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**GREECE: Human Rights - Protection of various groups at risk**

**In the text below you can read a report by the Society of Social Psychiatry P. Sakellaropoulos about the situation in Greece with respect to different vulnerable groups for preventing the spread of COVID-19 and supporting them (homeless people, refugees, Roma, people with mental health difficulties,** older persons, LGBT persons **etc). The structure of this text is organized in a flexible way according to the following pillars;**

* Central government responses
* Local government responses
* Voluntary sector/NGO responses
* Examples of inter-agency or cross-sector working
* Use of technology in responding to the situation.

**HOMELESS PEOPLE**

Regarding Homeless people, *the Greek Network for the Right to Shelter and Housing* (a league of social and public benefit organizations) keeps lobbying and putting pressure to Authorities for more measures for homeless people.

**THE STATE RESPONSE**

Copy of information from: <https://www.localit.gr/site/archives/197147>

The urgent measures that municipalities must take to protect the homeless and limit the spread of coronavirus are described in a **Circular issued by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.**

According to the circular, the municipalities are called upon to take measures for the homeless in order to: on the one hand, to accommodate the people living on the streets in a safe environment and on the other hand to decongest the existing structures for the homeless, if they show increased occupancy. Therefore, each municipality must immediately draw up an **Action Plan** that includes the following three axes, all in accordance with the instructions of the National Organization for Public Health (EODY in Greek) (which gives an idea of coordination between Ministry of Health and Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs):

1. Strengthen measures in existing homeless structures
2. Designation of premises / hotels / buildings for safe housing for the homeless

It is important to underline that the Circular of the Ministry demands that for the operation of the specific areas, special care must be taken in order **to ensure the**

**cooperation with Institutions, Organizations, NGOs that will provide the services and the staff** (in case they are not provided exclusively by the Municipality). This is a good example of coordination between State and NGOs.

1. Provision of streetwork services

For the implementation of the above project, it is necessary to provide streetwork services. In addition, in case of refusal of cooperation by the beneficiaries for their temporary housing, it is critical to continue providing services on the road.

Municipalities were required, depending on their **recorded needs** to submit to the General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and Fight against Poverty / Directorate for Fighting Poverty) an **action plan** in accordance with the above, as well as an **estimated implementation budget**, as soon as possible and in any case no later than Wednesday, April 1, 2020 at 14:00.

Even before that, in order to meet their immediate needs, the municipalities received an additional grant of 5m euros and the regions 11m euros. ( <http://www.pontos-news.gr/article/207186/apagoreysi-kykloforias-merimna-gia-astegoys-toxikomaneis-roma-kai-adespota> )

The **Ministry of Interior** has decided to boost financially with 2.25 million euros 98 municipalities in the country to take measures to prevent and spread the coronavirus in Roma settlements and camps. The municipalities of Attica, which have Roma communities, have already been active in this direction and from the first moment they rushed to ensure care and protection. (Source: iefimerida.gr - <https://www.iefimerida.gr/ellada/koronoios-merimna-dimon-gia-roma> ).

It seems that there is coordination between Ministries, that set the framework, provide the budget and then the implementation goes to Local Authorities.

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND NEED OF ACCOMODATION: THE RESPONSE OF THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT FOR FAMILY POLICY AND GENDER EQUALITY**

The General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality in order to deal with emergencies, taking into account the safety of employees, guests and applicants for hospitality and, in order not to disturb the smooth operation of hostels provides free accommodation and food for domestic violence victims and their minor children, in collaboration with the Hellenic Forensic Medicine Society. It is also possible for the victims to be examined by medical examiners and their children to be monitored by specialized scientists of the "Child's Smile". These accommodations will assist in the service of the needs of the hostels, as long as the emergency measures are implemented to reduce the spread of coronavirus.

**MUNICIPALITY RESPONSE**

**Α) Rough Sleepers**

The Athens municipality on Wednesday opened the doors of a new shelter, the Homeless Centre, which can host up to 400 people.

