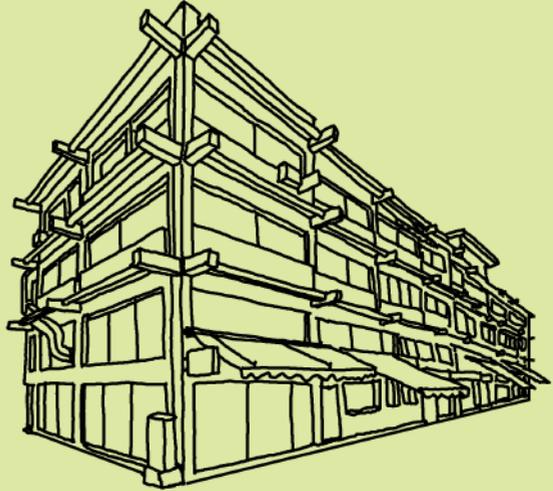


Stavrodromi Intercultural Center

Community center for refugees and migrant communities
from 2019



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Greece

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In the market, a symbol of Karditsa that was abandoned after the Greek economic crisis, an intercultural center was born to support the communities of refugees and asylum seekers coming to Greece by encouraging integration with the local Greek community. Stavrodromi - meaning "crossroads" in Greek, thus symbolizing the journey so far and the route to the future - is a hub for all people coming from a different cultural and social context, who want to start working on a new life project. The center provides people with information and assistance in accessing social services, enrolling their children in public school, entering the workforce, and learning Greek. Together with associations, NGOs and local authorities, and with the support of the City of Karditsa, the Center designs activities to encourage the meeting and cooperation between the refugees and the local community, with the goal to create a new identity that is open to the reception of migrants and refugees.

The Center, active since 2019, was created with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ESTIA Program and is funded under the EU's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).



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WHERE

Stavrodromi is located inside the municipal market of Karditsa, a concrete, metal and glass building that was built in the late 1920s and is a unique example of modern architecture in the Panhellenic region. This is probably one of the last surviving municipal market buildings built by the French company Hennebique, which began to build reinforced concrete buildings for public use in the late 19th century.

LOCATION

Urban

TYPE OF SPACE

Building

ORIGINAL FUNCTION

Commercial (city market)

YEAR OF CONSTRUCTION

1925-30

SURFACE AREA

3,400 sqm

OWNERSHIP

Public

CONCESSION

Regular rent

CONDITION BEFORE ACTIVATION

Abandoned

COMPOSITION OF THE SPACE

Nursery school
Language school
Computer room
Conference room
Small kitchen
Meeting place for community
Offices

WHEN

TIME OF DAY USED

Morning 7am - 1pm 45%
Afternoon 1pm - 7pm 45%
Evening 7pm - 1am 10%
Night 1am - 7am 0%

Working days: 90%

Weekends: 10%

OPENING HOURS

Monday - Friday: 8am - 5pm

AVERAGE USERS PER DAY

Around 50

WHAT

The Stavrodromi Intercultural Center is a steady constant for people who have just arrived in the city, providing them with the safety and confidence they need. In order to meet the needs of migrants and refugees and involve them in a collective project, the Center organizes periodic meetings with representatives from the migrant communities, local organizations and entities, co-designing with them activities and services through the UNHCR policy on Age, Gender and Diversity.

The Center organizes informative meetings on rights and obligations, and provides assistance in accessing the healthcare service, the public education system, employment, etc.; in collaboration with local associations, it organizes cultural activities. On its premises, language courses are organized. Greek courses are being provided by ANKA, while Arabic and French courses are provided by volunteer members of the refugee community under the guidance of ANKA and local teachers.

Additionally, coaching and mentoring services are offered by ANKA under the "YES!" Project, a European project funded by EEA and Norway Grants. As of April 2021, this service, initially offered to Greeks aged 18-29 excluded from employ-

ment, education and training (NEETs), is also open to refugees and migrants in this target age group, even online, thus reaching refugees/migrants beyond the Karditsa region. ANKA is in the process of developing a mentoring scheme with mentors and learners from both the local and the refugee community. Training in key areas such as digital skills is being occasionally offered by ANKA under “YES!”.

