

EEA Grants Programme I Local Development and Poverty Reduction

Fund operated by
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Final Evaluation Report

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The dedication and transparency of all involved stakeholders have been instrumental in capturing the program’s achievements and lessons learned, and their contributions are deeply appreciated.

Sincerely,

Gerasimos Kouvaras
Lead Evaluator
On behalf of Sarli Kouvaras Consulting PC

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The "Local Development and Poverty Reduction Programme," funded by the EEA Grants through contributions from Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway, was implemented from 2019 to 2024. Its overarching aim was to address social inequalities, unemployment, poverty, and the integration challenges faced by refugees and migrants in Greece. The programme focused on three key outcomes: fostering inclusive education, enhancing social inclusion and youth employment, and reducing poverty, all within a framework promoting systemic change and localized solutions.

The evaluation was conducted using three key criteria—effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability—to assess the extent to which the program achieved its intended outcomes, utilized resources effectively, and ensured the durability of results beyond the funding period. The methodology incorporated a review of program documents, focus group discussions, interviews with stakeholders, and field visits. However, limitations, including the inability to interview beneficiaries from vulnerable populations directly, required a reliance on secondary data to assess long-term impacts.

Key findings highlighted the program's achievements and areas for improvement across its three outcomes. The "Schools for All" project, implemented under Outcome 1, engaged 176 schools nationwide, transforming them into inclusive and democratic environments. The mentorship model was a cornerstone of success, empowering educators to foster collaboration among teachers, students, and communities. Manuals and resources developed during the project have the potential to sustain its impact, though their widespread adoption requires further integration into national educational frameworks. Despite challenges such as high teacher turnover and systemic gaps in refugee mobility, the project catalyzed cultural shifts and built capacities for long-term inclusion.

Under Outcome 2, the Athens Solidarity Centre (ASC), implemented by Solidarity Now, demonstrated the effectiveness of a holistic, one-stop-shop model in addressing complex beneficiary needs. With over 11,500 individuals directly benefiting from services and thousands more referred externally, the ASC combined psychosocial support, legal aid, employability services, and financial counseling into a comprehensive delivery model. The center's adaptability during crises, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, showcased its operational resilience. However, systemic barriers, such as bureaucracy and fragmented public services, underscored the need for sustained advocacy to address structural issues hindering social inclusion.

Outcome 3, focused on youth employment and poverty, was less successful in achieving its objectives. The "Skills on Demand" project aimed to bridge gaps between labor market needs and vulnerable populations through tailored training and job placement. However, operational inefficiencies and a misalignment of resources constrained its impact. Lessons learned from this project emphasize the importance of evidence-based planning and flexible implementation to address structural employment barriers effectively.

The evaluation concluded that the whole program delivered significant value beyond its numerical targets. Its effectiveness lies in fostering collaboration among civil society

organizations, local authorities, and national institutions, as well as empowering beneficiaries to navigate systemic challenges. However, long-term success hinges on addressing structural barriers, enhancing monitoring mechanisms, and embedding innovative models into national systems.

The program's efficiency was commendable, with a high proportion of resources directed toward direct outputs. However, challenges such as fragmented data systems and shifting operational contexts highlighted areas for improvement in future planning and execution. Sustainability was bolstered by partnerships with local authorities and institutions like the Ministry of Education and the Institute of Educational Policy, alongside tools such as manuals and training resources. Yet, systemic risks, including inadequate mechanisms for institutionalizing best practices, pose challenges to sustaining the program's legacy.

Key recommendations from the evaluation include promoting holistic models of service delivery, fostering local ownership through municipal collaboration, advocating for systemic reforms, and integrating program tools and methodologies into national frameworks. Donors are encouraged to support flexible funding mechanisms and invest in scalable pilot projects, while implementing organizations should enhance advocacy efforts and expand outreach to ensure inclusivity.

The "Local Development and Poverty Reduction Programme" exemplifies the potential of systemic, community-driven approaches to address social challenges, leaving behind a legacy of innovative practices and critical lessons for future programming. Its emphasis on inclusion, empowerment, and systemic reform provides a model for addressing complex social issues in Greece and beyond.

B. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The EEA and Norway Grants-funded “Local Development and Poverty Reduction Program” was implemented in Greece against a backdrop of significant social, economic, and educational challenges. This program sought to address deep-seated inequities and systemic barriers faced by vulnerable populations, particularly those affected by poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion. The program’s design targeted three critical outcomes, ranging from the integration of refugee children in Greek schools to the broader inclusion and empowerment of marginalized individuals.

