

IN-CREATE

IO1 National Report

GREECE

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND ARTS IN TCN'S INTEGRATION
AND BEST PRACTICES.



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale of the IN-Create Project

The composition of the population of the EU and Turkey has changed drastically over the past years, with many third country nationals (TCNs) arriving and settling in with increased arrivals being observed in the last 5 years. Within this context, the integration of TCNs in their host communities constitutes a significant challenge. The design and utilisation of pioneer approaches for this purpose is of paramount importance.

Culture and the arts have a role to play in the process of integrating TCNs, to help them to better understand their new environment and its interaction with their own socio-cultural background, thus contributing to building a more cohesive and open society. The contribution of arts in the integration process of TCNs is currently underestimated, while such techniques and tools are not mainstreamed in the portfolio of professionals, educators, and volunteers working with TCNs.

The purpose of IN-Create is to address the basic need and challenge of promoting the successful integration of TCNs within the EU and cultivate creative expression as means to promote their social inclusion and community cohesion. The project will focus on developing and applying pioneer methodologies on various alternative ways of expression, such as Visual Art, literature, theatre, creative writing, film, and photography.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to develop a sound and updated knowledge foundation, necessary for the preparation and development of the upcoming IN-CREATE capacity building activities. Therefore, it intends to map the existing context regarding the use of arts practices for the integration of TCNs, to identify potential skills gap and needs of the involved professionals, educators and volunteers as well as to propose efficient approaches for utilising arts towards TCNs integration

The scope of this output is not oriented to conduct primary or hard data research, but to gather intelligence and reflective feedback from involved third country nationals.

We will seek to verify and enrich our conclusions by inviting insights and feedback from a diverse range of the target group in order to get a balanced, comprehensive and up-to-date overview. For this purpose, a comprehensive research methodology has been designed and implemented, combining both desk and field research.

Furthermore, good practices on how to utilize arts for promoting integration of third country nationals will be identified by each partner, along with a pool of relevant effective capacity building methods, tools and approaches.

The purpose of this document is to highlight the findings and results of both desk and field research that has been conducted in Greece.

2. DESK RESEARCH IN GREECE

2.1 Facts and statistics about TCNs in Greece

Despite having one of the most restrictive citizenship regimes in Europe - characterized by underdeveloped migration management, integration policies and facilities, Greece has been hosting a significant number of international migrants since the 1990s from Eastern Europe and the Balkans (Manou et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the country was quickly transformed from a country of emigration to a country of immigration due largely to Greece being one of the major entry points to Europe (Kapsalis et al., 2020).

Greece experienced an unprecedented asylum crisis in 2015, where over 1 million people seeking international protection entered the country. In response to the crisis, Greece activated the EU Civil Protection Mechanism in order to get access to resources that would help the country cope with the asylum seekers and refugees arriving. Non-government Organisation (NGOs), volunteers and activists also played a very important role in contributing with fulfilling the needs of the country regarding the increasing arrival of immigrants and refugees (AIDA, 2020). There was a 287.1% increase in asylum applications during 2015 and 2016 (Manou et al., 2021), which represented the most of any European country.

The Greek Asylum Service states that in 2015, only 13,197 asylum applications were submitted, although the influx of refugee and asylum seekers was significantly higher. This number of applications in relation to the significant number of refugees entering the country was likely a result of refugees not wanting to remain in Greece with plans of reaching other European countries. During that time, the country was also going through a major economic crisis, and the unemployment rates were extremely high. However, after March of 2016, when the EU-Turkey Agreement was signed restricting border movement, Greece became a hosting country, and was no longer a transit country (Sakellis et al., 2016).

Nationalities and Demographics

Since 2015, Greece has provided international protection to more than 55,000 refugees and asylum seekers, most of them coming from countries that are threatened by war and conflict. According to the Asylum Information Database (AIDA, 2020), 15,696 migrants and refugees arrived in Greece in 2020 – namely from Afghanistan (35.2%), Syria (27.7%) and Democratic Republic of Congo (10.3%), of which 41.2% were men, 23.3% were women and 35.5% were children.

In 2019, there were a total of 75,000 asylum applicants (an increase of 15.3% comparing with the previous year), with the greatest number of applications from Afghanistan, Syria, and from Pakistan. In 2020, there was a total of 40,559 asylum applications, where men represented 68.56% of the applicants, whilst women represented 31.44%, 35.73% were children, and 6.9% were unaccompanied children (AIDA, 2020) (Fig. 1). The three countries with the highest number of asylum requests being from Afghanistan (11,514), Syria (7,768) and Pakistan (4,146) (Fig. 2). Some of the countries with the highest (more than 80%) recognition rate regarding the asylum applications in Greece were Syria, Eritrea, Palestine, Yemen and Somalia.

	Number	Percentage
Total number of applicants	40,559	100%
Men	27,807	68.56%
Women	12,752	31.44%
Children	14,490	35.73%
Unaccompanied children	2,799	6.9%

Fig. 1 - Total number of immigrant applicants in 2020 - Asylum Information Database (2021)

Nationality	Number of asylum requests in 2020
Afghanistan	11,514
Syrian	7,768
Pakistan	4,146
Congo	1,929
Bangladesh	1,745
Iraqi	1,675
Turkish	1,601
Somalia	1,542
Albanian	1,334
Palestinian	1,273
Other countries	6,032
Total	40,559

Fig. 2 - Asylum request by citizenship - Hellenic Ministry of Migration and Asylum (2021)

Integration Strategies

Since the asylum crisis, integration became a major area of priority. In response, the Directorate of Social Integration was settled in 2016 as a part of the General Secretariat of Migration Policy of the

Ministry of Migration and Asylum. The main goal of this directorate was to integrate TCNs in the Greek society through several projects and programs and to establish migrant's lawful status, enable their access to health and social security services, education and employment, and improving the quality of other services provided specifically to them (Hellenic Republic - Ministry of Migration and Asylum, 2021).