SURFACE IN USE

134 sqm

THEMATIC AREAS

Education and training
Design, crafts and production
Welfare

USER DEMOGRAPHIC

The activities are open to everyone, with a special focus on:
Artists and creatives
Associations and collectives
Children
Families

Local community
Young people
Under-represented people: asylum seekers and refugees, disabled people, migrants, parents in need

COLLABORATIONS

Associations and collectives
Companies
Public administrations and public authorities
Universities and schools

NETWORK

Local
National
International

Did you know?

The Cities Network for Integration (CNI)

The City of Karditsa is part of the Cities Network for Integration, an inter-municipal network led by some Greek municipalities with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Greece to exchange and co-design good practices in the field of migrant and refugee integration, with the goal to strengthen social cohesion through actions and interventions coordinated at local and national level.

The Cities Network for Integration was formed in January 2018 on the basis of a memorandum of understanding between the municipalities of Athens and Thessaloniki. To date, 18 municipalities have joined the Cities Network for Integration: Athens, Chania, Delta, Agios Dimitrios, Heraklion, Thessaloniki, Ioannina, Kalamaria, Karditsa, Katerini, Larissa, Livadia, Neapoli - Sykees, Nea Filadelfeia / Nea Chalkidona, Piraeus, Telos, Trikala and Tripoli.

The memorandum lays the foundations for a common framework of cooperation between the members of the Network in the areas of expertise sharing, strengthening of infrastructure and human resources, promotion of good practices, policy development at a European, national, regional and local level, participation in funding proposals and implementation of initiatives.

WHO

The Center is coordinated by AN.KA S.A., the development agency of the Karditsa Prefectural Unit, together with other organizations and local authorities, initially with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ESTIA Program, managed by the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum as of 01/01/2021, and funding from the EU's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

MANAGING ORGANIZATION(S)

1. Development Agency of Karditsa S.A. (AN.KA) (Development agency, 1989)

PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE MANAGEMENT

40 full time employees
From 2 to 10 volunteers

HOW

NATURE OF THE INITIATIVE

Top-down

TYPE OF MANAGEMENT

Vertical

ECONOMIC RESOURCES

95% Public grants

5% Sponsorships

TYPE OF ACTIVITIES

100% Free



How did your story begin?

The market was one of the many public buildings abandoned after the Greek economic crisis, so when we rented it from the City, we had to do some renovations. It is a significant place for Karditsa and its inhabitants: it is located in the center of the city and the city market that takes place on Wednesdays happens right outside of this building.

We thought that by bringing in a project for the acceptance of immigrants and refugees in this symbolic building, the heart of the social life of the city, we would put the situation of migrants and refugees at the center of public discussion.

Is there a practice or value that represents you and you think may be an inspiration to others?

The history of this building is inspiring, but it is the hospitality activities that take place within it today that have become a new element of Karditsa's identity. Refugee inclusion policies will forever impact this city because some of the people accepted will eventually continue living here. This is the first time this has ever happened, because until now Greece was not a destination for refugees. Greeks were most often forced to leave the country in the past as migrants themselves, for example because of the civil war.

In the past, we accepted and helped people from other countries, like from Albania, but with this project we are doing it in a more professional way, offering very structured services to support large organizations (such as UNHCR) and creating, through activities for the acceptance of refugees, a new feature of the local identity.

“We thought that by bringing a project for the acceptance of immigrants and refugees in this symbolic building, the heart of the social life of the city, we would put the situation of migrants and refugees at the center of the public discussion”

What is the secret ingredient that makes your story unique?

Our “powerful weapon” is the strategic role of participation in our organization: we involve people or local authorities, not because they are functional to the realization of a project, but to involve them in the design of new ideas and projects. Participation is therefore a goal, not a means. This way of considering participation is really appreciated by authorities and local entities and generates mutual trust and a form of participation that is truly active. Being part of a local network and coordinating it is a big responsibility, but it's also very inspiring, because bottom-up activities start every day.

Interview with: Vasileios Bellis

