

Challenges in transitioning recognised refugees away from humanitarian assistance in Greece

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Abstract

With a focus on urban refugees in Athens, and using a mixed method approach to generate and triangulate the data, this research identifies key challenges in transitioning recognised refugees away from humanitarian assistance in Greece. It finds that the refugees are generally a long way from integrating, and with few opportunities to become self-reliant many will need to transition onto to social welfare, which for administrative reasons is difficult to access. Greek social welfare does not cover social housing so it will need to be augmented with other coping strategies, such as sharing accommodation and working in the informal sector, which may expose the refugees to exploitative conditions.

Several of the challenges related to the attainment of refugee self-reliance stem from complex public policy and funding concerns, which are exacerbated by the economic crisis and austerity. They are also symptomatic of funding restrictions that have prevented civil society organisations from more adequately supporting refugee integration. Nevertheless, the lack of a plan from the central administration regarding the transition away from humanitarian assistance has led to confusion and uncertainty among the refugees, civil society and local government.

Many would argue that much of the humanitarian funding that was provided for the refugee response in Greece was intended to encourage the refugees to remain there, rather than continuing into Northern-Europe. However, if the refugees are unable to attain self-reliance and social welfare does not cover their basic needs many may embark on secondary migration anyway, despite the risks that this might pose for them.

This research argues that a wide range of stakeholders should be involved in the development of a transitional plan; civil society in particular can help to identify and articulate the challenges that refugees face in becoming self-reliant and in accessing social welfare. It also argues that until such time as the transition can take place without creating a protection gap for the refugees, UNHCR should continue to provide recognised refugees with cash assistance and accommodation.

Keywords

refugee, humanitarian, integration, transition, Greece

Introduction

Through 2016 and 2017, the majority of asylum seekers in Greece began to receive cash assistance from UNHCR and its implementing partners, and many have also been provided accommodation.¹ Once granted refugee status however, they will lose their entitlement to this assistance and should be self-reliant, or they should transition onto social welfare, which can be received on the same conditions as that to which a Greek citizen is entitled.² This research focuses on the challenges of transitioning recognised refugees away from humanitarian assistance in Greece, and the potential consequences if they have not attained self-reliance.

The first objective of this research is to explore the extent to which recognised refugees have attained self-reliance. After several years in Greece, this may have been possible for some, although it is anticipated that few will have achieved this. When a refugee has not attained self-reliance they have the right to transition to social welfare programmes, which are comparable to that to which a Greek citizen is entitled. However, Greece has no social housing scheme and the primary social welfare mechanism, the Social Solidarity Income (SSI) scheme, is difficult to access due to its administrative entry requirements. Given this, the second objective of this research is to consider how civil society organisations and municipalities can facilitate refugees to become self-reliant or to access social welfare. The research will identify and articulate the challenges in the political and policy environment that makes the attainment of self-reliance difficult for refugees, civil society organisations and municipalities. The third objective of the research is to consider what the potential consequences might be if the Greek government is unable to ensure that recognised refugees are able to meet their basic needs. For example, will the refugees be prompted into secondary migration or will the Dublin regulation dissuade them from this, and if so will they be forced into informal work, which potentially exposes them to exploitative working conditions?

Considerable funding has been provided for the refugee response in Greece, and many would argue that this was, in part, to establish conditions that encourage refugees to remain there rather than continuing on the route towards northern Europe. It is important to question whether the assistance provided thus far has equipped the refugees to be able to meet their basic needs when it ends.

To analyse the extent to which the refugees have integrated and attained self-reliance, a survey of urban refugees will be conducted, based on Ager and Strang's conceptual framework that defines the core domains of integration. Particular focus will be given to the domains, host language proficiency, employment, and the leverage of social connections in securing access to employment or resources. To complement the survey, interviews will be held with key stakeholders to identify the challenges and limitations that civil society and municipalities face in facilitating recognised refugees to attain self-reliance or to access social welfare.

1. Methodology

This study was field and desk-based and it used a mixed-method, qualitative approach. The specific methods are as follows:

Contextual analysis: Given that this research relates to a specific period, this being the transition from a humanitarian response to Government led assistance, the initial contextual analysis is key in summarising the history of the refugee influx, the legal framework for asylum in Greece and the role of the various stakeholders and funding mechanisms in the response.

Literature review: Section three focuses on literature relating to conceptual and practical realities of: (i) refugee integration, refugee self-reliance and refugees coping strategies and (ii), how humanitarian assistance has transitioned to state led support in other contexts.

Refugee survey: Twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted to build a survey of the experience of refugee household's in Athens, through the prism of Ager and Strang's conceptual model of refugee integration.³ Particular focus was given to the domains that are considered most relevant to achieving self-reliance, these being language proficiency, employment, and the role of social connections in leveraging access to employment or resources.

Participants were identified using purposeful sampling with a focus on refugees who have arranged their own accommodation. This is because self-accommodated refugees are most likely to have achieved a degree of integration and self-reliance. UNHCR suggests that in many contexts refugees perceive that their stay is temporary pending resettlement, thus resettlement-oriented refugees are reticent to invest in integration efforts.⁴

1 UNHCR, 'ESTIA Program' (UNHCR, 2017), <http://estia.unhcr.gr/en/home/> (accessed 12 Apr. 2018).

2 Article 30, Presidential Decree 141/2013 on the transposition into the Greek legislation of Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 (L 337) on minimum standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection and for the content of the protection granted (recast) [2013] A226/21–10–2013.

3 Alastair Ager and Alison Strang, 'Indicators of integration: final report' (Home Office, Home Office Development and Practice Report 28, 2004) 1, 13.

4 UNHCR 'The Implementation of UNHCR's Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas' (2012) Global Survey 1, 53 www.refworld.org/docid/51c7fa9e4.html (accessed 11 Oct. 2017).

Buscher suggests that host governments and local populations often treat ethnic, racial and country of origin groups differently, and as a result local integration may be more viable for one group of refugees than for another.⁵ Given this, there was no bias towards particular nationalities in the sampling, rather a diversity of nationalities was sought to enable comparison between groups who have different social networks and who may have access to different to assistance.

The sample was initially drawn from existing databases that are held by the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) CARE, which in the course of its work has registered self-accommodated refugees in Athens. After identifying the initial sample, controlled snowballing using connections generated by the refugee respondents was used to increase the sample size. At the time of the research, the researcher was employed by CARE as a Programme Manager. This provided the researcher opportunities to network with a range of stakeholders with broad experience in the context.

A list of the respondents who took part in the interviews is provided, however, individual responses are anonymised as some are working illegally in the informal sector and were concerned about the impact that this could have on the cash assistance that they are receiving.

Stakeholder interviews: Qualitative interviews were used to explore the roles of different stakeholders in implementing activities that promote self-reliance and integration with particular focus on refugee access to employment, social welfare and language classes. The interviews were held with staff members from civil society organisation, EU donors and Athens Municipality. The interviews were based on semi-structured interview grids, which were designed according to the role of the stakeholder.

A purposive sample was drawn of 12 individuals with an emphasis on interviewing those working in senior roles who are familiar with humanitarian action and/or with the technicalities of facilitating self-reliance and integration. See the bibliography for a list of the interviewees.

Desk review: The information that was gathered through the refugee survey and the stakeholder interviews was analysed and developed through a desk review of relevant literature relating to the findings and the context.

Data collection: All interviews were conducted by the researcher, with interviews of NGO/UN/Municipal officials taking place in English since this is the language that is predominately used in professional meetings in Athens. Audio recording was used to allow for preparation of the transcripts, which were reviewed for content analysis.

Among the refugees, interpreters speaking Arabic, Farsi/Dari and French were used. The interpreters were from the NGO CARE. Based on prior experience with these interpreters the researcher was confident in the quality of the interpretation.

Data analysis: Data analysis was organised around particular topics or themes that had been identified during the contextual analysis for the research.⁶ These themes were further developed through a content analysis of the interview and survey findings.⁷ Grounded theory was used based on Strauss and Corbin's conditional matrix.⁸ Starting with open coding to allow new themes to emerge and to categorize new data, the analysis transitioned to axial coding to make connections between categories and sub-categories.

For the refugee survey, an initial codebook was developed with the questionnaire and the codes were included in the survey database.

Ethical approval: This research received ethical approval from the University having undergone a rigorous review process. All interview respondents were asked to sign a detailed consent form that was translated into their first language and that gave them the option to withdraw from the interview at any time. They also selected whether they could be quoted and named, quoted anonymously or not quoted at all. Five respondents requested to review and approve the quotes that they had given prior to submission.

Limitations: The UNHCR factsheet on Greece for February 2018 estimated that there were 39,800 refugees on mainland Greece.⁹ Therefore a representative sample size for the refugees, with a margin of error of 5 per cent and a confidence level of 95 per cent would be 381,¹⁰ which is beyond the scope of this research. Having a small sample size though has been found to enhance the validity of in-depth inquiry.¹¹ Even when refugees originate from one nationality or ethnic group they are far from homogenous, having vastly different qualities, experiences and motivations. The refugee survey identified the core challenges and opportunities that corresponded to the attainment of self-reliance and integration in Athens. These will be applicable to the majority of refugees who will remain in mainland Greece.

5 Dale Buscher, 'Case identification: challenges posed by urban refugees' (*Annual Tripartite Consultations on resettlement, NGO Note for the agenda item*, 2003) www.refworld.org/docid/5215bbf44.html (accessed 17 Mar. 2018).

6 Florian Kohlbacher, 'The use of qualitative content analysis in case study research' (2006) 7(1) FQS (citing Jean Hartley 'Case study research' in Catherine Cassell & Gillian Symon (eds.) *Essential guide to qualitative methods in organizational research* (Sage, 2004), 323).

7 David E. Gray, *Doing Research in the Real World* (Sage, 2014), 607.

8 Anselm L Strauss and Juliet M Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, cited in David E. Gray, *Doing Research in the Real World* (Sage, 2014).
Arlene Fink, *How to conduct surveys: a step-by-step guide* (Sage, 2013).

9 UNHCR Fact sheet Greece 1–28 February (28 Feb. 2018), <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/62950> (accessed 4 Apr. 2018).

10 'Check Market, Sample size calculator', <https://www.checkmarket.com/sample-size-calculator/> (accessed 4 Apr. 2018).

11 Helena Harrison, Melanie Birks, Richard Franklin and Jane Mills 'Case study research: foundations and methodological orientations' (2017) 18(1) FQS Art.19, www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/2655/4080 (accessed 20 Mar. 2017).

2. Context

2.1 *History of the refugee influx in Greece*

During 2015 and early 2016, 856,723 refugees crossed by boat from Turkey into Greece, with the vast majority continuing on to northern Europe.¹² However, on 9 March 2016, the Republic of Macedonia sealed its border with Greece, closing what had become known as the 'Balkan route'.¹³ Eleven days later, on 20 March, a Statement negotiated between the European Union and Turkey – often referred to as the 'EU/Turkey Deal' – was initially effective in meeting its objective of reducing the flow of refugees into Greece.¹⁴ Individuals arriving on the Greek islands after the agreement are instructed to remain on the island of arrival. They retain the right to apply for asylum, but the agreement provides for the return of all new irregular migrants and asylum seekers whose applications are declared inadmissible or unfounded.¹⁵

For refugees who were confined to mainland Greece by the closure of the border, the future was uncertain. Many gathered in camps that were hastily opened by the military while others congregated in the urban centres.¹⁶ By March 2017, the Greek authorities estimated that from the influx that began in 2015, 62,434 refugees and migrants remained in Greece, with 23,487 living in accommodation rented by UNHCR and NGOs, 11,158 in camps, and 2,291 in state-run facilities (including reception and pre-removal centres). The figure included an estimated 7,850 refugees who are said to be 'self-settled',¹⁷ meaning that they had rented their own accommodation or that they are living in squats (illegally occupied buildings).

2.2 *Legal framework for asylum in Greece*

The 1951 Refugee Convention relating to the Status of Refugees – which Greece ratified in 1960 – outlines the legal obligations of States to protect refugees.¹⁸ Articles 2 to 32 of the Convention define the legal rights that States should grant to refugees who are on their territory, and Article 34 holds that States 'shall, as far as possible, facilitate the integration and naturalization of refugees'.

Refugees also have rights that stem from human rights law and from regional legal frameworks. In the European Union, the 1951 Refugee Convention is elaborated through the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). This harmonises the interpretation and application of the Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol across the Member States.¹⁹ It is binding on Greece, as it is on all Member States with the exception of Denmark, the United Kingdom and Ireland, the latter two being bound by the first phase instruments only.²⁰ Its provisions are contained in a number of Directives and Regulations, which for the most part have been transposed into Greek law. The following section explores how asylum seekers are received, granted international protection and provided for under Greek asylum legislation.

Reception conditions: The term 'reception conditions' refers to the provisions that host countries make for asylum-seekers from the time they apply for asylum. The CEAS Reception Conditions Directive (recast) 2013 aims to establish 'a dignified standard of living and comparable living conditions for applicants of international protection in all Member States'.²¹ It also introduces the concept of detention. It has not been transposed into national law in Greece. However, Presidential Decree 220/2007 lays down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers, including for example, the right to employment (Article 10), housing, food and clothing, provided in kind, or as financial allowances (Article 12), and accommodation in reception centres (Article 13).²²

Qualification as a beneficiary of international protection: The CEAS Qualification Directive (recast) 2011 defines the 'standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international

12 UNHCR, 'Refugee and Migrants Sea arrivals in Europe' (Dec. 2016) <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/53447> (accessed 10 Feb. 2017).

13 Nick Squires, Matthew Holehouse and Colin Freeman, 'Macedonia closes its border "completely" to migrants', *Daily Telegraph* (9 Mar. 2016) www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/macedonia/12188826/Macedonia-closes-its-border-completely-to-migrants.html (accessed 10 June 2017).

14 Between 01/04/16 – 19/11/17 47,917 crossed to Greece from Turkey (European Commission, 'Seventh Report on the Progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement' (Sept. 2017) COM92017 470 final).

15 European Commission, 'Seventh Report on the Progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement' (Sept. 2017) COM92017 470 final.

16 Refugee Rights Data Project, 'Life in limbo: filling data gaps relating to refugees and displaced people in Greece' (2016), http://refugeerights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/RRDP_LifeInLimbo.pdf (accessed 24 Aug. 2017).

17 Greek Ministry of Digital Policy, Media and Telecommunications, 'Summary Statement of refugee Flows' (14 Mar. 2017), <http://mindigital.gr/index.php/προσφυγικό-ζήτημα-refugee-crisis/1050-summary-statement-of-refugee-flows-14-03-2017> (accessed 24 Mar. 2017).

18 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees [1951] 189 UNTS 150 (hereinafter the 1951 Refugee Convention), amended by the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, 606 UNTS 267.

19 European Asylum Support Office, 'An Introduction to the Common European Asylum System for Courts and Tribunals: A Judicial Analysis' (2016) <https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/public/BZ0216138ENN.PDF> (accessed 27 May 2017).

20 Ibid.

21 Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection [2013] OJ L 180/96.

22 Presidential Decree 220/2007 The transposition into the Greek legislation of Council Directive 2003/9/EC Laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers [2007] A251/13.11.2007.

protection.²³ It is transposed into Greek national law through Presidential Decree 141/2013.²⁴ Under this Decree, those who are granted refugee or subsidiary protection status are provided with a three-year renewable residence permit (Article 24). They are also authorised to engage in employment and vocational training (Article 27), and they receive necessary social assistance (Article 30) and healthcare (Article 31), and minors are granted access to education (Article 28). These provisions are made under the same conditions as Greek nationals.

Law L4375/2016: Until 2016, the main laws relating to asylum in Greece were Presidential Decrees 220/2007 and 141/2013. However, in 2016 Greek Law L4375/2016 made modifications to these decrees and defined the structures that would enable it to respond to the crisis.²⁵ It also transposed the CEAS Asylum Procedures Directive (recast) 2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection. Under the provisions set out in this law, 16,847 asylum seekers were granted refugee status and 2,217 had received subsidiary protection status by December 2017.²⁶

Law L4375/2016 also contains provisions on the organisation and operation of the Asylum Service, the Appeals Authority, the Reception and Identification Service, the establishment of the General Secretariat for Reception, and a Directorate for Social Integration. It also guarantees the right to employment for beneficiaries of international protection under the same conditions as nationals.