Allocation was a major priority for integration as it was fundamental to ensure access to housing and to labor markets and the involvement of TCNs in the processes or issues that impact the hosting communities (Manou et al., 2021). Initially, the main measure of refugee housing that was implemented was to house refugees in camps, but as they did not ensure the human rights' protection, the Ministry of Migration Policy closed these camps and transferred the refugees into social housing, as a result of the implementation of the ESTIA Program (Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation) that ensured better living conditions for those in need (Kapsalis et al., 2020).

The 2019 National Strategy for Integration that includes the "Greek Integration Model" was implemented to allow many institutions to manage action plans. This strategy was focused mainly on the role that the local government can play in the field of social integration, the benefits of interculturalism and in the need to respect the country's values (OECD, 2020). Furthermore, the Hellenic Manpower Employment Organization played an important role in the integration of TCNs that were legally residing in Greece, in country's labor market, ensuring that the same rights and procedures of access to public education and to employment were applied to foreign citizens the same way they were applied to natives.

Also in 2019, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and its partners implemented the Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection (HELIOS) project. The HELIOS project supported TCNs and helped in their integration by offering several services that promoted independent living after leaving the camps and other state housing facilities, education seminars, integration courses, monitoring, employability support and sensitization of local communities (European Commission, 2019). Since its inception, a total of 31,00 people have signed up for the programme (Manou et al., 2021).

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is also another entity that has been fundamental in the support and integration of TCNs in Greece. The IRC focuses mainly on the country's economic recovery and development, in providing information, protection and psychological support to refugees and on promoting environmental health. The IRC developed the Hellas Program, that consists of several actions and projects such as the Fostering the Transition of Unaccompanied children to Adulthood (FUTURA) project, that was created with the goal of providing accommodation

for asylum-seekers between the ages of 16 and 18 in several Supported Independent Living apartments in Greece (International Rescue Committee, n.d.).

Other projects such as the “Accommodation, WASH, Shelter & Site Management Support in Kara Tepe Municipal camp” project and the PROVASIS project were also developed by the IRC with the aim to protect and support the development and integration of the refugee community in the country (International Rescue Committee, n.d.).

Barriers

The social and economic integration of TCNs is challenged by barriers due to Greek’s economic crisis, underfunded health system, overwhelmed social welfare services, and the lack of success in integrating TCNs in higher education and training programs (Skleparis, 2018). *Some of the barriers include:*

- 1. Administrative delays** - Administrative delays during the applications for residence permits has left many TCNs without the right to be legally integrated in the labor market. As a result, many people would become insecure regarding their legal and employment status and shy away from seeking employment (Kapsalis et al., 2020).
- 2. The unwillingness of TCNs to stay in the country** – The majority of the residents in long-term accommodation sites (LTAS) and the beneficiaries of the ESTIA project for vulnerable asylum seekers show their will to move to another EU country, mainly due to two factors: the perceived discrepancy of the EU asylum system’s provisions and because they are not willing to learn the country’s language.
- 3. Language barrier** - Language barrier also constitutes a big problem regarding TCNs integration efforts, especially as there are not many multilingual enterprises that can employ non-speaking Greek people (Manou et al., 2021).
- 4. Lack of skills** - The lack of skills, work history and education profile of many of the asylum-seekers also make it extremely challenging to target specific employment programs to be implemented, and therefore it becomes even harder to allocate them to jobs that meet the market needs (Kapsalis et al., 2020).

2.2 The role of culture and arts in the integration of TCNs

The role of arts and culture is widely recognized as an important element in the successful integration of TCNs into their host country (McGregor and Ragab, 2016). The European Union (2014) has also noted that cultural institutions and creative spaces, “play a pivotal role in connecting people and in building a more cohesive and open society”. Language is one of the single most significant factors of integration (Esser, 2006), and artistic and cultural expression can lead to its better acquisition. In a paper bringing together various approaches to the problem of integration, the European Council (2015) also identifies the integral role that arts and culture plays in integration and intercultural communication.

The migration surge of immigrants since 2015 has boosted the multi-cultural aspect of the Greek society. This is reflected not only in the vast number of migrant and refugee organisations that have sprung up in Greece, but also in the growing number of cultural connections between refugees and the Greek community. Though the first migration associations were established in Greece during the 1990s following the migration waves from Eastern Europe and the Balkan, numerous organisations and ethnic groups for immigrants from Asia and Africa have formed.