Social and Economic Landscape

The Municipality of Athens, where much of the program was anchored, reflects the harsh realities of Greece's prolonged economic downturn. A significant proportion of the city's population lives below the poverty line, with long-term unemployment accounting for over half of those jobless. This socioeconomic context demanded targeted interventions to reduce inequality, enhance employability, and support vulnerable groups in regaining stability.

At a national level, Greece's 2020 Strategy prioritized inclusive growth, setting ambitious employment goals to combat social exclusion. However, entrenched structural barriers, exacerbated by austerity measures, presented persistent challenges. The program aligned with the EU’s strategic objective of achieving a 70% employment rate for individuals aged 20-64 while also addressing localized needs within Athens and surrounding areas.

Educational Context

In the educational sphere, Greece faced unique challenges in integrating refugee children into mainstream schooling. Between 2017 and 2019, refugee enrollment increased significantly, with over 12,000 children attending up to 1,500 schools by the 2018-2019 academic year. Despite this progress, critical gaps remained. The national Institute of Educational Policy (IEP), under the Ministry of Education, was responsible for refugee education, but limited resources and austerity measures curtailed its capacity to provide in-service teacher training and holistic support for schools.

Programs such as "Schools for All" emerged to fill this void, emphasizing a whole-school approach to foster inclusion and create safe, democratic learning environments. By focusing on equipping teachers, school leaders, and communities, these initiatives sought to address systemic inequities in refugee education and build sustainable models for inclusive practices.

Program Alignment with Broader Goals

The program operated within the framework of Greece's overarching priorities for poverty reduction and social cohesion. It aligned with the EU’s "Inclusive Growth" pillar, focusing on high-employment economies and territorial cohesion. Specifically, it addressed local labor market needs by fostering employability, providing skills training, and promoting job placements for vulnerable individuals.

Emerging Needs and Gaps

The program's implementation responded to critical gaps in both service provision and systemic capacity, including:

- **Employment and Social Inclusion:** High unemployment rates, coupled with limited access to employability programs, required innovative solutions to connect vulnerable populations with the labor market.
- **Education:** Limited teacher training, inadequate funding for refugee education, and the need for holistic school-community approaches highlighted systemic weaknesses in fostering social cohesion.
- **Institutional Capacity:** Local governance structures required enhanced capacity and collaboration to implement inclusive growth initiatives effectively.

Description of the program evaluated

The “Local Development and Poverty Reduction” programme in Greece, financed by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, was awarded a total budget of 6,5 million euros as part of the EEA Grants 2014 – 2021. The program aspires to contribute to enhancement of social cohesion and reduction of economic and social disparities.

The Fund Operator for the Local Development and Poverty Reduction in Greece is SOL Consulting S.A in partnership with HumanRights360.

The Programme objective is ‘Strengthened social and economic cohesion’, supporting the following areas:

- Social and economic development in specific geographic areas
- Anti-discriminatory activities focusing on groups vulnerable to social and economic exclusion
- Interventions to increase job prospects
- Interventions to increase job capacity, especially among the most vulnerable
- Quality of and access to social/welfare services
- Networking and policy exchanges between municipalities

The Local Development and Poverty Reduction programme is organised in three outcomes:

Outcome 1: “Integration of refugee children in Greek schools approved”

Outcome 2: “Increased opportunities for integration and social inclusion for vulnerable individuals”

Outcome 3: “Social Inclusion, Youth Employment & Poverty”

The three outcomes correspond to three Pre-Defined Projects, two of which intervened in the urban area of Athens (**Skills on Demand** and **Athens Solidarity Center**), and the third one’s

geographic coverage (**Integration of refugee children to education**) is the Greek mainland, with an important share of participating schools located in Attica region.

In addition to these three outcomes, the program aimed to contribute to strengthening bilateral relations between Greece and the Donor States. For this reason, a Bilateral Fund was reserved to facilitate donor partnership projects by carrying out, inter alia, match-making events and activities in conjunction with launching calls for proposals, as well as by encouraging donor partnership projects in call texts.