Family reunification and relocation: The primary legal routes from Greece to other European countries are via family reunification and via relocation. Under Dublin²⁷ III Regulation No 604/2013 there were 18,881 requests for family reunification, resulting in 13,290 acceptances by Member States and 8,378 transfers by the end of March 2018.²⁸ The EU Council also took two emergency Decisions in September 2015 to establish a relocation scheme to alleviate pressure on Italy and Greece.²⁹ Through this scheme, 66,400 asylum seekers were to be relocated from Greece to other Member States. However, at the end of 2017, the scheme had closed with only 21,700 (33 per cent) refugees being relocated.³⁰

Given the scale of the influx into Europe and into Greece in particular, these legal routes to other Member States are important factors in increasing Greece's capacity to absorb and integrate refugees who will remain in Greece in the longer term.

2.3 Response to the refugee influx in Greece

2.3.1 Funding for the refugee response, refugee reception and integration

States have a duty to protect refugees on their territory but they often lack the capacity to meet the needs of refugees single-handedly, particularly in the case of a large-scale influx. By 2015, when the refugee influx was escalating, Greece had experienced five years of austerity³¹ and did not have the infrastructure or resources to cope, leading Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras to make a plea to the EU in August of that year for assistance.³²

23 Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (recast) [2011] OJ L 337/9.

24 Presidential Decree 141/2013 on the transposition into the Greek legislation of Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 (L 337) on minimum standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection and for the content of the protection granted (recast) [2013] A226/21–10–2013.

25 Law 4375/2016 on the organisation and operation of the Asylum Service, the Appeals Authority, the Reception and Identification Service, the establishment of the General Secretariat for Reception, the transposition into Greek legislation of the provisions of Directive 2013/32/EC 'on common procedures for granting and withdrawing the status of international protection (recast)' (L 180/29.6.2013), provisions on the employment of beneficiaries of international protection and other provisions, [2016].

26 Asylum Service, 'Statistical Data of the Greek Asylum Service from 7.6.2013 to 31.03.2018' (Asylum Service, 5 Apr. 2018) http://asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Greek_Asylum_Service_Statistical_Data_EN.pdf (accessed 12 Apr. 2018).

27 Regulation (EU) 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person (recast) [2013] L180/31.

28 Asylum Service, 'Statistical Data of the Greek Asylum Service from 7.6.2013 to 31.03.2018' (Asylum Service, 3 Apr. 2018) http://asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Dublin-stats_march18EN.pdf (accessed 12 Apr. 2018).

29 Council Decision (EU) 2015/1523 of 14 September 2015 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and of Greece, Relocation Decision I', No. 2015/1523, [2015] OJ L. 239/146, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AJOL_2015_239_R_0011 and Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 of 22 September 2015 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece, Relocation Decision II' [2015] OJ L. 248/80, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32015D1601> (accessed 16 Oct. 2017).

30 UNHCR, 'Europe Monthly Report, December 2017' (14 Feb. 2018), <https://data2.unhcr.org/es/documents/download/61936> (accessed 16 Feb. 2018).

31 Jack Rasmus, 'Still More Austerity Imposed in Greece', *Global Research* (11 Jan. 2018), <https://www.globalresearch.ca/still-more-austerity-imposed-in-greece/5625779> (accessed 17 Jan 2018).

32 Michele Kambas and Staphanie Nebahay 'Greece says cannot handle migrants; UNHCR calls crisis 'shameful', *Reuters* (7 Aug. 2015), <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-europe-migrants-greece/greece-says-cannot-handle-migrants-unhcr-calls-crisis-shameful-idUKKCN0QC10S20150807> (accessed 2 Jan. 2018).

The European Commission took the Decision in April 2016 to release €300 million from the EU budget for emergency assistance.³³ By January 2018 this had risen to €440 million.³⁴ This emergency assistance falls under the Regulation for the Provision of Emergency Support within the Union.³⁵ Within the EU, there are a number of Directorates General, each with responsibility for specific policy areas and with different funding mechanisms at their disposal. This assistance is administered by the EU's Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and is allocated to UN bodies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement and NGOs. It was earmarked to provide 'a needs-based response aimed at preserving life, and preventing and alleviating human suffering',³⁶ and the 'Operational Priorities', which were developed by ECHO covered basic needs assistance, food aid, shelter, protection, educational services, healthcare, and water, sanitation and hygiene.³⁷ Activities that foster longer-term integration such as language lessons and vocational training do not fall under the Emergency Support Regulation, although the third rendition of the Operational Priorities³⁸ did encompass non-formal education and this was funded at a small scale.³⁹

A further €361.8 million in emergency funding was allocated directly to the Greek authorities through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) which is administered by the EU's Directorate General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG-HOME). The government has used this for the development and maintenance of state systems, rather than for the activities that might be necessary for refugee integration.⁴⁰ Some of the funds were provided through the Internal Security Fund (ISF), which is primarily used for border management with a small percentage going to the police.⁴¹

These emergency funding streams were in addition to €509.4 million that had been allocated to Greece for national programmes for the period 2014–2020, €322.8 million from AMIF and €238.2 million from ISF. Greece developed numerous national strategic priorities for the use of this fund, many of which relate to increasing reception capacity and strengthening policy on returns.⁴² One priority focused on integration projects with an emphasis on linguistic and vocational training, education, information, and the promotion of inter-culturalism.⁴³

However, none of the national AMIF funds that were available to Greece were used in 2015, and only 2 per cent was used in 2016.⁴⁴ The Greek Ombudsman remarks that the fund was not absorbed due to administrative issues between state ministries that were handing over responsibilities for the management of the fund.⁴⁵ Slominski and Trauner however, suggest that the non-uptake of the fund indicates strategic non-use on the part of the Greek state due to a fear of a potential influx of transfers from the other Member States under the Dublin Regulation.⁴⁶

In 2011, the European Court of Human Rights had suspended returns to Greece after finding in the case of *M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece* that asylum conditions in Greece were so bad that asylum seekers could face a risk of serious breach of the rights which are guaranteed under the Charter of Fundamental Rights.⁴⁷ It was not until March 2017 that the restriction on returning refugees to Greece under the Dublin Regulation was lifted.⁴⁸ Regardless of the reasons

33 Commission Decision ECHO/-EU/BUD/2016/01000 15.4.2016 on the financing of emergency support in favour of the affected Member States in response to the current influx of refugees and migrants into the Union to be financed from the 2016 general budget [2016] C(2016) 2214 final, http://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/emergency_support_financing_decision.pdf (accessed 10 Oct. 2017).

34 European Commission, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, Greece: Facts and Figures (2 Apr. 2018), https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/europe/greece_en (accessed 5 Apr. 2018).

35 Council Regulation (EU) 2016/369 of the 15th March 2016 on the provision of emergency support within the Union, Official Journal of the European Union [2016] L70/1, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016R0369&from=EN> (accessed 10 Jan. 2018).

36 Commission Decision ECHO/-EU/BUD/2016/01000 15.4.2016 on the financing of emergency support in favour of the affected Member States in response to the current influx of refugees and migrants into the Union to be financed from the 2016 general budget [2016] C(2016) 2214 final, http://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/emergency_support_financing_decision.pdf (accessed 10 Oct. 2017).

37 European Commission, Emergency Support Financing Decision, Operational Priorities [17 June 2016] Ares (2016) 2834625 – 17/06/2016, <http://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/esop.pdf>; European Commission, Emergency Support Financing Decision, Operational Priorities [5th July 2017] 3390839 – 06/07/2017, https://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/dg_echo_esop_2017_second_round_v2.pdf (accessed 8 Sep. 2017).

38 European Commission, Emergency Support Financing Decision, Operational Priorities [5th July 2017] 2017) 3390839 – 06/07/2017, https://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/dg_echo_esop_2017_second_round_v2.pdf (accessed 8 Sep. 2017).

39 Interview with Yorgos Kapranis, ECHO Advisor (EU Delegation Office, 1 Mar. 2018).

40 European Commission 'Managing the Refugee Crisis: EU Financial Support to Greece' (26 July 2017), https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20170726_factsheetmanagingrefugee_crisis_eu_financial_support_greece_en.pdf (accessed 4 Jan. 2017).

41 Ibid.

42 Ministry of Finance, 'Greece National Programme AMIF 2014–2020', www.amifsf.gr/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Programme_2014GR65AMNP001_4_4_el.pdf (accessed 2 February 2018).

43 Ibid.

44 Annual Report of the National Programme of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund 2016, Table 3, cited in (The Greek Ombudsman, Migration flows and refugee protection: Administrative challenges and human rights issues (Apr. 2017)).

45 The Greek Ombudsman, Migration flows and refugee protection: Administrative challenges and human rights issues (Apr. 2017).

46 Peter Slominski and Florain Trauner, 'How do Member States Return Unwanted Migrants? The Strategic (non-)use of 'Europe' during the Migration Crisis' (2017) 56(1) *JCMS* 101,113.

47 *M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece* Application no. 30696/09 (EctHR, 21 Jan. 2011).

48 Commission Recommendation No 604/2013 of 8th December 2016 addressed to the Member States on the resumption of transfers to Greece under Regulation (EU) No. 604/2013 [2016] C(2016) 8524 final.

why Greece did not utilise the AMIF funds, the case of *M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece* demonstrates that Greece was not equipped to receive refugees in any number at the time that the major influx began in 2015.

2.3.2 Roles and responsibilities in the refugee response

Betts suggests that the global refugee regime encompasses the rules, norms, principles, and decision-making procedures that govern the responses of states to refugees, and this responsibility functions in conjunction with UNHCR's supervisory responsibility for ensuring that states meet their obligations toward refugees.⁴⁹

UNHCR's supervisory role is defined at Article 35 of the 1951 Refugee Convention.⁵⁰ This provides the legal basis for the obligation of States to accept UNHCR's responsibility in providing international protection to asylum seekers and refugees.⁵¹ UNHCR's initial mandate was one of monitoring the Refugee Convention and scrutinising state practice, but since the 1990s its role has expanded with it taking on an increasing role in humanitarian relief.⁵² Kälin argues that the different activities that UNHCR carries out in its field activities, including protection work and leadership and coordination in refugee responses are encompassed within its supervision role.⁵³

Among the actions that the Greek Government took the lead on in response to the influx were: expansion of the Asylum Service;⁵⁴ building camps and the hotspots on the islands and management of the majority of them; and the provision of the food in those locations;⁵⁵ plus the enrolment of over 5000 refugee children into Greek schools.⁵⁶

The cornerstone of UNHCR's assistance on mainland Greece is the 'Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation' (ESTIA) programme, which was established at the request of the Government in order to provide better reception conditions for asylum seekers.⁵⁷ The programme is funded under the emergency assistance that is administered by ECHO. It provides accommodation in rented apartments and hotels and cash assistance on a monthly basis that covers basic needs.⁵⁸ By March 2018 seven NGOs and nine municipalities were providing 22,382 individual places, of which 14,138 were in Athens.⁵⁹ Initially the accommodation programme targeted refugees who were due to be relocated but in July 2016 it was extended to asylum seekers and refugees who will remain in Greece.⁶⁰ In February 2018, 41,387 refugees and asylum seekers were receiving monthly cash assistance in Greece through the programme.⁶¹

Civil society organisations have played an extensive role in supporting refugees in Greece. The term 'civil society' in this research encompasses Greek organisations that were active before the influx, carrying out social projects for Greek citizens, migrants and refugees. It also encompasses International NGOs (INGOs) who arrived during 2015 to implement humanitarian programmes in response to the influx. Some of these organisations are adapting their programmes to support refugee integration. In Athens, the Municipal Coordination Centre for Migrants and Refugees counts over 70 civil society actors including both national and international organisations that are providing a range of support to refugees with specific needs such as legal assistance, psychological support and Greek language classes.⁶²

2.3.3 Transition to national programmes

At the end of 2018 ECHO will leave Greece⁶³ and the ESTIA programme will move to governmental management.⁶⁴ It is not yet decided if it will function as one programme, or a multitude of programmes, if it will transition to municipalities, or to a centralised system that uses municipalities as partners.⁶⁵ Although the programme is evolving into a reception

49 Alexander Betts, 'The normative terrain of the global refugee regime' (2015) 29(4) *EIA* 363, 363.

50 Article 35, Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees [1951] 189 UNTS 150 (hereinafter the 1951 Refugee Convention), amended by the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, 606 UNTS 267.

51 Walter Kälin, 'Supervising the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees: Article 35 and beyond', in Erika Feller, Volker Türk and Frances Nicholson (eds.), *Refugee Protection in International Law: UNHCR's Global Consultations on International Protection* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 619.

52 Alexander Betts, 'The refugee regime complex' (2010) 29(1) *RSQ* 12, 30.

53 Kälin, 'Supervising the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees', 615.

54 Hellenic Republic 'Refugees in Greece: Integration efforts, remaining challenges' (25 Nov. 2017), www.greeknewsagenda.gr/index.php/topics/politics-polity/6570-refugees-in-greece-integration-efforts-remaining-challenges (accessed 14 Feb. 2018).

55 UNHCR, 'Site Profiles Greece' (June 2017), <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/58471> (accessed 18 Oct. 2017).

56 UNHCR, 'RMRP 2017 Q3 Update' (Jan-Sept. 2017) 1, 3, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/61150> (accessed 10 Oct. 2017).

57 Interview with senior UNHCR representative (UNHCR Office Athens, 28 Mar. 2018).

58 UNHCR, The Greece Cash Alliance 'Meeting basic needs through a harmonized partnership system for cash assistance' (24 Nov. 2017), <http://estia.unhcr.gr/en/the-greece-cash-alliance-meeting-basic-needs-through-a-harmonized-partnership-system-for-cash-assistance/> (accessed 12 Feb. 2018).

59 UNHCR, 'Greece Accommodation Update' (Mar. 2018), <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63081> (accessed 12 Apr. 2018).

60 UNHCR, 'Greece: Accommodation Update' (Sept. 2017), <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/60397> (accessed 13 Nov. 2017).

61 UNHCR, 'Greece Cash Assistance' (February 2018), <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/62612> (accessed 12 Apr. 2018).

62 Athens Coordination Centre for Migrant and Refugee Issues, 'Coordination in Support of Integration', <https://www.accmr.gr/en/the-athens-coordination-center.html> (accessed 8 Feb. 2018).

63 European Commission, 'Management Plan 2018: Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations' (22 Dec. 2017) Ares(2017)6352929 1, 19, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/management-plan-echo-2018_en.pdf (accessed 12 Feb. 2018).

64 Interview with Senior UNHCR representative (UNHCR Office Athens, 28th Mar. 2018).

65 *Ibid.*

service, to date ECHO has provided the funding, hence recognised refugees are transitioning away from ‘humanitarian assistance’, rather than from ‘reception services’.

When the asylum seekers receive refugee status, theoretically they lose their eligibility to receive support under the ESTIA programme. The UNHCR Fact Sheet on Greece for November 2017 notes that:

The increased number of recognized refugees translates into a pressing need to support their transition from the assistance they received as asylum-seekers to the national programmes they are eligible for in Greece on the same terms and conditions as Greek nationals. To facilitate this transition, UNHCR with the Government and relevant actors have agreed on a transitional period of some months during which recognized refugees can access cash assistance and accommodation on a case-by-case basis.⁶⁶

The transitional grace period is echoed in the Ministry of Migration’s Guiding Principles that accompany its Financial Plan for 2018, which states: ‘Beneficiaries of international protection will continue being supported by the current Emergency Support Instrument support scheme for [6 months] after they have been legally granted asylum’.⁶⁷

One NGO Manager has noted that in reality, recognised refugees have not transitioned out of the programme. ‘We have gotten those communiqués before and I’ve seen them pass. We host people who have refugee status and then they get given another six months. I would like some more definitive timelines.’⁶⁸

By the time recognised refugees’ transition out of the programme, whether this is after ‘some months’ or after ‘six months’, some of them should have attained some degree of self-reliance, which is a central element of refugee integration. For those who have not, the assistance should ideally transition to social welfare programmes. These should be comparable to that which a Greek citizen is entitled.⁶⁹ However, Greece has no social housing scheme and the primary social welfare mechanism, the Social Solidarity Income (SSI) scheme,⁷⁰ is difficult to access with administrative requirements that refugees struggle to fulfil, such as having a bank account, having submitted a tax return and having a rental contract that has been approved by the tax authorities.⁷¹ The SSI scheme provides a maximum monthly income of €200 for the first adult, €100 for the second adult and €50 per minor, combined with complementary social services.⁷²

This section has examined the mechanisms for channelling funding from the EU into the refugee response, the responsibilities of the key stakeholders in providing the refugees with protection and support, and how, with the absence of social housing and with difficulties in accessing social welfare, it will be challenging to transition refugees away from the ESTIA programme. It would be ideal if the refugees have attained self-reliance or capacity to become self-reliant so that can meet their basic needs. To explore the feasibility and likelihood of this, the following section examines conceptual and practical realities related to refugee integration and self-reliance and how the transition from humanitarian assistance to national social welfare programmes has occurred in other contexts.

