

POVERTY WATCH 2020

Poverty in (covid-19)
Greece Never Rests



Greek Antipoverty Network

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Poverty in Greece has exacerbated due to the Covid-19 pandemic and has yet to show to what extent. Struggling for survival is the case for all the more people with few exceptions.

All photos are courtesy of Marios Lolos

1. Introduction

In Greece the homeless people unfortunately do not exist for the state. Offering with a meal a day or some blankets distributed by the City or some organisations and volunteers when it rains or snows is no help. Unfortunately, I am sorry to say so, there are many people who will lose their jobs due to covid and will become homeless. These people should have medical care and not the social pharmacies that have been founded to help them, once again by the people themselves; once again because of the sympathy of those who bring in the medicine they have no need of any longer. The benefit that the state gives to the suffering homeless people is disgraceful. There should be homes subsidized by the state; and certainly not ones with an expiration date... There is now a reintegration programme out that gives one 80% of their rent... For 18 months; what about after these 18 months, however? If this person is older and doesn't have a pension; if this person is older and doesn't have a job, can't find one, this person is put back in the streets. And this person has to wait out in the streets for a whole year to be able to re-enter some shelter. This is wretched.

It's as if you are told...you know what? Go kill yourself because you are nothing but left overs.

Dimitra Piagkou, 70-year-old homeless woman who now works as a seller of the street paper SCHEDIA. Dimitra became homeless during the 2010 crisis.

The Greek Antipoverty Network (EAPN-Greece) is an independent body with 30 member organisations that offer support to socially excluded groups. It is a partner of the European Antipoverty Network (EAPN). The goals of the EAPN are to reduce poverty and inequality, to give a voice and increase the participation in the decision-making of people affected by poverty. EAPN asks National Networks each year to draw up country-by-country reports to highlight its extent and aspects of poverty and to put pressure on the European Commission and all European Union institutions to adopt integration strategies, policies and measures.

This report is the second compiled by the Network: The first was for the year 2019 and it recorded the then latest statistics and trends related to poverty as well as measures needed to reduce it. The 2020 report includes, in addition to quantitative and qualitative data, the recording of and utilizing the experience of member and non-member organisations that are active in the field.

2020 was recorded as the year of the pandemic due to COVID-19 and to our perception as the year that increased the risk of poverty in a large part of the population. Thus, the celebrations of the two hundred years of the Greek Independence planned will find Greece suffering from

recession, with a large public and private debt and a large part of the population threatened with even greater impoverishment and loss of basic goods and freedoms.

At an international level, despite the decline in growth around the world due to the economic impact of the pandemic, we have seen the richest people in the world getting richer and the poorer pushed into greater poverty. In such a global setting where the pandemic was seen also as an opportunity for wealth for the few, social inequalities grew and the poorest survived marginally.

It is estimated (World Bank)¹ that due to the pandemic, an additional 150 million people will be forced into extreme poverty raising the poverty rate to 9.1-9.4% of the world's population. The UN report estimates that by 2021 the number of people at risk of starvation will double from 135 million to 265 million. International Institute of Finance (IIF) report raises global debt to 365% of global GDP (\$ 277 trillion over-indebtedness). The International Labor Organisation (ILO) estimates that half a billion people will be driven into poverty due to job losses or declining incomes.

In such an international reality and with a recession in Europe, the situation in Greece could not be any different: the recession is running at -10.5% but is estimated to increase with a further decline in GDP in 2020. Private loans-overdue debts exceeded 240 billion euros and the bankruptcy of over-indebted households that are unable to pay is pending. The public debt reached 338 billion euros, exceeding for the first time the limit of 200% of the Greek GDP. Unemployment has risen, incomes have fallen, the most excluded groups of the population have survived marginally.

In order to quantify the course of poverty, we used the valid data of ELSTAT-EUROSTAT, which refer mainly to 2019, but describe the trends regarding the risk of poverty in a year when a pandemic was not the case. However, we also included additional data published in 2020 or early 2021 by various sources and are indicative of the situation during the pandemic.

We cover the lack of fully updated quantitative data with qualitative data on the visible and invisible aspects of poverty: The contribution of organisations that support people from the general population, poor households or socially excluded groups and who shared their experience with us was invaluable. We tried to capture this experience through questionnaires but also by recording personal testimonies of people who experienced poverty.

In total, 19 EAPN member and non-member organisations participated in the survey.

The processing of secondary data can certainly not capture all the dimensions of poverty and the report can only provide an indicative picture. The social reality is always different from numbers

and statistics. A persistent look at how the people around us live and feel can guide us in understanding what is really the case here.

The minimum guaranteed income was 300 euros and the second time I applied I was told it would not be 215 e because I receive a small benefit for my child. My child studies for the National exams on its own without any help. Everything is malfunctioning. For 3 months now they have said they will provide laptops to those children who don't have one, while the platform for such registration has not even opened yet. Fortunately, my child pops in our neighbour next door, thank god; she is helping any way she can."

unemployed single-parent family

Action Aid

The (pre) covid-19 situation (survey)

Long term unemployment; access to (public) services and programmes; low income, lack of housing (accommodation in practically dilapidated houses, old establishments and in crowded conditions), health issues; burdened psychology. These have been the greatest problems faced by the beneficiaries of organisations that provide services and support. In addition, shortage of staff and resources for carrying out these exact services and weakness to cover the needs in medicines and other health products have been subsequent with the advent of the virus.

Specific groups of people, such as released prisoners have faced inadequate housing opportunities upon release. Being fed, not being able to obtain legal documents or accessing asylum services have taken a toll on asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. Inability to make ends meet or sustain basic livelihood was met with difficulty in accessing formal education and participate in free educational and recreational activities.

Access to the majority of NGOs has been made difficult and potential beneficiaries are not able to complete the processes for the (welfare) benefits without particular assistance. The benefits are scarcely enough to cover people's livelihood needs.

Particular groups of people, ie of Roma communities, refugees may lack documents due to frequent traveling; thus, children attending school might be difficult. The Mobile Student card is not easy to get, so that children can attend classes in two different schools (eg Thrace and Athens) making even more difficult the receipt of allowances since this may be linked to the compulsory attendance of children at school.

Subsequently, if no certificate of attendance at a school exists nor a rental contract a family does not receive allowances (KEA-EEE, large family, welfare, rent). This leads to owners blackmailing potential rentees, and every year increasing prices.

Problems in relationships, social contacts, psychiatric symptoms and serious psychosocial problems, abuse of women, reintegration problems in the labour market and stigma come to complete an already gloomy picture.

"We face many difficulties as a single-parent family. I could never imagine that it would get to this. The procedure to receive the heating subsidy are unacceptable. The building we live in hasn't been heated for 10 years. Those responsible could have calculated things in a way that would make possible for us to receive a subsidy for the electricity bill so we can heat up like this at least. There are people who freeze to death. I could never imagine that I would use cold water to wash my hands or have a shower once a week. Poverty is striking.

unemployed mother-single parent family

Action Aid



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2. What is poverty? How do we measure it? Which are the quantitative indicators?

In Greece, when we refer to poverty, we mainly mean the relative poverty, ie the comparison of the living standard of the people who are in a disadvantaged position to the rest of the population.

Relative poverty is defined in two ways:

A) With reference to the "Poverty Risk", where only income criteria are taken into account (AROP index). The risk of poverty is defined as the percentage of people living in households whose total disposable income is less than 60% of the national median equivalent income. The median income is the income of the middle person, ie the citizen who is right in the middle of the income distribution. The people who are richer than those are exactly the same in number as the people who are poorer. (We will refer in more detail to the "Poverty Risk" based on income in the next section).

B) With reference to the "Poverty or Social Exclusion Risk" three (3) indicators are included: in addition to income poverty (AROP index), access to nine (9) basic goods (SMD index) and the labor intensity of the household are taken into account. In this case, Eurostat and the Hellenic Statistical Service - ELSTAT use the mixed index AROPE (persons living At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion - people living at risk of poverty or social exclusion), which records higher risk of poverty than the AROPE index. The AROPE index is also used to evaluate the "Europe 2020" programme, which in 2013 had set the goal "to reduce people who are already or are at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 20 million by 2020".

The SMD (Severe Material Deprivation) index measures the financial inability to access nine (9) basic material goods, ie the possibility to pay for: 1) rent, bills and installments of loans or purchases; 2) for holidays of at least one week a year; 3) meat, chicken, fish or vegetables of equal nutritional value every other day; 4) managing emergencies amounting to about 380 euros; 5) landline or mobile phone; 6) color TV; 7) laundry; 8) privately owned passenger car; and 9) access to heating in winter. The lack of four (4) of these nine (9) goods of the SMD index mentioned indicates that the person lives in conditions of material deprivation.

Material deprivation of goods for 2019 is estimated at 16.2% and seems improved in comparison to 2018 (16.7%) and the previous years of implementation of the Memoranda. In 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 the deprivation was more intense and concerned respectively 19.5%, 20.3%, 21.5%, 22.2%, 22.4% and 21.1% of the total population. It is important to note that material deprivation is not only faced by the poor but also by the increasing number of the non-poor.

For the final configuration of the AROPE index, underemployment is also taken into account, ie living in low-labor-intensive households. This also takes into account the working time of economically active members of the household - ie how many household members work and for how long. In 2019 the percentage of the population aged 18-59 living in households with low labor intensity was 15.6% of people of this age spectrum.

A critical testimony of a beneficiary of the Open Day Care Centre for the Homeless of Athens (ODCCHA), who during her scheduled visit for the personal hygiene services for herself and her children, she requested an appointment with the Social Service. During the meeting, she said that she finds it challenging to adapt to the new circumstances of online learning, as she does not have free internet access (Wi-Fi) nor mobile data on her phone so that her children can attend their classes on a daily basis.

Obviously frustrated, she stressed out that she would like to use the internet corner for a few hours a day. When she was informed that it was temporarily unavailable, she asked to be given free entrance for a few hours and to use the Centre's wifi from her phone.