The Outcomes were broken down into “expected programme results” and, for each of these, output and outcome indicators were established leading to the Results Framework presented below:

Outcome / Output	Expected programme results	Indicator	Target value
Outcome 1	Integration of refugee children in Greek schools improved	Share of pupils experiencing an inclusive learning environment	75 %
		Share of schools experiencing a reduced level of conflicts by the end of the school year	75 %
		Share of schools experiencing improved relations with local refugee administration	75 %
		Share of trained professionals self-reporting improved capacity to create an inclusive and safe school environment	75 %
Output 1.1	Training provided to school stakeholders focused on the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment at school	Number of official Coordinators for Educational Work, including on integration policies, trained	50
		Number of school directors trained	150
		Number of teachers trained	3,000
Output 1.2	Education institutions supported to create an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students	Number of schools implementing a whole school approach for inclusive and democratic school culture	150
		National network of schools to share experiences and good practice established	Yes
		Number of schools taking part in the network	150
Output 1.3	Teaching and learning materials and training modules developed and good practices on the integration of refugee children identified	Number of teaching and learning materials for education providers developed and disseminated	5
		Number of training modules for teachers and school directors designed	1
		Number of schools where support materials are disseminated and available for use for free	300

Outcome 2	Increased opportunities for integration and social inclusion for vulnerable individuals	Number of beneficiaries of services provided or improved	10,000
		Number of people accessing social benefits (including accommodation)	1,500
		Share of employability service beneficiaries who find a job	25 %
		Share of successful asylum applications and family reunification cases	50 %
		Share of users who are satisfied with the services provided	65 %
		Number of tax numbers issued	1,800
Output 2.1	Services provided to vulnerable individuals	Average number of sessions per beneficiary	3
		Number of legal representations (asylum service and court)	2,400
		Number of psychological sessions carried out (individual and group)	4,000
		“Child friendly space” for children of beneficiaries of services provided operational for the duration of the project	Yes
		Number of people attending job interviews	400
Output 2.2	Collaboration between the Athens Solidarity Centre (ASC) and CSO's enhanced	Number of organisations which carry out complementary activities in the ASC	25
		Number of external referrals made (to services outside the ASC)	12,000
		Staff participation in external coordination meetings	150
Output 2.3	Improved operational efficiency of ASC	Number of ASC interdepartmental / internal coordination meetings	100
		Number of ASC staff trained	28
Outcome 3	Increased employment among recently unemployed people	Psychological supervision made available to staff	Yes
		Share of certified trainees working in occupations relevant to the training they received within 3 months of training completion	70 %
		Number of certified trainees hired by participating businesses within 3 months of training completion	500
		Share of participating businesses that hired certified trainees	80 %

		Share of participating businesses that hired certified trainees reporting satisfactory results from the recruitment	80 %
Output 3.1	Capacities of vulnerable unemployed people are enhanced	Number of beneficiaries trained and certified ¹	1,000
		Share of certified trainees reporting improved capacity to meet labour market requirements	95 %
		Number of workstations set up for beneficiaries who lack the necessary ICT equipment to follow the training courses	40
Output 3.2	Businesses are engaged in the network	Number of businesses supported with coaching and consultancy sessions	500
Output 3.3	The MoA effectively promotes the employment of vulnerable unemployed people	Fit-for-purpose information technology system operational to match beneficiaries with jobs	Yes
		Labour Market Survey mapping labour supply and demand completed	Yes
		Number of unique training programmes developed	60
		Number of vulnerable unemployed people registered in the IT system for support	1,100
		Number of certified trainees matched with businesses and attended job interviews	1,000
Bilateral Outcome	Enhanced collaboration between beneficiary and donor state entities involved in the programme	Level of trust between cooperating entities in Beneficiary States and Donor States	4.5
		Level of satisfaction with the partnership	4.5
		Share of cooperating organisations that apply knowledge acquired from bilateral partnerships	50
Bilateral Output 1	Cooperation between donor state and beneficiary state entities facilitated	Number of projects involving cooperation with a donor project partner	1

A description of each project under each outcome is provided below to set the context and background of our evaluation:

OUTCOME 1: “Integration of refugee children in Greek schools approved”

Pre-defined Project: **Schools for All – Integration of Refugee Children in Greek Schools**
Project Promoter: **European Wergeland Center (EWC)**

The “Schools for All” project aimed to ensure a more democratic and inclusive school environment, where refugee students feel safe and welcome. Following a whole school approach, including the school community, parents and local community, the project was

designed within the Framework of Competences of Democratic Culture as described by the Council of Europe.

The 3-year-long project (2019-2022) with a total budget of 1,500,000 euros - extended twice for half school year 2022-2023 and half school year 2023-2024 - was implemented by the European_Wergeland Centre (EWC), under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and with the support of the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP).

The project supported secondary schools with reception classes, with the aim of creating a safe and inclusive school environment, which provides quality education to all students. The trainings aimed at equipping school directors and teachers with the appropriate educational tools, cultivate skills and all necessary competences, as well as the confidence to manage controversy and deal with issues concerning intolerance, discrimination, racism and hate speech in the context of school and local community. Throughout the school year, secondary school teachers were being mentored by experienced trainers for the implementation of specific action plans, designed by themselves, according to their needs. Part of the action plan was the involvement of the school community in activities and workshops.

