



# **SECOND STUDY VISIT REPORT**

**ATHENS 19-20 November 2019**

**WP2 Engagement and Capacity Building of multi-stakeholders networks and development of the MILE model**

**Activity 2.2 Organisation of Study Visits and exchange meetings**



## 1. Introduction

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Study Visit of the project MILE Migrants Integration in the Labour market in Europe (821725-MILE-AMIF-2017-AG-INTE) took place in Athens and had a duration of two full days: 19 and 20 of November 2019.

The agenda of the meeting was designed so as to provide, in a short period of time, the overview of the migrant labour integration particularities in Greece. To this end, the hosting partner Hellenic Open University (HOU) arranged a programme of visits/presentations that facilitated a gradual introduction to the issues tangled by the project:

- Research: firstly, an overview of the historical routes of migration in Greece, provided by [EKKE National Center for Social Research](#), a leading national research organisation for social issues;
- Public sector: the role of public administrations was analysed next, by two special bureaus of the [Municipality of Athens, the Department of Support and Social Integration of Migrants and Refugees](#) (associate in the project MILE) and [ACCMR Athens Coordination Centre for migrant and refugee issues](#);
- Employers' Association: the leading professional association of Greece, i.e. GSEVEE "[The Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen & Merchants](#)" provided the view of the employers;
- International Organisations' chapters: the UN chapter in Greece of the [International Organisation of Migration](#) and [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees](#) presented details of how international aid is implemented in the Greece case;
- NGOs: one of the leading NGOs in Greece, i.e. [METAdrasi ONG](#), demonstrated how they work with migrants and the challenges ahead.

Overall, the agenda of the meeting provided a multi-faceted approach to the migrant integration problem in Greece, emphasising on the many differences observed in challenges and methods used in relation to most EU countries. The study visit gave participants the opportunity of exploring the Greek context and dynamics, especially related to the assistance and integration of refugees and asylum seekers. In fact, Greece is one of the arrival country for the majority of the asylum seekers looking for shelter in Europe; but with the time, it nowadays became a destination country too. This means that aspects of long-term integration, including economic and labour integration, are now crucial topics for local organisations in the sector. MILE Partners, associates and stakeholders received an historical overview of migration in the country in general. Up to date data on the main working migrants' communities in Greece were presented. Also, the point of view of local employers and job centres was taken into consideration.

## 2. Day 1 – 19.11.2019

In the morning of the first day, the partners met at the HOU headquarters in Athens for a short welcome and introduction to the goals and objectives of the study meeting.



The participants were then transferred to the headquarters of [EKKE National Center for Social Research](#). EKKE was founded in 1959 under the auspices of UNESCO and is the only public research centre in Greece that researches the social sciences. It is a Legal Entity under Public Law, supervised by the General Secretariat for Research and Technology (GSRT) of the Ministry of Development and Investment. The president of EKKE, Prof. Nikos Demertzis welcomed the partners and made a brief introduction of the activities of EKKE and especially to the ones related to labour integration. The floor was then given to Mr. Aggelos Tramountanis, senior researcher at EKKE, who made a very interesting presentation about the historical perspective of migrant labour integration from the early 90s to the 2015 migration crisis in Greece. Detailed statistics presented showed similar patterns in many aspects of the challenges faced before and now and that, despite some steps made in the field of legislation, there are still many problems to be solved.



According to the findings of EKKE, a significant part of migrants from Middle East or Asia arriving in Greece consider the country as an intermediate station. Their goal is to move to destinations such as Germany, France or Scandinavia countries where there are more job opportunities and the possibility of better life conditions. This mentality significantly reduces the impact of training and up skilling efforts. Other types of third-country migrants such as Albanians (the most significant migrant population in Greece) exhibits a different pattern as they are keen in staying in Greece and thus are eager to develop their skills. It has been noted that migrants originating from different countries need, somewhat, a different approach as far as labour integration methods and tools are concerned.