Since 2015, a growing network of cultural activities has been taking place in Greece. Their goal is to facilitate the integration of migrants and refugees into the Greek society while also increasing the Greek population's exposure to a diverse range of cultural identities. The National Strategy for Social Integration also leaves the door wide open for interpretation on how to include arts and culture in the daily lives of TCNs. Below are some of activities and initiatives that strives towards including the elements of cultural and artistic production into TCNs integration:

1. **SolidarityNow** is an NGO that created the 'My Book' project, consisting of a collection of poems, short stories, lyrics, and paintings by migrants and refugees who are beneficiaries of Solidarity Now's ESTIA program in Greece. This new publication showcases the art of individuals who have been forced to flee their homes and are attempting to rebuild their lives in a new country. The goal is to remind the public that, in addition to their hardships, these newcomers bring with them their own unique knowledge, skills, and talents to contribute to their new societies.¹
2. **Lesvos Solidarity** is a Greek NGO supporting refugees and locals by using visual art as a necessary form of welcoming and integrating TCNs. The backbone of such undertaking is the project Mosaik Support Center, run with support of Borderline Europe. According to Lesvos

¹ <https://www.solidaritynow.org/en/>

Solidarity, Mosaik, offers language classes (Greek, English, Farsi and Arabic), educational activities for children, computer classes, guitar lessons, yoga classes, literature workshops, human rights workshops, poetry nights, cinema screenings and has two choirs. Eight hundred people from over 20 countries regularly attend activities.²

3. **Elix**, a local NGO partner of UNICEF, joined forces with artists Achilleas Souras and Alice Pasquini to stage an opportunity for young migrants to participate in creating a mural at the Skaramagkas Open Accommodation Site in Athens, where they would not only express their creative personality, but also transform the city of Athens a bit more according to their vision. The mural featured seven girls and boys facing the direction of the wall symbolizing unity, peace and friendship, showing seven girls and boys facing the direction of the wall.³
4. **Fresh stART** is a social and art project empowering refugee in Greece to paint and express the characteristics of their homeland cultures and visions within their new surroundings. Particularly strong initiative towards their integration in the local society is done through art auctions and sales of the artworks, enabling creative communication with the local population.⁴
5. **The Hope Project Greece** is another NGO that facilitates safe arrival of refugees to Greece. Recently, they have organized The Hope Project Art Centre, where artistic talent of refugees can be expressed through performing arts, music, poetry, theatre and dance alongside painting, ceramics, photography and other art-based programs.⁵
6. **ART BRIDGES** is a Greek cultural organization with special focus on the socially disadvantaged. They employ art and creative initiatives that use education, music, culture and environmental awareness to promote the inclusion, integration and accessibility of a variety of groups, among which migrants and refugees stand central.⁶
7. The Walk, a project organized by a major Greek NGO **AMAKA** is a 7,500km rolling arts festival featuring Little Amal, a 3.5m tall puppet of a young refugee girl. According to the creators of the initiative - The Walk will encourage new cross-border perspectives on the large-scale movement of people, celebrate the potential of refugees, encourage dialogue

² <https://lesvossolidarity.org/en/what-we-do/mosaik-support-center>

³ <https://www.unicef.org/greece/en/stories/refugee-and-migrant-children-create-mural-promote-unity-peace-and-friendship-greece>

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/freshstARTserres/>

⁵ <https://www.hopeprojectgreece.org/about-us>

⁶ <https://artbridgesangela.wixsite.com/artbridgesgefyres/in-the-press>

between cultures and highlight the enormous creative opportunity of migration. Along the walk are local and refugee artists showcasing their art, dance, music, storytelling, poetry, painting and puppetry. The Walk gives refugees a feeling of pride in artistic creativity, improve self-esteem, acceptance & autonomy, enhance dignity, reassert individuality and revive hope. It also encourages cultural curiosity between local communities and their new neighbours.⁷

8. **Open Cultural Center (OCC)** an NGO which is active in both Greece and Spain, supports the refugee and migrant community by working towards inclusion through educational and cultural activities. OCC organizes events including music and art workshops, open mic nights, and performances. OCC is currently active in Polykastro, Greece, through its cooperation with the University of Seville they provide access to a wide range of projects such as non-formal education, language classes to aid in the personal and social empowerment of the migrant-refugee community.⁸
9. **Love without Borders for Refugees in Need** is an NGO founded in 2015 that seeks to help refugees in Greece express themselves through art and attain economic independence, in addition to sharing their experiences and forging relationships with both the local and global community. The organization, through donations uses volunteers in Greece to purchase art supplies which are delivered to refugees in camps. The refugees' creations are subsequently displayed in workshops and exhibitions facilitated by volunteers. Volunteers also takes the art to their countries where all the proceeds of sales are returned to the artist.⁹
10. **World Refugee Day by UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency** – June 20th of each year is recognized as World Refugee Day, which commemorates the strength, courage and perseverance of millions of refugees. On this day, cities throughout Greece such as Athens, Thessaloniki, Lesvos, Leros island as Samos amongst others, hosts cultural and artistic programs which highlight the significance of diversity and power of culture as a vehicle for integration and empowerment. Events include Greece Artistic workshops, painting exhibitions, film screenings, sports, music, food and dancing, with the active participation of refugee communities.¹⁰

The Greek local population has not been immune to the presence of TCNs in terms of artistic practices and cultural activities. Rescue guards on Greek island of Lesvos have made Christmas tree out of

⁷ <https://www.amaka.gr/en/projects/the-walk/>

⁸ <https://openculturalcenter.org/who-we-are/>

⁹ <https://lovewithoutborders4refugees.com/aboutus/>

¹⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/aug/01/were-giving-people-a-reason-to-wake-up-crafting-a-new-life-for-refugees-around-the-world>

discarded life vests (Giannakopoulos, 2016) as a symbolic deed that sends a message of optimism to others.