The objectives of the program with their intended impact were the following:

- School directors and teachers are better prepared to welcome and include refugee children in schools
- Refugee children experience a smoother integration in schools, as an equal member of the school community
- School directors and teachers are better equipped to deal with issues concerning intolerance, discrimination, sexism, racism and hate speech in school and the local community
- Teachers learn how to create safe spaces in the classroom for teaching and learning about controversial issues
- School directors and teachers develop their competences for a democratic culture in school
- Pupils, regardless of background, will experience less conflicts and a more inclusive learning environment which better facilitate learning and improve the quality of the education provided in school
- Parents and local community actors experience improved communication and cooperation with schools regarding the integration of refugee children.

Due to Covid-19 and lockdowns (postponement of trainings and school activities), the project was expanded for one more school year (2022-2023), with the inclusion of some webinars, and further amended in 2023-2024 with project end on 31/3/2024 to include primary schools and other regions (than Athens and Thessaloniki) prioritizing schools with refugee and immigrant students in collaboration with regional coordinators.

The project's methodology focused on systemic collaboration with the Ministry of Education, institutional strengthening through school networks, a multiplier approach leveraging regional trainers, and academic engagement to integrate findings and recommendations into ongoing and future activities.

OUTCOME 2: “Increased opportunities for integration and social inclusion for vulnerable individuals”

Pre-defined Project: **Athens Solidarity Center**

Project Promoter: **Solidarity Now**

The Athens Solidarity Centre (ASC) was a crucial initiative supporting vulnerable populations in Athens through a holistic and multidisciplinary service delivery model. The program was implemented in three distinct phases, each contributing to the overarching goal of empowering individuals at risk of social exclusion and fostering their integration into society.

The ASC program was executed through three successive projects:

1. **Project 1:** May 2019 - July 2021 (26 months, €2,000,000)
 - Establishment of a broad service provision model and foundational support systems.
2. **Project 2:** August 2022 - July 2023 (12 months, €450,000)
 - Response to post-pandemic vulnerabilities and economic challenges.
3. **Project 3:** August 2023 - April 2024 (9 months, €350,000)
 - Focus on supporting the most marginalized populations, including asylum seekers and Greek citizens.

The ASC program aimed to:

- Provide comprehensive support to vulnerable individuals to address immediate needs.
- Empower beneficiaries to become self-reliant and integrated members of society.
- Foster long-term social inclusion through multidisciplinary interventions.

The ASC offered a range of services tailored to the diverse needs of its beneficiaries:

- **Psychosocial support:** Counselling and group sessions to address mental health and resilience.
- **Legal aid and representation:** Assistance with asylum applications, legal cases, and family reunification.
- **Employment assistance:** Job readiness training, counselling, and placement services.
- **Accountancy services:** Financial guidance and support for small business setups.
- **Child-friendly activities:** Educational support and tailored activities for children.
- **Cultural mediation and interpretation:** Ensuring equitable access to all services.

The program set ambitious targets for its three phases, including:

1. **Number of beneficiaries served:**

- 10,000 for Project 1, 1,350 for Project 2, and 1,200 for Project 3, totaling 12,550 across all phases.
2. **Employability assistance:**
 - Support for 400 beneficiaries to secure employment.
 3. **Legal support:**
 - At least 2,880 legal representations for asylum applications and family reunifications across all phases.
 4. **Psychological support:**
 - Provision of 4,000 individual and group sessions to enhance mental health outcomes.
 5. **Administrative support:**
 - Provide 2500 services for social benefit applications and facilitation of social inclusion.
 6. **Child-friendly activities:**
 - Support 100 children with tailored educational activities to reduce school dropouts.
 7. **Accounting services:**
 - Issue 1800 tax numbers and facilitate the submission of 1,130 tax declarations to assist individuals with financial compliance.
 8. **Reception and referrals:**
 - Facilitate 14,700 referrals to external services, ensuring beneficiaries access additional support beyond the ASC.

The ASC adopts a centralized model of service delivery, with an integrated approach to case management. This model ensures that beneficiaries can seamlessly access multiple services tailored to their unique circumstances.

The ASC operates within the same building as the social services of the Municipality of Athens, hosts the Asylum Service on its premises, and collaborates closely with civil society organizations (CSOs) to enhance service delivery and promote systemic change.

