

MAY 2023-AUG 2023  
NEWSLETTER



## Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection and Temporary Protection



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ  
Υπουργείο Μεταναστεύσεων & Ασύλου



## EMPLOYABILITY

# Promoting entrepreneurship among refugees

A 4-day Entrepreneurship Workshop was organized in collaboration with the Greek branch of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and facilitated by a group of experts with the goal to enrich the entrepreneurship prospects of refugees from Ukraine in Greece. The primary focus of the workshop was to strengthen participants' entrepreneurial skills and knowledge and provide to them valuable insights into the Greek business ecosystem. Over the 4 days,

21 attendees, including 18 HELIOS beneficiaries, had the opportunity to create their own business canvases, refine their business ideas, and exchange knowledge and practical tips. Emphasis was placed on how to navigate the bureaucratic regulatory procedures in establishing and running a business – a necessary step towards thriving as a business owner in Greece. The event was held at the premises of the Athens Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

## Enhancing refugees' employability in the North Aegean islands

Two Job Fairs were organized in Lesbos and Chios to enhance the employability prospects of refugees residing in the islands of the North Aegean. The Integration Working Group of Lesbos, HELIOS, UNHCR, METAdrasi, Caritas Hellas, RAD Music International Cultural Club, Welcome Office Borderline Lesbos, EuroRelief, Starfish Foundation and Co-Existence and Communication in the Aegean collaborated in the organization of the Job Fair at Lesbos CCAC which was attended by 215 individuals. The attendees were informed about their labor rights, created their CVs, and interviewed with companies from various sectors. During the event, HELIOS also held a detailed information session whereby the representatives of the participating companies were informed on migrants' labor rights and the related hiring administrative framework.

The Job Fair at Chios CCAC was co-organized by the Integration Working Group of Chios, HELIOS, UNHCR, Metadrasi, Praksis, the Women's Counselling Center of the Municipality of Chios, the Community Center of the Municipality of Chios, Equal Rights Beyond Borders and Refugee Biryani and Bananas. The 130 attendees networked and interviewed with representatives of 11 companies from various sectors such as hospitality, construction, agriculture, and mastic production. An information session on refugees' and migrants' labor rights and the related hiring administrative aspects was also held during the fair for the representatives of the participating companies.



The HELIOS Employability Component participated in 'Skywalker Plus - Your Festival', organized by Skywalker.gr in Larissa, conducting an open-to-the-public workshop towards enhancing the employability of refugees, migrants, and locals. The workshop focused on "Skills Development and Hobbies" and aimed to raise awareness on how, through engaging in hobby activities, we can acquire skills that can be effectively utilized in the workplace. In the framework of the festival, HELIOS Sensitization Component also organized 2 additional open interactive creative workshops during which HELIOS staff members together with two HELIOS beneficiaries guided attendees in developing their skills by creating fabric spring flowers, jewelry, crafts, and gardening constructions. The festival was the first of a series of inclusive festivals through which Skywalker.gr aims to promote volunteerism, skills enhancement, and personal development and to better connect local actors, experts, and other community members.

## SENSITIZATION

### “Honoring World Refugee Day” in Agios Dimitrios

HELIOS in collaboration with the Municipality of Agios Dimitrios and the Migrants and Refugees Integration Council (MRIC) organized a sensitization event with the aim of bringing together people of diverse cultural backgrounds and languages under the universal language of art. This open to the public event that took place at Alekou Panagouli Square in Agios Dimitrios, included a live traditional music concert with songs from Greece, Albania, Palestine, Russia, Armenia and Italy, performed by polyphonic groups, and the screenings of the films “Lifelong Day” by Saber Ansari and “Le Havre” by Aki Kaurismaki. The event was addressed by the Mayor of Agios Dimitrios and the President of the MRIC.







## “3D Printing & Laser Cutting” workshop in Athens

A one-day workshop led by the Makers Space of the Municipality of Athens was organized by HELIOS and the Migrants Integration Center (KEM) of Athens with the support of the ACCMR. The workshop consisted of interactive educational hands-on activities on 3D printing and laser cutting, introducing new technologies, and promoting the reuse of old items in a sustainable way for the environment. The 17 workshop participants were introduced to the new technologies in this field and importantly learned how to reuse old items in a sustainable way. The event was part of the activities of the Refugee Week Greece Festival 2023.