Experts from the two units of the Municipality of Athens ([ACCMR Athens Coordination Centre for migrant and refugee issues](#) and the [Department of Support and Social Integration of Migrants and Refugees](#) which is an associate in the project MILE) joined the group making presentations about the services provided by their administration and the challenges being faced. They described how, since the beginning of 2015, with Greece's unprecedented number of migrant and refugee arrivals fleeing conflict, the City of Athens has increasingly adopted a proactive approach towards developing strategies to address the needs of these vulnerable populations. In this context, the City of Athens undertook the initiative to establish these two units, ACCMR and the Department, for the support and social integration of migrants and refugees. The initiative aims at the efficient coordination between the municipal authorities and stakeholders operating within the city, such as national and international NGOs, international organizations, and migrant and refugee community groups. The experts presented their activities towards achieving the goal to shape the necessary conditions for the smooth integration of migrants and refugees currently living in the city of Athens, but also for dealing with emergency situations linked with future migration flows. It was pointed out that one of the major services provided was finding housing for the migrants. Very specific areas in the larger vicinity of Attica were found to be suitable. This meant that migrants' opportunities to find jobs at their area of stay were rather limited and as such, labour integration was difficult as well. Migrants do not have the flexibility to find work far from their place of stay and this is a parameter that needs to be considered in the Greek case.



In the afternoon, the participants moved again to the HOU premises for the second part of the day. A representative of GSEVEE (the [Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen & Merchants](#)) made a brief presentation of the association: the Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen & Merchants (GSEVEE) was founded in 1919, in the wake of the need for the Greek professionals and craftsmen to join forces, initially under the name "Hellenic Craftsmen Association". GSEVEE is a so-called third level, cross-sectoral, employer's organisation across Greece, and one of the major social partners that co-sign the National General Collective Agreement (GSEE, GSEVEE, ESEE, SEV, SETE). It constitutes the major and most massive association of Professionals, Craftsmen and Merchants all over the country. GSEVEE incorporates 90 federations, out of which 59 local, 30 sectorial and 1 of pensioners and 1.100 main unions with 140.000 natural persons (entrepreneurs) registered. During the presentation several interesting points were mentioned including the difficulty to engage Greek SMEs (actually SMEs comprise 100% of the Greek companies' corpus) in activities related to migrant labour integration due to the complicated procedures needed to employ migrants. There have been several interesting, albeit isolated efforts for



capacity building and training but there seems to be a lack of political consensus. The participants had the opportunity to be informed about the results of the [MigrAID](#) project, an Erasmus+ project which focuses on ethnic diversity in the workplace and implements specific research and training activities in the field of small and medium-sized enterprises aimed at the smooth integration of migrant workers into the labour market. The results of the programme were of particular interest to MILE because they refer to two innovative and interconnected research actions and specific training programs for both stakeholders (trade unions and businesses) as well as for migrant communities. The themes that cover all project activities are ethnic diversity, inclusion, diversity in the workplace, inequality and conflict resolution. After the presentation participants were engaged in a discussion about the very interesting information presented during the first day of the meeting.

### 3. Day 2 – 20.11.2019

In the morning of the second day, the second meeting of the 3 Transnational Multi-Stakeholders Working Groups takes place, within Activity 2.3 of the MILE project, and taking into account each partner country's best practices and the ones visited during study visits.

The Working Groups were:

- Working Group 1: Approaches and tools in training and integration into labour market  
Subtopic: Legal issues concerning the integration of migrants into the labour market: challenges and solutions.  
Participants:
  - ICEI (Italy) – FACILITATOR
  - ACH (Spain) – NOTE TAKER
  - EMIT (Italy)
  - Municipality of Milan (Italy)
  - AMS (Austria)
  - OTC (Greece)
  - Central Macedonia University (Greece)
  - Multicultural Centre Prague (Check Republic)
  - IOM Greece (2) (Greece)
  - UNCHR Greece (Greece)
  