2.3 Presence of TCNs in culture and arts in Greece

Greek contemporary society, via links with its ancient past, is inclined to believe that arts and creative forms of culture are one of the essences of a good life, hence the widespread belief that the domain of arts and culture belong to all people and should be based upon the collective talent and creativity, not upon the exclusivity and particularism. Therefore, it is no wonder that many artistic undertakings of TCNs are incorporated into various small, medium and large art settings of the country. Arts and culture have also not been lost on individual TCNs as some have even started their own initiatives. Here is a representative selection of TCNs presence in culture and arts in Greece:

1. **Mazi by Richard Lusakumunu** - Richard, a Congolese artist who secured asylum in 2017 in Greece, has been using his talent as an artist to integrate, inspire and to gain visibility. He founded a collective called 'Mazi' bringing together 11 refugee and Greek artists in the city of Thessaloniki. As of 2020, the collective has held two exhibitions at the French Institute with plans of having more exhibitions and more artists in the future. The collective is supported by the UN High Commission for Refugees, non-profit NAOMI and the French Institute. Richard believes that art is what will make refugees visible in Greece and the rest of the world and constantly volunteers to give art lessons to men, women and children in camps. Richard also acts as a talent scout and frequently teaches other refugees to paint in workshops.¹¹



Source: AFP



Source: AFP

¹¹ <https://gulfnews.com/photos/entertainment/photos-congolese-refugee-artist-seeks-niche-in-greece-1.1596540914745?slide=10>

2. **Love Welcomes** - Love Welcomes is a creative social enterprise that was started in 2017 in Greece as a response to the refugee crisis. The enterprise employs refugee women in order to empower them to get their lives together by making handmade products which are sold worldwide. These women make just about anything from recycled and upcycled materials such as guitar straps from linen, Christmas and birthday presents, and other products from vegan leather. Proceeds of sales pay salary and are reinvested into the refugee community.¹²



Source: Lovewelcomes.org



Source: Lovewelcomes.org

3. **Station Athens** - Station Athens is an innovative artistic workshop of theatre, photography, video and visual arts for new immigrants and refugees designed by NGOs, Arsis, Polyplanity and AMAKA and aimed at facilitating social and cultural adaptation of asylum seekers and refugees to the Greek society. **Young people between 15 and 30 years of age work in artistic preparation and presentation of stage performance, culminating in the theatrical premieres on major festivals and events.** Their title “We are Persians” from 2015 was presented in the Athens Festival. Since part of the ensemble is of Greek origin, full prospect of intercultural communication and integration is encouraged, resulting in many of the participants learning about Greek history, even learning Greek language during the preparations. Some other notable performances of the workshop are *Station Athens (2011)*, *We Are at Home (2011)*, *I_LEFT (2014)*.¹³

¹² <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/26624/crafting-a-future-for-refugees>
<https://www.lovelwelcomes.org/pages/about-us>

¹³ <https://www.mindthefact.gr/en/project/station-athens-2/>

4. **Festival Mind the Fact 1** – Festival Mind the Fact 1, held in May 2017 in various parts of Athens, tried through an innovative model of art and culture production to turn the gaze of local spectators towards the significant “Other”. Artists from fine and applied art worked with people who belong or have belonged to vulnerable or disadvantaged social groups to create works of art that illuminate different aspects of everyday life of “the Other”. Since the organizers are working on a nonprofit basis, support was provided by Stavros Niarchos Foundation, one of the world’s largest patrons of culture and arts. Run by the motto “True stories starring the people who lived them”, the festival turned towards integration of art in the daily life of the participants, contact of the public with people who are not always “visible” and the connection of the audience with the true stories leading towards better integration of TCNs.

5. **With nails and teeth** - With nails and teeth (direct translation of a Greek expression “tooth and nail”) is an umbrella term for a variety of collective actions on issues of the foreign/other, difference and diversity, migration, rights, common and shared life in the city. The actions started in 2013 and “bring together expression in all its forms: music, dance, poetry, theater, performance, visual and sound arts, cooking etc. The actions take place through an open group, who are based in the free and self-organized EMBROS Theater, in Athens, Greece” (MND, n.d.).

6. **United African Women Organization Greece** - United African Women Organization Greece holds that one of its the main objective is to explore and incorporate the rich African woman heritage into the rich Greek heritage. Together with the activist group **Theatre of the Oppressed**, they staged a very successful performance, “No to racism from birth” which brought into dialogue the hardships experienced by both African immigrants and Greek hosts. This initiative was followed by another theater performance named “How much” that centered on the painful issues of human trafficking.¹⁴

¹⁴ <https://www.africanwomens.gr/?cat=7>

2.4 Good Practices on the use of arts for promoting integration of TCNs

Good Practice 1

Title	The Acting Project: theatre and refugee integration in Greece
Country (Flag)	
Image	
Context	<p>The acting project began in November 2017 to June 2019 in Greece, when 28 young migrant-refugees from Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, between the ages of 17 and 25, expressed interest in participating in the first acting group of Caritas Hellas which is a part the integration program called Metavasis, which includes psychosocial support services and legal counselling. The project explored ways in which art and specifically theatre can support the integration of refugees and migrants into Greek society.</p> <p>The project aimed to help the participants develop their creativity and imagination, social networks, language proficiency and communication skills. In addition, it aimed at supporting them in overcoming feelings of isolation and developing a feeling of belonging. It also focused on helping familiarize them with the local culture and establishing lines of communication between the refugee population and the local community.</p>
Description	<p>The project consisted of two phases of 10 months each running from September to June. The first trimester focused on building trust among the members of the acting</p>