OUTCOME 3: “Social Inclusion, Youth Employment & Poverty”

Pre-defined Project: **“Skills on Demand”**

Project Promoter: **ADDMA (Athens Development and Destination Agency) of the Municipality of Athens**

The project aimed to promote the employment of vulnerable unemployed residents of the city of Athens through awareness raising, training and certification, individualized psychosocial and employability support and job placement.

In total, one thousand vulnerable people were expected to be benefited from the action through their participation in certified trainings and accessing psychosocial and employability support services, provided by the Municipality of Athens. A labour market needs assessment created the basis on which the development of training curriculum was based on. In addition, approximately 500 local businesses were expected to be engaged to the project for the establishment of a network of local businesses with identified skills needs.

The initially planned project period was October 2021 to 31/12/2023, which was later extended to 31/3/2024 and then further to 30/4/2024. The initial budget was 2,468,000 euros reduced to 895,000 euros total after the amendment that accompanied the extension.

The main objectives of the project were:

1. **empower beneficiaries** to re-enter the job market
2. the **systematic recognition and coverage of the needs of the local labour market**, and
3. the **overall enhancement of the capacity of the City of Athens** to empower and support vulnerable groups through employment, while aiming:
 - to recognize the needs of companies in terms of job positions and the skills of personnel operating locally.
 - to develop training programs that meet the needs of companies and make them available to beneficiaries through an online platform.
 - to provide individualized professional counselling and psychosocial support to beneficiaries/individuals belonging to vulnerable social groups.
 - to connect beneficiaries with the needs of companies and to actively support their employment
 - to support companies with consulting services for the preservation of job positions and to create an active network between the participating companies

The Action would include sixty (60) different educational programs lasting two hundred (200) hours (120 hours of theory - 80 hours of practice), which would be designed and produced by certified bodies and institutions according to the needs that will arise. The Action would provide a physical space with the necessary ICT equipment (i.e. a certain number of workstations) to facilitate the undertaking of the training courses by beneficiaries which lack access to the required hardware. Additionally, and in order to further address possible digital participation gap issues with beneficiaries lacking the necessary ICT skills for the training, special training groups would be formed and supervised by specialists in digital literacy.

A modular information technology system (IT system) would be developed as part of the project, to safely monitor and deliver important projects' processes. The IT system was essential for the effective implementation of the project for its entire life cycle, as well as for the continuation of the introduced intervention after the project end, actively supporting the sustainability of the proposed mechanism.

An extended network of businesses and potential future employers would be established. The role of this network would be to represent the local labour market demand side within the project, as well as to feed the Action with specific market needs and job openings and

eventually to hire the trained and certified beneficiaries of the Action for a minimum period of 6 months.

To this end, the Action would include business consultancy sessions with all businesses willing to hire the certified trainees, in order to facilitate the nurturing of a favourable climate for the proper integration and acceptance of the beneficiaries of the project at the stage of their placement and develop a relationship between the broker and the new entrant to the business. Additionally, goal of the business consultancy activity was to influence and secure the employment of the beneficiaries in the long-term within the company, targeting at least a 6-month employment period.

In terms of dissemination, the project was expected to create a supporting network of key stakeholders by identifying and involving “multipliers” through targeted information sessions to increase awareness of the work done and to ensure the dissemination activities reach a large number of “multiplier” organizations that could transfer the message to an even wider potential audience.

BILATERAL OUTCOME:

Project title: **Classrooms against bullying – CAB**

Lead Partner: **Solidarity Now**

Co-Partner: **The European Wergeland Centre**

The initiative "Classrooms Against Bullying – CAB" was a collaboration between SolidarityNow and the European Wergeland Centre (EWC), aiming to establish a bilateral partnership to promote safe and inclusive schools in Greece. The project focused on preventing discrimination, bullying, and violence in schools while fostering the inclusion of all children in the education system. EWC brought expertise in democratic education and tailored resources from the "Schools for All" project, while SolidarityNow contributed its extensive experience in providing education to vulnerable children and capacity building for educators.

Implemented over 12 months (July 2023–June 2024), the project developed an approach to prevent bullying and promote integration through the exchange of practical experiences, including a study visit to Oslo. It adapted existing materials and international practices, particularly EWC’s resources on the holistic school approach and democratic competences. These were distilled into a publication widely disseminated to Greek schools and accompanied by two in-person trainings in Athens for 30 Greek educators, school administrators, social workers, psychologists, regional educational advisors, and refugee education coordinators. The collaboration also aimed to lay the foundation for future bilateral initiatives targeting inclusive education.

