

## **'The Route of Solidarity' #6 Thessaloniki meeting**

**17-23 October 2018**

### **I. Description & Evaluation**

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#### **Description: Short Presentation of the 5 days**

##### **\_Thursday, 18/10\_Mapping 'here & now': TROS in Thessaloniki**

The first day of the #6TROS meeting was divided in two major parts: A. the TROS inner activities and workshops and; B. visits and meetings with other organisations.

The first morning sessions began by introducing the TROS project and its goals as well as the Thessaloniki meeting Agenda and concept. The next session aimed at getting to know each other and each other's organizations, thus, via several experiential exercises, multiple different backgrounds, approaches and visions about inclusion and migration were presented.

During the evening session the team visited the '**ALKYONE Refugee Day Center**', as well as the '**NAOMI Ecumenical Workshop for Refugees**'. Apart from attending the presentation of their work and history, we engaged in discussing good practices, focusing on the refugee inclusion aspect.

##### **\_Friday, 19/10\_Mapping the reality: 'camps & integration'**

The second day of the meeting was devoted to '**OMNES**' association as a prominent and outstanding example of the inclusive approach. Prior to our arrival to Kilkis, where '**OMNES**' is operating, we passed by the **Diavata camp**, where we were informed over the current living conditions of the refugees and the work ANTIGONE did there.

We then visited '**OMNES**' headquarters where some of their staff presented us with the overall structure of their project. During the evening session, that was held in '**OMNES Inclusion Center**', we had the chance to go into depth over the program they are running. '**OMNES**' housing project runs on an equal dispersion sustainable model which is based on the calculation of cost and benefits of the redistribution of displaced people. They therefore operate with an electronic board system that monitors the housing infrastructure and occupancy status. The goal is to optimize this system, by including information about the residents' needs, hopes and skills.

What is more, '**OMNES**' is currently preparing a circular economy project, where they will incorporate locally produced products that will then reach the European market; we were therefore reminded of the economic aspect of the 'refugee crisis' and the importance of creating sustainable projects that will carry on even after the funds are gone.

The discussion that followed focused on the importance of data collection. We also debated the possibility of implementing a similar housing project on a bigger scale and whether its positive impact would still be as visible as that of the smaller scale

### **\_Saturday, 20/10\_Mapping Networking**

The third day of the meeting was dedicated to an overview concerning migration in Greece: "It's not a crisis. It's a new reality and we as a society have to find ways to live together". It was some of these co-living ways that we tried to find out in a discussion and an experimental exercise of **mapping networking** between the countries as well as the different groups (NGOs, governmental organisations and activists). During the presentation of the **Select Respect network**, we discussed how we can experience solidarity in networks and effective multiplication of good practices together with a group from the Heinrich Böll Stiftung Brandenburg/Germany.

We were also given the chance to see other links between people and times during the screening of the "**The Journey of Orpheus**" documentary. The film narrates refugees' and migrants' stories in connection to the music traditions they brought along – and it does so by linking two major refugee influxes in the recent Greek history: the refugee influx of 1922 and that of 2015. The screening was attended by the film director who presented us with the film's process, ethics and overall vision.

### **\_Sunday, 21/10\_Mapping 'our strengths**

The fourth day of the meeting was spent outdoors. During the morning sessions we conducted our workshops in the port of Thessaloniki. More particularly, the first workshop entailed the four (4) countries' paradigms, in regards to the refugee issue and the overall migration management; the dominant **Discourses** lying, the **Actors** involved, the **Risks and Challenges** we are facing, as well as the **Strengths and Opportunities** that we have and can use in order to overcome them. We then proceeded to drafting **the first part of the workshop** concerning the **message deriving from Thessaloniki's meeting** regarding the Advocacy action, the TROS#8 Sevilla final meeting and further outcomes of the TROS project.

In the evening we had the chance to follow a **guided walking tour** in Ano Poli, mapping the old city of Thessaloniki. Finally, we concluded our day by attending the **Thessaloniki Animation Festival**, where we watched the "Human Rights Animated" session.

### **\_Monday, 22/10\_Mapping 'now' towards the future**

During the fifth and last day of the meeting we attempted to map the 'now' towards the future. In the morning session we visited different organisations, working in solidarity and in support with refugees: '**PRAKSIS**', '**Oikopolis**' and the '**Doctors of the World**'. The final discussion was dominated by the 'volunteerism-professionalism' dichotomy that affects the NGO field on many different levels & countries.