	<p>group. Weekly meetings including games and exercises were done to have members become comfortable to express themselves. Members were then introduced to Greek mythology in a playful and interactive way through games, videos and other group activities.</p> <p>The second phase was dedicated to developing a better understanding of the local context and establishing links with the local culture. In terms of performance piece for the play, the members selected “Odyssey” as they saw it as a way of symbolically sharing their own experiences and journeys by performing a classic piece of Greek mythology. The play was performed in Greek, with simplified and adapted dialogue that was easily understood by audiences of any background.</p>
Stakeholders	<p>The acting project was part of Metavasis implemented by Caritas Hellas. The project was funded for two years by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Caritas Germany. Other stakeholders include, German Embassy in Athens, Theater PK, Greek Forum of Migrants, Director Giolanta Markopoulou and acting group: “Station Athens” and Cinematographer Olympia Mytilinaiou. The participants of the practice were young migrant-refugees. The performance was supported by a facilitation team and directed by the group facilitator and was held at a local theatre.</p>
Impact	<p>The participants sense of belonging had increased, as they had the opportunity to develop new social networks, formed relationships and friendship. The performance at the end of each group project strengthened the sense of belonging as everyone worked toward a common goal. Participant’s skills were improved and enriched as working in groups and participating in team building exercises helped with the improvement of their communication and language skills and boosted their confidence. Participants daily lives were improved as all members had the opportunity to access appropriate social and livelihood support mechanisms which gave them confidence to pursue their own dreams. Some participants found stable jobs, some enrolled In Institutions to further their education while others advanced to participate in documentaries on the refugee crisis in Greece. Intercultural dialogue between refugees and members of the local community was Improved as they learned to understand each other.</p>
Success Factors / Transferability	<p>SF 1: The main success factor of this initiative lies in its pertinency towards universality that can be achieved by staging a “hero journey” narrative in a theatrical setting. Almost every language and culture have such narratives and they are capable of speaking about universal values and bypassing superficial differences (e.g. language, skin colour, religious beliefs, sexual orientation etc.), hence the choice of the Odyssey.</p> <p>SF 2: Another success factor is the theatrical setting where the stage is a social context in and of itself, enabling the participants to loosen up the inherited and</p>

	<i>acquired constraints and indulge into the performance thus becoming more and more a part of the hosts' culture and community.</i>
More information	https://caritas.gr/en/tag/theatrical-group/ ; https://facebook.com/caritashellas/ ; https://globalcompactrefugees.org/article/acting-project-theatre-and-refugee-integration-greece

Good practice 2

Title	Love Welcomes
Country (Flag)	
Image	
Context	<i>Love Welcomes is a creative social enterprise that was started in 2017 in Greece as a response to the refugee crisis. The enterprise employs refugee women in order to empower them to get their lives together by making handmade products which are sold worldwide. Love Welcome works in numerous cities in Greece supporting refugees in camps along with those who have resettled. Love Welcome aims to provide positive social change in the lives of refugees.</i>
Description	<i>Love Welcomes collects upcycled or recycled materials that are used to make beautiful handmade home products that are sold all over the world. The initiative saw the need to give women something to do each day by helping them integrate into society, especially those who have left the camps and needed to do something meaningful to provide for themselves and their families.</i>

	<p>These women make just about anything from recycled and upcycled materials such as guitar straps from linen, Christmas or birthday presents, and products from vegan leather. Proceeds of sales pays salary and are reinvested into the refugee community.</p> <p>Love Welcomes also collaborate with different organisations for greater outreach. By teaming up with Banksy, refugee women made mats using upcycled life vests found on Lesvos beaches.</p>
Stakeholders	<p>Love Welcomes was founded by Abi Hewitt. At the inception, she was supported by 5 refugee women in camps who believed in her initiative. Love Welcomes has collaborated with Banksy (street artist in England) by making welcome mats, The Edge (Musician) to create guitar straps and Margo Selby (textile artist and designer) to create apparel.</p>
Impact	<p>Each purchase contributes to the creation of jobs, which creates resources and promotes independence and confidence in refugee women. Love Welcomes makes 3 significant impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides training and skills to refugee women. This process improves self-worth and support the women and provides valuable skills for the future. - Employs refugee women in multiple locations to create beautiful Love Welcomes products. These women are given above Living Wages and a safe and supportive work environment. - Provides additional support to refugee communities currently living in camps; this includes access to health and legal support, supplies for mother and, nutritious food and support for micro businesses.
Success Factors / Transferability	<p>SF 1: Deep empowerment – provides access to training and the development of skills. This social enterprise pays above living wages that enable participants to make decisions for themselves and their families</p> <p>SF 2: It aims towards the global public – by making universally recognised goods and establishing endorsements with globally recognised individuals, this initiative is making it has ongoing business. It also provides a window for cultural and societal norms of the global market which is an important element of the EU integration for TCNs.</p> <p>SF 3: Recycling – By using recycled materials in the production process, the initiative is (a) helping the local community reduce its footprint (b) educating their patrons about the importance of ecologically minded behaviour (c) contributing to raising awareness of global pollution threats.</p>
More information	<p>https://www.lovelwelcomes.org/pages/about-us</p>