Main purpose and scope of the evaluation

The primary purpose of this evaluation was to assess the extent to which the EEA and Norway Grants-funded “Local Development and Poverty Reduction Programme” in Greece achieved its stated objectives, while identifying lessons that could inform the design and

implementation of future programs. By evaluating the program's three key outcomes and bilateral output, the evaluation aimed to provide evidence-based insights into its effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability within the broader national context.

The scope of the evaluation encompassed the following dimensions:

1. **Effectiveness:** The evaluation explored the degree to which the program achieved its intended outcomes and delivered meaningful results for beneficiaries. Key questions included:
 - To what extent did the Program performed as intended?
 - To what extent did the Projects achieve the expected results and why?
 - To what extent were the outputs produced and outcomes achieved to the desired quality (as opposed to quantity)?
 - What factors contributed to or hindered the program's performance?
 - What key learnings can be drawn to guide future programs?
2. **Efficiency:** The evaluation assessed how well the invested resources have been used. Key questions included:
 - To what extent did the Program/Fund deliver the planned results (outputs and outcomes in the results framework) in an economic and timely way?
 - How COVID-19 affected the programs' efficiency?
3. **Sustainability:** This aspect examined the program's ability to ensure continuity and durability of results beyond the funding period. Specific questions included:
 - What is the lasting effect of the produced benefit on the medium and long term?
 - As regards the capacity building component of the programme to the public entities, are the produced results sustainable?

C. OVERVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY

This evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative data collection, document analysis, and triangulation to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the EEA grants program “Local Development and Poverty Reduction”. The methodology was designed to provide a thorough understanding of the program’s outcomes, informed by diverse data sources and stakeholder perspectives.

Data sources and stakeholders consulted

1. Document review

The evaluation began with an extensive review of project-related documentation, forming the foundation for subsequent data collection and analysis. The reviewed materials included:

Key documents reviewed included:

- **Final reports:** These served as primary sources for understanding project achievements, challenges, and implementation strategies.
- **Quarterly reports:** Referenced selectively when cited in the final reports to provide additional context and details.
- **Project proposals and contract annexes:** Used to identify any variations between the original concept and the final agreement, including log frames, risk assessments, and communication plans (with a focus on stakeholder engagement rather than publicity).
- **Contract amendments:** Assessed to understand modifications made during implementation and their implications.

This document review enabled a deep understanding of program frameworks and objectives, identified gaps or inconsistencies, and informed the design of stakeholder interviews.

2. Stakeholder consultations

Semi-structured interviews with diverse stakeholders for outcomes 1 and 2 and one group discussion (ACS) were conducted following the document review to validate findings and address questions that emerged.

A detailed list of interviewees is provided in the Annex.

3. Field visit

A field visit was conducted at the ACS.

Data Collection and Analysis

1. Data collection methods

- **Document review:** The evaluation commenced with a comprehensive review of program documents and reports. This step aimed to consolidate data, evaluate results against established targets, identify discrepancies, and contextualize program

performance. Insights from this phase informed the design of stakeholder interviews by highlighting questions and areas requiring further investigation.

- **Semi-structured interviews:** Building on the findings from the document review, semi-structured interviews were conducted to validate consolidated data, explore discrepancies, and gather in-depth perspectives on program implementation and outcomes. This approach ensured both consistency across interviews and the flexibility to delve into individual experiences and emerging themes.
- **Observational field visit:** This was used to validate findings and gain first-hand insights into program operations.

2. Analysis approach

- **Thematic analysis:** Information from interviews and document reviews was systematically organized to identify key insights, recurring themes, and patterns relevant to each program's unique outcomes.
- **Triangulation:** Findings from documents, interviews, and field visits were cross-referenced to ensure reliability and address any discrepancies.
- **Comparative review:** Adjustments made during project implementation were analyzed against the initial project proposals to evaluate the program's responsiveness and adaptation to emerging needs. This process also facilitated a more accurate assessment of results against targets, highlighting areas of alignment or deviation and informing deeper exploration during interviews.

Limitations

Despite rigorous efforts to ensure comprehensive coverage, the evaluation faced the following limitations:

- **Reliance on secondary data (ACS program):** A key limitation was the inability to conduct interviews with beneficiaries, restricting the evaluation's capacity to assess the long-term impact, sustained benefits, and empowerment outcomes experienced by individuals' post-engagement with the ASC. Consequently, the analysis relied heavily on program reports, focus group discussions with staff, and stakeholder interviews, which may not fully capture the lived experiences and broader impacts on the target population.
- **Absence of direct interviews (Skills on Demand program):** No interviews were conducted with project participants, businesses, or key stakeholders, limiting the ability to evaluate firsthand perspectives on the program's processes, outcomes, and effectiveness.