According to a municipality announcement, the new facility is housed in three adjoining buildings which have a staff of doctors, care workers, nurses, social workers and psychologists.

At the Day Centre, which offers showers and washing machines, homeless people can wash their clothes and take showers, while there are also places where they can store their personal belongings and internet rooms, TV rooms and a dining area. In the dormitory, the homeless can find a safe place to sleep without bureaucratic procedures and can stay at the hostel as long as they need, until they are once again integrated in society.

Additionally, a team of the National Public Health Organisation test for the coronavirus and, in the case of individuals that test positive, they will go to an isolation area specifically set up for this purpose within the facility.

The Greek Red Cross, the organisations "Apostoli", Praksis, The doctors of the world, Equal Society and others contribute to the effort.

(Source: <https://www.amna.gr/en/article/448031/New-shelter-in-Athens-to-offer-decent-living-conditions-for--the-homeless> )

**B) Rough Sleepers with Addictions/Drug Use**

**The new structure of temporary - transitional hospitality where citizens who are homeless and at the same time face problems of addiction** and / or addiction to psychoactive substances will find shelter and care was created by the Municipality of Athens with the City Of Athens Homeless Shelter (KYADA), joining forces with the Organization Against Drugs (OKANA), the Center for the Treatment of Addicted Persons (KETHEA), with the help of the "Mission" of the Holy Archdiocese of Athens and with the cooperation of the "Network of Equal Users of Psychoactive Substances", "PRAKSIS", "Doctors" of the World ", the Association of Liver Patients" Prometheus ", the Association of HIV-positive people of Greece" Positive Voice ", and the Organization" STEPS ".

The hostel will provide accommodation, personal care and hygiene services, nursing care, counseling, psychosocial support, integration, and, above all, treatment and rehabilitation programs with health, legal assistance, welfare, social and employment services. This space will be able to accommodate 70 people (with the possibility of receiving up to 140 people) and for a period of up to 6 months.

According to an announcement by the Municipality of Athens, the services will be provided by specialized staff of the two Organizations (OKANA-KETHEA), on a 24-hour basis, with full respect for the rights of guests and following scientifically substantiated and accepted methods of providing these services. There will be special care from the competent services of the Municipality of Athens and all the competent bodies for the strict observance of the rules of hygiene, cleanliness, lighting and safety throughout the area where the hostel is housed.

(Source: <http://www.topontiki.gr/article/380686/xekinise-na-leitoyrgei-o-xenonas-astegon-hriston-toy-dimoy-athinaion-me-ti-synergasia> )

The 2 cases are an example of good practice for the collaboration of Public and NGO sector.

**C) For Vulnerable Social Groups**

After a few days of pilot implementation to ensure its absolute effectiveness, the Municipality of Athens is launching the "Help at Home plus" program. The Municipality of Athens, with the assistance of scientists, technocrats and people in general loyal to the values ​​of social contribution and solidarity, designed and created a special mechanism unprecedented in scope and possibilities for receiving and processing requests from residents of Athens, who belong to the vulnerable groups.

"Help at Home Plus" is addressed to residents of the Municipality of Athens with underlying diseases and illnesses and the elderly who cannot be served by their relatives but also lonely people who are not able to self-serve. The goal is for all of the above to be served at home by social workers, nurses and program assistants.

At the same time, through the "Help at Home Plus" it is planned to distribute to the **beneficiaries of the social grocery store** of the City of Athens Homeless Shelter belonging to the vulnerable groups, the **social pharmacy**, as well as the alternative food distribution that recently implemented a long-distance tray (distributing packages, so that people are not crowded in places of food distribution).

Finally, with the "Help at Home plus", the food packages and basic material goods of the European Relief Fund for the Poor will be distributed to approximately 16,000 beneficiaries, thus carrying out the largest home service ever implemented in the Municipality of Athens.

( Source: <http://www.cityofathens.gr/node/34691> )

The Municipal Clinics, for their part, contribute to the above program for both regular and intangible prescribing to the vulnerable and vulnerable groups of the residents of Athens.