3. Transitioning from refugee assistance to self-reliance: conceptual and practical realities

To better understand how refugees integrate and achieve self-reliance, section 3 explores how these are conceptualised and facilitated. It also considers the coping strategies that refugees might adopt if they have not attained sustainable and dignified livelihoods. Finally, it considers challenges in the transition from humanitarian assistance in other contexts. It finds that there is potential for a protection gap to form, but that this has been avoided by transferring certain responsibilities from states to UN agencies. This can be particularly helpful when there are challenges in translating legal rights into true entitlements.

66 UNHCR, ‘Fact Sheet on Greece for 1st–30th November’ (Nov. 2017), <http://donors.unhcr.gr/en/unhcr-greece-factsheet-november-2017/> (accessed 30 Dec. 2017).

67 Ministry of Migration, ‘Financial Plan for 2018: Guiding Principles’ (Jan. 2018), distributed to ECHO partners by email in January 2018.

68 Interview with Joshua Kyller, Country Director, Catholic Relief Services (Catholic Relief Services Office, 16 Mar. 2018).

69 Article 30 of Presidential Decree 141/2013 on the transposition into the Greek legislation of Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 (L 337) on minimum standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection and for the content of the protection granted (recast) [2013] A226/21–10–2013.

70 Ziomas Dinitris, Antoinette Capalla and Danai Konstantindou ‘The national roll-out of the “Social Solidarity Income” scheme in Greece’ (European Commission, July 2017), ESPN Flash Report 2017/68.

71 Interview with Dimitra Sairsou and Dimitis Voutirakis, social workers, Greek Council for Refugees (Greek Council for Refugees office, 14 Mar. 2018); interview with Evanthia Botsolou, accountant, CARE Greece (CARE office Athens, 15 Feb. 2018). See 4.2.1 for more details about opening a bank account in Greece.

72 European Commission, ‘The national roll-out of the “Social Solidarity Income” scheme in Greece’, (July 2017) ESPN Flash Report 2017/68, ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=18246&langId=en (accessed 10 Oct. 2017).

3.1 Refugee integration and self-reliance

Local integration, hereafter abbreviated to 'integration', has multiple dimensions. It is one of the solutions to displacement that is promoted in UNHCR's durable solutions framework.⁷³ To conceptualise it, it is necessary to reflect on how it is defined, when the process of integration begins and concludes, how it is measured, and who facilitates it.

UNHCR defines integration as '... a complex and gradual process with legal, economic, and social and cultural dimensions that imposes considerable demands on both the individual and the receiving society', and notes that 'in many cases, the culmination of the process is to acquire the nationality of the country of asylum'.⁷⁴

The three dimensions include a legal process whereby refugees are granted a range of entitlements and rights which are broadly commensurate with those enjoyed by citizens, an economic process whereby refugees attain a growing degree of self-reliance and become capable of pursuing sustainable livelihoods, thus contributing to the economic life of the host country, and finally, a social and cultural process whereby refugees acclimatize and become able to live amongst or alongside the host society.⁷⁵

The process of integration begins upon arrival in the host state,⁷⁶ and it has been argued that recipients of international protection, who will remain in a country, should be supported to integrate as soon as possible, as not doing so can impair their ability to integrate in the long-term.⁷⁷ Although naturalisation⁷⁸ marks a conclusion in the integration process, it is not an essential outcome.⁷⁹ Even when full integration is not a viable solution, self-reliance should be vigorously pursued, as should the refugee wish to voluntarily repatriate, it facilitates their sustainable reintegration.⁸⁰ Furthermore, even beneficiaries of subsidiary protection – who should receive a residency permit valid for at least one year and, in case of renewal, for at least two years⁸¹ – should be facilitated to integrate, as their need for international protection is equally as compelling and frequently as long as it is for refugees.⁸² As such, being afforded opportunities to better integrate is highly valuable since it contributes to the achievement of self-reliance.

UNHCR defines self-reliance as; '... the social and economic ability of an individual, a household or a community to meet essential needs in a sustainable manner and with dignity'.⁸³ This understanding of self-reliance is oriented toward the economic dimension of integration. However, a research brief on self-reliance that was produced by the Refugee Studies Centre found that academic and policy literature often focuses on economic outcomes at the expense of the social and political dimensions,⁸⁴ thus demonstrating that to support a refugee to attain self-reliance, other aspects of their integration need to be taken into consideration.

A central feature of refugee integration is that it is a two-way process requiring effort from both the host society and the refugee.⁸⁵ The refugee will actively and selectively control certain aspects of their integration,⁸⁶ and it is conceivable that while some refugees will be keen to integrate, others may not see its value, because, for example, they do not intend to stay in the host country for longer than necessary, or they are not willing to invest the time in learning the host language.

73 UNHCR, 'Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern' (May 2003), www.refworld.org/docid/4124b6a04.html (accessed 12 Nov. 2017).

74 UNHCR, 'Note on the Integration of Refugees in the European Union' (May 2007), 1, 2, www.refworld.org/docid/463b24d52.html (accessed 8 Jan. 2018).

75 UNHCR, 'A New Beginning; Refugee integration in Europe' (Sept. 2013), 1, 15.

76 Stephen Castles, Maja Korac, Ellie Vasta, Steven Vertovec, 'Integration Mapping the Field' (2002) Home Office Online Report 29/03, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218135832/http://rds.../rdsolr2803.doc> (accessed 12 Nov. 2017).

77 OECD, 'Making integration work: refugees and others in need of protection' (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2016) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264251236-en> (accessed 10 Nov. 2017), 1, 13.

78 Naturalisation can be defined as 'any acquisition after birth of a citizenship not previously held by the person concerned that requires application to public authorities and a decision by these' (T. Molnár, 'A fresh examination of facilitated naturalisation as a solution for stateless persons', in L. van Waas and M.J. Khanna (eds.), *Solving statelessness* (Nijmegen: Wolf Legal Publishers, 2016), 225–58).

79 Stephen Castles, Maja Korac, Ellie Vasta, Steven Vertovec, 'Integration mapping the field' (2002) Home Office Online Report 29/03, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218135832/http://rds.../rdsolr2803.doc> (accessed 12 Nov. 2017).

80 UNHCR, 'Local Integration and Self-Reliance' (2 June 2005) EC/55/SC/CRP.15 [31(j)], www.refworld.org/docid/478b3ce12.html (accessed 10 Feb. 2018).

81 Article 24(2) Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (recast) [2011] OJ L 337/9.

82 UNHCR, 'Note on the Integration of Refugees in the European Union' (May 2007) 1, 2, www.refworld.org/docid/463b24d52.html (accessed 8 Jan. 2018).

83 UNHCR, 'Handbook for Self-Reliance' (August, 2005) First edition, www.refworld.org/docid/4a54bbf40.html (accessed 19 Jan. 2018).

84 Refugee Studies Centre, 'Refugee self-reliance, moving beyond the marketplace' (Oxford University Refugee Studies Centre Research in Brief 7, Oct. 2017).

85 Sergio Carrera and Anais Faure Atger, 'Integration as a two-way process in the EU? Assessing the relationship between the European Integration Fund and the Common Basic Principles on Integration' (2011) Centre for European Policy Studies, <https://www.ceps.eu/system/files/book/2011/07/Integration%20as%20a%20Two-way%20Process.pdf> (accessed 22 Oct. 2017).

86 UNHCR, 'A New Beginning; Refugee integration in Europe' (Sept. 2013), 1, 13.

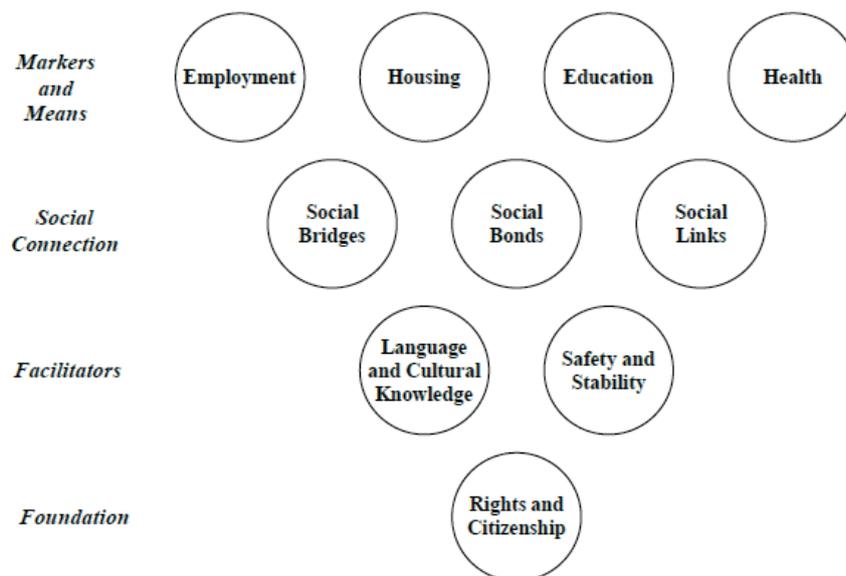
3.2 Facilitating integration and self-reliance

Local government, municipal authorities and civil society play a particularly prominent role in facilitating refugee integration and self-reliance,⁸⁷ and several academics assert that humanitarian actors should develop closer working relationships with mayors and municipal authorities so that the needs of the displaced are captured in urban planning.⁸⁸ Kihato has argued that the most effective engagement between humanitarians and local authorities often come when humanitarians recognise local authorities' interests and incentives and develop strategies to align them with protection concerns.⁸⁹ While Kihato has argued that humanitarian actors need to engage better with municipal authorities this is also needed from other civil society actors who aim to support refugee integration. These actors will play a profound part in creating conditions conducive that are to the social and labour market integration and can that help to build ties between refugees and host-country communities, contributing to social cohesion.⁹⁰

3.3 Indicators of integration and self-reliance

There have been several attempts to describe the economic, social and cultural dimensions of refugee integration.⁹¹ In 2004 Ager and Strang – in a report that was commissioned by the United Kingdom's Home Office – conceptualised it as a set of ten interrelated domains. The domains are organised under four headings (see the following diagram).⁹² Each of the domains has approximately ten sub-indicators which, when measured, can be used to determine the extent to which integration has been achieved. For example, under the domain employment, the sub-indicators include the mean length of time before securing employment after being granted refugee status, reported satisfaction with employment amongst refugees, and the employment rates of refugees (compared with the general population).

Conceptual framework defining core domains of integration



The conceptual framework does not suggest a clear 'process' of integration and the way the domains are presented should not be taken to suggest a hierarchy, as there are complex interactions between them.⁹³ Ager and Strang suggest the best use of the framework is to provide a sound basis for dialogue around issues of integration policy and practice.⁹⁴

The remainder of this section considers core elements of the framework that contribute to self-reliance, these being language proficiency, employment, and the role of social connections in supporting self-reliance. The interactions between these aspects are fundamental to demonstrating the lack of utility in analysing any of the domains in isolation.

87 Dia Anagnostou, 'Local government and migrant integration in Europe and in Greece' (2016) Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy EEA GR07/3808, www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/LOMIGRAS.report.No1-1.pdf (accessed 18 Nov. 2017).

88 Jeff Crisp, Tim Morris and Hilde Refstie, 'Displacement in urban areas: new challenges, new partnerships' (2012) 36(1) *Disasters* 23, 26; Jessica Brant and Kemal Kirisci 'In rethinking refuge, draw lessons from Turkey', (Brookings Institute, 2018), <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/01/25/in-rethinking-refuge-draw-lessons-from-turkey/> (accessed 2 Feb. 2018).

89 Caroline Kihato and Loren Landau, 'Stealth humanitarianism: negotiating politics, precarity and performance management in protecting the urban displaced' (2016) 30(3) *JRS* 407, 410

90 OECD, 'Making integration work', 1, 13.

91 Ager and Strang, 'Indicators of integration: final report', 1, 13; Rob Bijl and Arjen Verweij (eds.) *Measuring and monitoring immigrant integration in Europe* (The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, 2012), 1, 35.

92 Ager and Strang, 'Indicators of integration: final report', 1, 13.

93 Ager and Strang, 'Indicators of integration: final report', 1, 13.

94 *Ibid.*, 2.

3.3.1 Proficiency in the host language

Being able to speak the main language of the host community is central to the integration process;⁹⁵ and is key to attaining employment. In a 2010 exploratory study that was aimed at identifying predictors of employment for 47 refugees living in the greater Brisbane area in Australia, Hebbani and Preece found that the only predictor that increased the odds of being employed was spoken English language proficiency.⁹⁶ Conversely, in 2013, a longitudinal study that investigated predictors of employment among 233 adult refugee men living in South-East Queensland found that English language proficiency was not a significant predictor when others such as age, place of settlement and access to transportation were controlled.⁹⁷

Regarding language learning, Hou and Beiser, in a longitudinal study of 608 Southeast Asian refugees in Canada that lasted ten years, found that although demographic characteristics and pre-immigration academic achievement were the major factors determining English-language proficiency during the early years of resettlement, post-migration opportunities and incentives, such as sponsorship, became increasingly important over time.⁹⁸ The study also found that the most rapid improvement in language proficiency occurred during the early years of resettlement.⁹⁹

Although pre-immigration achievement is a major factor in determining newly learnt language proficiency, a study by Benseman that analysed the learning needs and issues of adult refugees who had low language and literacy skills found that as these developed, the refugees also developed knowledge about their new environment that enabled them to undertake daily tasks in their community with increasing confidence.¹⁰⁰ However, it was also found that psychological trauma among refugees can impede and delay the rate of progress, compared with other learners.¹⁰¹

3.3.2 Employment

Employment has consistently been identified as a factor that influences how successfully a refugee will integrate. While jobs enable self-reliance, they also enable refugees to meet members of the host society, providing an opportunity to develop language skills, and contributing to restoring self-esteem.¹⁰²

UNHCR recommends that to reduce the vulnerability and their long-term reliance on humanitarian and external assistance, Persons of Concern (PoCs) should be supported with livelihood development and strengthening.¹⁰³ Krause argues that if humanitarian and political actors are providing livelihoods support for refugees, they should also address the systemic issues that create barriers to work for them.¹⁰⁴ For example, Correa-Velez et al. argue that employers should be informed about refugee capabilities and the value of their qualifications,¹⁰⁵ and Wake and Barbelet suggest that livelihoods interventions should also be based on an analysis of the support that refugees receive through their social networks.¹⁰⁶ Krause suggests that humanitarian organisations should be cautious of transferring the responsibility for achieving self-reliance onto the refugees because self-reliance risks becoming a political tool to reduce aid, while simultaneously, factors such as a lack of economic opportunities, inequality and discrimination go unacknowledged or even accepted.¹⁰⁷

3.3.3 Social connections

'Social connections' are subdivided into the domains of social bonds, social bridges, and social links. These relate to connections within refugee communities and with the host community and strong social connections are well recognised as correlating with improved economic outcomes and emotional wellbeing.¹⁰⁸

95 Ager and Strang, 'Indicators of integration: final report', 1, 13; Michael Collyer, Rupert Brown, Linda Morrice and Linda Tip, 'Putting refugees at the centre of resettlement in the UK' (Feb. 2017) *FMR* 54, 16, 17; Elizabeth Mesthenous and Elizabeth Ioannidi, 'Obstacles to refugee integration in the European Union Member States' (2002) 15(3) *JRS* 304, 320.