Ethical Considerations

All data collection adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring:

- **Informed consent:** Participants were informed of the study's purpose and their rights before participating.
- **Confidentiality:** Data were anonymized and securely stored to protect participant identities.

D. EVALUATION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis of the program's performance across its key outcomes, evaluating effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. The findings offer evidence-based insights into achievements, challenges, and areas for improvement. Each outcome is discussed based on the evaluation questions presented above. This chapter also highlights critical lessons that shape the recommendations for future interventions included in the next chapter.

OUTCOME 1: “Integration of refugee children in Greek schools approved”

Project Promoter: European Wergeland Center – (project title: Schools for All – Integration of Refugee Children in Greek Schools)

Numeric overview of results

The table below presents the outcomes and outputs of the project against set targets.

The purple fonts correspond to the modifications of outputs and targets as agreed in the amendments 1 (17/4/2020) and 2 (11/1/2024) and the respective actual results.

Planned / Amendments	TARGET	Actual (reported)
OUTCOME 1: Integration of refugee children in Greek schools improved		
1. Share of pupils experiencing an inclusive learning environment	75% gender, age	86% amongst 1012 pupils 89% female (509) 84% male (461) 80% other (5) 67% non specified (37)
2. Share of schools experiencing a reduced level of conflicts by the end of the school year	75% Disaggregated by district	57% 47.2% for Year 2023-2024
3. Share of schools experiencing improved relations with local refugee administration	75%	61% 44.4% for Year 2023-2024
4. Share of trained professionals self-reporting improved capacity to create an inclusive and safe school environment	75%	94% amongst 314 professionals 99% female (144) 98% male (20) 90% non specified (170) 98.6 for Year 2023-2024
Output 1.1: Training for school stakeholders on inclusive and safe learning environment at school		
1.1.1 Number of official coordinators for educational work, including on integration policies, trained	50 Disaggregated by gender, school district	211 (138 female, male)
1.1.2 Number of school directors trained	150	135 (70 female, 65 male)

	1.1.3 Number of school teachers trained	3000	1557 (1204 female, 353 male)
	<i>Number of Trainers</i>	30	45
	<i>Number of schools organizing school workshops</i>	120 (150)	57
	<i>Number of school workshops</i>	220	170
	<i>Number of participants in school workshops</i>	5000	2.314
	<i>Number of regional academies</i>	13	17
	<i>Number of participants in regional academies</i>	360 individuals 150 schools	607 individuals 156 schools
	<i>Number of local academies participants, schools</i>	10 academies, 80 participants, 30 schools	0
	<i>Participant community organisations in academies</i>	40	9
	<i>Online training events (Amendment 2)</i>	6 events, 1300 participants	6 events, 562 participants
Output 1.2: Education institutions supported to create an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students			
	1.2.1 Number of schools implementing a whole school approach for inclusive and democratic school culture	150	125
	1.2.2 National network of schools to share experiences and good practice established	YES	YES
	1.2.3 Number of schools taking part in the network	150	176
	<i>Number of school action plans developed</i>	120	110
	<i>Number of school activities implemented (as defined in the schools' action plans)</i>	240	320
	<i>Number of mentoring visits to schools by regional trainers</i>	240	870
	<i>Number of school hubs established</i>	5 hubs, 30 participant schools, 5 interschool committees, 5 events	4 hubs, 25 schools, 4 interschool committees, 4 dissemination events
	<i>Webinars (as awareness raising and promotion networking events)</i>	3 webinars, 300 participants	6 webinars, 669 participants
Output 1.3: Teaching and learning materials and training modules developed and good practices on the integration of refugee children identified			
	1.3.1 Number of teaching and learning materials for education providers developed and disseminated	5	32
	1.3.2 Number of training modules for teachers and school directors designed	1	3
	1.3.3 Number of schools where support materials are disseminated and available for use for free	300	158
	<i>Webinar (presenting the new learning resource)</i>	1 event, 200 participants	0

Evaluative overview

The "Schools for All" (S4A) program was a transformative initiative aimed at fostering inclusive and democratic school environments across Greece. Over 4.5 years, it engaged 176 schools, trained over 1,500 educators, and introduced innovative practices to address the challenges of integrating refugee and local students. At its core, the program adopted a whole-school approach, emphasizing collaboration among teachers, school leaders, students, and parents to create cohesive and inclusive educational communities.