PRAKSIS

From 2005 to 2010, relative poverty in Greece showed decreasing trends, with people living at risk of poverty or social exclusion amounting to 27.7% (2010) of the total population. This number started to increase dramatically after 2011 reflecting the conditions of the evolving economic crisis and reached 36% in 2014. There followed a slight decrease reaching 35.7% in 2015, 35.6% in 2016, 34, 8% in 2017, 31.8% in 2018 and 30.0% in 2019 according to the latest available data (Survey of Income and Living Conditions of Households of ELSTAT with 2018 as income reference year).

It is striking, however, that over the past decade, about a third of the total population has survived poverty or exclusion, according to official data. This suggests that poverty was a constant problem for much of the population and that it only began to decline in the years 2017-2019. For 2020 itself, when a large reduction in income was in place, the official data has not been announced.

According to ELSTAT data:

- The comparison of the three indicators we mentioned above shows that: 17.9% of the population is at risk of poverty; 16.2% experience material deprivation of basic goods; and 15.6% of people 0-59 years old live in households with low employment. The proportional composition of the three indicators gives the percentage of 30.0% of the total population and the estimated

number of 3,162,000 inhabitants of the country finding themselves at the same time at risk of poverty or exclusion.

- The risk of poverty or exclusion of people aged 18-64 is higher for foreigners (53.7%) than Greeks (31.4%). 53.7% of the foreigners were born in another country while 30.9% were born and live in Greece.

Other ELSTAT data on material deprivation:

- The percentage of households that do not have adequate heating in winter is 17.9% of the general population and 34.1% of poor households;
- 27% of households have serious shortages in their main residence or have outstanding financial obligations (loan, mortgage);
- 28.7% of the population lives in a dwelling with limited space and this concerns 45.7% of the poor population and 25.0% of the non-poor population;
- 58.6% of poor households have difficulty paying their fixed bills and have great difficulty meeting their regular needs based on their total monthly or weekly income;
- 73% of poor households and 42.2% of non-poor report inability to cover unexpected expenses of 380 euros per month (approximately the equivalent of the monthly equivalent income of the annual poverty line);
- 45.4% of households find it very difficult to pay off consumer loan installments for goods or services;
- 37.7% of poor households are deprived of proper nutrition (chicken, meat, fish or vegetables of equal nutritional value every other day);
- 5.4% of the population does not have an internet connection for home use. The corresponding percentages for the poor population are 15.3% and for the non-poor 3.3%. (That had specific consequences on following the school curriculum online during the pandemic).



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3. The reality of Poverty. Which social groups are mostly affected?

Population in risk of poverty and “poverty line”

The risk of poverty is defined as the percentage of people living in households with a total available income of less than 60% of the national median equivalent income. This varies by household and is defined each year depending on the development of the lower and upper incomes in the country.

The annual income of an adult at risk of poverty, ie the so-called "poverty line", was 4,917 euros per year for 2019. For a family (a household with two adults and two children under 14 years of age) was estimated at 10,326 euros. Compared to 2018, the amounts were 4,718 euros and 9,908 euros respectively. Compared to 2012, the respective amounts were 5,708 euros and 11,986 euros, indicative of a higher equivalent median income then.

According to ELSTAT in 2019, 17.9% of the total population was at risk of poverty based on income criteria. Indicatively, this index was 19.6% in 2005 and increased every year until 2012-2013 which was estimated at 23.1%. Since then, we have had a reduction every year reaching 17.9% in 2019.

It is important to mention that the poverty risk rate before social transfers (ie without including pensions and benefits in the total income) reaches 48.4%! If pensions are included, the percentage drops to 23.2% and if the various benefits (family, unemployment, disability ones, etc.) are included, it drops to 17.9%. Therefore, without pensions the risk of poverty would be 25.2% higher and without benefits 5.3%. With this we mean that benefits and pensions reduce the risk of poverty by 30.5% and therefore play a key role in its prevention.

(Note: The survey represents to a small extent the population groups that are presumably poor, such as the Roma who are constantly on the move, migrants and refugees, the homeless, people in institutions and, in general, people with non-stable residence or outside the households being researched to a short extent. Therefore, the real income poverty record falls short of that reported).

Additional ELSTAT data:

- Households at risk of income-based poverty alone are 698,454 out of a total of 4,123,242 households and their members are 1,181,600 out of a total of 10,534,857 people in the total population.
- Workers face a lower risk of poverty compared to the unemployed and the economically inactive. The risk of unemployment for the unemployed was 44.9% (39.3% for women and 51.3% for men), for the economically inactive 22%, for pensioners 8.9% and for the employed 10.2%. The risk of poverty for part-time workers is almost double, at 20.9%. The data therefore shows

that the risk of poverty does not only affect people outside the labor market. The phenomenon of "working poor" people, who, despite working, do not have enough income to meet their needs, has intensified.

- The level of education reduces the risk of poverty: the rate is 22.7% for those who have completed primary and secondary education; 18% for those who have completed high school and post-secondary education; and 7.7% for tertiary education.
- Regarding the geographical distribution of the population at risk of poverty Attica (13.7%), Ionia (13.9%), Crete (15.2%) and the South Aegean (16.9%) had the lowest percentage while the largest went to Eastern Macedonia and Thrace (24.3%), Western Greece (23.8%), Western Macedonia (21.6%) and the North Aegean (20.7%).

A picture of the risk of poverty based on income can also be obtained from the processing of data related to the tax returns of 2019 (Data of AADE-Independent Public Revenue Authority). Although the tax returns do not reflect the exact income, it is indicative that:

- From the 6,469,044 tax returns of individuals in 2019, in 639,860 zero income was declared, ie almost 10% (mainly students but also unemployed). Also 1,357,165 citizens (approximately 20% of taxpayers) declared income up to 1,000 euros.
- Declarations with an annual income of less than 1,000 euros (hence about 83 euros per month) indicate that two out of ten taxpayers survive on amounts below the Minimum Income of 200 euros, which they do not receive. They are therefore below the poverty line of 4,197 euros and are unable to meet basic needs.
- Six out of 10 tax returns (58.9%) incorporate incomes up to 10,000 euros.

2020 was for me 'the worst year of my life financially'... I could not find work, not even as a maid at homes, helping people or even cleaning. I won't even mention office jobs or work at shops, which is impossible to find.'

Regarding access to health services

'In terms of social benefits, it was difficult; for example, I wanted to go to OAED (Unemployment Service) and because of the lockdown or the other measures placed due to the coronavirus, I had to make an appointment, which never actually took place and I had to arrange this online, which I am not able to do as my computer is not good enough.

"The drugs were impossible to be prescribed because I had to make an appointment, which was also two and a half to three months on the waiting list, which was the hard part. Once again, it was difficult to even go even to the municipality, where a meeting was to take place; I had to

have had made an appointment, which was also long due. To tell you the truth, I was exhausted with this treatment; it made me not want to leave the house '.

Unemployed woman (fire victim in the Mati area), beneficiary of a feeding programme

Extreme poverty

Additional indicators that determine poverty were created based on meeting the minimum needs or minimum survival budgets of households. In this way an attempt was made to define the absolute dimension of poverty (also called "extreme poverty"). The "extreme poverty line" can be defined as the monthly cost of a "basket" of products and services, without which a Greek household cannot survive. This "basket" corresponds to the minimum living needs, while its value varies depending on the size and composition of the household and whether the members live in a privately owned house or pay rent or mortgages.

According to a relevant research of the DiaNEOsis Institute that was done with calculations based on the EUROMODE model, the rate of extreme poverty in Greece in 2016 was about 13.6% of the population. In 2009 the index was only 2.2%, in 2011 it rose to 8.9%, in 2012 it was 14.3%, in 2013 in the middle of the crisis it was 17.1%, in 2014 it was 15.7%, in 2015 approximately 15% to be further reduced in 2016 (for the coming years there is no exact estimate).

Nevertheless, it is estimated that 1,488,714 Greeks live in extreme poverty. Of these, 68.5% are unemployed; 20.6% are self-employed; 2.9% are retired; and 0.6% are employees of the State-DEKO-Banks. 15.4% concern children 0-17 years old; 22.6% concern young people 18-29 years old; 14.2% aged 30-44; 15.4% aged 45-64; while 2,4% the ones over 65 years of age.

Child poverty

The formal total percentage of child poverty is 21,1%. Therefore, one in five children of 0-17 years of age lives in a household at risk of poverty or social exclusion, with Greece coming third in child poverty in the EU behind Romania and Bulgaria. The European average is one out of four children lives in conditions of poverty.

Children who reside in closed shelters-institutions, Roma families, refugees or migrants, children with disabilities, children without parental care or in single-parent families are in need of special support. The disfunction of welfare services due to the pandemic did not allow for progress during 2020. However, the continuation of the provision of the child monthly allowance to poor and non-poor based on income criteria.

New regulations of 2021 are expected to lead to exclusion from the allowance mainly of the migrant population and generally the foreigners who reside in Greece. For the provision of all the social benefits (child, housing and M.I.) the prerequisite is to prove legal and permanent stay in the country for the past 12 years!

In Greece there was a serious problem during 2020 with unaccompanied minors seeking asylum (teenagers over 14 years of age and older teenagers), who despite constituting a particularly vulnerable group and being provided shelter and support by well-known NGOs, they were found without access to basic services: from the 4,229 unaccompanied minors having been registered until November 2020, 1,137 were left homeless or in precarious living conditions, 115 in moderate conditions in Reception Centres and 36 under “protective custody”, that is in custody that lasted up to 100 days due to the COVID-19 pandemic(!).

The refugee children who were hosted with their families in the islands and in various shelters for refugees-asylum seekers all over Greece were in most cases excluded from schooling. Indicatively in the shelters in Diavata (Thessaloniki) 35 out of 305 children went to school, in Ritsona (Voiotia) 50 out of 1,017 and in Elaionas (Thiva) only 22 out of 609.



Mentally ill people

The fear of the coronavirus infection and the lack of staff led to the imposition of extreme measures to limit the mentally ill in clinics, public psychiatric hospitals and shelters in cities and rural areas. Complaints of a ban on visitation, external supplies, going out, use of courtyard or exercise, isolation, "closed doors", deprivation of mobile phones and social contacts violated the rights of the mentally ill. Six out of ten boarding houses or sheltered apartments did not provide

access to the internet for video calling with relatives. Similar isolation and exclusion problems have existed in nursing home facilities with or without psycho-geriatric problems (such as private or church nursing homes).