96 Aparna Hebbani and Megan Preece, 'Spoken English does matter: Findings from an exploratory study to identify predictors of employment among African refugees in Brisbane' (2015) 36(2) *ARAS* 110, 118.

97 Ignacio Correa-Velez, Adrian G. Barnett and Sandra Gifford, 'Working for a better life: longitudinal evidence on the predictors of employment among recently arrived refugee migrant men living in Australia' (2013) 53(2) *IM* 321, 331.

98 Feng Hou and Morton Beiser, 'Learning the language of a new country: a ten-year study of english acquisition by South-East Asian refugees in Canada' (2006) 44(1) *IM* 135–156.

99 Ibid.

100 John Benseman, 2014, 'Adult refugee learners with limited literacy: needs and effective responses' (2014) 30(1) *Refugee* 193, 101.

101 Ibid.

102 Ager and Strang, 'Indicators of integration: final report', 1, 4.

103 UNHCR, 'Handbook for Self-Reliance' (August, 2005) First edition, www.refworld.org/docid/4a54bbf40.html (accessed 19 Jan. 2018).

104 Ibid.

105 Correa-Velez, Barnett and Gifford, 'Working for a better life', 334

106 Veronique Barbelet and Caitlin Wake, 'How do refugees define self-reliance? Integrating the perspective of refugees: self-reliance as networked support', in Refugee Studies Centre, *Refugee Self-Reliance, Moving Beyond the Marketplace*, 1, 4.

107 Ulrike Krause, 'How do discussions of refugee self-reliance frame refugees? (And why does this matter?)', in Refugee Studies Centre, *Refugee Self-Reliance, Moving Beyond the Marketplace*, 1, 2.

108 Matthew R. Stevens, 'The collapse of social networks among Syrian refugees in urban Jordan' (2016) 1(1) *Contemporary Levant* 51–63, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/20581831.2016.1153358> (accessed 10 Oct. 2017)

'Social bonds' refers to the connections within refugee's own communities. Field et al. have found that interconnected activities between families and communities can enable groups to 'get on' without substantial external aid.¹⁰⁹ In part, this is because refugees utilise the bonds within their community in their search for employment and other resources. Landau and Duponchel, for example, in a study that drew on data from four African cities in 2011, found that social networks were the most significant factor in enabling refugees to access jobs, food, housing and physical security.¹¹⁰

Conversely, a study by Lamba that examined the resettlement experience of 525 adult refugees living in Canada in 2003 found that social bonds were of little value in the labour market and that they were particularly of little use in adjusting for a downward occupational mobility with regard to refugees who were previously employed in professional or managerial positions.¹¹¹ Accounting for this disparity, a study examining the implications of social networks for the labour market outcomes of refugees resettled in the United States demonstrated that an increase in the number of social network members resettled in the same year or one year prior to a new arrival leads to a deterioration of outcomes, while a greater number of working network members improves the probability of employment and raises the hourly wage.¹¹²

Although Lamba found that social bonds were not of much help in enabling refugees to secure employment, they nevertheless play an important role in helping refugees to maintain a sense of identity and community, which contributes to a sense of security and wellbeing.¹¹³ Worryingly, in Irbid in Jordan, based on an analysis of the role that social connections play in everyday concerns such as financial care, housing and employment,¹¹⁴ Stevens found that, with a few notable exceptions, the strain of exile had led to the collapse of social networks among Syrian refugees.¹¹⁵

'Social bridges' relates to the connection between the refugee and the host community. In another study in Jordan, Calhoun demonstrated that ties between refugees and the host community were 'particularly important for economic advancement, as people need these ties to get new information, about job opportunities or markets'.¹¹⁶

'Social links' refers to connections between individuals and state structures, such as government services.¹¹⁷ Ager and Strang refer to this in terms of the refugees' civic participation, for example, through representational functions in community organisations or committees.¹¹⁸

3.4 *Refugee coping strategies*

The following section considers the various ways that refugees meet their basic needs if they have not been able to become self-reliant based on sustainable and dignified livelihoods. Specifically, it considers the role of informal work, social welfare, remittances (money sent as a gift) and borrowing.

3.4.1 *Informal work*

In a study investigating the role and impact of legal and normative provisions in providing and protecting refugees' right to work across 20 countries, it was found that the majority worked in the informal sector, under conditions that are much less satisfactory and more exploitative than the conditions that nationals work under.¹¹⁹ These findings are consistent with a wide-ranging literature review that was conducted by the International Labour Organisation, which found that non-standard forms of employment have many detrimental impacts on workers including a higher rate of injury, and a lack of legal protections relating to hours of work, wages and work-related insurance for example.¹²⁰ The review included research that linked temporary work to poor physical and mental health and that highlighted that

109 Jessica Field, Anubhav Tiwari and Yamini Mookherjee, 'What are important aspects of refugee self-reliance beyond the economic?', in Refugee Studies Centre, *Refugee Self-Reliance, Moving Beyond the Marketplace*, 1, 3.

110 Loren Landau and Marguerite Duponchel, 'Laws, policies, or social position? Capabilities and the determinants of effective protection in four African cities' (2011) 24 (1) JRS 1, 13.

111 Navjot K. Lamba, 'The employment experiences of Canadian refugees: measuring the impact of human and social capital on quality of employment', (2003) CRSA/RCSA 40(1) 45, 58.

112 Lori A. Beaman, 'Social networks and the dynamics of labour market outcomes: evidence from refugees resettled in the U.S.', (2012) 79(1) RESTUD 128, 158.

113 Sarah Spencer et al, 'Refugees and other new migrants: a review of the evidence on successful approaches to integration' (Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, 2006) 1, 8.

114 Ibid.

115 Stevens, 'The collapse of social networks among Syrian refugees in urban Jordan', 55.

116 Noel Calhoun, 'With a little help from our friends: a participatory assessment of social capital among refugees in Jordan' (2010) UNHCR research paper no 189, www.unhcr.org/4ca0a0109.pdf (accessed 8 Feb. 2018).

117 Ager and Strang, 'Indicators of integration: final report', 1, 20.

118 Ibid.

119 Roger Zetter and Héloïse Ruauadel, 'Refugees' right to work and access to labour markets: an assessment' (Knomad, 2016), <https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications/refugees-right-to-work-and-access-to-labor-markets-an-assessment-part-1/@@download/file> (accessed 12 Jan. 2018).

120 Michael Quinlan, 'The effects of non-standard forms of employment on worker health and safety' (International Labour Office, Inclusive Labour Markets, Labour Relations and Working Conditions Branch, 2015).

worker insecurity appears to make them more susceptible to bullying and harassment, including unwanted sexual advances.¹²¹ At its worst, refugees may be forced into ‘survival sex’, which, even if it is consensual, is exploitative.¹²²

3.4.2 Social welfare

In the absence of employment opportunities, social welfare programmes can be vital in enabling refugees to meet their basic needs.

In a review of the literature on the role of push-pull factors of international migration, Thielemann noted that some commentators have argued that by decreasing welfare provisions, a State will be able to reduce refugee inflows.¹²³ Despite the cynicism underpinning this reasoning, Thielemann himself argues that existing studies find little evidence for differences in welfare regimes driving migrants’ choices of the host country.¹²⁴ It could also be argued that this point has been muted since under the Dublin Regulation and the relocation quotas, refugees do not have a choice in where they will be relocated.

It is important to consider the impact of welfare on refugees. In a study that gathered empirical evidence between 1995 and 2000 in the Netherlands, Ghorashi found that social welfare transformed the refugees from active participants in society, into passive dependents of the state by creating an isolated form of reception and treating them as weak people who are not able to act independently.¹²⁵ Humanitarian assistance could have a similar impact. Furthermore, in a comparative analysis between the Swedish and Norwegian welfare states, Valenta found that extensive integration assistance has only a limited effect on equalising the initial differences between refugees and the rest of the population.¹²⁶ These points demonstrate the importance of providing refugees with alternatives to welfare.

3.4.3 Remittances and borrowing

Van Hear describes how some members of the Palestinian refugee diaspora support family members who are displaced by providing remittances. In a case study, he demonstrates how many displaced Palestinians have been heavily dependent on remittance transfers from Palestinians in the Gulf States.¹²⁷ Jacobsen also studied the role of remittances on Sudanese refugees in Cairo. Her study, which consisted of 565 qualitative interviews, found that although 89 per cent of the study respondents were economically active, a quarter of the sample also received remittances, but that these were not a reliable source of income.¹²⁸ Jacobsen also found that borrowing small amounts from friends and relatives was an important coping strategy, and some refugees borrowed from employers, small shops and moneylenders but this led to debt and increased vulnerability.¹²⁹

3.5 Transitioning humanitarian assistance to self-reliance in other contexts

Ward, in a study in Iraq, observed that if humanitarian actors leave in an ad hoc or rash manner it could lead to gaps in the protection space for refugees.¹³⁰ In a subsequent study by Ward that reviewed UNHCR’s Urban Refugee Policy in the Middle East, she notes that UNHCR only seeks to supplement state services to refugees for a limited time, until refugees can be included in national programmes. However, if the state is not ready to take over the required support to refugees when UNHCR’s funding diminishes, the transition can create tension and a fluctuating protection space.¹³¹ As a result of her study in Iraq, Ward calls for increased dialogue among donors, NGOs and policymakers who should be encouraged to move closer to a strategic approach framework and multi-year funding cycles for protracted situations.¹³²

While supplementing state services for only a limited time might be the ideal scenario, Kagan has observed that in the Middle East responsibility for managing refugee assistance has in effect been transferred from states to UN agencies. Kagan asserts that this responsibility shift can be positive in ensuring refugee protection and that it should be

121 Ibid., 4.

122 Survival sex involves an exchange of sexual activities for basic needs, food, clothing, or shelter: Susanna Greijer and Jaap Doek, ‘Terminology guidelines for the protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse’ (ECPAT International, June 2016), 1, 32, <http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/docpdf/terminologyguidelines.pdf> (accessed 23 Sept. 2017).

123 Eiko R. Thielemann, ‘How effective are national and EU policies in the area of forced migration?’ (2012) 31(4) RSQ 21, 22

124 Ibid., 28.

125 Halle Ghorashi, ‘Agents of change or passive victims: the impact of welfare states (the case of the Netherlands) on Refugees’, (2005) 18(2) JRS 181, 195

126 Marko Valenta, ‘State assisted integration: refugee integration policies in Scandinavian welfare states: the Swedish and Norwegian experience’ (2010) 23(4) JRS 463, 479

127 Nicholas Van Hear, ‘From durable solutions to transnational relations: home and exile among refugee diasporas’ (2003) Working Paper No. 83, available at www.unhcr.org/3e71f8984.pdf (accessed 30 Nov. 2017).

128 Karen Jacobsen, ‘Sudanese refugees in Cairo: remittances and livelihoods’ (2014) 27(1) JRS 145, 153.

129 Jacobsen, ‘Sudanese refugees in Cairo: remittances and livelihoods’, 165.

130 Patricia Ward, ‘Evolving roles of national and international NGOs in protracted urban refugee contexts: the case of Iraqis in the Middle East’ (2012) 2(1) OxMo 17, 17.

131 Patricia Ward, ‘Refugee cities: reflections on the development and impact of UNHCR Urban Refugee Policy in the Middle East’ (2014) 33(1) RSQ 77, 80.

132 Ward, ‘Evolving roles of national and international NGOs in protracted urban refugee contexts: the case of Iraqis in the Middle East’, 20.

legitimised.¹³³ To support this argument he notes that it helps to deflect the material burdens of hosting refugees onto donor states, and some states will not accept the full integration of refugees for political reasons. For example, Crisp et al. note that concerns regarding the political, economic and social impact of the influx of Iraqi refugees has been cited as the reason that Jordan, Lebanon and Syria did not complete their integration.¹³⁴

Nevertheless, Kagan suggests that States will tolerate the long-term presence of refugees if the UN assists them.¹³⁵ However, he also notes that UNHCR is often trapped into indefinitely accepting quasi-government functions, fearful that if it pulls back, refugees would be abandoned because host governments would be unwilling to step in.¹³⁶ He also acknowledges that the UN does not have the capacity to fully substitute for the host government who should always maintain the role of protecting refugees against persecution by not allowing deportation and detention.

3.6 *Converting legal entitlements into effective protection*

Protection is mentioned several times in the Refugee Convention and it forms part of the refugee definition but Storey has argued that the term itself has not been clearly defined. He posits that protection has both a negative content (the absence of persecution) and a positive content (consisting of a securement of basic human rights).¹³⁷ To substantiate this one need look no further than the introductory note to the Refugee Convention. This affirms that it is both a status and rights-based instrument, laying out as it does basic minimum standards for the treatment of refugees, such as the right to wage earning employment (Article 17), the right to housing (Article 21) and rights regarding labour legislation and social security (Article 24).¹³⁸ With respect to rights that are not covered by the Convention Chetail has argued that as refugee law and human rights law are so interdependent and overlapping, it is virtually impossible to separate one from the other,¹³⁹ and that human rights law has become the primary source of refugee protection.¹⁴⁰

Although refugees have rights stemming from both refugee law and international human rights law, a challenge for host countries can be in translating legal rights into true entitlements. In a study in South Africa in 2006, Landau found that South Africa lacked the institutional prerequisites for translating refugees' legal rights into true entitlements for accessing jobs and social services.¹⁴¹ He argues that as a result, South Africa had failed to meet its domestic and international obligations.¹⁴²

When a refugee is unable to meet their basic needs they might be prompted into secondary movement. In 2017, at least 75 refugees and migrants died along land routes while moving onwards in Europe,¹⁴³ and there were reports of groups being held against their will and mistreated by smugglers.¹⁴⁴ An indication of the degree of ongoing movement to northern Europe is that in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 5,290 refugees had been detected arriving irregularly arriving from Serbia and Montenegro, between January and May 2018, with only 427 of these expressing an intention to seek asylum in Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁴⁵

Bottinick and Sianni in a review of UNHCRs of Urban Refugee Policy in Bulgaria in 2011 found that a large proportion of the refugees who were working in the informal sector were unable to generate a minimal income. As a result they engaged in irregular movement to other parts of Europe.¹⁴⁶ This finding was consistent with a study of Eritrean refugees in Italy in 2014, which found that national differences in labour market opportunities and also in the quality of reception systems motivated the secondary migration of asylum seekers and refugees. This is contrary to the findings of Thielemann, who had found in his literature review that differences in welfare provisions were not a factor that prompted secondary movement. Interestingly, in Italy the Dublin Regulation held some of the Eritrean refugees back

133 Michael Kagan, 'We live in a country of UNHCR: the UN surrogate state and refugee policy in the Middle East' (Feb. 2011) UNHCR Research Paper No. 201 1, 25.

134 Jeff Crisp, Jane Janz, Jose Riera, and Shahira Samy 'Surviving in the City – A review of UNHCR's operation for Iraqi refugees in urban areas of Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria' (July 2009) PDES/2009/03.

135 Kagan, 'We live in a country of UNHCR', 3.

136 *Ibid.*, 7.

137 Hugo Storey, 'The meaning of 'protection' within the Refugee Definition' (2016) 35(3) RSQ.

138 1951 Refugee Convention amended by the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, 606 UNTS 267.

139 Vincent Chetail, 'Are refugee rights human rights? An unorthodox questioning of relations between refugee law and human rights law', in Ruth Rubio-Marin (ed.), *Human Rights and Immigration* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 19, 68.

140 *Ibid.* 69.

141 Loren Landau, 'Protection and dignity in Johannesburg: shortcomings of South Africa's Urban Refugee Policy' (2006) 19(3) JRS 308, 309

142 *Ibid.*, 308.

143 UNHCR, 'Desperate Journeys January 2017 – March 2018' (Mar. 2018), 1, 5, https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/63039#_ga=2.250945614.914958166.1523524773-2001785084.1346928889 (accessed 13 Mar. 2018).

144 *Ibid.*, 7.

145 UN Country Team Operational Update, Refugee and Migrant Situation, Bosnia and Herzegovina 1–31 May 2018, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63998> (accessed 25 June 2018).