## Sharing of good practices in Rhizome Cities Network conference “A city that celebrates diversity - Art and culture as a powerful medium for integration” in Athens

HELIOS Sensitization Component, in collaboration with the Municipality of Athens, participated in the conference “A city that celebrates diversity - Art and culture as a powerful means of integration” that was organized by Rhizome Cities Network and the City of Athens in Technopolis. The open to the public event aimed to present good practices of intercultural actions promoting the creative and meaningful coexistence of communities in the Municipality of Athens. HELIOS’s presentation was on “Awareness Raising and Social Inclusion activities within the Helios integration project” and highlighted the continuous effort of the project towards raising social awareness on the importance and benefits of integration, through crucial endeavors at the local level to address both the challenges related to the successful socio-economic inclusion of refugees, as well as the creation of inclusive communities. Among the participants were representatives of the leading Municipalities of the Rhizome Cities Network, while the Municipality of Athens was represented by Mrs Melina Daskalaki, Special Advisor to the Mayor of Athens for Migrants and Refugees and President of the Reception and Solidarity Center (K.Y.A.D.A.) and Mr. Panagiotis Psathas, Head of the Department of Support and Social Integration of Migrants and Refugees, the Coordination Center for Migrants and Refugees of the Municipality of Athens - ACCMR, the Center for the Integration of Migrants of the Municipality of Athens (KEM) and the Development and Tourism Promotion Company of the Municipality of Athens (EATA).



## Info-session at Athens Migrant Integration Center (KEM)

HELIOS organized a visit to Athens' Migrant Integration Center, during which HELIOS beneficiaries from Ukraine and Africa had the opportunity to discover how they can benefit from the center's specialized services - benefits, courses of Greek, English and IT, career counselling for adults, intercultural activities for children and adolescents and other services. Mrs. Melina Daskalaki, Special Advisor to the Mayor of Athens for Migrants and Refugees and President of the Reception and Solidarity Center (K.Y.A.D.A.) welcomed the visit and presented several services offered at the municipal level to migrants and refugees. The visit took place in coordination with HELIOS ILC in Athens, run by SolidarityNow.



## “I feel, I empathize, I communicate through art” in Thessaloniki

A multisensory workshop was organized by HELIOS, with the support of the Municipality of Thessaloniki at the city's seafront. Specifically, the “I feel, I empathize, I communicate through art” workshop took place at the amphitheater “Garden of the Seasons” and was facilitated by Sempreviva Hellas collective of women that specialize in various forms of art and expression through which they inspire us towards social cohesion, empathy, acceptance, and integration. The aim of the workshop was to bring together refugees, migrants and locals and give them the opportunity to explore how different forms of art and expression can help us in our daily lives and drive our personal development. The attendees enjoyed themselves and intermingled in a variety of communication forms that enabled them to discover insights related to interactive coexistence and empathy. They sang songs from their country of origin, played, laughed and were moved while they discovered their inner ‘child’ self again, that spread coolness in a hot July sunset.

## «Sweet Flavor of a peaceful world» in Thessaloniki

On the occasion of International Refugee Day, HELIOS Sensitization and Employability Components jointly organized the “Sweet Flavor of a Peaceful World” event at Thessaloniki's City Hall, as part of a broader series of activities involving various local institutions and organizations towards fostering stronger interaction between the local community and the refugee population. The event, which was graced by the presence of U.S. Ambassador George Tsunis, took the form of a confectionary creative decoration contest for children, supported by La Chef Levi. The ambassador encouraged the children during the

contest and enjoyed their sugar paste art pieces while he was also part of the judging committee together with four local entrepreneurs - Ari Foods, Tor Hotel Group, Phillian Hotels & Resorts, Glikanisos Marea Sea Spirit Iberico - that closely collaborate with HELIOS towards the employability of the project's beneficiaries. The children had the chance to learn new techniques and work together on a creative endeavor while the representatives of the attending companies and HELIOS had a roundtable discussion during which they exchanged views on the importance, benefits, and challenges in the integration of refugees in the labor market.





## Preparation of the Migrant and Refugees Integration Council (MRIC) in Neapoli-Sykies.

A series of 4 weekly capacity building workshops were organized by the Municipality of Neapoli-Sykies with the support of HELIOS, targeting migrants and refugees that reside in the Municipality and covering 4 distinct topics: Advocacy in the humanitarian context and social change, Anti-racism and gender equality (a topic which was covered with the support of Diotima and IOM), Strategic communication and Legal aspects of the asylum process in Greece and the integration of migrants and refugees. The aim of these workshops was to increase the capacities and knowledge of migrants and refugees residing in the Municipality of Neapoli-Sykies and to enhance in parallel the role of the local MRIC and the engagement of its members. Attendees had the opportunity to cultivate their knowledge and engage in active discussions around the said 4 topics, while everyone agreed that togetherness and inclusivity are the key factors for the way forward.