Good Practice 3

Title	HARTS – Hands on Refugees Talent and Sustainability initiative
Country (Flag)	
Image	
Context	<p>HARTS is an initiative of the Greek Forum of Refugees that was established in 2016, with a focus on empowering refugee women to become autonomous by relying on their skills to aid in their inclusion in the Greek society. The idea came about when the founder, Fotini, visited Lesbos and noticed that women were not included in recreational projects or any other projects that strengthened and empowered the refugee population. These women also had traditional skills and talents in crafts acquired from their mothers which were worth preserving.</p> <p>The HARTS initiative is not only where the art begins but, mainly, it is about women empowering time and space in which they design, train and support each other through their creations.</p>
Description	<p><i>The HARTS workshops constitute a private meeting (once or twice per week) in a safe space between refugee women, where they share their stories, their experience and skills in terms of traditional handicrafts brought down from mother to daughter. The HARTS provides professional support to help them develop their skills and create a sustainable outcome.</i></p>
Stakeholders	Greek Forum of Refugees
Impact	Products created by refugee women are promoted and displayed for sale at the market and available at Greek Forum of Refugees. The women's skills

	<p>and abilities are recognised thereby promoting confidence in their work and self-confidence. Donations further helps in the impact of the practice as it is used to procure supplies and for seminars including language training, learning new skills, learning the value of their skills and how to cultivate new skills, creating small business for women.</p>
Success Factors / Transferability	<p>SF 1: By giving TCNs the chance to use traditional skills learned from their homeland and families, contributions are made not only to healing and the overcoming of trauma but also the integration in new societies by offering artefacts that speak on a universally human scale.</p> <p>SF 2: Creating small businesses for women after the “phase of survival” – TCNs are trying to create a new normal for themselves and their families. By being able to work, this initiative acts as a stepping stone to future prospects in the host country.</p> <p>SF 3: The ethics behind the initiative – every person’s ability, skills and contributions are recognised, which is important for the psychological strengthening of the newly arrived TCNs.</p>
More information	<p>https://refugees.gr/harts-hands-on-refugees-talent-and-sustainability-initiative/ ; https://www.facebook.com/harts.collection/ ; https://refugees.gr/class/harts/</p>

3. FIELD RESEARCH IN GREECE

3.1 Results from the online questionnaire for professionals

Data was collected from eleven (11) professionals working with TCNs using an online questionnaire. A total of 29 questions (See Annex I) were asked and the results summarized as follows:

- 73% of participants were females, 18% were males and the other 9% were not stated. 9% of participants were in the 18-24 age group, 36% in the 25-39, 9% in the 40-59 and 9% in the 60+ age group. All but 1 participant was the holder of higher education qualification. Participants provide social, psychological, educational, cultural and legal support to TCNs. They were more likely to offer social support when compared to the other areas as indicated by the data, where over 1000 TCNs benefited from social support per year.
- 64% of participants felt that they have received enough training to support TCNs through the arts while 36% felt that adequate training was lacking. Most (90.9%) agreed that arts and culture played a major role in making one feel a part of the community and 72.7% agreed to art being very important to their lives. All participants also agreed to art making them feel good.
- All participants agree that many cultural events took place in their area and that arts and culture have the ability to express a wide range of community concerns and contribute to the positive change of society. The participants also wanted to have more opportunities for participation in cultural activities and felt that the city should invest more in opportunities for art and culture. Most participants (90.9%) believe that arts and culture are an integral part of their community. Most also agreed to arts being as beneficial to participants as well as the wider community. Similarly, most felt that arts is as important to children as it is for adults.
- All participants wanted to be more involved in some sort of artistic or cultural program, varied with individuality, from painting, music, photography, poetry, writing, jewelry, fashion, dance etc. Over the past 2 years, all participants have contributed or attended some sort of artistic activities such as theatre, cinema, exhibition, concert, photography and museum tours. Time, work and daily life responsibilities were among the biggest challenges faced by professionals in participating in artistic activities.
- Participants had differing views about what they considered to be more important for integration. 18.2% felt that higher frequency of contacts between the host country and country of origin was more important while some felt promoting intercultural dialogue

(27.3%), language teaching (27.3%) and promoting the culture of immigrants (27.3%) were most important for cultural integration.

- Arts and culture are widely embraced in the communities as 90.9% of participants indicated that immigrant organizations in their neighborhoods were already involved in artistic and cultural activities.
- Most participants find out about artistic and cultural activities through the internet and friends and at least 45% organized cultural events every 3 months.

3.2 Results from the online questionnaire for TCNs

Data was collected from nine (9) TCNs using an online questionnaire. A total of 30 questions (See Annex II) were asked and the results summarized as follows:

- There were equal number of male and female participants, most of which were in the 25-39 age group. Over 60% of them had lived in Greece for more than 5 years. 77% were holders of higher education certificates while the remaining 23% had high school diplomas. Most (44%) TCNs were from Albania, while the others were originally from Sudan, Georgia, Afghanistan, Turkey and Ukraine.
- 89.9% agreed that art and culture played an important role in their lives and agreed that art made them feel good. Most (66.7%) also felt that immigrant organisations in their neighbourhoods were not actively involved in arts and cultural activities.
- Participants had differing views about what they considered to be more important for integration. 11% felt that promoting the culture of immigrants was more important while some felt promoting intercultural dialogue (44.4%), higher frequency of contacts between the host country and the country of origin (22.2%) and language teaching (22.2%) were more important for integration.
- Most participants (77.7%) agreed that many cultural events took place in their area and that arts and culture were an integral part of their community. 88.9% wanted to have more opportunities for participation in cultural activities. All the participants believed that arts and culture have the ability to express a wide range of community concerns and contribute to the positive change of society. They also believed that the city should invest more in arts and culture and that the arts not only helped people who participate but also the wider community. Similarly, they all agreed that arts is as important to children as it is for adults.