146 Larry Bottinick and Areti Sianni, 'A review of the implementation of UNHCR's urban refugee policy in Bulgaria' (May 2011), UNHCR PDES/2011/04.

from secondary migration.¹⁴⁷

3.7 Section conclusion

This review of the literature began by recognising that beneficiaries of short-term residence status should be facilitated to integrate in the same way as other refugees, as their need for international protection is equally as compelling and frequently as long in duration as it is for refugees who are typically granted residency permits lasting a minimum of three years in Europe.¹⁴⁸ Being afforded opportunities to better integrate contributes to the achievement of self-reliance, which is defined as the realisation of sustainable and dignified livelihoods. This plays a considerable role in securing basic human rights, which is an important aspect of protection.¹⁴⁹

Local government, municipal authorities and civil society play a particularly prominent role in facilitating refugee integration.¹⁵⁰ However, there are multiple factors that are beyond the influence of these actors such as: pre-immigration literacy attainment; funding for language classes, particularly during the first years of displacement; and systemic issues that create barriers to work, such as a regulatory environment that makes it difficult or impossible to engage in work opportunities.

In some contexts strong social connections have correlated with improved economic outcomes and emotional wellbeing. However, a high number of refugees arriving in the same year or one-year prior has led to a deterioration of outcomes; conversely, the greater the number of refugees in employment, the greater the probability of finding employment through the refugee network. While there can be a positive correlation between strong social connections and improved economic outcomes, among Syria refugees in Irbid in Jordan, it was observed that social networks had largely collapsed due to the pressure of exile.¹⁵¹

When refugees are not able to become self-reliant they may become and remain dependent on humanitarian assistance or social welfare, and they may need to resort to various coping strategies such as informal work, borrowing or relying on remittances. Such strategies may include resorting to negative coping strategies such as accepting exploitative working conditions and they may prompt secondary movement, indicating that the state has failed in providing adequate protection.

In some contexts the state is unable or unwilling to ensure that refugees are able to meet their basic needs. In these circumstances, the United Nations can find itself playing a state substitution role. While not ideal, Kagan asserts that this responsibility shift can be positive in ensuring refugee protection and that it should be legitimised.¹⁵² To prevent a protection gap from occurring when humanitarian assistance does transition to state-led services, Ward has called for increased dialogue among donors, NGOs, and policymakers who should be encouraged to move closer to a strategic approach and multi-year funding cycles for protracted situations. This call is equally applicable to creating the conditions that help to enable refugees to integrate and to achieve self-reliance.

4. Research findings

4.1 Refugee survey

Structured interviews with 20 refugees took place over a six-week period from 15 February–30 March 2018. The results of these interviews fed into a survey that explored the experience of refugees in Athens. The full findings of the survey can be found at Appendix 1.

147 Jan-Paul Brekke, 'Stuck in transit: secondary migration of asylum seekers in Europe, national differences, and the Dublin Regulation' (2014) 28(2) JRS 145, 158.

148 UNHCR, 'Note on the Integration of Refugees in the European Union' (May 2007), 1, 2, www.refworld.org/docid/463b24d52.html (accessed 8 Jan. 2018).

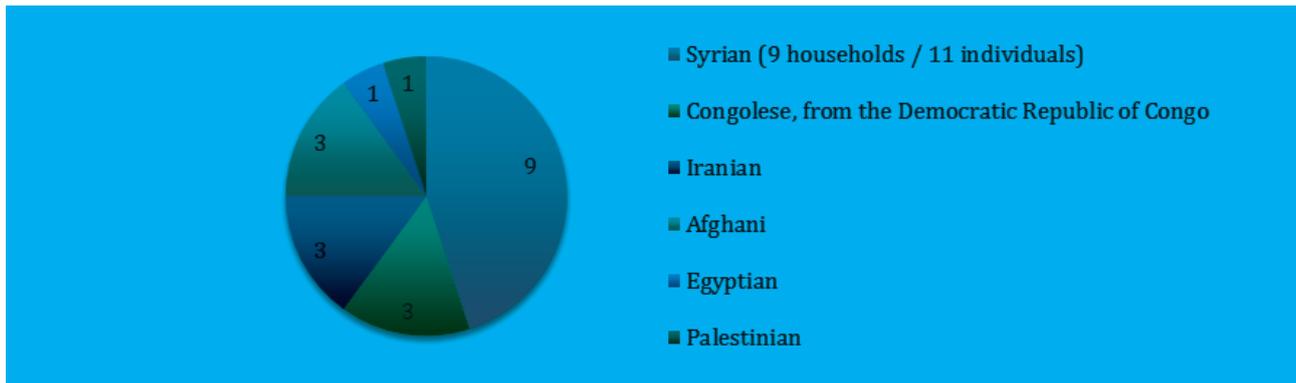
149 Hugo Storey, 'The Meaning of "Protection" within the Refugee Definition' (2016) 35(3) RSQ 1; Chetail, 'Are refugee rights human rights?', 68.

150 Dia Anagnostou, 'Local government and migrant integration in Europe and in Greece' (2016) Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy EEA GR07/3808, www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/LOMIGRAS.report.No1-1.pdf (accessed 18 Nov. 2017).

151 Stevens, 'The collapse of social networks among Syrian refugees in urban Jordan', 55.

152 Kagan, 'We live in a country of UNHCR'.

The breakdown of nationalities between the respondents was as follows:



Of the 20 primary respondents, nine had refugee status, eight were asylum seekers who had been registered for their final asylum interviews and three were awaiting family reunification.

The refugees came to Athens for a multitude of reasons including administrative, job seeking and looking for services, or simply because Athens was considered a stopping point on the route into northern Europe. However, the poor conditions in the camps were commonly referred to as the main reason for coming to Athens, rather than the opportunities presented by the urban environment.

Nineteen refugees were living in apartments and one was living in a camp. Two of the apartments were provided under the ESTIA programme. Sixteen of the respondents were either paying for the rent or contributing to it by sharing with other households and splitting the rental payment. Of those that were paying for their rent, the main source of income was using cash assistance from UNHCR. Two were living from savings with one supplementing this with informal work. Only one was working in the formal sector, and one was an UAM and as such was ineligible to receive cash assistance. The majority had moved several times in Athens, often initially staying with friends or in squats.

The main sources of household income included: UNHCR cash assistance 14/20, and SSI 2/20 (in both cases the respondent was yet to receive the first payment). Of the 16/20 receiving cash assistance from either UNHCR or through SSI, only 6/16 were able to supplement this with informal work, remittances or savings.

See Appendix 1 for the results of the survey in detail.

4.2 Discussion of the research findings

This section explores the challenges that refugees might face in claiming their legal entitlements to work or to claim social welfare. While, these rights exist in law, realising them is dependent on a multitude of other factors. These are considered in the following sections, which draw on the evidence base that was generated by the refugee survey and the interviews with key stakeholders. The results of the survey and the interviews are supported by a detailed desk review of relevant literature.

4.2.1 Access to language classes

There is no requirement in law for the Greek State to provide language classes to recognised refugees, nevertheless in January 2018, the Ministry of Education together with the Ministry Migration Policy announced a pilot programme of Greek language courses that will be funded by AMIF. The target includes 2,000 persons between the age of 15 to 18 and 3,000 persons over 18.¹⁵³ During 2015 and 2016, 4,297 individuals aged between 18 and 64 had received refugee status in Greece.¹⁵⁴ This had increased to 9,707 by the end of 2017, indicating that the pilot programme will reach fewer than 30 per cent of the recognised adult refugees, many who have been in Greece with refugee status for several years.

The refugee survey found that eight of the refugees were trying to learn Greek to some degree, with five of these being able to hold a basic conversation. However, the majority were learning Greek from fellow refugees or long-term migrants. For example, two of the Congolese were learning Greek through a Congolese community group, but there was only one lesson a week. Fourteen of the refugees had no significant contact with Greeks.

One of the respondents noted that he had, 'tried many Greek language classes but the teachers kept changing and whenever there is a new teacher they start again from the beginning'. He also noted that at in one organisation, which is popular for language lessons, 'there were no resources, including chairs for the students'. Interestingly, four of the refugees had focused on learning English since arriving in Greece, and the interviews with these respondents were, for the most part, conducted in English.

¹⁵³ Greek Council Refugees, 'Country Report Greece, 2017 Update' 1, 139, www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/Greece (accessed 8 Apr. 2018).

¹⁵⁴ Asylum Service, 'Statistical Data of the Greek Asylum Service from 7.6.2013 to 31.03.2018' (Asylum Service, 5 Apr. 2018), http://asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Greek_Asylum_Service_Statistical_Data_EN.pdf (accessed 12 Apr. 2018).

More than 25 civil society organisations offer Greek language classes for adults in Athens.¹⁵⁵ These range from comprehensive, well-structured programmes to ad hoc, poorly resourced efforts. An example of one of the more comprehensive programmes is that delivered by the civil society organisation Solidarity Now that offers five Greek language classes at different levels of proficiency. It takes five to six months to complete the basic level and on average, 115 refugees can be accommodated each month but this includes long-term migrants, second-generation migrants and Greeks.¹⁵⁶ They also offer English, French and Arabic classes. At the other end of the spectrum, volunteers offer language classes to refugees which, while being well-intentioned, have little consistency between teachers and their pedagogical approaches.

Among the organisations delivering language classes which were interviewed none had received funds from large institutional donors. For the Greek Forum for Migrants, who have been delivering comprehensive language classes to migrants and refugees for the last 15 years, and who have taught over 1,500 individuals during the previous two years, a lack of funding means that they are currently limited to using volunteer teachers.¹⁵⁷ They note that this is not satisfactory since it is much more difficult to manage volunteers.¹⁵⁸ It is not clear how the AMIF fund that is allocated for language classes will be utilised or if it will be channelled through civil society organisations, but organisations that are experienced and equipped to deliver these classes need to be funded and ideally this should be under a comprehensive and standardised programme.

Although Hou and Beiser have found that incentives, such as sponsorship, became increasingly important over time in encouraging refugees to participate in language classes,¹⁵⁹ the NGOs in Greece commented that although there was often a high drop-out rate during the first weeks of the programmes, this soon stabilised and the participants generally completed the course.¹⁶⁰

4.2.2 *Opening a bank account*

Having a bank account in Greece is a necessary prerequisite for salary payments in the formal sector and to receive SSI payments. In Greece, banking regulations require that to open an account, the applicant must have: an employment contract that has been submitted by the employer to the tax authorities, or a certificate from the social services to confirm that this is for an application for SSI; a tax number; a legally recognised accommodation rental contract that is supported with utility bills, or a homelessness certificate that is provided by a homelessness day centre; and a recognised form of identification such as a refugee travel document.¹⁶¹ These conditions are difficult for refugees to satisfy.

Technically bank accounts may be opened with the residence permit and the international protection applicant's card providing proof of identification.¹⁶² Nevertheless, the experience of refugees, and accompanying civil society staff, is that the banks will only accept Greek-issued travel documents as proof of identity, and that the residence permit and asylum cards are not accepted.¹⁶³ Refugees are commonly waiting in excess of four months to receive their travel document having been granted refugee status.¹⁶⁴ The refugee survey found that of the seven refugees who had tried to open a bank account, only four had been successful and three of these had been assisted by civil society. Furthermore, many refugees do not have rental contracts for their accommodation that have been approved by the tax authorities, and banks will not accept informal rental contracts as proof of address. Of the 16 refugees in the survey who were renting their own accommodation, or contributing to the rent, nine had formal rental contracts and seven had informal rental contracts.

4.2.3 *Access to employment*

Law 4375/2016 grants all applicants for international protection the right to access salaried employment (Article 71), and those who have received a resident's permit have this right on the same terms and conditions that apply for Greek nationals (Article 69).¹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the likelihood of a refugee finding work is dependent on, among others: the employment rate; traditional mechanisms of seeking and securing employment in Greece, including in the informal sector; the administrative requirements related to labour law; and the availability of livelihoods programmes that support refugees into employment. These are considered below, following a brief summary of the refugee survey results that relate to employment.

155 Refugee.Info, 'Language classes for refugees' (*Refugee.Info*, 2018), <https://www.refugee.info/greece/services/by-category/33/> (accessed 14 Mar. 2018).

156 Interview with Olga Eleftheriou, Education Focal Point, Solidarity Now (Almasar Day Centre, 28 Mar. 2018).

157 Interview with Alda Shashati, director, Greek Forum for Migrants (Greek Forum for Migrants Day Centre, 4 Apr. 2018).

158 Ibid.

159 Hou and Beiser, 'Learning the language of a new country', 135–56.

160 Interview with Alda Shashati, director, Greek Forum for Migrants; interview with Olga Eleftheriou, Education Focal Point, Solidarity Now.

161 Interview, Evanthia Botsolou, Accountant, CARE Greece, (CARE office Athens, 15 Feb. 2018).

162 Interview with Eleni Petraki, head of public relations and communications, Greek Asylum Service (Greek Asylum Service, 14 Mar. 2018).

163 Interview with Evanthia Botsolou, accountant, CARE Greece.

164 Ibid.

165 Law 4375/2016 on the organization and operation of the Asylum Service, the Appeals Authority, the Reception and Identification Service, the establishment of the General Secretariat for Reception, the transposition into Greek legislation of the provisions of Directive 2013/32/EC 'on common procedures for granting and withdrawing the status of international protection (recast)' (L 180/29.6.2013), provisions on the employment of beneficiaries of international protection and other provisions [2016].

Of the 20 primary respondents who took part in the refugee survey, two had found work in the formal sector, meaning that they had received a formal employment contract that had been submitted to the tax authorities. One was working as an interpreter for an NGO and one had been working in a café, but the job was short-term and had finished.

Four of the 20 had found work in the informal sector, without legal employment contracts; of these, two were working as construction labourers on an irregular basis, one was working as a cleaner, and one was working as a nightclub bouncer for two nights per week. The construction labourers were earning approximately €35 per day, whereas the cleaner was earning only €10 per day. Of the four, none reported working exploitative hours and none reported that they had particular problems with their employers, although clearly €10 per day is below minimum wage and insufficient to meet basic needs.

Twelve of the 20 refugees had tried to find work but had been unsuccessful. Among the main challenges that were encountered in job seeking, including among the those who had been successful, were: a lack of available work (10/18); difficulties caused by poor Greek or English language proficiency (8/18); and several noted that they were unable to find work in the formal sector as they did not have a tax number (AFM) or a national insurance number (IKA).

In June 2017 the OECD published an assessment of labour market trends in Greece. It highlighted a high unemployment rate at 23.2 per cent, which was particularly high among young people at 48 per cent.¹⁶⁶ Of the refugee survey respondents (including primary respondents and active participants) 18/23 (78 per cent) were under the age of 34.

The economic downturn in the construction sector, in public works and in transport has a particularly negative impact on men from non-EU countries. This has also hit middle-class Greek families leading them to reduce cleaning and care services that are usually provided by foreign women.¹⁶⁷ The European Commission has identified that these are also those professions of which Greece has a surplus of workers.¹⁶⁸ The main worker shortages in Greece are in management and ICT professions.¹⁶⁹ The Greek Asylum Service collects 'occupation in the country of origin' data during asylum registration; however, these details are not reflected in statistical data,¹⁷⁰ therefore it is not possible to infer a potential correlation between the skills shortages that Greece faces and the skills that the refugees bring.

Nevertheless, the refugee survey conducted as part of this research found that prior to arriving in Greece 9/20 of the respondents listed their profession as being in building trades; the others had worked in a variety of positions or had never worked. The shortage of jobs in the construction sector, and factors such as a high level of refugees who have not completed secondary school, which has been estimated at around 60 per cent,¹⁷¹ suggests that refugees may require vocational training to prepare them for work in sectors that matches their educational attainment. In some cases vocational training may help to match them to highly skilled work such as in ICT where there is an existing skills shortage.

Studies on the Greek labour market, including one with over 200 respondents,¹⁷² have found that Greek businesses look for workers mainly through informal, family networks, and these networks provide a primary job seeking modality among the Greek unemployed.¹⁷³ While Greek businesses might rely on informal networks as a core recruitment modality, the social networks between refugees and Greeks – what Ager and Strang refer to as 'social bridges' – appear to be very weak with only four survey respondents reporting regular interaction with Greeks and only five being able to engage in basic conversations in the Greek language.