Homeless people with mental health problems or with double diagnoses continued to live on the streets because there are no temporary hostels that can receive the homeless.

Fear of today and anxiety for tomorrow have worsened the mental health of the general population and increased the use of psychotropic drugs. The effects were greater on children and especially adolescents, who experienced the greater lack of school, friends and social isolation. The Psychosocial Support Hotline 10306 received more than 100,000 calls, with 50% of the callers contacting mental health services for the first time.

Firstly, it has affected the course of the psychological support I have been receiving because I know that if it was not for COVID-19, it would not take so much time to make an appointment with a psychiatrist or a psychologist. My medication has now finished; I have to wait for one or two weeks before I see a doctor, before they can prescribe medicine to me. Also, in 2020, I only worked 2 months and got paid less, because of COVID-19 and the way it struck us. Now, I am afraid about getting my job back because I know how difficult things are now all around the world. Sitting home throughout the week, the month, doesn't do any good to my psychology. Sometimes it also causes me acute pain when sitting, lying down; back pain, joint pain and severe headache. I am still hoping; but I don't know whether I am going to be sacked or not; a lot of people have lost their jobs. I don't know whether I am going to get any support from the government if I am unemployed when the lockdown is over, and that stresses me out. It has also affected my wife. She has not had work for over six months now and that has been a psychological burden for her. We are finding it difficult to survive because we have to pay bills and rent, so it is very difficult for us.

ARSIS

Prisoners

The large crowd of prisoners in overcrowded facilities, the complete confinement, the lack of COVID-19 tests and the absence of measures other than isolation, led to the recording of COVID-19 cases (as well as related deaths) in 16 of the 34 detention facilities. The lack of measures was denounced by the prison officials themselves, who also suffered as carriers and victims of the virus.

At European level, measures were taken to decongest prisons, while in Greece no releases were made (eg those with less serious offenses) and no measures were taken for the sick, the elderly, the disabled and the vulnerable prisoners. Due to the closed courts, it was not possible to suspend the sentences or release those who had reached a maximum detention level, pre-trial detention continued normally and the prisons got uncomfortably overcrowded. Due to this overcrowding in the prisons, whatever measures were taken were in practice revoked.

It has been reported that the transfer of detainees from various prisons to transport divisions in other cities took place in overcrowded conditions in overcrowded "cage" vehicles and without a COVID-19 test. It has also been reported that inmates of different prisons are "recycled" and transferred to different wards due to the lack of separate spaces for HIV-positive people.

The ban on accepting clothes and food from relatives impoverished the poorest inmates because they were forced to buy goods (food, masks and antiseptics) exclusively from the prison's relatively expensive market. Solidarity citizens' initiatives provided personal hygiene and protection items to detainees.

Homeless

The "We stay at home" prompt did not make sense for the homeless on the street, who continued to sleep on benches, squares, churchyards, building recesses and abandoned buildings. Several municipalities across the country have activated their social services and taken additional measures for the homeless.

The Municipality of Athens through KYADA operated a new shelter for the homeless on the street in collaboration with 5 NGOs with experience in the field, one for homeless substance users and in collaboration with organisations that support current users. In Thessaloniki, the Municipality supported the homeless by distributing items and a housing programme run by NGOs with special experience in the field. In both cities, streetwork groups of well-known NGOs as well as citizens' initiatives support homeless people on the streets at night.

Various Municipalities have operated shelters for the homeless on their own funding. About 14 Municipalities operate support structures through the "Housing and Work for the Homeless" programme, which aims to help reintegrate individuals and families living in homeless shelters, on the street or in inadequate accommodation. The housing shelters operate either exclusively through the Municipalities or in cooperation with specialized NGOs-service providers or exclusively by NGOs.

At the end of 2020, there were about 20 municipalities that signed the FEANTSA Homeless Charter and pledged to provide services and not discriminate against the homeless.



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Domestic violence and Abuse

During the pandemic there was an increase in domestic violence but we do not have sufficient aggregate data by the authorities involved. All data comes from the number of complaints, which, however, reflect only part of the real situation as most women do not report the violence they suffer from.

According to a report by the General Secretariat for Equality and based on data provided by EETAA (Hellenic Society for Local Development and Local Government) in the period November 2019 - October 2020, 4,872 women victims of violence and multiple discriminations were supported by Counseling Centers. The predominant form of violence was domestic violence at a rate of 84%. The relationship between the victim and the offender is 56% marital, 13% partnership and at a rate of 12% the offender was a member of the family. It was reported that 77% were Greek women and 14% were immigrant women living in Greece.

During this period, the relevant "SOS 15900" hotline received 8,609 calls, out of which 63% was related to domestic violence. Indicatively, from the beginning of the lockdown in March 454 calls were made and within one month 325 incidents of violence were recorded while in April those increased to 1,070 (increase of 227.4%). Also from February 2020 to March the phone calls and the incidents of violence were increased by 16,4%.

The victims of violence during a quarantine are at a greater risk because the quarantine protects the offenders and the offenders become more aggressive. Due to the fact that the offender and victim are necessarily constantly together at the same place, there is room for the abuser to exercise more control over his victim by shutting down any possible way out. In addition, bruises

on the body usually take up to two weeks to heal and a multi-week quarantine does not allow for evidence. Most women are afraid to make the phone call, they feel trapped in the house and that they cannot escape.

Let us note that only one out of three victims of violence by a partner reports a serious incident to the authorities. The aggregate data of the Hellenic Police during the financial crisis shows a rise in serious incidents over time: 3,512 in 2014; 3,572 in 2015; 3,838 in 2016; 3,930 in 2017, with a sudden increase up to 4,722 in 2018 and 5,540 in 2019.

In 2020 a well-known NGO that specializes in women's issues in cooperation with the Municipality of Athens launched a new programme of legal support for victims of domestic violence during the pandemic. However, despite the promises made by public authorities that the victims of violence - women with their children - could be accommodated and fed in special temporary accommodations, this only happened in a few cases. It is also pointed out that in some cases local accommodations for abused women stopped accepting new cases in order to protect the women already hosted there.

Let us note that in 2017 “The Children's Home” was established, a scheme that would allow the proper receipt and promotion of complaints of children for abuse of any kind. This scheme has not yet started and there is also a huge lack of infrastructure for child protection and suitable accommodations for minors.

Roma communities

In the country live more than 100,000 Roma in 354 separate settlements -in addition to the integrated population of gypsy origin. From those at least 20,000 can be characterized as homeless because they live in 80 settlements in rough structures made from wood or plastic and prefabricated constructions. This particular nomad gypsy population lives in shacks without electricity, drinkable water, drains, in the mud and in conditions of absolute poverty.

These unacceptable housing and sanitation conditions and the fact that multi-member households are housed - stacked within a few square meters do not allow for compliance with any protective measures against COVID-19. However, the cases of infection were relatively limited due to the isolation of this population anyway. In a few cases, the racism virus was the one to target Roma communities as a source of infection but this was not a general issue as in other European or Balkan countries. Quarantine of Roma settlements was imposed in very few cases.

Due to the nature of their occupation (as street vendors, sellers in flea markets, recycling) and due to their informal employment, most men are unregistered, self-employed and therefore uninsured. “Unregistered employment” and long-term unemployment are long-standing

problems. However, for typical reasons this population is excluded from all social benefits and allowances at a time when they cannot work at all. A percentage of them are stateless, do not have an ID or other documents, they do not have birth certificates, they are not registered in the local municipal registers, they do not have access to health, or vaccinations.

Due to the complete lack of income and lack of access in benefits there was an extreme food problem, which was only dealt with by the help of relatives. In some cases, the Municipalities helped providing food and performing disinfections.

The exclusion of children living in camps from basic education was extreme due to the lack of basic space infrastructure, electricity, devices and internet access. The total absence from online learning for objective reasons is also related to the fact that 90% of the parents are illiterate. Children of more integrated communities (who live in organised settlements) are also excluded from online learning due to the lack of a supportive framework, the inability of the parents to help them at home and the lack of equipment.

A serious institutional issue related to equality is that only men can file a tax return in the Roma families and women need to legal aid in order to claim benefits for their families. Also it is only the men who collect the benefit of a large family (many children in the same family) even if they have left their families or abused their wives (which is a common practice in the field). It is important to take measures for school dropouts, for enrolling children in primary schools and for providing laptops to primary school children. A very serious issue is the strictness shown by the police in traffic controls, so that poor families received exorbitant fines of 300 or 600 euros per person or even higher in cases where Roma people sold balloons. Fines were given even when the family went to the supermarket to do the shopping.

Refugees - Asylum seekers

The situation of asylum seekers and refugees in Greece is a disgrace for the modern Greek and European history: around 110,000 asylum seekers lived in the country in 2020 in extremely difficult and inhumane living conditions.

According to the data, in addition to the 514,734 immigrants with a residence permit and around 50,000 refugees who were granted asylum in previous years, the pending asylum applications in December 2020 were 75,675 according to Eurostat and 90,283 according to the Ministry of Migration and Asylum. In these numbers are not included those who are in the process of applying for asylum and are unable to complete due to malfunctions and understaffing of the asylum services. The relevant services were arbitrarily closed between 13/1 and 31/5/2020 and when reopened, the procedures for renewing international protection cards were humiliating with hundreds of people were waiting in queues and outdoors.

Several months of quarantine were imposed on Reception and Identification Centres in the islands (Moria in Lesbos, Samos...) and in places in the mainland (Schisto, Eleonas, Ritsona...) due to COVID-19 cases, which were transmitted relatively easily due to the suffocating conditions of cohabitation. Just before Christmas 7,255 people(!) lived in Kara Tepe, which succeeded Moria. In Samos, 3,500 applicants live in a space that has been designed for 800, while some thousands lived in the fields...

An acute housing problem was created in the middle of the pandemic for about 11,000 asylum seekers, who lived with their families in apartments funded via the European ESTIA programme. At the end of the programme they were forced to leave the apartments - except for some particularly vulnerable cases. Most ended up homeless in squares lacking alternative housing plans. In 2021 a much larger number of asylum seekers is expected to become homeless and to be found out of accommodations because they have formally been recognised as refugees and therefore cannot stay in reception centres. Similarly, in respect of minimising the populations of the islands, applicants from the islands will be transferred in the mainland while there is an intention for some of the existing refugee shelters to close or downsize.