**NGOS**

Most NGOs for Homeless People function as follows: The Day Centers are open certain hours, operate with security personnel and due to the security and precautionary measures that have been decided (Covid-19), the service is given up to 3 people (depending of the space available) serving in the personal hygiene services (baths and laundries), by appointment.

Street work and harm reduction interventions are carried out where injectable material, sanitary kits and an information leaflet for the coronavirus are distributed in the language of the person served. In some cases they may restrict street work, in some cases the keep offering services.

Examination in the doctor's office is done mainly by appointment, trying to avoid crowded spaces, however the services remain open.

On the other hand there are some NGOs that offer their services through skype and telephone for the cases that can be addressed this way.

An important example of good practice is the Greek Department of the NGO DOCTORS OF THE WORLD / MEDECINES DU MONDE which organized specific responses and services to homeless and other vulnerable people specialized for the coronavirus period and specific needs.

See details: <https://mdmgreece.gr/en/covid19-response-briefing-note-march-2020doctors-world-greek-delegation/>

**PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS**

There are many helplines for information, social services, psychological support and for the support of the staff of frontline medical services. Many of them have been developed by NGOs, by Local Authorities, by Professionals Associations, by University Hospitals.

A good example for the collaboration of NGOs and Public Sector is the Help Line (Psychologist, Psychiatrists, Social Workers) of the Confederation of Non Profit Organizations for Psychosocial Support and Mental Health, the Athens University, University Mental Health Hospital Aiginition, Social Solidarity Center, “the smile of the child NGO”.

we follow the Ministry of Health instructions for the function of Mental Health Units, similar to other EU countries.

**The function of Mental Health Services**

Different level of instructions for Mobile Units, for Day Centers and for Hostels and Protected Apartments, where people with chronic illness live and most of them have other chronic illnesses. We are concerned and we train them for protection, following the protocols of National Organization of Public Health.

We have increased our availability for skype and phone sessions and for emergency mental health needs for people living in the community.

**Some concerns for people with mental disabilities living in institutions**

*There is an article by Yannis Alexakis, Barrister and Legal Advisor on Mental Health Issues and Member of the Standing Committee for Monitoring the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Mental Disorders (Act 2716/1999)- Ministry of Health, which describes the situation in Psychiatric Hospitals.*

*Mr Alexakis describes: (direct copy from his website)*

*“Proven lack of staff, ie mental health professionals, in the Psychiatric Hospitals ("Dromokaitio" and "Daphne"), in the Psychiatric Departments (PD) of the General Hospitals and in the housing structures especially those developed by public entities, together with the actual fear of staff being infected by the COVID-19 coronavirus, seems to be the reason why some administrations have taken excessive measures against people with mental disabilities.*

*We are referring to the restrictive measures imposed in absentia on people with mental disabilities, especially those who are being treated in psychiatric hospitals or housing structures. […]*

*In any case, the above restriction infringes the right of people with mental disabilities, in particular those living in housing structures, to freedom of expression, information and communication.”*

[*https://mentalhealth-law.blogspot.com/2020/03/covid-19.html*](https://mentalhealth-law.blogspot.com/2020/03/covid-19.html) *(accessed in 30/3/2020)*

**NGOs and LOCAL AUTHORITIES FOR TRANS, LGBT+ (and/or) homeless people**

The Association for the Support of Transgender People, since its establishment, still provides food, clothes and basic necessities, in Trans and in general LGBTQI + persons who are in financial weakness. Some time ago, the Association called for the support and assistance of Trans and LGBTQI + persons due to the coronavirus.

The Municipality of Athens responded positively to this call, where through the City of Athens Homeless Shelter, it provided to the Association forty-five (45) food packages in order to cover food for a week for LGBTQI + persons in great difficulty, amid the pandemic.