When contrasted with Calhoun's study in Jordan which demonstrated that ties between refugees and the host community were 'particularly important for economic advancement, as people need these ties to get new information, about job opportunities or markets', this is concerning.¹⁷⁴ However, it should be remembered that in Jordan the refugees speak the host country language so it can be expected that the social bridges would be stronger in Jordan than in Greece.

Although the section on social connections presented contrasting evidence regarding the importance of 'social bonds' – those between refugees – in facilitating access to work, the refugee survey found that only one refugee had found work in the informal sector through a friend who had been in Greece for many years. The director of the Greek Forum

166 OECD, 'How does Greece Compare, Employment Outlook' (June 2017), www.oecd.org/greece/Employment-Outlook-Greece-EN.pdf (accessed 19 Oct. 2018).

167 European Commission, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Skills Panorama 'Greece: Mismatch priority occupations' (Oct. 2016), http://skills Panorama.cedefop.europa.eu/en/analytical_highlights/greece-mismatch-priority-occupations (accessed 19 Feb. 2018).

168 Ibid.

169 Ibid.

170 Interview with Eleni Petraki, head of public relations and communications, Greek Asylum Service

171 Interview with Marina Drymalitou, Chair of the Livelihoods Working Committee under the Municipality of Athens / International Rescue Committee (IRC) Partnership Manager (IRC Office Athens 5 Mar. 2018).

172 Achilleas Anagnostopoulos and Stanley Siebert, 'The impact of Greek labour market regulation on temporary and family employment: evidence from a new survey' (2012) Forschungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit Institute for the Study of Labor Discussion Paper No. 6504, <https://d-nb.info/1024975444/34> (accessed 28 Mar. 2018).

173 Thanos Maroukis, 'Temporary agency work, migration and the crisis in Greece: labour market segmentation intensified' (2016) 22(2) *Transfer* Brussels 179, 181, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4959133/> (accessed 27 Jan. 2018).

174 Noel Calhoun, 'With a little help from our friends: a participatory assessment of social capital among refugees in Jordan' (2010) UNHCR research paper no 189 1, 2, www.unhcr.org/4ca0a0109.pdf (accessed 8 Feb 2018).

for Migrants, an umbrella organisation for 40 migrant community groups, noted that some of the stronger community groups are able to assist refugees into work, but that this is rare and that it only relates to certain professions.¹⁷⁵

Generally the support that was provided by longer-term migrants was in translation or through the provision of information. One survey respondent noted that 'long-term migrants are not in a position to help them as their situation is also bad'. Nevertheless, the social bonds within the refugee communities remain an important feature in their social lives and 18 reported regular interaction with individuals from their country or from their region; for example, Arabs regularly socialised with refugees from other Arabic-speaking countries.

There are a number of requirements in Greece that prospective employers need to fulfil in order to employ someone in the formal sector. For example, the Immigration and Social Integration Code 2014 requires that employers provide a labour contract for at least one year that demonstrates that remuneration will be at least equal to the monthly remunerations payable to unskilled workers, plus they must provide evidence demonstrating their ability to pay the monthly tax on behalf of the employee (Article 12).¹⁷⁶ Requirements to employ someone for seasonal work or in the fishery sector include the payment of a set fee of €150, appropriate accommodation, and payment of a national insurance contribution on a bi-monthly basis (Articles 13 and 14).¹⁷⁷ Employers that contravene Greek labour law can be fined between €500 and €50,000.¹⁷⁸

Regardless of the potential risk to employers, many refugees and migrants find their way into the informal sector where they may face exploitation. The director of the Greek Forum for Migrants is aware of multiple cases of migrants from South Asian countries finding work in the agricultural sector and working for a week or more, but the employers refuse to pay them and threaten to report them to the police if they complain.¹⁷⁹ Due to the potential that third country nationals will be exploited if they enter the informal economy, the Greek Forum for Migrants always recommends that individuals seek work in the formal sector.¹⁸⁰

A specific administrative challenge for refugees in accessing formal employment is that all wages must be paid into a bank account.¹⁸¹ The requirement to have wages paid directly into a bank account has made work in the formal sector untenable for the majority of the refugees, forcing them into the informal sector where they face potentially exploitative working conditions. The refugee survey found that those working in the informal sector are unable to provide adequately for themselves and their families and are unable to save sufficient money for a deposit for an apartment that has a legally recognised rental contract. The challenge now is for the Government to develop strategies and programmes that can help to free the refugees, and particularly the self-settled ones, from the vicious cycle whereby they are unable to open bank accounts or to access work in the formal sector.

The high unemployment rates in Greece pose great problems in designing and delivering measures that target the integration of asylum seekers and refugees into the labour market.¹⁸² Government is unaccustomed to dealing with people who have legal labour rights. In the past, migrants arrived in Greece and quickly disappeared into the informal sector, where they would spend a few years in the black market until they had saved enough money to regularise themselves by applying for residents permits.¹⁸³

Many civil society organisations are providing refugees with support in 'employability'. This consists of building skills in areas such as curriculum vitae development, job seeking, career counselling, awareness of labour rights and cultural orientation.¹⁸⁴ Others are developing entrepreneurial projects but on a small scale.¹⁸⁵

The Livelihoods Working Committee, under the auspices of the Athens Municipality's Coordination Centre for Migrant and Refugee Issues, is disseminating examples of best practices between actors involved in livelihoods programming, and efforts are being made to standardise the livelihoods components that are currently offered.¹⁸⁶ However, it was noted by the Chair of the Livelihoods Working Committee that there is a real shortage of the language classes and vocational training that are needed to support refugees into work.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, any vocational training needs to be tailored to the refugee population, meaning that it should be delivered in a language and at a level that is adapted to

175 Interview with Alda Shashati, director, Greek Forum for Migrants Director.

176 Article 12, Law 4251/2014 Immigration and Social Integration Code and other provisions [2014] G.G. A'80 of 2014.

177 Articles 13 and 14, Law No 4251/2014 Immigration and Social Integration Code and other provisions [2014] G.G. A'80 of 2014.

178 Law 3996/2011, Reforming the Labour Inspectors Body, Social Security Matters and other provisions, [August 2011] 170 A'2011

179 Interview with Alda Shashati, director, Greek Forum for Migrants Director.

180 Ibid.

181 Ministerial Decision 22528/430 Establishment of compulsory payment by employers' for remuneration in the private sector through a banking account [2017] Issue B 1721 / 18.05.2017, <https://translate.google.co.uk/translate?hl=en&sl=el&u=www.grhotels.gr/GR/BussinessInfo/library/DocLib/1721-B-2017.pdf&prev=search> (accessed 24 Feb. 2018).

182 Dimitris Karantinos, 'Labour market integration of asylum seekers and refugees, Greece' (Apr. 2016) European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion 1, 10, ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=15909&langId=en (accessed 19 Oct. 2018).

183 Interview with Marina Drymalitou, chair of the Livelihoods Working Committee under the Municipality of Athens/International Rescue Committee (IRC) Partnership Manager (IRC Office Athens, 5 Mar. 2018)

184 Ibid.

185 Ibid.

186 Ibid.

187 Ibid.

the participants, and this potentially restricts many refugees from joining training courses that are held for the Greek population until such time as their language skills are adequate.¹⁸⁸

4.2.4 Access to social welfare

The refugee survey found that none the refugees who had found work in the informal sector earned sufficient salary to meet their basic needs or those of their families, demonstrating that access to social welfare will be vital should the cash assistance be stopped. Presidential Decree 141/2013 grants recipients of international protection the right to receive necessary social assistance on the same conditions as provided to Greek nationals (Article 30).¹⁸⁹

There has been no formal communiqué from the Government, or from UNHCR that refugees should transition from the cash assistance to SSI. The only written information that indicates when the cash assistance will end for recognised refugees is contained in UNHCR factsheets,¹⁹⁰ and in a Ministry of Migration Policy (MoMP) guiding document that is attached to its financial plan for 2018.¹⁹¹ This information is not shared with refugees and as such it is essentially unavailable to them. The refugee survey found that of the 14 refugees who were receiving cash assistance, ten had no idea how long it would continue while four said that they had been told that they would only receive it for six months, but some had already received it beyond the six months. This ambiguity creates considerable confusion among the refugees.

Asked what they would do when the assistance is no longer provided, six of the survey respondents said that they would look for work, however, all six had looked for work in the past and only two had been able to find work in the informal sector. Other responses, included: 'we will live on the streets', or 'we will return to the camp', or that they, 'prefer not to think about it'. It is likely that these responses were given, as very few refugees are aware of SSI. Of the survey respondents, 15 had never heard of it and although three respondents had been assisted by civil society organisations to successfully apply for SSI, it should be noted that only two civil society organisations in Athens had projects that aimed to support refugees to apply for SSI and at the end of March 2018 these organisations have only successfully assisted a handful of refugees to apply for SSI.¹⁹²

Two civil society organisations have attempted to assist refugees to apply for SSI, but both organisations have now ended these projects due to an absence of funding.¹⁹³ For the time being, refugees would need to apply for SSI independently although an accountant who has assisted refugees to apply for SSI confirms that they will still need support, particularly, with translation and to submit the required tax return.¹⁹⁴

Even when refugees are able to access SSI, it must be reiterated that SSI is not designed to cover rental payments. The lowest monthly apartment rental fee found in the survey was €250 meaning that the cash assistance was not enough to cover even the rent for a single individual or even for a couple when utility costs are added. In the words of the deputy mayor of Athens for migration, 'the amount that is given by SSI is not enough. It doesn't cover the cost of the rent and surely it cannot cover rent, food and services. If living costs go up again it will be a big problem'.¹⁹⁵

The refugee survey found that refugees have self-accommodated using the money that they have received from cash assistance, however they need to subsidise this whenever possible by living in cramped apartments with little privacy or by entering the informal sector; stretching the extent to which they can be said to have secured their basic human rights.

4.2.5 Secondary migration

In the refugee survey the respondents were asked how long they intended staying in Greece but it was rarely possible to get a definitive answer. The main reasons for wanting to stay in Greece generally revolved around the friendliness of Greek people, the weather and for the Arabic speakers it was common to hear 'they are like us', and 'they have the same culture as us'. However the need to find employment was clearly the deciding factor in whether they would stay in Greece.

To anticipate further migration, perhaps the most telling indicator was that five of the refugees explained that they are currently waiting for their travel documents which permit them to travel within Europe for up to three months. When they receive the travel document they will use this as an opportunity to seek work outside of Greece. One intends to

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Presidential Decree 141/2013 on the transposition into the Greek legislation of Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 (L 337) on minimum standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection and for the content of the protection granted (recast) [2013] A226/21–10–2013. See section 2.3.3 for more details on the challenges of accessing the Social Solidarity Income scheme.

¹⁹⁰ UNHCR, 'Fact Sheet on Greece for 1st-30th November' (Nov. 2017), <http://donors.unhcr.gr/en/unhcr-greece-factsheet-november-2017/> (accessed 30 Dec. 2018).

¹⁹¹ Ministry of Migration, 'Financial Plan for 2018 Guiding Principles', distributed to ECHO partners by email January 2018.

¹⁹² Interview with Dimitra Sairsou and Dimitis Voutirakis, social workers, Greek Council for Refugees; interview with Evanthia Botsolou, accountant, CARE Greece.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Evanthia Botsolou, accountant, CARE Greece.

¹⁹⁵ Interview with Lefteris Papagiannakis, deputy mayor for migrants, refugees and municipal decentralization, Athens Municipality (Athens City Hall, 21 Feb. 2018).

travel to Malta in search of seasonal work during the three months that he is permitted to be outside of Greece. Another intends to find work with an online job search before travelling. All five said that they would remain in Greece if work were available. This finding is consistent with the findings of Bottinick and Sianni, Thielemann and Brekke, who found that a lack of opportunity for employment prompts secondary movement (see section 3.6).¹⁹⁶ Only one of the refugees said that continuing to receive assistance was a deciding factor in the decision to migrate. This individual had found work in the informal sector and said that this was insufficient for him and his family of four children and his wife to subsist on alone. Three of the refugees raised concerns about their physical safety in Greece.

4.3 Challenges in converting legal entitlements into real entitlements

4.3.1 Political and policy challenges

Integrating recognised refugees into Greek society and social welfare programmes poses a number of challenges for the Government. When an asylum seeker who is accommodated under the ESTIA programme or receiving cash assistance becomes ineligible for this support how will they be transitioned away from it. With no alternative social housing, are they to be evicted? And in a context where securing employment is extremely difficult, how can they transition, in practical terms, from cash assistance to SSI, or to an alternative scheme? These are complex public policy issues, which are exacerbated by the economic crisis and austerity, and which require inter-ministerial decisions and action.

The decisions that need to be made are also problematic from a public relations point of view. With an election scheduled for 2019, many politicians will focus on the expectations of their voter base and on campaigning, rather than on the needs of the refugees. Furthermore, the election itself could have a considerable impact on refugee integration projects. As noted by the Deputy Mayor for Migrants for Athens Municipality, 'projects need to be so well established that they cannot be negatively affected by a change of administration'.¹⁹⁷

If recognised refugees are transitioned out of the ESTIA accommodation programme with no offer of alternative housing, it will undoubtedly cause considerable hardship. Like refugees who are already self-accommodated, they will be forced to rely on either cash assistance or SSI welfare payments to cover their rent, even though this is only intended to meet food and basic needs. This predicament strongly predicates that some form of social housing is needed to enable refugees to meet their basic needs until they are able to secure sustainable and dignified employment.

Previously Greece had a housing subsidy programme but this was abolished in 2012.¹⁹⁸ An OECD economic survey of Greece in 2013 recommended that Greece introduce a well-targeted housing benefit,¹⁹⁹ which, if it were of a similar size to the previous programme would amount to around 0.5 per cent of GDP.²⁰⁰ They also suggested that in the longer term, a social housing programme would be preferable.²⁰¹

There are examples of innovative housing solutions that meet the needs of both refugees and citizens. For example, in the Netherlands, the local government and two housing associations initiated the Startblok project, which provides social housing that is shared between young refugees and young Dutch people. This not only relieves pressure on social housing but it also contributes to social cohesion.²⁰² Such a scheme might be suitable in Greece, as it would help to solve the current disparity between citizens and refugees.

The experience of two NGOs has shown that transitioning recipients of cash assistance, onto SSI requires considerable administrative effort and facilitation.²⁰³ Civil society organisations and municipalities are best placed to support refugees in this process, although since it is not possible for some refugees to open a bank account an alternative modality to receive the support might be needed.

Although the legal framework holds that recognised refugees are entitled to the same support as a Greek citizen,²⁰⁴ at the end of March 2018 no transitional strategy or statement had been released by the Government to confirm that recognised refugees should be supported to apply for SSI. This leaves civil society organisation in a dilemma, uncertain how best to support recognised refugees. In the words of one NGO manager:

196 Bottinick and Areti Sianni, 'A review of the implementation of UNHCR's urban refugee policy in Bulgaria'; Thielemann, 'How effective are national and EU policies in the area of forced migration?'; and Brekke, 'Stuck in transit'.

197 Interview with Lefteris Papagiannakis, deputy mayor for migrants, refugees and municipal decentralization, Athens Municipality.

198 OECD Economic Surveys, 'Greece: March 2016 Overview' (2016), <https://www.oecd.org/eco/surveys/GRC%202016%20Overview%20EN.pdf> 1, 22.

199 Ibid, 53.

200 OECD Economic Surveys, 'Greece: March 2016 Overview' (2016), <https://www.oecd.org/eco/surveys/GRC%202016%20Overview%20EN.pdf>, 1, 22.

201 Ibid.

202 Startblok Housing Project (*Startblok Riekerhaven*, 2018), www.startblok.amsterdam/en/about-the-project/what-is-startblok/ (accessed 17 Mar. 2018).

203 Interview with Dimitra Sairsou and Dimitis Voutirakis, social workers, Greek Council for Refugees; interview with Evanthia Botsolou, accountant, CARE Greece.