It is estimated that over 1,000 confirmed cases of refugees have been illegally deported to Turkey. In respect of the repatriations there were reports made by OXFAM and WE MOVE ngos as well as to the European Parliament.

The Network for Recording Violence in the Borders has recorded 892 illegal repatriations from European countries (including Greece at the first place). For human rights violations one can see more in the Report of Human Rights Watch 2020.

During 2020 at least half of the refugee children were left out of school due to living conditions and out of online learning due to the lack of equipment and accessibility. Well-known ngos offered informal educational support, which could not replace the formal school process. There were also serious difficulties in accessing the health system because new procedures were introduced for issuing a Temporary Insurance Number, which, however, took months to be implemented.

LGBTQI Community

If the pandemic affected even the most privileged classes of society, the social groups that have already been living in the margins have experienced more exclusion and poverty. Data from the "11528" support line show that, up to July, the pandemic has revealed the vulnerability of the LGBTQI community especially of young people, many of whom had to stay in a non-supportive and often abusive family environment.

The guide of the Color Youth - LGBT Youth Community of Athens mentions that the way the LGBT people experienced the social isolation is crucial for their mental health. Staying in an unsupportive parenting family can lead to strong emotions and conflict. The intense discriminations that they experience within the family regarding their gender identity or sexual orientation worsen their physical and mental health (increased depression and loss of housing also). Equally painful can be the social isolation for LGBTQI people who live alone in their home.

Have the problems differentiated? (survey)

The COVID-19 situation has exacerbated the problems. The most important new addition has been that vital access to sanitary material (masks, antiseptic, gloves) is ensured primarily by social pharmacies which were called upon to play an even more important role than before.

Homelessness has intensified due to the difficulty of the available shelters to accept new referrals; access to asylum services remains difficult; with the coming of winter, there are more requests for clothes, shoes, sleeping bags; lack of definition of new procedures by public and private bodies; difficulty accessing a fixed internet connection so that they can be served by public and private services.

The specific problems have not ceased to exist; on the contrary, the feeling of isolation has come in strong. This is also due to the fact that group meetings / activities are no longer held in the organisations that provided such. Distancing from our close ones in parallel to generated phobias about the situation along with the current financial problems has aggravated the psychology of already burdened people.

The need for access of the disabled to the labor market is on the increase; limited or no access to the public health system and state health centers persists; occasional part-time employment has minimized. However, the opportunity for well-paid work in poor working conditions (eg collection of oranges - olives or other seasonal agricultural work in Crete, the Peloponnese) steady or heavy construction work, transportation, loading and unloading exists.

People who worked steady jobs in businesses such as restaurants, shops or hotels may have lost their jobs or gone on suspension status like other employees and got paid the relevant state benefit. Feeding has been suspended in a number of cases e.g. providing snacks, food, drinks in the day centres.

Integration is not working. There are no sustainable programmes focusing on integration specifically for people on the move. The measures to tackle the pandemic hamper any integration efforts.

Access to the labor market is extremely difficult. Many processes require computer use and internet access. There are families who go to the organisations to request to stay in the area so that they can use their wifi so that their children attend classes through distance learning.

All this cause uncertainty about the future. However, those who have access to digital means are better ensured. In some cases, being offered a new way of communication and relationship has been seen as able to support members of vulnerable groups for a while, but not for a long time. A safer care environment was created at instances, which may have reduced the stress and anxiety of the beneficiaries and some of their housing requests were answered, after many months of waiting or an emergency.

4. Main challenges and priorities.

Housing and poverty

According to Eurostat in 2019 in Greece, 39.5% of the population was obliged to spend more than 40% of their income on expenses related to the house they live in (bills, rent or loan installments, heating, repairs, taxes). The average in EU-27 was only 9.6%, ie in Greece the population spends twice as much as their income for their home. Note that the 40% threshold has been set as one and when it is exceeded it is considered that a household is too burdened financially and prone to poverty.

In 2010 the corresponding percentage of the excessive burden on Greeks for their property was 18.1% compared to 10.8% of the European average, but then for the whole decade it exceeded the limit of 40%: in 2014 it was 40.7 %; in 2015 it was 40.9%; in 2016 40.5% and 39.6% in 2018. The reasons were the reduction of incomes, unemployment and taxation.

There are significant differences between landlords and tenants: About 29% of landlords spend more than 40% of their income on bills, installments and maintenance of their home (whether they have a mortgage or not) while the percentage of tenants reaches 83.1% (!) with a 25% European average.

According to Eurostat, the cost of housing in the EU-27 especially for tenants was also the highest in Greece with 83.1% of tenants paying over 40% of their income exclusively for housing. A positive step, however, was the introduction of the monthly housing allowance from 2019, which is determined depending on the members of the household and incomes at 70 to 210 euros per month. Today it is received by more than 250,000 households with 600,000 beneficiaries living in a rented house.

Let us point out here that last year the rent increases were on average 6-7% with large variations in the cities in the provinces and by region. The lack of new construction work has led to a reduction in available new housing and a significant increase in rents while the decline in short-term leases has restored a significant number of apartments in the rental market with a slight reduction in prices.

Regarding home ownership the EU-27 average in 2018 was 70.0% and more than half of the population in the EU-27 lived in private housing in 2018. One-fifth (20.7%) lived in rented housing and 9.3 % in dwellings with reduced rent, in social dwellings or free of charge. In Greece, home ownership reaches 80% and rented households are about 20% over time. Almost 80% of homeowners have a home loan and 20% do not. Therefore, the first home depends on the bank lending by 80% and involves additional charges for the loan service.

Bankruptcy law and first home

In Greece the private debt is high and amounts to 234-244 billion euros. Debts are 106 billion to the tax authorities and the Public, 92 billion to the banks, 37 billion to the insurance funds, 1.7 billion to the DEKO (utility bills) and 4 billion to private suppliers. For the management of this debt and in particular of non-performing-"red" loans to banks, the so-called bankruptcy law was passed, which concerns only physical entities and over-indebted households.

The new law provides for the release of a debtor from their debts if they agree to liquidate all their movable and immovable property. For most borrowers this means that they will probably lose their first home because they have mortgaged it to get a home, consumer or business loan. The respective auctions in recent years mainly concerned real estate that was not residential, however, with the implementation of the law from 2021 thousands of over-indebted Greeks will lose their first home.

The borrowers-owners, who had temporary protection from the confiscation of their first home under previous laws, are estimated at 50,000 while the total of those who have "red" loans exceeds 300,000. Towards the end of 2020 non-performing loans increased due to the effects of the pandemic on the economy and there is a real inability to repay the installments of even non-performing loans.

The government offered the "Bridge/Gefyra" programme through which borrowers affected by the pandemic were given the opportunity to receive a 9-month state subsidy of 90% of the installments. However, they must first settle their debts with the banks and funds that have taken over the management of non-performing mortgages and other loans. There are at least 100,000 borrowers who have already joined the programme above.

The objective inability to service any type of loan is shown by the fact that the banks themselves offered temporary suspensions of installments of 20 billion to 370,000 borrowers. Among the borrowers are small or medium-sized enterprises, which risk closing down and request for regulation and installment subsidies for business loans which they have received and are not able to pay off.

The full implementation of the bankruptcy law from July 2021 and the lack of an alternative framework for the protection of the first home is expected to exacerbate the problem of homelessness. Through declarations of bankruptcy an unknown number of already indebted households at risk of becoming homeless will be rendered impoverished.

Feeding-food insecurity

During 2020 due to the limitations of the pandemic, most of the schemes that provided food were closed. Despite the fact that the Municipality of Athens, through KYADA, opened two new shelters for the homeless, it reduced the daily feeding program, which was open to the homeless, the needy, the poor, drug users and refugees. The same happened with most of the parish meals.

This, combined with the closure of the restaurant services, has caused a huge shortage of cooked food for the homeless, non self-served or with mobility issues, lonely elderly, refugees and poor households. It is striking, however, that in addition to relevant initiatives from Municipalities, soup kitchens were developed on an initiative basis: with the help of volunteers, thousands of portions of food and materials provided by the sensitive public were cooked every day and distributed to homeless or elderly people and people in need of help door to door.

The contribution of the Social Groceries of the Municipalities in the distribution of food for cooking was important, however the beneficiaries were only those who were registered in the relevant registers before the pandemic. The under-functioning of some services did not allow the registration of new beneficiaries.

According to the European Federation of Food Banks, the demand for food increased by 50% compared to the period before the pandemic. Thus, in January 2021, additional funds were approved for the TEVA-European Aid Fund for the Poor, mainly for benefits that were admittedly more critical during 2020.

Note that during 2020 there were many NGOs that gathered and distributed food, medicine and emergency supplies to excluded individuals and families, homeless people and refugees. Many relevant citizen initiatives were also created and social grocery stores or pharmacies operated in addition to the municipal services.

Fotis Adamopoulos, 67 years old, Magazine salesman for "Schedia"

In 2020 the biggest difficulty was fear and insecurity because for long, we could not go out and sell the "Schedia" magazine in the streets. I had an additional fear of being infected by the virus. On the government side, there was no support since I had to stop working as the magazine's salesman. Our only financial support used to be associated with the sales of the magazine while at the same time we received some gift vouchers from supermarket chains; an acquaintance of mine (from the area of Agios Antonios) would provide me with some food, as well. Therefore, my feeding needs were covered, more or less. Another difficulty is that I have been sleeping in a factory room that does not have heating. As long as there are workers in the factory, i.e., till

the afternoon, I stay at an office where I can keep myself warm. However, at the place where I have been sleeping, there is no access to heating.

Schedia



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Consumption

Greece in 2019 was ranked 21st in real individual consumption and in GDP in the Eurozone of 27 based on the AIC Index (Real Individual Consumption) which measures the available wealth of households. Based on 100 units of purchasing power as an average in the EU consumers in Greece have 78 units and are behind Poland and Romania (79 units), followed by Estonia (76), Latvia (71), Slovakia (69), Hungary (67), Croatia (66) and Bulgaria (58). Similarly, based on the European average of 100 GDP units, Greeks have 67 while Luxembourg 260, Denmark 130 and Germany 120 while the latter in the ranking Bulgaria has 53.