(Source: <https://www.news247.gr/good-news/koronoios-parochi-trofimon-apo-ton-dimo-athinaion-se-loatki-atoma.7615997.html> )

The NGO ORLANDO for the Mental Health of LGBT+ persons created a “Survival Guide” providing information regarding health, mental health and access to services, housing services among other services. It also offers instructions for professionals.

(Source: <https://orlandolgbt.gr/loatki-atoma-kai-koronoios-odigos-epiviosis-gia-ta-idia-to-perivallon-toys-kai-epaggelmaties-psychikis-ygeias/> )

**THE STEET PAPER “SHEDIA”: an example of good practice**

The Editor of Street Paper "Shedia", invited citizens to support the approximately 150 sellers of the street magazine in other ways, after the temporary suspension of the publication.

He asks citizens to buy two-month or four-month subscriptions so that the magazine can go home by post. As with street sales, 50% of the revenue will go to our sellers in proportion, to ensure that even if so, they will have a small income to cover some basic needs…

(Source: <https://www.alfavita.gr/koinonia/316101_kyniki-i-odigia-meinete-spiti-gia-toys-astegoys-otan-den-yparhei-pronoia> )

**CHARITY – THE EXAMPLE OF A SHIPOWNER FAMILY FOR THE SUPPORT OF HOMELESS AND VULNERABLE**

The "Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Foundation" announces that the funds it had pledged for this year's Anniversary Celebration of the 2500th anniversary of the Battle of Thermopylae and the Battle of Salamis will be donated for the relief of vulnerable groups of homeless, elderly, and social work of churches.

Equally important is the announcement of "Elpida/Hope", the association that the same lady has founded and with its many years of work has relieved thousands of children suffering from cancer and their families, according to which the money of the "Social Solidarity Fund" of 2020 will be allocated to vulnerable groups of homeless people, the elderly and the sick in this extremely difficult situation.

(Source: <https://www.thetoc.gr/koinwnia/article/marianna-bardinogianni-se-astegous-ilikiomenous-ta-xrimata-ton-eortasmon-thermopules-salamina/>)

**REFUGEES**

**STATE RESPONSE**

A) For preventing the spread of the corona virus to the population residing at the islands’ RICs, the Greek Government had announced the following measures;

1. The new arrivals coming in Greece after 1st of March 2020 remain outside the RICs to avoid the risk of spreading the COVID-19. According to the plan, they will be transferred to closed sites on the mainland in the next days.
2. The movement of the people resides in the RICs to the urban centers for covering their basic needs is controlled. More analytically, only one member of each family can go there every hour between 7am to 7pm. Police coordinates this procedure. People can use only public transport.

<https://www.civilprotection.gr/el/22-hrisimes-erotiseis-kai-apantiseis-gia-ola-ta-nea-metra-kai-tis-rythmiseis-shetika-me-ton-koronoio>

1. Entry is not allowed for visitors
2. Instructions for sanitary conditions
3. Close cooperation with the National Organization for Public Health
4. Suspension of educational activities

<https://bit.ly/2S0rhnS>

B) In cases of confirmed cases in refugee-migrant facilities, the state puts on quarantine for 14 day these places according to the health requirements. For example, just few days ago 150 people in an accommodation facility in the town of Kranidi, in southern Greece, have tested positive for the COVID-19.

## C) Suspension of services of the Greek Asylum to the public, in 10 languages

<http://asylo.gov.gr/en/?p=5288&fbclid=IwAR0MAc1Qt9AIXUmjJwmik9RzTswcJNWy5V2vHn_W4AHHYqPVy13KRmpFDFQ>

- Extension of the period of validity of residence permits, residence cards and permanent residence cards

[http://www.immigration.gov.gr/documents/20182/31265/Extension+of+the+period+of+validity+of+residence+permits.pdf/82a125fb-e3e6-4fe4-b8ca-d67d05fcec27](http://www.immigration.gov.gr/documents/20182/31265/Extension%2Bof%2Bthe%2Bperiod%2Bof%2Bvalidity%2Bof%2Bresidence%2Bpermits.pdf/82a125fb-e3e6-4fe4-b8ca-d67d05fcec27)