204 Law 4375/2016 on the organization and operation of the Asylum Service, the Appeals Authority, the Reception and Identification Service, the establishment of the General Secretariat for Reception, the transposition into Greek legislation of the provisions of Directive 2013/32/EC "on common procedures for granting and withdrawing the status of international protection (recast) (L 180/29.6.2013), provisions on the employment of beneficiaries of international protection and other provisions, [2016].

A key challenge is a lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities. What is expected from us, what authority do we have in order to implement programmes that can be used for the integration of refugees? The symptom of all of this is a lack of accountability. I don't know if accountability goes to the Greek authorities, or to us, who are here to implement projects, and this of course has a negative impact on the refugees.²⁰⁵

The challenges highlighted above require a comprehensive inter-ministerial transitional plan. However, the administration itself is struggling with internal challenges, 'it is extremely bureaucratic which makes it difficult for them to be nimble ... and there are all kinds of financial restrictions and austerity measures which make it difficult for them to channel funding.'²⁰⁶ Furthermore, the Ministry of Migration Policy, which is the line ministry for refugee issues, is also faced with internal difficulties. It is a very young ministry having only been developed from a department within the Ministry of Interior in 2016. It is also poorly equipped in terms of human resources and budget.

Although the Greek administration faces challenges they have made huge progress in some areas; in children's education for example, they have made a committed effort to bring in additional teachers, there are after-school classes and scientific councils with very engaged academics looking at the most suitable curricula.²⁰⁷ Countries with similar funding challenges could be a lot less proactive.²⁰⁸ According to one INGO manager, one of its greatest assets of the current administration is that it has a 'pro-refugee' outlook.²⁰⁹

Municipalities play an important role in enabling refugees to integrate and to attain self-reliance. In Athens, the municipality has developed a Strategic Action Plan for Refugee and Migrant Integration, whose objective is to strengthen and refine the municipality's role in addressing and facilitating refugee integration into social services.²¹⁰ The Municipal Plan also proposes to strengthen the engagement of civil society in assisting refugees and migrants to integrate smoothly, and it aims to achieve this primarily through its coordination function. In the words of the deputy mayor for migration for Athens Municipality:

The Municipality needs the help of civil society, we don't have the same interests and goals, nevertheless, we are operating under the same umbrella, in the same conditions and we can find an honest compromise. The work that we have done in Athens shows that this is possible. It takes goodwill from all sides, it takes commitment, but above all, it takes trust because the Municipality has to understand that they are dealing with agile actors, that need to be active and efficient and that need to be accountable to other people. And from the other side, you have a big institutional actor that can provide the institutional assurance that you can do your work.²¹¹

Interviews with civil society managers in Athens as part of this research finds that they are aware and supportive of the role of the municipality in facilitating refugee integration and social cohesion, and also that they have a good understanding of the constraints that the municipality is working under, from its 'lack of resources, budget and experience in dealing with a large influx',²¹² to the lack of guidance from the central level. Despite its challenges, the Athens Municipality has been proactive and engaged in the response but this is not always the case. The Danish Refugee Council's country director notes:

We cannot put the municipalities in the same box, each municipality has a different direction, a different will, a different approach, sometimes collaborative, sometimes not collaborative, if we take the municipalities that have been active, they have expressed a lot of interest and willingness in working with us. However, if there is no planning from the central government you will have isolated and not necessarily harmonized initiatives between the municipalities.²¹³

This argument finds traction with the Deputy Mayor for Migration within Athens Municipality who notes that. 'We need a plan and a perspective... We need to declare our political will to go from here to there. The central government needs to say who does what. We need leadership and we need an objective.'²¹⁴ The ECHO representative notes that within the administration, 'there is clearly a political will and a very clear statement to say we acknowledge that there is a need for integration and for long-term planning'.²¹⁵ The challenge, it would seem, is to transform this resolve into strategy for the transition that is fully funded and that has the buy in of multiple stakeholders including the municipalities and civil society, as these will be fundamental to supporting refugees to integrate.

205 Interview with Kyriakos Giaglis, country director, Danish Refugee Council (Danish Refugee Council office, Athens, 22 Feb. 2018).

206 Interview with senior UNHCR representative, (UNHCR Office Athens, 28 Mar. 2018).

207 Ibid.

208 Ibid.

209 Interview with Joshua Kyller, Country Director, Catholic Relief Services.

210 Athens Coordination Centre for Migrant and Refugee Issues, Athens Municipality, 'Strategic Action Plan for Refugee and Migrant Integration' (2017).

211 Interview with Lefteris Papagiannakis, deputy mayor for migrants, refugees and municipal decentralization, Athens Municipality.

212 Ibid.

213 Interview with Kyriakos Giaglis, country director, Danish Refugee Council.

214 Interview with Lefteris Papagiannakis, deputy mayor for migrants, refugees and municipal decentralization, Athens Municipality.

215 Interview with Yorgos Kapranis, ECHO Advisor.

4.3.2 Funding for the refugee response, reception and integration

The funding for integration activities such as livelihoods projects and language classes is by-and-large coming from private donors and foundations, and civil society organisations that are implementing these projects have expressed serious concerns about their ability to fundraise for these activities. In the words of the country director for the Catholic Relief Service, 'I am not aware of any significant institutional funding for refugee integration. Writ large, our deepest concern is about our ability to fund these activities for as long as we foresee a need to continue them.'²¹⁶

UNHCR, in its coordinating role, can develop funding appeals, which are published in the form of Refugee Response Plans (RRPs).²¹⁷ These provide the framework for an interagency response by presenting a set of priorities that contribute to the protection of refugees and that appeal for funding. UNHCR published Regional Response Plans in 2016 and 2017. Due to the need to stabilise the population from a humanitarian standpoint, these focused heavily on humanitarian action. The 2016 Response plan went so far as to say 'expanding options for durable solutions would only be possible if and when asylum and integration in Greece becomes a viable option for a greater number of arrivals.'²¹⁸ There was no Response Plan for 2018 and it is unlikely that UNHCR will publish a new funding appeal for Greece.²¹⁹ In the words of a UNHCR representative:

I'm not sure if UNHCR in Greece has the largest per capita funding per PoC globally, but if it is not, it is pretty close, and that makes it very difficult, both internally and externally to fundraise over and beyond that.... If, for example, we wanted to put out an appeal for, lets say €15 million for the whole humanitarian response to do work on integration it's a bit of a hard sell.²²⁰

The national AMIF funding allocation for 2014–2020 that was discussed in section 2.3.1 can, in theory, be channelled to municipalities and civil society organisations to enable them to implement livelihoods programmes and language classes, along with other activities that support integration such as social cohesion projects. During 2017 and 2018 the Ministry of Economy has released a number of calls for proposals that utilise this fund but only one, which covers the management of UAM shelters, is aligned with the traditional mandate of civil society organisations.²²¹ Other calls relate to interpretation services at the reception and identification service and none cover the facilitation of refugee integration.

In October 2017 the EU Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs released a number of European Union wide calls for proposals under AMIF specifically aimed at funding projects in the area of integration of third-country nationals.²²² However, all Member States (apart from Denmark) participate in the call resulting in a high rate of competition, and there is a lengthy review process for the proposals which delays project implementation. In the mentioned call, the final decision on the proposals is not scheduled until July 2018. This signifies a lengthy gap before programmes can be implemented and this can have a negative impact on the ability of some organisations to retain their offices or key staff.

4. Conclusion

To analyse the challenges of transitioning recognised refugees away from humanitarian assistance in Greece this research considered: the degree to which refugees in Athens have integrated and attained self-reliance; the policy and funding challenges related to the transition; and possible consequences if the refugees are unable to attain self-reliance or the Greek Government is unable to guarantee their basic human rights.

Section 3 on the conceptual and practical realities of transitioning from refugee assistance to integration and self-reliance or other coping strategies began by recognising that even beneficiaries of a one-year residency status should be facilitated to integrate, as their need for international protection is equally as compelling and frequently as long as it is for refugees.²²³ From the beginning of 2015 until the end of March 2018, 17,288 asylum seekers were granted refugee status in Greece. This provides a three-year residency permit. The research found that refugees in Greece have not integrated to any significant degree in three key domains: host language proficiency; access to employment; and leveraging social connections to facilitate access to employment or resources; nor have they attained sustainable or dignified livelihoods, the two core elements around which self-reliance is defined.

216 Interview with Joshua Kyller, Country Director, Catholic Relief Services.

217 UNHCR, Emergency Handbook (4th edition, 2015), <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/65138/refugee-response-plans-rrps-interagency>

218 UNHCR 'Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Europe, Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkans Route' (Jan.–Dec. 2016) 1, 37, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/46812> (accessed 10 Dec. 2017).

219 Interview with senior UNHCR representative.

220 Interview with senior UNHCR representative.

221 Ministry of Finance, Special Service Coordination and Program Management: Announcements, https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=el&t=en&js=y&prev=_t&hl=en&ie=UTF-8&u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.amifisf.gr&edit-text= (accessed 2 Feb. 2018).

222 European Commission, Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, 'Call, Integration of Third-Country Nationals' (26 Oct. 2017) AMIF-2017-AG-INTE, <https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/amif/calls/amif-2017-ag-inte.html#;c=callIdentifier/t/AMIF-2017-AG-INTE/1/1/1/default-group&callStatus/t/Forthcoming/1/1/0/default-group&callStatus/t/Open/1/1/0/default-group&callStatus/t/Closed/1/1/0/default-group&+identifier/desc> (accessed 23 Dec. 2017).

223 UNHCR, 'Note on the Integration of Refugees in the European Union' (May, 2007) 1, 2, www.refworld.org/docid/463b24d52.html (accessed 8 Jan. 2018).

It is widely recognised that being able to speak the language of the host community is central to the integration process and key to attaining employment.²²⁴ Hebbani and Preece's study in Australia found that spoken native language proficiency was the only predictor that increased the odds of being employed.²²⁵ The refugee survey found that 50 per cent of the refugees were trying to learn Greek. However, the majority were taught by fellow refugees or long-term migrants who do not have the pedagogical skills or educational resources to provide comprehensive instruction, and in some instances, a lack of funding for civil society language classes has had a detrimental impact on the quality of existing programmes. Although the Greek Government is introducing a pilot language programme, the number of students that it can absorb is limited and it will reach fewer than 30 per cent of the recognised adult refugees. It is unfortunate that this programme is not starting until several years into the displacement as Hou and Beiser found that the most rapid improvement in language proficiency occurred during the early years of resettlement.²²⁶ This research recommends that when it is not viable from a budgetary point of view to deliver structured language courses, that new approaches for disseminating language courses should be developed and trialled, for example, using online platforms and social media.

The constricted labour market in Greece, along with a complex regulatory environment regarding employment and taxation, compounded by a lack of Greek language proficiency among the refugees, has made it extremely difficult for them to secure employment in the formal sector. UNHCR has recommended that to help refugees into work they should be supported with livelihood development and strengthening.²²⁷ In Greece civil society organisations are implementing livelihoods programmes that facilitate refugee access into the labour market, but these are on a small-scale, and these initiatives are not supported with institutional funding. This limits their scope. Krause has made the highly pertinent recommendation that civil society organisations should identify the systemic issues that create barriers to work and should advocate for solutions.²²⁸ This advocacy should help to ensure that that refugee self-reliance is not used unreasonably as a political tool to reduce aid.²²⁹ The Livelihoods Working Committee is well placed to support this.

Wake and Barbelet suggest that livelihoods interventions should be based on an analysis of the support that refugees receive through their social networks, as these can provide a springboard into the labour market.²³⁰ This research found that while the social networks between the refugees in Athens are generally quite strong, they have provided next to no leverage into employment. This is possibly because, as was found by Beaman, an increase in the number of social network members resettled in the same year or one year prior correlates negatively with securement of job that have been found through the social network.²³¹ Furthermore, the refugee survey found that social connections between refugees and Greek nationals tend to be strongest when the refugee is already working. While social networks have generally not helped refugees to secure employment in Greece, it is important to recall that they play an important role in helping refugees to maintain a sense of identity and community, which contributes to a sense of security and wellbeing.²³²

Currently, the vast majority of refugees in Greece are dependent on cash assistance, which is broadly equal to the amount that they might receive under the SSI social welfare scheme. To apply for SSI the refugee must overcome a number of administrative hurdles and many would need to be supported in this, especially with translation and to enhance their understanding of the scheme. Civil society is well placed to support this but equally municipalities could if they were appropriately resourced and had the will to do it. The most important first step though is that the Government should provide guidance stating entering the SSI scheme is an appropriate pathway from cash assistance for recognised refugees.

The refugee survey found that among those who are self-accommodated, many are using cash assistance to cover their rent. The cash assistance is not meant to include accommodation and therefore they are unable to cover their basic needs. Thus, if refugees do transition onto SSI, it is strongly predicated that some form of social housing is required until they are able to secure sustainable and dignified employment. If this is not provided they will resort to other coping strategies, for example, they may share rental costs by multiplying the number of people living in accommodation leading to cramped living conditions with little privacy, or they may be forced into informal work and potentially exploitative conditions. It might therefore be argued that Greece will have failed to meet its domestic and international obligations for translating refugees' legal rights into true entitlements for accessing jobs and social services as Landau argued in relation to South Africa.²³³ It is notable that the survey found that single people were commonly sharing and that families who were not sharing were left with even less cash per capita to meet their basic needs.

224 Ager and Strang, 'Indicators of integration: final report', 1, 21; Michael Collyer, Rupert Brown, Linda Morrice and Linda Tip, 'Putting refugees at the centre of resettlement in the UK' (February, 2017) FMR 54, 16, 17; Elizabeth Mesthenous and Elizabeth Ioannidi, 'Obstacles to refugee integration in the European Union Member States' (2002) 15(3) JRS 304, 320.

225 Aparna Hebbani and Megan Preece 'Spoken English does matter: Findings from an exploratory study to identify predictors of employment among African refugees in Brisbane' (2015) 36 (2) ARAS 110, 118

226 Hou and Beiser, 'Learning the language of a new country', 135–52.

227 UNHCR, 'Handbook for Self-Reliance' (August, 2005) First edition, www.refworld.org/docid/4a54bbf40.html (accessed 19 Jan. 2018).

228 Krause, 'How do discussions of refugee self-reliance frame refugees? (And why does this matter?)', 1, 2.

229 Ibid.

230 Barbelet and Wake, 'How do refugees define self-reliance?', 4.

231 Beaman, 'Social networks and the dynamics of labour market outcomes: evidence from refugees resettled in the U.S.', 158.

232 Sarah Spencer et al, 'Refugees and other new migrants: a review of the evidence on successful approaches to integration' (Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, 2006) 1, 8.

233 Landau, 'Protection and dignity in Johannesburg', 309.

Kihato has argued that the most effective engagement between humanitarians and local authorities often comes when humanitarians recognise the local authorities' interests.²³⁴ Other academics have asserted that humanitarian actors should develop closer working relationships with mayors and municipal authorities so that the needs of the displaced are captured in urban planning.²³⁵ In Athens, civil society actors and the Municipality have developed a close working relationship and demonstrated a willingness to develop joint strategies that align with protection concerns. This collaboration has the potential to strengthen refugee integration and self-reliance initiatives, however, across Greece, initiatives for refugee integration at the municipal level tend to be isolated and lacking in uniformity. This research considered that this correlates with the lack of a national transitional plan that harmonises approaches.

Civil society organisations and municipalities can only access limited funding for integration programming, and this has significantly restricted the number and reach of these initiatives. The Greek Government has not published details of current expenditure under the national AMIF programme for 2014–2020 but given the lack of absorption of the fund during 2015 and 2016, combined with the allocation of the EU emergency funding to strengthening asylum systems, there may be some scope to reallocate the existing national AMIF fund toward developing national programmes refugee integration. However, the State may not have the capacity to administer these funds, and there may not be capacity to develop national programmes within a reasonable timeframe.

Many of the identified challenges stem from complex public policy and funding issues, which are exacerbated by the economic crisis and austerity, and which require inter-ministerial decisions and action. They are also symptomatic of funding restrictions that are imposed by the EU's Regulation for the Provision of Emergency Support within the Union.²³⁶ While the situation in Greece has been unprecedented, as is the use of ECHO funding within Europe, the EU must now ask itself how existing funding mechanisms can better complement each other so activities that facilitate refugee integration can be factored into refugee responses from the outset.