Other Eurostat 2019 data records double the expenditure of Greek households on food as a percentage of GDP. Based on the average of 6.8% of GDP for all households of the EU-27 in Greece, 11.6% of GDP is spent on food. This is not due to waste but low income. In other words, poorer European countries are spending proportionately more on food due to lower food insecurity incomes.

Pending pensions

A factor of the impoverishment of those over the age of 65 is the systematic delay of the payment of pensions for years. There are estimated over 400,000 (!) pending retirement applications: 173,500 are the applications for main pensions; 23,500 for civil servants' pensions; 121,862 for supplementary pensions and about 60,000 for one-offs. There have also been 62,500 applications for parallel pension for the past 5 years. The dramatic delays that often leave retirees without any income or other benefits are due to bureaucratic and technical reasons, the successive changes of the legal framework and the insurance system and the unconditional consolidation of the insurance funds into one (EFKA). In fact, the delays are due to the financial tightness and the reluctance of the Greek state to meet its obligations under the law. For this reason, thousands of retirees have taken legal action against the Greek state following endless legal proceedings.

Health

Greece was the penultimate country in the EU (with Bulgaria last) in emergency need to strengthen its health system in order to deal with the pandemic (OECD data, Health at a glance, Europe 2020 report) and in COVID-19 test numbers per 100,000 inhabitants.

The press reports reveal a fact that remains to be confirmed: The poorest areas and prefectures of the country were hit the hardest by the pandemic and had the least means to deal with it. The regional hospitals and health centres in Northern Greece had many shortages of means and medical staff, while the prolonged lock-downs had a very serious impact on the local economy, employment and poverty.

Education (survey)

It is worth mentioning that 85% of children (served by the Athens Day Centre) do not have access to education due to their living conditions and the small percentage (15%) who try to integrate into school are unable to buy the necessary school items (stationery, school bags, etc.).

Particularly for Roma people the enrollment in the school from the end of the school year 2019-2020 (May) was done based on the good will of the principal (when there were not enough documents) and if there were places available. Thus, few children enrolled in primary schools, mainly due to the lack of places and the existence of many children in the area from socially excluded groups. Therefore, there is lack of access to primary education.

60% of high school students were given laptops and access to lessons was available, however, 40% did not have access. Laptops were given in only two (2) cases to primary school children and the majority of children were left out of primary schools either due to non-registration or inability to attend. The organisation working with the Roma people printed out the school work but could practically not replace the school.

The lack of a family and educational support framework is prevalent.

The registrations for the primary and kindergarten schools, in May, were done only online. We did not know that; we went to the Support Center and they helped us. But we did not have time to go to school to validate the registration together with the student's health card. Time passed until we made an appointment with a pediatrician and a cardiologist and, in September, they no longer had places at the school for the classes we needed. The seats were taken by the children of the immigrants. Our children will remain illiterate. They could not go to school this year.

GDP and unemployment

GDP has fallen by 10.5% in 2020 and it is estimated that the recession will eventually be greater than 11.6%. This is particularly troubling for the citizens because 25% of the GDP has already been lost over the past decade (from 2008 to 2018). (Let us point out the recession was present before the pandemic and that GDP had already started receding since 2020's first quarter).

Public debt in 2021 will rise for the first time to 208.9% (!) of the GDP confirming that Greece remains a heavily indebted country. Analysts estimate that for every unit of falling GDP, about 50,000 jobs are lost. Based on the fall of 10.5 units, an estimated increase of 500,000 young in unemployment is expected.

The ELSTAT data for the third quarter of 2020 give the number of 3,926,812 employed people. However, this includes all employees who have been suspended or are receiving 50% of their salary. The unemployed amounted to 756,424 people and unemployment was estimated at 16.7%. There are no significant differences with 2019, which according to ELSTAT had 17.3% official unemployment.

There are significant discrepancies to the data provided by OAED (Unemployment Service): the total number of unemployed registered in the Register in December 2020 with job seeking as criterion was 1,133,432 people (increase +2.42% compared to November 2020 and increase + 4.69% compared to December 2019). From the unemployed 49.46% (560,567) are registered for a period of more than 12 months and 50.54% (572,865) for a period of less than 12 months. Men amounted to 422,487 (percentage 37.28%) and women to 710,945 (percentage 62.72%).

According to the ERGANI system of the Ministry of Labour, in the January-September 2020 period, 133,000 jobs were lost (recruitment announcements minus departures) while in November 2020, 29,933 jobs more were lost. However, it was found that 50% of new hires involve part-time (40.53%) or alternate work (8.99%) employment, proving that we are moving towards the dominance of part time employment, telework, unpaid overtime and generally flexible work arrangements.

The dimension of the ELSTAT and OAED data is due to different census methodologies and correspond to differentiated populations: ELSTAT is responsible for the official estimation of the unemployment rate according to standards which are common with other European countries' for reasons of comparability. OAED (Unemployment Service) is responsible for the administrative registration of the registered unemployed, regardless of whether it is confirmed in any way that they are promptly looking for work. Also, in each country there are different registration requirements. Once again ELSTAT statistically ranks a number of unemployed as "economically inactive" and out of the workforce based on ILO definitions.

These differences do not allow for accurate conclusions about the number and percentage of unemployed. However, the Annual Budget Report in Parliament accepts that unemployment reached 18.9% in 2020.

The INE Labor Institute of GSEE estimates that unemployment will be higher and will eventually be around 21.2% in 2020. Prior to the second lock-down INE Labor Institute of GSEE was estimated that more than 180,000 workers were in a "grey area" between underemployment and unemployment and remained on contract suspension for more than three months with wages reduced by at least 50%. Estimates for contract workers in December 2020 were around 640,000 people. So a possible lifting of the suspension status would double the number of unemployed and would raise the unemployment rate to 27%. Nearly one million workers fear that either their contracts will not be renewed or they will find it difficult to return to work on the same terms as before the pandemic. INE Labor Institute of GSEE points out that the cost of losing a job is particularly high in Greece, since after two years of unemployment the unemployed have lost 47% of their income. This result ranks Greece in the third worst position in the Eurozone. The long term unemployed (that is approximately 50% of the total number) have by 70% greater chances never to return to the labour market.

It should be noted that out of the total number of unemployed people, only 202,504 were subsidized in December due to the formal conditions set by OAED (Unemployment Service). Within 2020, a one-time emergency financial aid of 400 euros was given to the non-subsidized long-term unemployed. However, out of the total number of 578,668 registered long-term unemployed until April 2020, only 150,000 unemployed people, who had completed 12 months of continuous unemployment, received that benefit. As a result, about 350,000 long-term unemployed, regardless of income criteria, were left out of the emergency aid in the midst of a pandemic based on formalities. The benefit was also given to those who had completed 12 months of continuous unemployment until November 2020, provided that they had not received the benefit paid in April-May. Again, a large percentage of non-subsidized registered unemployed were excluded on formalities.

A more specific issue is employment in tourism, which provides 20.8% of GDP. Greece is the most vulnerable economy in the Eurozone precisely because it is affected by the recession of tourism and also 21.7% of employment locally depends on it. It is worth mentioning that 34.1% of those who receive the unemployment benefit come from the tourist industry.

With regards to areas with the geographical distribution of higher unemployment, we focus on Northern Greece: According to data from the Labor Centres in Evros and Rodopi, unemployment is at 35-40% due to deindustrialisation. In Thessaloniki at 35% with dominoes of layoffs in industry, handicrafts, trade, tourism and catering. In Drama and Serres at 40% due to deindustrialisation, transfer of companies to neighboring Bulgaria and, in combination with COVID-19, with the closure of 50% of companies. In Pella (Edessa and Almopia), which was particularly affected by the pandemic, unemployment has reached 60% with full deregulation of the labor market and parallel degradation of the health sector with large shortages of doctors in the hospital and health centres of the region. In Pieria, which relies mainly on tourism, with the health crisis, hotels and restaurants were understaffed and few employees managed to get the quarterly allowance of OAED (Unemployment Service). In Veroia, it is requested that the active employment policies of OAED (Unemployment Service) and the agricultural activities be included in order to activate the labor force of the long-term unemployed. In Kilkis, high unemployment and deregulation of labour relations is directly related to the effects of the severe health crisis. In Kavala and Xanthi, the huge extent of "black labour" and uninsured employment and the large percentage of part-time work that reaches 40% of the total work are pointed out. In Halkidiki, the effects of the pandemic on tourism were serious and the requests concern coverage for a minimum income, settlement of DEKO debts (utility bills) and first home loans, rent subsidy, heating and unemployment benefits for all the unemployed. In Kastoria, unemployment reached 55% while in Florina the respective percentage was 35%.

Especially in the prefecture of Kozani, which was particularly affected by COVID-19, there is particular concern about the vertical increase in unemployment due to the plans to de-lignify and close the large power plants of DEH (Electrical Power Company). The same issue exists in Megalopolis in the Peloponnese, where the local economy also depends on the extraction of lignite and the operation of DEH units.

Inequalities in salary loss

According to the December Labor and Social Development Bulletin published by the European Commission, Greece was the second country in terms of income loss from work due to the pandemic during the first half of 2020. The decrease in income was 8%, compared to 10% for Croatia and a 5% average for the EU-27.

(For Greece this reduction was added to the reduction of incomes from 2009 to 2019).

Losses by country were extremely unequal, but there were also large discrepancies between income categories: Income losses from the pandemic and lock-downs were twice as high among low-wage workers compared to high-wage workers: In Greece, the income loss compared to 2019 exceeded 12% for low-wage earners compared to a reduction of around 6.5% for middle and high-income workers.

The main cause of income loss was absenteeism: 10.3% of the employed population in the EU-27, ie 19.3 million people were absent from work due to contract suspension or redundancies. Support to these individuals focused on partial income replenishment but the aid provided did not supplement full salaries. Part-time, seasonal and informal workers were left without any coverage.

It was also confirmed that the biggest income losses were for employees in tourism-hotels-catering (20% on average) but also in arts-entertainment (14% on average).