 -Extension of employment permits

[http://www.immigration.gov.gr/documents/20182/31265/Extension+of+employment+permits.pdf/f0cb1fba-84a5-492a-9bca-2afa75c31ff3](http://www.immigration.gov.gr/documents/20182/31265/Extension%2Bof%2Bemployment%2Bpermits.pdf/f0cb1fba-84a5-492a-9bca-2afa75c31ff3)

-8 basic protective measures against COVID-19 available in Greek and another 6 languages - English, French, Arabic, Farsi, Albanian and Russian

<https://www.civilprotection.gr/el/simantika-themata/se-exi-glosses-i-enimerosi-tis-genikis-grammateias-politikis-prostasias-me-odigies?fbclid=IwAR1aIrhzu8nb1WvBtVV7OAi0COKimeoU4RW7cuQT9XwuEBLLpv6sQxbRKSQ>

**-** A**sylum-seeker access to Healthcare.** As of 1 April 2020, the issuance of the Temporary Aliens Provisional Insurance and Health Care Number (PAAYPA) to asylum-seekers will be implemented. <https://help.unhcr.org/greece/coronavirus/#Access>

D) The Greek Government announced that 2380 vulnerable refugees from islands will be transferred to mainland until the end of April.

<https://www.mitarakis.gr/press/81-tv/2008-dt-yma-wra-elados-opentv>

**INTERNATIONAL – EUROPEAN COOPERATION**

60 unaccompanied minors, children and adolescents, have left Greece to Germany Luxembourg.  Within the next months approximately more 1,600 will find a new home in Europe. It is an initiative of Greek Government, European Commission, UNHCR, International Organization for Migration (IOM) and EASO (European Service fog Asylum) <https://primeminister.gr/2020/04/18/23795>

Greece has activated the EU Civil Protection Mechanism to request housing units, sanitation and medical equipment, including oxygen generators, X-ray machines and wheelchairs. In this context, Austria has provided 181 housing and sanitation booths via the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

<https://www.amna.gr/en/article/451440/Greece-receives-aid-for-refugees-via-EU-Civil-Protection-Mechanism>

Assistance including tents, blankets, sleeping bags, generators, heaters, beds, and other needs totalling nearly 70,000 objects offered also by 15 EU countries.

<https://www.amna.gr/en/article/438108/Civil-Protection-Min-thanks-EU-member-states-for-humanitarian-aid>

**NGOs/ LOCAL GOVERNMENT/EXAMPLES OF INTER-AGENCY OR CROSS-SECTOR/ USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN RESPONDING TO THE SITUATION**

**The MHPSS Technical Working Group of Attica**, that is a network mostly of NGO, under the aegis of UNHCR of Greece and the co-ordination of Day Center Babel has skype-meetings every week. In this context the Interim Briefing Note “ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF COVID-19 OUTBREAK” by IASC Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings has been translated in Greeks. <https://bit.ly/2x0fXRh>

# **The Athens Coordination Center for Migrant and Refugee Issues of Municipality of Athens** is as a **coordination hub for the fruitful exchange of good practices and know-how** *between local and international NGOs, international organizations and municipal bodies* on issues ranging from temporary accommodation to integration of newcomers **(**<https://www.accmr.gr/en/>). **It keeps its platform up to date. Among others it has introduced a** useful tool mapping services and good practices aimed at vulnerable groups (including migrants and refugees) and a useful information on Covid-19 preventive measures for community workers and beneficiaries coming from **UNHCR and NGO Solidarity Now, as well as by the Working Committees of ACCMR, Greek Government, World Health Organization.**

* Many NGOs have reduced the staff in the field and they provide services by phone, skype etc.
* Webinars for the training of the staff with respect to the COVID 19 CRISIS are taking place. See for example Webinar Series\_Mental Health and COVID-19”, Lancet Psychiatry, Mental Health Innovation Network, MHPSS.net και United for Global Mental Health. <https://www.unitedgmh.org/news/webinarseriescovid19>