- WG2: Social and personal support tools to reach, involve and accompany migrants into the labour market  
Sub-topic: Linking the process of migrant integration to real labour market needs: processes, synergies and strategies needed  
Participants: 6 people from 6 organisations
  - OTC (Greece)– FACILITATOR
  - VM (Austria) - NOTE TAKER
  - ICEI (Italy)
  - Foundation ISMU (Italy)
  - Migration Hub Network (Germany)
  - HOU (Greece)
  
- WG3: Employers' organizations' needs and long-term involvement strategies  
Sub-topic: The desirable professional profile of migrants according to employer needs: required skills and training programs  
Participants: 9 people from 8 organisations
  - HOU (Greece) – FACILITATOR
  - ICEI (Italy) – NOTE TAKER
  - AFOLMET (Italy)
  - VM (Austria)

- Innovia (Austria)
- ACEDE (2) (Spain)
- Hellenic Association for Intercultural HAIE (Greece)
- Migration Policy Group (Belgium)

The Working Groups, after discussing and sharing practices that can be useful in each country and for the implementation of MILE's future key activities, presented their findings to all in plenary session, individualizing suggestions, feedback and useful practical solutions.

After the Working Groups, there was a session at HOU where representatives from [International Organisation of Migration](#) and [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees](#) presented their main projects active on the territory to promote social security and long-term integration support for refugees and asylum seekers in the country. Especially [Helios Project](#), the Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection from IOM, and the [ESTIA Project](#), Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation programme from UNHCR Greece were of much interest.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is a significant stakeholder for the MILE project. It was founded in December 1951, operating as the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM). Today, 67 years on, IOM is the world leading intergovernmental UN Organization for migration. IOM Greece, as a founding member of IOM, has a long cooperation experience with the Greek Government and the civil society, aiming at helping and supporting migrants.



The other stakeholder, UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is an organization active in many inclusion activities and several working groups. UNHCR was established on 14 December 1950, based in Geneva, Switzerland, by the UN General Assembly, with the mandate to guide and coordinate international action for the protection of refugees and to find sustainable solutions. Its main concern is to ensure that every person has the right to seek asylum and to find security in another country with a view to finding viable solutions, such as voluntary repatriation, asylum or resettlement in a third country. Since its inception, UNHCR has been protecting the rights and providing effective assistance to refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons and stateless persons. It has helped millions of people resume their lives successfully and has been honoured twice with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1954 and 1981. The Greek chapter is active in numerous programmes and cooperates with the government and the social sector to bring solutions to a most pressing problem: refugee and migrant integration.

During the presentation, participants had the opportunity to be informed about the latest key statistical data concerning migration in Greece. November 2019 statistics showed an increase of 30% of the migrant (or refugee population seeking asylum) population within a few months (from about 67.000 which was the official account according to the Greek government to approximately 98.000. The experts pointed out that even the provision of basic services to such increased numbers is difficult due to the lack of procedures, the complex legislation concerning job permits introduced in 2015 and the diversity of the migrant population.



During the afternoon, participants were transferred to the premises of [METAdrasi](#), an award winning NGO. METAdrasi was founded in December 2009 with the mission to facilitate the reception and integration of refugees and migrants in Greece. Believing that migration leads to development, METAdrasi is determined to uphold and protect the fundamental human rights of all those displaced and persecuted through innovative interventions. The name of METAdrasi was coined by the synthesis of the Greek words “meta”+“drasi” (meaning: and then? + action) and encapsulates the stated purpose and philosophy. METAdrasi experts provided a guided tour of their offices where partners had the chance to witness how Language courses for migrants were delivered. The NGO, is the one of the main Legal Translation provider in Greece in the context of legal protection procedures. The organisation also delivers articulated programmes of language training for migrants and integration support too. A detailed presentation of METAdrasi activities was given and a fruitful discussion took place concerning the challenges faced by NGOs and volunteers in battling the migrant crisis in Greece.