- Over the past 2 years, all but one (1) participant had contributed or attended some sort of artistic activities such as theatre, cinema, exhibition, free or paid concert, photography and museum tours. Time, work and daily life responsibilities, lack of art opportunity and even the pandemic are among the biggest challenges faced by TCNs in participating in artistic activities.
- Participants had different interests in the choice of art classes/seminars they would be interested to participate in, however, 44% showed no interest in attending art classes while 64% showed interest in partaking in various subjects such as dance, photography, new media and traditional arts.
- 22.2% of participants said they would be motivated to participate in art to broaden their horizons and another 22.2% said it would be to learn new things while another 33% said it would be for fun, interaction with family and for interest in art. The remaining 22.2% said that none of these would motivate them to participate.

3.3 Results from the focus groups/interviews with professionals

The discussion was attended by people from different organisations. Some having youths as their target groups and others purely adults. Some worked in the field of social-psychological support and housing while others in the field of empowerment and arts. Despite the difference in the target group focus and various fields of work, all professionals had among their beneficiaries, TCNs who arrived or resided in Greece.

Participants unanimously agreed that artistic expression is a key pillar of the accession process. Art is not an elitist form reserved for some talented people but a way to see inside yourself and express yourself, and often makes one feel good and improves productivity. Art can be used to support vulnerable groups such as third-country nationals. As several of them` have pointed out, beneficiaries get in touch with the local community and through their artistic expression can mitigate existing differences and combat racism. In addition, as mentioned by one participant, TCNs often do not know the country they are coming to. Through the use of their artistic side as a lever of integration they can not only project an aspect of their own culture but also learn about the culture of the host country. In this way we will achieve a mutual understanding of the 2 "societies" and the peoples will get to know each other.

The arrival in Greece isn't always a pleasant situation as TCNs find themselves faced with a host of problems and state-social dysfunctions. One of the main difficulties that foreign nationals need to

overcome is the permanent lack of migration policy in Greece. For years the country has not followed a structured plan regarding the integration of TCNs. On the contrary, as pointed out in the discussion, immigrant communities are abandoned to carry the heavy burden of integrating their members into the Greek society. On the other hand, as one of the participants mentioned, TCNs are not a homogenized group, but they show several differences between them. A person who has lived here for 30 years has less problems than someone you just came from and does not know e.g. the language. The example of language is what appeared most in our discussion, several of the participants stressed that language is a key problem, especially for newcomers to the country. On the other hand, for those who have been in the country for years, the main problems are undoubtedly the renewal of their residence permit, finding a job and housing. But the problems are interconnected, and one brings the other.

Participants provided different views regarding the obstacles faced when creating expressions through forms of art. First, stereotypes about TCNs were considered an obstacle. Secondly, racism in combination with false stereotypes often leads to their exclusion from art spaces or even from the possibility of producing a kind artistic expression. Thirdly, there's the difficulty TCNs have in networking. Isolation and/or meeting only people in their community can be deterrent to their creativity. And lastly, the lack of space and safe environments in which they could safely create in the host country is another obstacle in their path.

What we see as shortcomings in the accession process of TCNs in art and culture is therefore as a result of the obstacles they face in the bid to express themselves creatively. If we can set a favorable framework for their accession process, there will be an immediate response to their creativity and reversely if we can set a favorable framework for their artistic expression, we can use it to boost their integration.

3.4 Results from the focus groups/interviews with TCNs

The discussion was attended by 8 TCNs from 5 different countries (Albania, Turkey, Afghanistan, Sudan, Georgia). Most of the participants were females (6) compared to males (2). All participants were aged between 21 and 64 years. Most of them have lived for more than 20 years in Greece while some have only been in Greece for approximately 2 to 7 years.

Despite the difference in age and duration of stay in Greece, the participants shared similarities in the challenges and experiences faced in their arrival in Greece. All of them, regardless of the period living in Greece, have experienced some form of racism. Some experienced it during their school years, others during their adult life and others in their daily lives socializing with the local community. Apart from this, there was the general view that all TCNs face language barriers when coming to Greece or any other host country. All participants faced or still face issues with learning the Greek language,

which delayed their integration process. The participants also agreed that the main obstacle in their daily lives is with the immigration processes; the visa issuance procedures and various immigration documents as well as the bureaucracy in Greece is a chronic issue.

Not all TCNs experienced adverse obstacles in Greece. Some indicated that they have had pleasant experiences and an excellent life in the country. The ones who were able to study here mostly related the pleasant memories to the affection and protection offered to them by their teachers in school in their first years being in the country. One of the participants even expressed the gratitude he felt for his first teacher with whom he still maintains contact. The TCN's largely agreed that their positive experiences were related to the people who helped them feel that they are not "foreigners" but part of the country where they now live. The help they received and their inclusion in society helped them integrate more quickly into the host country.