According to a public opinion poll by ALCO and INE of GSEE (January 2021) one in three private sector employees (approximately 31%) had a reduction in their earnings of more than 21%; 22% reported a loss of income of 21-30%; 13% reported a loss of 11-20%; 44% say incomes did not fall during the pandemic.

48% of the respondents are pessimistic about the improvement of their wages in the first half of 2021 while 39% of employees (4 in 10) also say they are pessimistic about whether they will keep their job.



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5. Good practices in Greece (survey)

It seems that the vast majority of organisations that provide services to vulnerable individuals and groups of people are well connected to each other and are in collaboration on a number of joint ways to offer assistance and work on these people's social inclusion or reintegration at all the levels that will facilitate their access to goods and services to address and alleviate vulnerable groups or else *to offer better and faster service to fellow human beings who need immediate help.*

The nature of the cooperation involves psychosocial support services; vocational education and rehabilitation of people with serious psychosocial problems; provision of medicines and sanitary material; referrals for requests concerning mental health issues of the beneficiaries but also referrals to those for requests concerning housing, nutrition, legal support, medical services; referrals to meet the needs and demands of children that cannot be met.

The exchange of knowledge and experiences in the holistic coverage of the needs that arise in the management of cases of gender-based violence is significant since such violence is on the rise globally and a lot of organisations work together to provide such holistic support and intervention to those served in the segmented, comprehensive and, at the same time, individual needs of the beneficiaries. Last but not least, cooperation concerns the management of emergency cases, claiming rights and exerting pressure for change or policy-making.



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6. Is the National Government helpful? (survey)

The first phase of covid 19 emergence has indeed caught everyone by surprise and put the residents of the country in isolation and seclusion. The situation was therefore aggravated for the beneficiaries of social services and people in need. Distant work and the provision of services remotely immediately reduced the attendance number of the served population. The digitization of services provided by the public bodies led to appointments being needed for every kind of request for people who have had difficulty meeting their basic needs, as they had no income available. Only a specific number of employees were to work in the workplace and alternate shifts were put to place in order to adhere to the Health Protocol in all actions and services. The use of masks and antiseptic liquids, cleaning of surfaces and objects got on the daily agenda.

On a different note, motivation was lost due to the absence of activation and the isolation imposed, thus contributing to the emergence of stress, strains on people's psychology, the generation of increased feelings of fear and insecurity.

For some people the automatic extension of their expired welfare benefits was a benefit along with the renewal of their legal documents, be them asylum application forms and residence permits, for which a visit to the Asylum Service would have been necessary, as well as the renewal of the unemployment cards from the Unemployment Benefit Service (OAED). The ability to issue documents online has also been seen as beneficial (gov.gr)

Consequently, the number of participants in the organisations' programmes decreased steadily in proportion to the services and activities provided since the limited number of live meetings, both in groups and as individuals has been reduced and upon appointment.

The hotlines have been used in cases, with 15900 for violence against women used to support requests for emergency accommodation and telephone sessions, and 10306 for cases of psychosocial support. Additionally, phone communication with caregivers was provided.

Families continued to receive benefits as for rent, a newborn child and so on. A subsidy of 400 euros benefited individual unemployed people and if both of the parents in a family were out of work the benefit doubled, which has been correspondingly very important for large families. The installments to the Hellenic Public Power Corporation (DEH) based on a social tariff (60 installments) were continued, a measure that must be continued in 2021 in order not to cut the electricity in the houses.

Some of the people who have received asylum also receive the benefit of 200e, because their income is proven to be low and they are entitled to it in money and a food card. Those who are registered to be unemployed have received the main benefits of the unemployment card (free

movement, etc.) but no allowance, because they do not have as many work stamps or are not unemployed long term.

Those waiting for an asylum reply continued to receive the asylum seeker's allowance through the UNHCR. However, those who have been granted asylum but for bureaucratic reasons have not yet received a residence permit as recognized refugees, are not entitled to apply for the KEA benefit of 200e and stay for many months, one year or even longer without any allowance. Likewise, there is no allowance for those whose application is pending, it has been rejected, they have presented objections and are waiting for a response from the Asylum Service for years.

Therefore, there are beneficiaries who have not benefited from any particular measure but have instead lost potential benefits due to delays and time consuming procedures. One of the local government's measures - the Polydynamo Centre on Acharnon street that provides housing for the homeless in Athens has worked as a precautionary measure against the pandemic. Doctors, social services and carers have been provided by organisations for its operation. However, one special case is the nursing homes which have been found on the red due to the emergence of COVID-19 cases. Controls have been continuous but without the corresponding support.

Many did not benefit from any measure other than adapting to telework since the beginning of the pandemic. Having actually been supported is stated to be rare. Some beneficiaries were further trained in the use of digital media while others benefited from the social solidarity allowance. However, that functions as a disincentive too, since people like that may no longer be included in the services provided in some networks and organisations, as they cannot declare additional revenue and still benefit. In some cases, people managed to ensure a housing and work programme in collaboration with the Municipality of Athens, but this social program too may be functioned as a disincentive.

There have been specific populations that have not benefited from any governmental measure to date as there is no longer direct access to the services provided by organisations and they found it difficult to participate in sessions / teleconferences due to poor internet connections, however, adhering to the anti-COVID-19 measures reduced the risk of exposure to the virus. Some patients benefited as they felt that despite physical distance it is possible to interact and feel close. The prevalent notion is that access to food became even more difficult - people can practically not find free food and if you had not registered before the pandemic in the registry of beneficiaries in the social groceries of the Municipality, you were not able to do so within the year. There was in theory the possibility for coupons for the Open Market through the International Social Welfare of the Attica Region and regardless of any welfare allowances. In practice it seemed that this service could not work. Nevertheless, the soup kitchen continues with 50 meals a day from the Municipal Nursery of Athens of the Municipality of Athens. It was found that the community centers either did not function or could not operate for other reasons.

There was difficulty in accessing the Unemployment Benefit Service (OAED) to renew an unemployment card (a large number of people do not work). In the first Lockdown the renewal was done automatically while in the second electronically by the unemployed. So again all the unemployed had to be supported to renew the Unemployment card electronically. Illiterate adults depend on social services to handle all their affairs: tax return, AMKA, applications for benefits, food provision and so the story goes...

The Citizens' Service Centres also required an appointment scheduled and along with the fact that in the community centre of the Municipality of Athens, the special branch for the Roma only operated in the month of December in 2020 made things rather difficult. It was also found that other services were understaffed or practically unable to operate for various reasons. Being served on the phone was practically impossible. The lack of a family and educational support framework was prevalent. In other cases, being offered a new way of communication and relationship has been seen as able to support members of vulnerable groups for a while, but not for a long time. A safer care environment was created, which may have reduced the stress and anxiety of the beneficiaries and some of their housing requests were answered, after many months of waiting or an emergency.

For the elderly, the distribution of food stopped on the premises of the relevant organisation and was carried out at home. All other distributions are carried out strictly observing the distances and the protection measures.

On the other hand, there have been reports of individuals benefiting from feeling more secure, retaining participation in the programmes as usual and enrolling new patients. The Polydynamo enabled people in the streets to find shelter and protect themselves from the pandemic. Moreover, information is always a good and strong ally either in the provision of services or at the preventive level - quite important, given the difficulties posed by pandemic measures.



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7. What is the role of EAPN? (survey)

To show the way, the vision

A lot of emphasis is placed on the great extent to which EAPN can contribute to the improvement of the relation and horizontal cooperation of the bodies that provide services. More specifically, through appropriate political and institutional pressure and lobbying as well as the mere operation of such networks and the active participation of members or their involvement in the dissemination of information and other relevant networks and the exchange of know-how and referral networks professionals in the field can benefit and also joint advocacy actions can have a positive Impact on service providers.

What is necessary is regular contact, interaction, deep knowledge of the organisations providing services, networking and cooperation at all levels and all the Networks and Platforms they are active in for all to be more efficient, more useful more referrals and local networking of NGOs with the Municipalities as well as institutional cooperation in the field of all bodies concerned.

The problem is that in reality there is no social policy to implement. Those who focus on that see EAPN contributing by pushing for the elimination of discrimination against specific groups of people ie the Roma people. Greater cooperation of NGOs and cooperation with the Municipalities are needed in order to address such problems.

Research could be another major part of what EAPN can contribute. The findings in the critical fields the member organisations work in should be used extensively to raise awareness and inform the service providers and the authorities at national and European level about the real needs in the field and, if possible, to create concrete steps to serve the population, in order for all the participants to avoid spending valuable energy they could allocate to their actual work.

The overall aim needs to be to reduce exclusion. The issue of poverty and the constant impoverishment of all the more vulnerable groups is on the increase, so in the face of such risk EAPN could and should play an umbrella role attracting and coordinating organisations that serve these groups.

More specifically putting pressure on normalizing procedures, for example for asylum, and highlighting the problems of asylum seekers, which remain pending for years could be one of its short-term goals; the same for all policies that exclude people living in poverty stressing out the urgent and exigent needs involved; making good use of the experience of its members (field experience, first and direct contact with the beneficiaries); setting up working groups; organising

thematic meetings; collating documented data and the voices of people experiencing poverty (case studies); expanding its membership and, subsequently, advocating for the demand for a just society.

On a different note, planning joint actions with the support of the state, which will ensure the viability and long duration of the programmes; taking initiatives, cooperating with the Ombudsman and the Social Services of the Municipalities taking into account the realm of the population with their individual needs. Shaping social policy can be achieved by constantly monitoring developments and systematic intervention in issues related to EAPN's statute, but also in the effort to maintain an open channel of communication with institutional actors and mobilise them in social issues. Strategies for social inclusion, inclusion and prevention / response to poverty triggers can only be effective and sustainable when combining field experience and the impact of measures and policies taken centrally.

The voices of those excluded is vital to be heard thus empowering vulnerable groups and supporting them in active participation, in their needs assessment and decision making, mapping of social structures fighting poverty and exercising their rights through communication between actors at national and European level is a crucial task for EAPN.



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8. Thematic emphasis 2019/20: developments/progress of Minimum Income

Minimum Income

In 2014 was introduced the "Minimum Income", which was piloted in 30 municipalities and later throughout the country. In 2016 the benefit was renamed to "Social Solidarity Income" (KEA). KEA has become a key tool in the fight against poverty, supporting low-income people. The current government continued to provide the allowance which in December 2019 was once again named "Minimum Income" or M.I.

