



ESTIA II

RENTAL ACCOMMODATION SCHEME
FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS IN LIVADIA



Dear all,

The escalation of the refugee issue in recent years has been a "dark page" in modern world history, but also a huge international challenge for the best possible response to this humanitarian crisis. Greece, during the economic crisis, managed to stand out for the humanity and solidarity it showed to those people who were uprooted from their homeland to be saved from war.

Municipality of Livadia was one of the first municipalities in the country to host Arab-speaking families of asylum seekers offering them safe living conditions in apartments, equal access to healthcare and educational structures with a view to ensuring a dignified life for these people as well as maintaining social cohesion and local balance.

Municipality of Livadia had been implementing the ESTIA Programme, a successful refugee accommodation Programme, in cooperation with UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency in Greece and we, as a local Authority, chose to continue, with the same undiminished interest and eagerness, the implementation of this Programme.

The present booklet is a brief historical overview from the beginning of the Programme in Livadia until today. It presents the priorities set by Municipality of Livadia and K.E.DH.L. regarding the hosting of people, awareness-raising activities, integration activities, synergies with local organizations and finally, this booklet refers to the international recognition this Programme received for its optimal implementation.

Ioannis D. Tagalegas
The Mayor of the Municipality of Livadia

The logo for the ESTIA Programme, featuring a stylized grey outline of a house with a dark teal roof. The word "ESTIA" is written in a bold, dark teal, sans-serif font to the right of the house graphic.

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Introduction

This year marks the fourth anniversary of the implementation of the ESTIA Programme in Livadia in cooperation with UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency in Greece, which is co-funded by the European Commission. Through this Programme, Municipality of Livadia participates in the management of the refugee issue with the main focus on ensuring humane and decent living conditions for hundreds of people who have found refuge in Greece.

During these last four years, more than 1,500 asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection have resided in Livadia in 80 rented apartments. They have had a quiet, peaceful family life far away from the fear and the hardships of the war.

The ESTIA Programme had a positive impact and gained the trust of the citizens in a short period of time. The society accepted the Programme as the ideal solution in the way of hosting thousands of asylum-seekers and promoting their social integration. Several volunteer groups, associations and individuals were also activated to provide aasylum-seekers with all types of support.

In parallel, Municipality of Livadia claimed and implemented the Programme Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection (HELIOS), in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), offering the people, who wish to integrate into the society, the opportunity to learn the Greek language and have access to the labour market.

2016 – 2020 ESTIA Programme implementation in collaboration with UNHCR



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RENTAL ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS IN LIVADIA

The Public Benefit Organization of the Municipality of Livadia (K.E.DH.L.), as a municipal body with many years of experience in supporting vulnerable social groups, undertook the administrative and financial management of the Programme, finding an innovative way of hosting and supporting refugees and ultimately, constituting an example of good practice for other Municipalities of the country.

For the implementation of the Accommodation Programme, 80 apartments were rented in the urban fabric of Livadia, providing 480 accommodation places.

Livadia, all these years, hosts only vulnerable families of asylum-seekers who are referred to Livadia by various accommodation schemes in cooperation with UNHCR.



PROVISIONS OF THE PROGRAMME

- Fully equipped apartments
- Financial aid through cash card provided by UNHCR
- Psychosocial Support
- Access to healthcare structures
- School enrolment
- Sports – cultural – recreational activities

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Education

- A few months after the beginning of the Programme in Livadia, reception and integration classes for the first refugee children in the town public schools began to be established. Today, almost 90% of the children, aged 0 to 17, have joined all school levels, in reception classes in the Zones of Educational Priority (ZEP) being part of the Greek educational community and learning the Greek language (2017-2020).
- Sixty (60) students joined the KS Relief programme of IOM with the aim to learn Greek and acquire computer skills by being trained in new technologies (2018).
- Greek and English language lessons for adult refugees were carried out by volunteer teachers and supported by the Solidarity Network for Refugees in Livadia (2017-2018).



The beginning of a new school year.



Computer class.



English language lessons for adult beneficiaries of the ESTIA Programme.

Health

- From the beginning of the Programme, the main concern was the disease prevention and the protection of health for the beneficiaries as well as the citizens of the town. As a consequence, upon the arrival of a new family, the necessary medical examination is performed in collaboration with the local healthcare structures.
- Eight (8) actions have been organized for the medical examination and vaccination of refugee children to date under the programme "Health for All" in collaboration with the Municipality of Livadia and K.E.DH.L. (2016-2020)



Prevention through the conduct of Covid - 19 sample tests.



Vaccination of children.



Mammography

Sports



Organization of football matches, integration of adults and children in sports clubs and institutions of the town (2016-2020).



Basketball training courses for young beneficiaries of the Programme (June 2018).



Swimming lessons for children (July – August 2018).



Fitness classes for women beneficiaries of the Programme (July 2018).



Creative activities for children



Painting workshop for little children (2017).



Puppetry Workshop "Children Without Nightmares" through which children developed their motor skills, creativity, imagination and expression of emotions. (2018-2019).



Ceramic workshop for children to learn the art of ceramics and create objects with clay (July 2019).



Photography lessons for young students offered by the Photography Club of Livadia (October - November 2019).

Awareness - Raising activities



Actions for beneficiaries with the aim to strengthen voluntary work (Cleaning of common areas, beautification of the city).



Tree planting – Respect for the environment.



