migration and Asylum and IOM cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



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