The M.I. amounts to € 200 per month for a single person household and is increased by € 100 for each additional adult and € 50 for each minor member. For inclusion in the beneficiaries are taken into account the income of the last six months before the application as well as any real estate. The Community Centres of the Municipalities and many NGOs provide counseling to individuals in order to be able to apply for it online.

The M.I. is designed to be provided to approximately 273,000 vulnerable households. In 2020 the beneficiaries were 256,562 households with 482,335 members. In December the allowance was given almost "double" but with reductions: A household with one person and zero income would receive 400 euros instead of 200 euros - unless they had a certain income in the last six months, in which case they would receive 200 euros again. A couple with two (2) minor children would receive up to 800 euros or, if in the last six months they had a certain income, a reduced allowance of 486 euros. Despite the low level of benefits, its granting was a positive measure of minimal relief for the extremely poor and the consequences of the pandemic.

However, the drastic reduction of the allowance is considered problematic for those who have low income or some menial part-time job. It is also clear that of the total estimated number of people at risk of poverty or extreme poverty, only a small proportion can receive the benefit. This is due to lack of information, lack of a supportive framework or inability to collate supporting documents. But the main reason for the introduction of the M.I. was not the introduction of another destitution allowance but the reduction of inequalities, the right of access to a decent income for all those at risk of extreme poverty and linkage to employment.

On the plus side, homeless women and women-victims of violence living in shelters will have access to the M.I. from 2021, despite not having a permanent home address.

The beneficiaries of the M.I. are also entitled to free medical care for the uninsured, inclusion in programmes and social services of the Municipalities for dealing with poverty, social tariff for electricity and water supply as well as the benefits of the Unemployment Card (such as heating allowance, free transportation).

As of 2017, the beneficiaries of the EU are also beneficiaries of the TEVA (European Aid Fund for the Needy) for periodic assistance in kind (mainly food). However, the resources of TEVA are managed by the Municipalities (eg for the purchase of food) which also operate the municipal Social Groceries. The paradox is that those who are entitled to support from TEVA are institutionally excluded from the benefits of the Social Groceries of the Municipalities.

A basic condition for maintaining the right for the M.I. and for submitting an application is the mandatory registration (and permanent re-registration) in the OAED unemployment register. This forced the approximately 220,000 beneficiaries to officially register as unemployed and, in this way, the OAED data on unemployment in the period 2018-2020 were differentiated upwards.

In 2021 the granting of the M.I., child and housing allowances will be linked to the compulsory schooling attendance of the beneficiary children. This measure will make it difficult to provide M.I. to poor families, where children cannot attend school regularly and stay in the same school year due to absences (for example: Roma - migrant populations, refugee families) or who did not have access to distance learning.

9. Key Recommendations

Recommendations need to take into account the assessment of the situation as is.

Although it is true that some organisations and services have ensured the appropriate framework with the necessary adjustments to deal with COVID-19, so that we can eventually return to a relative normality through a new and different way of supporting people, if the situation insists things will worsen at all levels. The issues facing vulnerable social groups and the multifaceted level of discrimination and exclusion will increase - in combination with the increase or intensification of poverty, the difficulty of accessing services and goods but also the restrictions imposed by the pandemic measures themselves. The number of people who (will) need services and support will be constantly on the increase and there will steadily be adverse deterioration of the socio-economic situation, increased unemployment and difficulty accessing benefits for those most vulnerable. The effects on mental health and social isolation will not cease. If this continues longer and the state does not provide benefits, some may be excluded from the educational process altogether. Our work will become even more demanding as the number of people who will be especially dependent on social pharmacies, for example, will increase.

Today's social policy in general does not really help those who are still in the mood to fight to get their lives back in their hands. One example is the refugee field which is becoming increasingly complex in terms of the legal status of individuals, so working and being able to make ends meet becomes extremely difficult and such is the situation for Roma people who may be working for minimum income in menial temporary jobs. If the restrictions are lifted, the situation of these people will also improve. It is very important for the supporting NGOs to function normally again.

Measures to be taken additionally

- Additional care for a financial support system and the possibility of general access of people to services, education and benefits.
- Free provision of sanitary material; free distribution of antiseptics and masks from the state.
- Additional hiring of staff.
- Care for immediate housing for the most vulnerable groups of people who lack a family environment, especially in cases where they face serious health problems.
- Provision /distribution of food as well as facilitating access to health services for the most vulnerable.
- More financial support for the long term unemployed and those not eligible for benefits.
- Particular care for the homeless unaccompanied minors and single men who also have no housing alternatives but are not recognized as a vulnerable group.

- Acceleration of procedures in relation to issuing legal documents; acceleration of asylum procedures and remedying the under-functioning of services due to COVID-19.
- Ensuring access to formal education online; provision for those children who do not have such possibility (PC and internet); reliable internet access.
- Provision of information in languages other than Greek.
- Ensuring the necessary medical examinations for admission to a shelter particularly for abused women.
- Ongoing registration with the asylum service, the absence of which resulted in inability to access health services, to seek housing or financial assistance.
- Communication with the organisations providing services should be in place non-stop especially for cases of abuse.
- Setting up units for home visits aimed at psychosocial assistance to people with mobility difficulties.
- Non-stop support from existing community centres particularly for the Roma population.
- Better education of the staff, the beneficiaries and the general population on pandemic outbreaks and the use of new technologies as a tool in such conditions.
- Increase of pensions for low-income pensioners.
- Increase of the amount of the unemployment benefit.
- Caring for the effects of quarantine on lonely people.
- Automatic issuance and renewal of KEPA decisions without personal examination or re-examination (HIV, etc.) based on medical opinions for chronically ill patients with non-curable diseases.



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10. Testimonies of PeP

I am a woman about to be 66 years old. I have lost my husband many years back and I have been living alone with my daughter who has a psychomotor disability of 80%. My daughter is frequently hospitalized in a home for long term ailments. When she is not, I need and want to be 24 hours a day by her side now that I have nowhere to leave her. You see, I have a child with this condition and do everything I can in order to provide her with whatever she needs, no matter if I am deprived of the essentials. I have also been facing health problems personally such as severe arthritis on one leg, heart problems, and high blood pressure. I receive my husband's pension and not much money is left after paying off our monthly fixed charges, roughly 75 euros. I have been struggling with this situation for years, but 2020 made it even harder because of the pandemic. My daughter and I were trapped at home without having any contact at all with others and there have been moments I believed I would go nuts. It is worth saying that our apartment is on the third floor and there is no elevator, therefore without someone's help, I cannot move my daughter. One thing is financial problems; the needs of my daughter which could not be dealt with financially or practically. Another thing is isolation; I was deprived of any remaining mental strength... as if we were forgotten by God. Luckily, we received valuable help from the Ladies Association of Drama, with the distribution of food and the so called "meals of love". I felt shame for our situation, having been a proud woman by nature, and still do. 2020 made our situation even harder in all aspects, especially now that we have sunk even deeper into poverty and many times hopelessness.

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I am a 45-year old mother of two, divorced 4 years ago.

In the past, I pursued a great artistic career but I would not like to talk more about it. I have studied and worked abroad for long. I have been living in Greece for the last decade. I had a very good life and a financially comfortable one. Unfortunately, right after a scandal in the intellectual property firm my works belonged to, combined with the financial crisis, changed both my economic status and my life entirely. I sustained myself with the money I had made all those years, but material goods are over at some point. The demands accumulated were huge and my earnings little and virtually nonexistent. It is indeed tough to lose everything you have acquired and get into a rather unprecedented situation. There were times I did not even have five euros on me. 2020 came and made matters even worse. It was a bad time because the artistic industry had gradually started to recover and that was the case for me too. When COVID-19 spread, restaurants, concert rooms, and theatres closed. You can see that was a "cheap shot". The most frustrating part was that we, artists, had been treated with a big deal of contempt by the government when it came to financial support and allowances. It was as if we had not been affected negatively and as if we did not offer a thing in this country. Culture is fundamental and a big commodity but was not treated as such. We struggled in real in order to make our voices

heard and get financial support from the government. During the first lockdown, we got nothing. In the second one, we were given a little something. To me, the financial and pandemic crisis was not only economically negative but also ethically.

2020 was a difficult year for me, as for most people. I belong to a six-member family of 4 adults and 2 minors (offsprings of divorced daughters), where I am the only one who works steadily. My father works on and off but can't find work easily. We struggle to cover our basic and fixed expenses, even our mortgage payments, since we do not qualify, because of my 700-euro salary, for any government benefits, apart from the ones for children.

My mother doesn't work because of her age (61 years) and the fact that she suffers from diabetes. It was often difficult to find her medicine for free, as she is uninsured, so we had to buy them. I also face similar difficulties due to chronic asthma. I do not always find my medicine in the Social Pharmacy and I resort to buying them off the market. The inhalers I need are quite expensive. So, even with the state's financial medical contribution, this is a burden for our family.

One more difficulty has been the online education of our children, which needed a lot in place to be done smoothly. However, with a little help, me and my sister made it!

An important issue that we face as a family, but me personally as an individual also, has to do with our ethnicity and religion. We come from Egypt and wear headscarves, following our traditions and religion, without disturbing anyone.

However, often, if not daily, I get angry stares on the street, in public services or wherever else I might find myself at. In fact, some even carry out verbal attacks, telling me to go back to my country and that they do not want me here. I am told to take off my headscarf and sometimes they might call me names. Unfortunately, this is a problem that was not brought by 2020, but is permanent even though I have been in Greece for several years and I speak perfect Greek.

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I'm trying to figure out how to apply for the housing allowance, but I can't make sense out of how to arrange an appointment, because you no longer can do that physically. The place I rent is a basement, which we have turned into a home, and we have signed a contract for a house, and turned the electricity domestic. But I cannot get a certificate because the municipality does not allow physical presence (...), we call and we wait for hours and do not know how to go this online. For so many months we cannot make sense of it and we suffer unjustly.

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We cannot go out for work to sell flowers, balloons and we have no resources at all, we want to register in the social grocery, but they are always closed because they had cases of coronavirus, as they told us.