Despite the complexity of addressing the multiple challenges the lack of a transitional plan or clear direction from the central administration has resulted in confusion and uncertainty among the refugees, civil society and local government and it is clear that when recognised refugees transition away from humanitarian assistance a protection gap will be created. Ward has called for donors, civil society, and policymakers to move closer to a strategic framework approach and multi-year funding cycles in protracted situations in order to prevent a protection gap from forming when humanitarian assistance transitions to state-led services.²³⁷ This is applicable in Greece, where civil society should give voice to the refugees by sharing concerns about the systemic constraints that they face in accessing employment or social welfare and in meeting their basic needs. Civil society can also suggest creative solutions such as Startblok.

This research recommends that until recognised refugees can transition away from humanitarian assistance without a protection gap from being created, or unless safe and legal pathways to Northern Europe are provided, UNHCR should continue to provide recognised refugees with accommodation and cash assistance. The findings of the refugee survey suggest that if refugees are not able to meet their basic needs there is a strong likelihood that they will engage in secondary migration, despite the risks that this might pose for them. This is consistent with the findings studies within the European Union by Bottinick and Sianni, Thielemann, and Brekke.²³⁸ Kagan has noted that a responsibility shift from the state to the UN can be positive in ensuring refugee protection and in deflecting material burdens.²³⁹ In this instance the financial burden would fall to the EU, but given that it can be presumed that the funding from the EU was provided, in part, to encourage refugees to remain in Greece rather than continuing on to Northern-Europe the additional investment might be considered worthwhile by some European policy makers.

234 Kihato and Landau, 'Stealth humanitarianism', 410.

235 Jeff Crisp, Tim Morris and Hilde Refstie, 'Displacement in urban areas: New challenges, new partnerships' (2012) 36(1) *Disasters* 23, 26; Jessica Brant and Kemal Kirisci 'In rethinking refuge, draw lessons from Turkey' (Brookings Institute, 2018), <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/01/25/in-rethinking-refuge-draw-lessons-from-turkey/> (accessed 2 Feb. 2018).

236 Council Regulation (EU) 2016/369 of the 15th March 2016 on the provision of emergency support within the Union, Official Journal of the European Union [2016] L70/1, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016R0369&from=EN> (accessed 10 Jan. 2018).

237 Ward, 'Evolving roles of national and international NGOs in protracted urban refugee contexts: the case of Iraqis in the Middle East', 20.

238 Bottinick and Sianni, 'A review of the implementation of UNHCR's urban refugee policy in Bulgaria', Thielemann, 'How effective are national and EU policies in the area of forced migration?', Brekke, 'Stuck in transit'.

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Presidential Decree 220/2007 The transposition into the Greek legislation of Council Directive 2003/9/EC Laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers [2007] A251/13.11.2007.

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Stakeholder interviews

Alda Shashati, director, Greek Forum for Migrants (Greek Forum for Migrants Day Centre, 4 April 2018).

Dimitra Sairsou and Dimitis Voutirakis, social workers, Greek Council for Refugees (Greek Council for Refugees office, 14 March 2018).

Eleni Petraki, head of public relations and communications, Greek Asylum Service (Greek Asylum Service, 14 March 2018).

Evanthia Botsolou, accountant, CARE Greece (CARE office Athens, 15 February 2018).

Joshua Kyller, country director, Catholic Relief Services (Catholic Relief Services Office, 16 March 2018, 12, 35).

Kyriakos Giaglis, country director, Danish Refugee Council (Danish Refugee Council office, Athens, 22 February 2018, 34, 35).

Lefteris Papagiannakis, deputy mayor for migrants, refugees and municipal decentralization, Athens Municipality (Athens City Hall, 21 February 2018, 32, 33, 35).

Marina Drymalitou, chair of the Livelihoods Working Committee under the Municipality of Athens / International Rescue Committee (IRC) Partnership Manager (IRC Office Athens, 5 March 2018).

Olga Eleftheriou, Education Focal Point, Solidarity Now (Almasar Day Centre, 28 March 2018).

Senior UNHCR representative (UNHCR Office Athens, 28 March 2018, 34, 36).

Yorgos Kapranis, ECHO advisor (EU Delegation Office, 1 March 2018, 35).

Appendix One: Refugee Survey Findings

Sample demographic summary: Interviews with 20 refugee households²⁴⁰ took place over a six-week period from 15 February to 30 March. The breakdown of nationalities between the households was as follows:

Of the 20 households, 11/20 of the primary responders were single individuals (including one unaccompanied minor, aged 17), 9/20 were in Greece with family members.

Of the 20 households, 18/20 of the primary respondents were male, 1/20 interview took place with the wife present as an active participant, and 1/20 with a female respondent with the husband present as an active participant. 1/20 comprised two brothers. 1/20 of the interviews was conducted with a female primary respondent alone.

The average age of the primary respondents, plus the additional wife, husband and brother was 31.2 years old and the ages corresponded with the following brackets.

Age brackets of interviewees

<18	18–30	31–40	41–50	51–60
1	13	5	3	1

10/20 interviews were conducted in Arabic, 3/20 in French, 3/20 in Dari/Farsi, and 4/20 in English (including with 2 Afghans, 1 Iranian and 1 Palestinian (mostly in English)).

Asylum status: 7/20 households had arrived in Greece prior to the EU/Turkey statement and 13/20 had arrived in Greece since the EU/Turkey statement. Of the 20 primary respondents, 9/20 had refugee status (commonly referred to as asylum status in Greece). 8/20 were asylum seekers who had been registered for their final asylum interviews. 3/20 were awaiting family reunification. Their status was verified by confirming which the most recent identification document that they had received was. Those with asylum in Greece had all been granted three-years residence permits.

Reasons for coming to Athens: 18/20 had previously spent time in camps, usually on the island of first arrival. Generally, the respondents had multiple reasons for leaving the camps, which generally revolved around the poor conditions, with shelter, sanitation and food commonly being referred to as low quality.

Respondents were asked the main reason that they came to Athens. Multiple reasons were accepted and responses included, because family or friends were there 6/20, for administrative reasons 4/20, because there likely to be more opportunities to find a job in Athens 2/20, because there were better services in Athens 2/20, and for their children's education 1/20. No definitive motive can be drawn from these responses, people came to Athens for a multitude of reasons but primarily the most significant factor was the poor conditions in the camps rather than the opportunities presented by the urban environment.

Accommodation: 19/20 were living in apartments. 1/20 (the unaccompanied minor) was living in a camp, which is located in urban Athens. 1/19 was homeless (having been stabbed in the squat that he was staying in) but was currently staying with a friend in his apartment. 2/19 were living in apartments that were provided by UNHCR. The majority had moved several times in Athens, often initially staying with friends or in squats.

Sources of income: The main sources of household income included UNHCR cash assistance 14/20, and SSI 2/20 (although in both cases the respondent was yet to receive the first payment). Of the 16/20 receiving cash assistance from either UNHCR or SSI, 6/16 were able to supplement this with informal work, remittances or savings.

2/20 were living from savings with one supplementing this with informal work, 1/20 was working in the formal sector, and 1/20 was an UAM and too young to receive cash assistance.

Cash assistance: Of the 14/20 receiving cash assistance from UNHCR, 10/14 said that they had no idea how long it would continue. 4/14 said that they had been told that they would only receive it for six months but they did not know when it would actually stop.

One respondent said that they had their assistance stopped in January 2018. The respondent claimed not to know the reason that it was stopped. A follow-up discussion with the UNHCR implementing partner who was providing the assistance revealed that they did not meet the eligibility criteria to receive cash assistance as they had been discovered to have arrived in Greece pre-2015. The eligibility requirement is that only refugees who arrived after the beginning of 2015 are eligible to receive cash assistance.

Of the 14/20 who were receiving cash assistance from UNHCR, when asked what they refugees would do once they stop receiving this assistance, 6/14 said that they would look for work, however all six had looked for work in the past and only 2/6 had been able to find informal work, one earning €35 per day as a labourer occasionally and one earning €10 per day as a cleaner. Another respondent, who had also been able to find occasional informal work as a labourer simply replied, '... if UNHCR cash assistance ends, it will be a very big mess' because the informal work salary was insufficient to live on. Other responses, from those who did not say that they would look for work, included: 'live on the streets', or 'return to the camp', or that they 'preferred not to think about it'.

²⁴⁰ A household is defined as: a single person who is 18 or over, or a couple, both of whom are 18 or over and any children who are 18.

Social Solidarity Income: Of the respondents, 15/20 had never heard of SSI and were unaware of what it is. 3/20 had been assisted by civil society organisations to successfully apply for SSI. It should be noted that only two civil society organisations in Athens have projects that aims to support refugees to apply for SSI and these organisations have only been successful in assisting a handful of refugees to apply for SSI.²⁴¹

Employment: All of the respondents had a legal entitlement to look for work in Greece.

- 2/20 had found work in the formal sector.
 - 1/20 was working an interpreter for an NGO.
 - 1/20 had been working in a café (the job was short-term and has finished). They were offered a formal employment contracts and letters from the employer to enable them to open a bank account.
- 4/20 had found work in the informal sector
 - 2/4 were working as labourers on an irregular basis for approximately €35 per day, but only for a few days each week.
 - 1/4 was working a cleaner for €10 per day.
 - 1/4 was working as a nightclub bouncer for two nights per week.
- 12/20 had tried to find work but had been unsuccessful.
- 2/20 had not tried to find work; however, both were awaiting family reunification.

Among those who had tried to find work the main challenges that they encountered were lack availability, 10/18, and lack of Greek or English language proficiency, 8/18. Several said that they were unable to find work in the formal sector as they lacked administrative numbers. The numbers that are required when offered a job in the formal sector include the tax number (AFM), the social security number (AMKA) and the national insurance number (IKA).

Of the 5/20 working in the informal sector, without legal contracts, none reported working exploitative hours and none reported that they had particular problems with their employers, although clearly paying €10 per day is exploitative.

Bank Account: 7/20 refugees had tried to open a bank account in Athens. 3/7 were refused due to a lack of documentation. Of the 4/20 responders who had been able to open a bank account, 3/4 had been assisted by civil society organisations and 1/4 had been provided a letter by his employer that confirmed his employment.

Payment of rental for the 16 self-rented apartments:

It should be noted that neither UNHCR cash assistance nor SSI are intended to cover accommodation rental costs.

16/20 were paying rent for their accommodation. 10/16 of the households were living with other households in the same apartment and thus were sharing the rental payment, 2/10 of these households nevertheless were able to supplement their income from UNHCR or SSI with savings, informal work or with support from their families elsewhere.

Of the 16/20 who were renting their own accommodation or contributing to the rent, 9/16 had formal rental contracts and 7/16 had informal rental contracts. This is significant because only formal rental contracts can be used as evidence of address when opening bank accounts or applying for Social Solidarity Income.

While most of the respondents were living in apartments that appeared to the researcher to be of reasonable quality, two apartments – that were both in basements – were particularly small and cramped with little natural light. One group of four refugees, comprising three brothers with a friend, was sharing a basement apartment that was in particularly poor condition. They were paying €400 per month in rent and utilities which is well in excess of the market value. With each receiving only €150 per month in cash assistance, only €50 per person per month remained for food and basic necessities.

The lowest monthly apartment rental fee found in the survey was €250 meaning that the cash assistance was not enough to cover even the rent for a single individual or even for a couple when utility costs are added.

Language: Regarding Greek language proficiency:

- 3/20 had not learnt any Greek
- 12/20 learnt a few basic words of Greek
- 5/20 had learnt Greek to the extent that they could hold a basic conversation

10/20 were trying to learn Greek. However, the majority were learning Greek from fellow refugees or long-term migrants, for example, two of the Congolese were learning Greek through a Congolese community group, but there was only one lesson a week.

One respondent was learning through a civil society organisation that delivered a structured course and some of the refugees have attended some classes with this organisation. One respondent noted that he had, 'tried many Greek language classes but the teachers keep changing and whenever there is a new teacher they start again from the beginning'. He also noted that at one of the civil society organisations, which is popular for language lessons, 'the

241 Interview with Dimitra Sairsou and Dimitis Voutirakis, social workers, Greek Council for Refugees; interview with Evanthia Botsolou, accountant, CARE Greece.

location was not good and there were no resources, including chairs for the students.'

4/20 refugees had focused on learning English since arriving in Greece and the interviews with these respondents were, for the most part, conducted in English.

Conversations with Greeks: All 20/20 expressed that they would like to have more contact with Greeks, however, 14/20 had no significant current contact with Greek people. Of the 6/20 who did have contact with Greek people, 2/6 was through work, 3/6 was through sports activities and the remaining 1/6 was through conversations in French with a Greek neighbour.

Asked if the respondents felt welcomed by Greek society the answers were broadly very positive from all nationalities with regular referral to Greeks being kind and friendly. Among the Arabic nationalities it was common to hear 'they are like us,' and 'they have the same culture as us.'

On the flip side 2/20 raised complaints about the police. One said, 'if you go to the police, they don't see a human in front of them, they see a refugee and then they see your religion,' another complained that the police had not helped him after he paid a lawyer to assist him but he never saw the lawyer again after the lawyer took the payment.

Social networks: Asked who the respondent interacted the most with outside of the home:

- 18/20 had regular interaction with individuals from their own country or from their region for example, Arabs would often socialise with other Arabs from other Arabic speaking countries. 2/20 had little interaction outside of the home.
- 13/20 respondents reported that they had no interaction with Greeks.
- 4/20 respondents reported that they had regular interaction with Greeks.

Support from long-term refugees/migrants: Asked if the respondents were receiving any support from longer-term refugees or migrants (those who have been in Greece for longer than three years):

- 3/20 do not know any long-term refugees or migrants.
- 6/20 know one or more long-term refugees or migrants but do not receive any support from them.
- 8/20 know one or more long-term refugees or migrants who are providing support to them. Generally, the support is the provision of basic information, although others are receiving support with translation or Greek language learning. Only one of the longer-term migrants has assisted the respondent to find informal work, as a bouncer in a nightclub. One respondent noted that 'long-term migrants are not in a position to help them as their situation is also bad'.

Staying in Greece vs. further migration: The respondents were asked how long they intended staying in Greece but it was rarely possible to get a definitive answer. Those who said that they wanted to stay in Greece often followed this with caveats, most often related to the need to find employment or for improved conditions. Those who said that they did not want to stay cited the lack of employment and conditions as the reason. Asked about the main reasons that they wanted to leave or remain in Greece the following responses were given:

- 11/20 listed the need to find employment as being a central factor in whether they would stay in Greece.
- 3/20 raised concerns about their safety in Greece, one had been stabbed in a squat and was concerned that the perpetrators still sought to harm him, one had been attacked whilst in detention and was traumatised by this, and one said, '... I don't feel so safe here, there are many fascists and my friend was attacked by several men who took away her scarf and beat her badly'.
- 1/20 referred to the need to continue to receive assistance. This was one of the individuals who had found work in the informal sector and therefore he knew that this was insufficient for him and his family of four children and his wife to subsist on alone. He also listed his children's ongoing education in a Greek school as an important factor that would encourage him to stay.
- Reasons for wanting to stay in Greece generally revolved around the friendliness of Greek people, the weather and for the Arabic speakers the cultural comparison.

Travel document: Perhaps the most telling indicator in terms of anticipating further migration is that 5/20 explained that they are currently waiting for their travel documents, which allow them to travel within Europe for up to three months. 4/5 intended to travel in search of work. 1/5 of these intended to travel to Malta in search of seasonal work but then to return to Greece before the three months that he is permitted to be outside of Greece expires. Another one intends to find work remotely using the Internet before travelling. All 5/5 said that they would remain in Greece if work were available.

Greek nationality: Although the refugees who had received refugees status had been granted three-year residency permits they were asked if they would like to receive Greek nationality:

- 16/20 expressed that they would like Greek citizenship.

Of those who did not want Greek citizenship:

- 1/20 who will be going to Austria for family reunification and would like Austrian citizenship.
- 1/20 said no.

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- 1/20 did not know.
 - 1/20 said that '... it is not important to be Greek, his Iranian friend has been given Greek nationality but this has not led to any improvement for him'.