Support for vulnerable families through the provision of clothing offered by the Solidarity Refugee Network.



Visits to the local historical / archeological sites and museums with the aim of bringing the beneficiaries into contact with the Greek culture and the cultural heritage of the region.



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Culture Nights - Participation of

- Arabic Music Evening with the band "AL MAHABBA" and Theatrical Performance by the theatrical workshop of Distomo "Theatrophrenia" (Trophonia Events 2017).
- "Tree of wishes", crafts and creation of Christmas decorations by beneficiaries of the ESTIA Programme (Christmas 2017).
- Photo Exhibition: "The Children of Ritsona" by Vassilis Nikas (June 2018).
- Intercultural activities during sports events in various districts of the town aiming at the interaction between the local population and the refugees.
- Music event with Kalliopi Vetta and Haig Yazdjian - preparation and offering of Arabic dishes (World Refugee Day 2018).



of K.E.DH.L. in Cultural Events

- Preparation of traditional Arabic sweets and participation in Christmas tree lighting ceremony in the Municipality of Livadia (Christmas 2018).
- Screening of films to raise awareness of the local community for refugees and the causes of their uprooting as well as screening of entertainment films in Arabic for the beneficiaries.
- Football Tournament - Screening of short films "Home New Home" (World Refugee Day 2019).
- Creative activities for children with experiential games and Christmas delicacies - Participation of refugee children in the intercultural choir of the 9th Primary School in Livadia (Christmas 2019).
- "Art Street Projection" projection of awarded photos on refugees in five different districts of the town (World Refugee Day 2020).



Visibility of the programme

The Accommodation Programme for asylum-seekers and refugees in Livadia was recognized as a good practice example shortly after its launch.

Ten Municipalities* of the country followed the example of Livadia and undertook the implementation of corresponding programmes in cooperation with UNHCR.

Greek and foreign officials, national and foreign journalistic networks visited the town to learn about the successful Programme and characterized Livadia as a model town of hospitality, humanity and culture.



Visit of the U.S. Ambassador.



Visit of the European Commissioner for Migration



Visit of the Mayor of Altena, Germany

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**Nea Filadelfia Athens, Larisa, Trikala, Karditsa, Piraeus, Heraklion Crete, Chania, Sitia and Agios Nikolaos Crete.*

Beneficiaries' Testimonies on the ESTIA Programme in Livadia

- “I feel that everyone who helped me is my child. I have never visited a more hospitable place than Livadia” - Dalsha, aged 76, Syria (**source: video K.E.DH.L. – UNHCR**).
- “We have an everyday life. Here everything is fine. My children go to school. We may not reach the destination we initially wanted to but at least, my children go to school. I have my own apartment, my kitchen. I can use my own bathroom. Yes, we have a normal life” - Hanan, aged 36, Syria (**source: Euronews.gr**).
- “Every time, I go out for a walk here, I do not feel a stranger. I feel as a person who lives in this town for a long time. Our life is very good here. Local people are nice, too” - Haitham, aged 30, Syria (**source: News247.gr**).
- “I have a lot of friends from Greece and we play together at school. Hopefully, war will end. Syria will be as it was some years ago and I will be with my whole family in my homeland again.” - Mara, aged 8, Syria (**source: UNHCR video**).
- “When we first got into our apartment here in Livadia, we felt like we would stay in a castle. We had the feeling that we were at home again in Syria and even better if you think that the situation in Syria is not good anymore. In Livadia, we feel safe and free. Our children, Shero and Malak, attend school every day and Shero plays football in a local team. I hope that one day he will be a great football player, as Lionel Messi. Livadia is our home, a part of our lives and even when we leave this place, we will definitely come back here one day.” - Salah, aged 35, Syria (**source: Newsletter UNHCR November 2019**).



Distinctions



Municipality of Livadia and K.E.DH.L. were awarded with the Gold Prize of Best City Awards for their good practice in hosting asylum-seekers and refugees in Livadia

The next day

Since the beginning of the refugee crisis in 2015, UNHCR and IOM actively supported the Greek government and the Ministry of Migration Policy in the provision of humanitarian aid to thousands of asylum seekers.

Since January 2021, the Ministry of Migration Policy fully undertakes the supervision and management of the Accommodation and Integration Programmes for refugees in Greece.

The responsibility of the local communities is growing and we must all together lay the new foundations for the smooth and effective integration of those people who wish to live in our country.

Claiming respective programmes is vital for strengthening social cohesion.

National Student Contest 2018 with the subject:

“A home away from home”

Home isn't.....

Home isn't the walls and the floors.

Or clothes and toys.

Neither is it the rooms and balconies.

Or the beds and chairs.

It's not even the people who have
cold in their hearts.

Home is...

Home is in the kind hand that helps you climb the ladder of your dreams.

In the words from the heart that help you take each step.

In the sincere embrace in which you can let go.

In the people who shed a tear of joy for me.

Saber Mohammed, Iraq

Award was given to a former student of the 1st Vocational High School of Livadia, beneficiary of the ESTIA Programme in Livadia (June 2019).



ΓΙΑ II





"The Public Benefit Organization of the Municipality of Livadia (K.E.D.H.L) implements the programme ESTIA II: Rental Accommodation Scheme for asylum seekers in Livadia in cooperation with UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency in Greece, and with co-funding by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of European Union".



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**RENTAL ACCOMMODATION SCHEME
FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS IN LIVADIA**

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