Working in the afternoon on **the second part of the TROS #6 Thessaloniki Message & Advocacy Proposals** we discussed and decided on the proposed outcomes, common message and statement that is further elaborated in the **Thessaloniki's Report\_Part II**. We finished the working part of our meeting with an **evaluation**, before it was rounded off by a last common 'Goodbye' dinner.

## **Evaluation**

The participants had the chance to evaluate the Thessaloniki's meeting on the base of five (5) categories and TROS objectives following. In concrete, they wrote their opinions in post-its which later were placed in a measuring scheme which was used to evaluate each category.

### **1\_Presentations / visits / activities at and with local organisations**

When it comes to the positive side of the evaluation spectrum, the participants pointed out the **good selection of the organisations** we visited during the meeting (Alkyone, Naomi, PRAKSIS, Oikopolis, Doctors of the world). They described the visits and presentations as **"inspiring and useful"**. In concrete, the visit at the organisation **OMNES**, in Kilkis town, has been highlighted, almost by all participants, as **an outstanding and inspiring example and a good practice**.

They also referred to the usefulness of visiting two organisations that are active in the same field (PRAKSIS / Doctors of the world) during the same morning as an interesting overview.

When it comes to aspects that could be improved, it was brought to our attention by two participants that the visit to *Diavata camp* with the bus was rather uncomfortable to them.

### **2\_Workshops & Presentations by ANTIGONE**

Based on the participants' feedback the workshops have been appraised **as very interactive & visual, effective & active, with a good energy, well prepared and in a good atmosphere**. They also mentioned **the attention at the group dynamic, the good leading and the team building** from the beginning on, as well as **the importance of solidarity**.

In regards to the presentations they highlighted **the good preparation and the data provided by the ANTIGONE team**; they pointed out that they were indeed thoroughly informed about the refugee issue in Greece and that the leading team managed to create a common ground for all the participants. More particularly, the participants mentioned that the "good explanations of local context [made it possible] for us to compare with our local context" and that **the workshops were "wonderful and very useful, it helps to understand the situation, to have a global and international point of view."**

However, it was brought to our attention that more time should have been given to the Advocacy action working group – and that is something to consider for the next two meetings; the

participants also pointed out that they needed more time and distance to reflect on this particular aspect.

### **3\_Cooperation**

It should be noted that during the TROS meeting in Thessaloniki we have had the chance to share certain activities with a visiting group of social workers, education and NGO professionals affiliated with the Heinrich Boell Stiftung Brandenburg/Germany. Therefore when it comes to evaluating the cooperation of the group, the participants referred to both the internal cooperation of the TROS group as well as the cooperation we had with the aforementioned group of the Heinrich Boell Stiftung.

When it comes to **our internal cooperation** between our groups has been described as **“good”**, as one that had a **“nice relation”**. We also got that they learned about the value of expression; about the cooperation beyond the representation of networking; about the challenge of networking; and about the importance of not being alone in “the history of history”, as they have found people with whom they can cooperate in the future. On an overall view: **“the group was really great and I think because of you!”**.

When it comes to the cooperation with the German group, the participants said that it was good to have the German group a few times with us, but that they would have needed a better introduction, or even a brief on their work before our shared activities. In spite of that, our participants found it **interesting to discover other points of view and a different approach of the issue.**

Lastly, when it comes to the cooperation with the visited organisations we did not get so much feedback, only this: “great with the visited organisations, thanks for this good management.”.

### **4\_TROS – Project – Relevance**

When it comes to the positive evaluation input: **the new insights, the knowledge about local initiatives, the motivation and inspiration by good practises, the overall information over the local situation, the analysis of new forms of active citizenship, as well as the network and exchanges of activities in the field of solidarity and social inclusion** were highlighted and **highly appraised.**

When it comes to aspects that should be improved few participants mentioned that the TROS objectives of the meeting should have been better communicated in the beginning of the meeting or and/or before it. We were also told that more time could have been given to developing messages debating the EU migration policies to deliver to the EU decision makers.

Nevertheless the feedback to the TROS project relevance **has been largely positive: “Almost all the points of the TROS objectives are achieved really good.”**

## **5\_Organisation**

When it comes **to accomodation, food, transportation and the workshop-locations**, everyone was **very satisfied, glad and thankful**. The participants attested that the ANTIGONE team provided them with **professional organisation, a good schedule and timing**.

Some quotes: "I really appreciated you scheduled a guided tour of the city" -"Thank you for **your energy, passion, respect & consideration you have for people and their needs** and the welcome package and the info package and food and tour and dancing." - "**the workshop-location feels like home too**" - "**Just please continue your work. WE BELIEVE IN YOU**"