## “A Day in the Mountain” in Pylaia-Chortiatis

An open to the public trip was organized by HELIOS to the refuge maintained on the mountain of Chortiatis where many well-being activities, including yoga, trail-hiking and creation of flower wreaths were held. The yoga and hiking activities were facilitated by HELIOS and the refuge staff members, while the workshop on flower wreaths was facilitated by HELIOS beneficiaries. The 70 attendees, including 30 HELIOS beneficiaries, enjoyed a day of fun, exploration and creativity and above all became more in touch with nature and enjoyed the company of each other in a picturesque setting.



## Presenting the benefits of integration in Drita e Diturisë (The light of knowledge)’s conference in Thessaloniki

In the framework of general support to local migrant communities towards social cohesion, HELIOS participated in the 1st Panhellenic Conference of the Albanian Association Drita e Diturisë (The light of knowledge). During the conference, HELIOS representatives presented and elaborated on the benefits of integration and the importance of active participation in community life through existing mechanisms, such as the Migrants and Refugees Integration Councils.



# “Tastes and Melodies of the World” in Heraklion

More than 1,000 people enjoyed a unique multicultural festival organized for the first time in Heraklion of Crete by IOM together with the Migrants and Refugees Integration Council, the Municipality of Heraklion, the Cretan Cuisine Festival, the Soroptimist Club of Heraklion “Aretousa”, the Association of Cooks, the Confectioners & Kitchen Staff of Heraklion Labor Association and ARSIS and with the support of the Region of Crete, at Georgiadis

Park of Heraklion. The aim of this festival was to raise awareness on cultural diversity and harmonious coexistence at the local level, through activities that involved, among others, dancing, live music from local choirs, multicultural cuisine tasting, creative and interactive workshops for children and adults and environmental awareness activities. This initiative, led by HELIOS, was part of the activities of Refugee Week Greece Festival 2023.



## Mother’s Day Celebrations by Ploigos in Crete

On the occasion of Mother’s Day, Ploigos, partner association of IOM for the HELIOS project in Crete, organized a picnic event in Crete in collaboration with the Pan Cretan Ukrainian Society for HELIOS beneficiary mothers. The attendees enjoyed a nice day of socializing, relaxing and rejuvenating while at the end of the event received colorful flowerpots with Mother’s Day wishes on them, in their mother language.



## “Paths of Culture” in Crete

A cultural one-day-trip in Crete, namely the “Paths of Culture” was organized by HELIOS in collaboration with the Cultural Association of Ini-Monastiraki “INATOS”. The Village of Ini, the Folk Museum, the old dam of Kera and the church of Panagia Kera were parts of the path that more than 80 people (refugees and locals) had the chance to enjoy. During the route, attendees walked through the village, saw the ruins of an old watermill, participated in an art workshop, and learned more about the history of the area. Participants also had the opportunity to enjoy wellness and educational activities such as hiking, sightseeing and an art workshop, paving for them a unique experiential journey into the traditions of Crete. The tranquility of the landscape and the interaction with the locals of the regions visited, and between them, made up a day to remember for the group.



## Exploring creativity during Pinios Festival in Larissa

A series of four open one-day workshops were organized during Pinios Festival in Larissa, by HELIOS in collaboration with SolidarityNow and Intersos, the two IOM's partners for HELIOS in Larissa, with the support and expertise of additional local specialized actors. The aim of the workshops was to promote activities that bring together diverse population groups highlighting the importance of community efforts towards environmental sustainability, harmonious coexistence, and cultural awareness. Each of the four workshops concerned a different theme. The "We create together: a creative workshop of painting" was carried out in collaboration with the GBV Shelter of Larissa. The Community Center of Larissa collaborated with HELIOS to organize the workshop "We create together: a creative workshop of painting and jewelry making". The "A doll from your country: creative workshop from reusable materials" was materialized in collaboration with TheatralLe. KDAP Damasiou "Learn and Create" was the additional co-organizer of the "Wishing Plants: gardening Workshop". More than 800 participants including locals, refugees and migrants enjoyed the workshops, explored their creative skills, and interacted in a fun and exhilarating atmosphere.



## Launch of Refugee Week Festival 2023 in Ioannina

Refugee Week Festival 2023 was launched this year in Ioannina city with events and activities that lasted for one week starting at Litharitsia Park. Residents of the city enjoyed a series of activities and workshops, sending a strong message of solidarity and social cohesion. The launch event was organized by HELIOS in collaboration with the Municipality of Ioannina, the Region of Epirus, UNHCR, the Youth Center of Epirus, the Intercultural Center for Social Integration "Akadimia", the Department of Arts of the University of Ioannina, SolidarityNow, Intersos, Arsis, ICSD, Atelier Fardella and the Municipal Art Gallery that kindly hosted HELIOS "Exploring Our Cities" Photo Exhibition for 3 days, starting on the day of the launch. A creative educational theatrical game organized by the local HELIOS ILC teachers, an impressive "Boat" installation symbolizing the movement of refugees by Konstantinos Koinos, an interactive collaborating drawing canvas inviting the expression of emotions and sentiments related to Refugee Week (and resulting in a profound artwork imbued with meaningful messages) and a joyful night concert were only few of the activities that attracted locals and migrants to a platform of "compassion" - the central theme of this year's Refugee Week Festival.