Their inclusion, as it appears from the discussion that took place, is also related to art. A first contact with art helped them to better understand the country they are in and to connect with the local population. For many of them, art is now an integral part of their lives, either on a personal level to feel "free" as one participant said, or on a professional and at the same time, social level since some of them have been professionally involved in the arts. Characteristically, they mentioned that art is connected to their life and through it they can offer to society and their community. In addition, everyone agreed that art is important to them because it is the best form of communication that can overcome even language barriers. It is worth mentioning that not everyone was able to practice art, at least at a younger age, as there was no financial opportunity or lack of thought due to the difficulties they faced.

For most of the TCNs, the first interaction with art was in their country of origin. Some were exposed through their participation in cultural activities, school theatre and drama clubs, traditional dances or through handmade jewelry & crafts. Many, however, had not participated in any activity in their country, either because they were not given the opportunity or because of the young age at which they immigrated. Regardless, all of them shared that they have managed to get involved with the arts and artistic events in Greece. This involvement is either a means of organizing a festival event, a theatrical performance, a dance party or by simply attending an artistic event related to their Greek and /or immigrant culture. Most of them admit that this contact with Greek art has proved to be a very positive experience for them, and that it created avenues through which they could expand their passions. They managed to open communication channels with their host country and some of them were so inspired that they decided to go into art and do it professionally.

The observation here is that although most of the TCNs immigrated to Greece with challenges and obstacles, they were able to get in touch with several locals who accepted them in their community and helped them in their integration process. An integration process that in several cases was

associated with their involvement in the field of art. Our participants, despite their different backgrounds, shared (in several cases) similar stories which concluded that the field of art and the possibility of artistic expression contribute positively to the harmonious life and the integration process of TCNs.

4. Final Recommendations: Needs analysis

4.1 Skills of professionals

1. **Social & Networking skills** – There is a gap in the ability to handle TCNs which is evident in the data from the professionals' group in which about 36% of them feel that they have NOT been well trained and equipped to handle TCNs.
 - a. Address whether the professionals are taking initiative to participate in community arts and cultural programs
 - b. Address whether participants are signed up in an art programme or have sufficient networking skills
 - c. Address whether participants have effective relationship building skills and collaboration skills that can allow them to reach more TCNs and assist a wider group of TCNs
2. **Legal Support Professional Development & Capacity Building** – There is a clear gap in the area of legal support. The data indicates that one of the greatest obstacles TCNs face when trying to integrate into the host country is in immigration and visa processes which implies that these challenges can hinder the TCNs from participating in arts and culture. It is therefore crucial that the professionals have legal knowledge which can assist TCNs with their immigration process.
 - a. Address whether there are enough legal professionals helping with TCNs
 - b. Address whether the city is willing to allocate resources or county officials for such processes
 - c. Address general laws that protect the rights of TCNs and laws and initiatives around art and culture.
3. **Digital Literacy Skills** – 45.4% of participants fell in the 40-60+ age group, whereas TCNs supported were of a younger age group (25-39). The younger generation interact with new age technology and some of the older professionals may lack adequate digital skills to fully support TCNs who mostly rely on internet for information.
4. **Design of Action/ Delivery Format skills** – Most participants have several TCNs that they support annually but there seems to be a gap on how they deliver their support and how they design their action plans on offering this support. There needs to be some capacity building on how they can create effective action plans to better support TCNs.

- a. Address whether participants reflect on the problem of art and culture when delivering their support.
- b. Address whether professionals consider their consistency in providing this support and the objectives and expected results for each of their TCN.

4.2 Topics and art forms

From the responses in the questionnaire, there were various topics and different forms of arts that participants would be drawn to. Since the communities of most participants are already actively engaging in these art forms, addressing these will enhance TCNs ability to seamlessly integrate in the host country while at the same time, expressing themselves through artistically:

- a. Film Production
- b. Music
- c. Theatre
- d. Dance
- e. Photography
- f. Handmade Crafts
- g. Painting
- h. Fashion Design

4.3 Methodologies and approaches on the use of arts towards TCNs integration

1. **Creation of a multifunctional cultural centre and shelter for TCNs** - that can be used as a haven for them where required but also as a recreational art centre that supports social cultural activities and education. This can also be good practice by the government to provide social empowerment services to TCNs. Here, TCNs can get involved and learn photography, painting, videography and many other art skills which they can use for their professional growth. Through such a space, the beneficiaries can develop both their individual skills and their social footprint, through networking with diverse community members under one roof. At the same time, it would be in the interest of TCNs to collaborate with local agencies to promote artistic and cultural works.

As mentioned by the participants, the past cooperation with the Municipality of Athens for the promotion of Sudanese art was crowned with success and was able to receive congratulations from the Minister of Culture of Sudan who attended it. Participation in

cultural festivals that give the opportunity to several TCNs to present their art in this area is another way, quite common in Greece, of promoting artistic expression.

2. **Mobilization of volunteers and more professionals to join the movement and help support TCNs.** Art has the ability to unlock aspects of man unknown to them, so the ability to interact with it must be an act of service and sharing. Creating a spirit of volunteership would also be great for the host country to allow more people to join hands in building the economy through arts and culture.
3. **Organizing culture-specific events to celebrate diversity** - This will not only help TCNs bloom in their talents but also help them communicate and connect with community members better.
4. **Creating social networks and discussions** that embrace arts and culture to allow TCNs to engage with others who are doing art professionally.

Annex 1: Questionnaire for Professionals data

Annex 2: Questionnaire for TCNs data

Annex 3: Data from focus groups/interviews with professionals

Annex 4: Data from focus groups/interviews with TCNs

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