And during the first quarantine those who were registered could get some food or clothes, but they did not make new registrations. Where can we find food? How will we survive?

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I try to take out a state ID for my children who are out of wedlock but are recognized by a notarial deed of recognition. Their mother left us 8 years ago when they were very young. I am a Greek citizen and so are my children. They ask me to have my children become Greek citizens. But I am Greek ... I cannot find any paper of their mother; I have no contact with her. I do not know if she is alive. Where can I find the documents? The deposit payment is 100 euros for each child in order to apply; I am unemployed, homeless; how can I find so much money? No service accepts me; I call and they do not accept me to send anything, except for the application for citizenship upon discretion of its acceptance.

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My child has hearing problems; the doctor gave him hearing aids for both his ears. The prescription must be executed by a public shelter because both parents are unemployed and uninsured. No one, neither the Roma Center nor any service knows where to go to get the hearing aids because these benefits are not provided for the uninsured; I went to other services, organisations, no one can help us. Nobody knows. It is impossible to not have any help. Our child might never be able to hear. The school does not accept our child because it can't hear, and we were not sent to another. He is 7 years old now. We do not know what to do. Will our child be deaf and illiterate?

Support Center of Children and Family

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Dimitris, male, 54, unemployed, Athens, Greece

The COVID-19 situation made me was anxious to keep strict hygienic rules, washing my hands all the time but I was allowed out of my house only for a handful of reasons. I had to deal with traffic restrictions; I could not visit any family member or friend. I live alone and I felt isolated and depressed. My job contract ended and there is a delay in renewing it due to the COVID-19 crisis. I have a bank loan for my house which I cannot pay for a long time now.

To deal with all that I wore face mask that covers the mouth and the nose at all times and tried to avoid overcrowded places. I stayed home as much as possible. I worked from home till the end of April 2020 that my job ended. I used phone and video calls more often to communicate with family, friends and colleagues and I tried e-shopping where possible.

Personally, I haven't received any support from the government. I happened to become unemployed in the middle of the crisis, late April 2020. The government gave a benefit (800€) to the employees who lost their jobs due to the lockdown of the businesses. They also gave a benefit

of 400€ to some of the unemployed people, to the newly unemployed, not all... The government reduced the V.A.T. in the public transport tickets and in the non- alcoholic drinks from 1st June until 31st October 2020.

My constant worry is to get free masks. I am waiting to receive the unemployment benefit of approx. 400€ per month. I have to reduce my expenses to the minimum. I need the bank to freeze the payments of the loan for an unlimited time, till we get the money to pay back. It is not possible for me to survive on the unemployment benefit and pay the bank at the same time. I hope the extra economic allowance to increase as soon as we get the EU funds agreed to be given to all the countries affected by the COVID-19 crisis. I hope the unemployment allowance to increase as a sum and be extended. I hope the government reduces the V.A.T. in all basic products.

If we have to keep the face masks on, the government should provide them to the vulnerable people for free. The payments of the bank loans for housing should freeze for a number of PeP and other vulnerable people for long. They should extend the economic allowance to everyone who has been affected of the COVID-19 crisis; increase the unemployment benefit; Include more beneficiaries to the economic support provided and reduce the VAT in all products.

George, male, 46, disabled, Thessaloniki, Greece

The biggest problem I faced due to COVID-19 was the closure of my very small business. I am the owner of a photocopy/ printing office. I offer my services to students, tutors, individual clients and small firms. Since I was not allowed to run my business for more than 2 months I faced a financial problem.

Following the orders of the government, I had to stay home. So, I put up a notice on my shop window and a message on my telephone machine with my email and home number. This way, I hoped to have some work still coming in.

The Greek government set a couple of measures to support businesses that had to close temporarily. For about 3 months we were allowed to pay 60% of the rent of our office. Plus, we were benefitted by a monthly 800€-benefit as for the income we lost during the lockdown. Of course, this amount is very little as an income for 3 months.

My short-term needs are to survive financially and keep my small business. I think there will be no money for any vacation this summer. I have to stay at the shop and work all day. I hope my clients return and my business runs again, so I can live.

In the short run, we need to continue paying a lower rent, but this is bad for the owners. We also need to get a small income again, at least as high as the unemployment benefit. In the long run, I think the government should get prepared for a possible comeback of the COVID-19 crisis.

Marianna, female, 48, PeP, Athens, Greece

I have faced two serious problems due to the COVID-19 crisis.

First, my husband stopped working (as a wood manufacturer at his own firm) due to the lockdown of his customers and providers. There were a couple of manufacturers that he was supposed to get paid from. This money never came. The only support we had was the benefit that the government gave to the businesses that had to close. But the benefit was small and the time we had to live on that was long...

Second, all my family got a psychological shock. My son stopped his studies at the University of Patras and came back home. Isolation and staying in for more than two months had a negative effect on us. Along with our financial problem, without any way out, without seeing any other people, friends or family, we felt really bad. It is difficult and not normal to be afraid of body contact, touching, hugging, kissing, etc. We lived under great tension and got on each other's nerves, fighting or being depressed.

I tried to spend the bulk of time available either on housekeeping or reading books. I kept myself busy so as not to think. I communicated via video calls or social media with people whom I hadn't kept in touch with for a long time. That was one good thing that happened during the COVID-19 crisis.

There was a small temporary financial support by the government. That was not even enough to counterbalance the economic loss that my family has and is still experiencing.

I wish everyone to be healthy and for that to be so I wish the government organizes a better Healthcare System to cover people properly without cost. Then, I hope the government supports financially all those who have really been struck by the pandemic and who experience poverty. We do not forget that a lot of businesses were lucky, were in the right side of selling useful products that we all bought. A lot of businesses managed to earn more and more money during this crisis, while other businesses collapsed.

In the EU, an agreement has to be made that we all face the crisis the same way. There must be established financial support from the so-called powerful member-states to the weakest ones. I would also propose the government set tax relief programmes for the ones who have really suffered by the COVID-19 crisis and ensure the workers' jobs; all employees face the same situation, follow the same rules and receive the same support because, usually, in Greece the public sector employees are "better off" than the private sector ones. No public salary was cut. Many private salaries were.

Isaac, male, 23, refugee, Athens, Greece

The first problem I faced was that the simple everyday life became quite more difficult than before. The numbers of deaths around the country was very threatening. I was very much afraid because I am a foreigner/ a refugee and I live in uncertainty anyway. It was a very difficult time

to feed oneself and pay both rent and bills. I only get 82€ each month from the Greek government. My rent alone is 270€. At the moment I have a 3-month debt to my landlord. It was too shocked trying to survive during the quarantine and lockdown.

I respected the rule of not being outside and tried to stay in as much as possible. I live alone, I felt isolated. I tried to communicate with my friends via social media and video calls.

There was no measure for support in place by the government. None. Just “Stay home!” I kept wearing a mask respecting myself and others. I hope the government and the EU thinks about us as refugees, unemployed PeP. Personally, I am desperate. I suggest everyone be extra careful because we live with this damned virus. How long is this going to threaten our lives?



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11. Survey details

The Greek Antipoverty Network run a survey based on the questions below with 19 member and non-member organisations that provide support and services to various vulnerable groups in Greece during Autumn 2020 with an emphasis on monitoring the situation that the ongoing crisis ensued with COVID-19 had created for the people most in need.

Questions asked:

1. Details on the scope of the organization
2. What are the main problems and/or needs that the beneficiaries dealt with before COVID-19?
3. Have the problems differentiated? If yes, which are the ones that have emerged or intensified?
4. Which governmental measures have you benefited from?
5. Have the beneficiaries eventually benefited by the governmental measures and how?
6. Which measures do you believe were necessary to have been taken additionally?
7. What is your assessment of the future situation of your beneficiaries?
8. Which organisations do you cooperate with?
9. What is the nature of the above cooperation?
10. To what extent do you believe that the network can contribute in the improvement of the relation and horizontal cooperation of the bodies of the provision of services?
11. What role do you think can EAPN play for the improvement of the situation induced by poverty?

Organisations that took part in the survey:

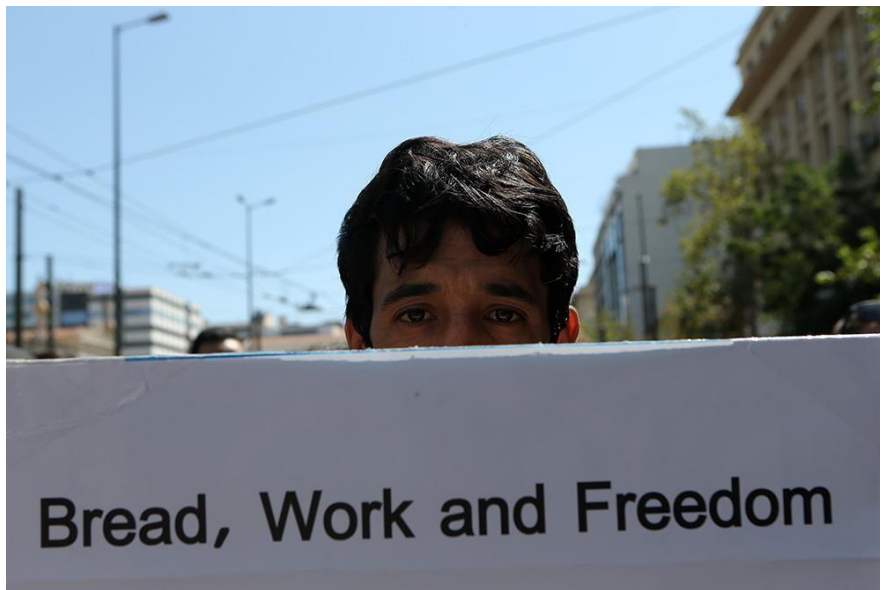
.Equal Society .Filoptocho (Archibishop's Fund for the Poor) .KSPM-ERP .Givemed .Technodromo .HCIPC Kostis Ballas .Praksis .Diotima .Velosyouth .Schedia (Diogenis) .Network for Children's Rights .Babel .Ekpse .Support Center for Children and Family .Voluntary Work Athens .Ladies' Association of Drama .Action Aid .Greek Council for Refugees .KMOP

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