## "A Day in the Museum" in Larissa

On the occasion of the International Museum Day, a visit to the exhibition of the Diachronic Museum in Larissa was organized by HELIOS in collaboration with Solidarity Now and the Community Center of the Municipality of Larissa. Participants had the opportunity to learn new things and familiarize themselves with the ancient history of Thessaly and with the functioning and structure of the ancient societies living in the specific area. Following the inspiring, educational tour of the museum, attendees participated in in-depth discussions with the museum curators and exchanged their thoughts and perspectives on Greek history and culture as well as the commonalities they identified with the heritage of their home countries.







## “Introducing Children to Human Rights” in Ioannina

A one-day fun and educational workshop was organized by HELIOS and the schoolteachers of the 9th Public Elementary Intercultural School of Ioannina. The aim of this empowering activity was to introduce children to the fundamental notions of human rights, respect for diversity and gender equality. The students had

the opportunity to explore these notions in an interactive and fun session that focused on diversity, stereotypes, migration, and inclusion. The session was part of the Skills Development Classes initiated by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and the material utilized was certified by the Council of Europe.

## Summer School on Media and Refugees Reception and Integration in Lesvos

The Summer School on “Media and Refugee/ Migration flows” was successfully concluded for a group of 20 students from Greece and abroad, after two weeks of lectures, field visits, and meetings with organizations of the Civil Society, the local press and community, and representatives of the European Commission, Frontex and the management team of the Reception and Identification center of the island. The discussions focused on the role of media narratives in shaping public opinion towards migration. Participants had the opportunity to listen to the voices of refugees and migrants themselves and the people who welcomed them. The key points highlighted were the reception and integration process for people arriving on the island and the contribution of HELIOS to social cohesion. Everyone agreed that what we have in common is much more than we think and that human connection and understanding start with a simple conversation. The Summer School was organized by the University of Athens, NKUA and the University of Aegean, with the support of HELIOS.



## “Peacefully Coexisting” in Karditsa

HELIOS in collaboration with the Social Services, the Community Center, the Community Center for Roma, the Social Pharmacy, and the Athletic Basketball Association of Karditsa (ASK) organized an open event at Pausilipo park of Karditsa, aiming to raise awareness and send a strong message on the principles of social cohesion, inclusive societies, and peace, against xenophobia and racism. The event included athletic and creative activities for children and their families.





# EDUCATION

## A Thank you Painting from Ukraine

The Ukrainian student, Larysa Ryabykh created a painting on canvas oil of sunflowers that are associated with her memories from her home country, Ukraine - and more specifically from the Donetsk region, to donate it to the Ministry of Migration and Asylum as a sign of gratitude for the support of the HELIOS integration program. Larysa, accompanied by Marilyn Polena, General manager of SolidarityNow, Nicholas Rangos, HELIOS Senior Project Coordinator, and her Greek teacher, visited the Deputy Minister of Migration and Asylum, Sofia Voultepsi, who welcomed them in her office and received the gift. After the Minister thanked Larysa for the painting, the two women discussed about Larysa's life in Greece and her plans and dreams.



## Inspiration for Refugee Week during a Conversation Café in Tripoli

During Refugee Week 2023, a Conversation Café was organized and conducted remotely with HELIOS students attending E-learning integration courses at the ILC run by CRS in Tripolis. During the gathering, the educator and students discussed the meaning and purpose of the refugee week and participants had the opportunity to express their opinion on the importance of this year's theme of the refugee week which was compassion. Then, after the educator shared some ideas with HELIOS beneficiaries about the ways we express our compassion, the participants were asked to suggest simple acts by which they can indicate their compassion to refugees. The Conversation Café was completed with the creation of a padlet that captured the thoughts and ideas of all participants.

# ACCOMMODATION

## Information session in Lesvos

HELIOS project was presented thoroughly to more than 51 recognized refugees, and potential HELIOS beneficiaries from the Sudanese community in Lesvos, during a dedicated information session that took place in RIC Mavrovouni. Emphasis was given to the scope of the project, how it promotes the integration of recognized refugees in the Greek society, the advantages of the employability tools the project offers - like the disposal of available job vacancies, the skills matching support and the organization of relevant job fairs - as well as the importance of the Greek courses to break the language barrier and enhance integration. The session concluded with a Q&A session during which attendees received detailed answers and clarifications to their questions.