The mentoring model stood out as a cornerstone of the program's success, providing hands-on, tailored guidance that bridged the gap between theory and practice. Regional hubs facilitated collaboration between schools, creating a network of shared learning and problem-solving. These innovations not only addressed immediate challenges but also laid the groundwork for systemic change by aligning with national priorities through partnerships with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP).

Despite its achievements, the program faced challenges, including systemic barriers such as teacher and student mobility and delays in centralized educational processes. However, the program's adaptability, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrated its resilience and commitment to achieving its objectives.

The legacy of S4A lies in its ability to inspire cultural shifts within schools, equipping educators with tools, knowledge, and confidence to foster inclusion and diversity. The manuals and regional mentor network remain critical resources for sustaining and expanding the program's impact. While challenges to institutionalization persist, S4A serves as a model for holistic, inclusive education reform, blending innovation with a deep understanding of local and systemic needs.

Evaluation findings

Effectiveness

1. Program Achievements:

- The "Schools for All" project engaged 176 schools across Greece over its 4.5-year implementation, meeting or exceeding its numerical targets for school participation and teacher training.
- A total of 45 regional trainers were developed to provide sustained mentoring and support, strengthening the capacity for inclusive education.
- Teachers and school directors demonstrated increased competencies, with 94% of trained professionals self-reporting improved capacity to create inclusive and safe school environments.

2. Whole-School Approach:

- The project adopted a 'whole-school approach', fostering collaboration between school leaders, teachers, parents, and local communities to address refugee integration challenges. A trainer interviewed stated *"For me, the collaborative spirit between all the stakeholders was just exceptional!"*. The involvement of the school directors was assessed as a critical success factor of the project.

3. Innovations in the program model

The program introduced several innovative approaches to fostering inclusion and strengthening educational practices in participating schools:

- **Mentorship model:** The mentoring framework was instrumental in bridging theory and practice. Mentors worked closely with schools, ensuring continuous guidance and tailored support. As noted by one trainer, *"For us, the mentorship was critical; it wasn't just about giving tools but walking alongside the schools to ensure meaningful implementation"*
- **School hubs:** The establishment of school hubs facilitated collaboration among participating schools. These hubs created opportunities for inter-school dialogue, sharing of best practices, and collective problem-solving. According to a participant, *"The hubs allowed us to exchange experiences and solutions across schools, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose"*.

4. Challenges Addressed:

- Initial teacher resistance, driven by skepticism about evaluation processes, presented an obstacle. This was mitigated during the training, practical mentoring and peer support, which built trust and engagement over time.
- Barriers such as mobility restrictions for refugee students and delayed reception class openings were addressed through alternative strategies, including direct engagement with local NGOs and creative classroom solutions.

A Head of Trainers recalling the trajectory of the project highlighted that *"the evolution of the project was the strongest part as we learned by setting criteria at the beginning that we later realized were not suitable. For example, setting a target to reduce violence by 30% between Greek and refugee students was irrelevant as there was no baseline either. However, from all these typicalities of numbers, we moved towards a program that served the actual needs of the schools"*.

5. Capacity for Long-Term Impact:

- Despite focusing on immediate objectives, the program laid a foundation for systemic change by fostering collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP).
- Tools such as manuals and training modules played a central role in equipping educators with practical methodologies. However, the lack of data on their adoption and long-term use limits the evaluation's ability to assess their full impact.

Efficiency

1. Resource allocation

- With 61.4% of its €1.5 million budget allocated to direct outputs, the program ensured that resources were effectively directed toward teacher training, mentoring, and educational materials.
- The cost per school engagement was relatively high due to the intensive mentoring model, but this investment was justified by the qualitative improvements in teacher confidence and inclusivity practices.
-

2. Timeliness

- The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant disruptions, delaying in-person activities and reducing engagement with schools during lockdowns. However, the program adapted by transitioning to webinars and extending its timeline, allowing it to meet its revised targets.

3. Impact of external factors

- Competing priorities in schools and frequent teacher turnover diluted the continuity of interventions. Despite these challenges, the program's flexibility allowed it to engage new schools and participants effectively, maintaining momentum even in difficult contexts.

Sustainability

1. Legacy tools and resources

- The two primary manuals produced by the program represent valuable resources for ongoing and future educational initiatives. While dissemination was broad, the absence of data on downloads or implementation limits the ability to assess their sustained impact.
- Beyond individual teachers, the program's experience was transformative for entire schools, fostering a shift toward more inclusive and democratic school cultures.
- The pool of 45 trained regional mentors is a critical asset for future efforts to institutionalize inclusive practices. However, sustained engagement will require continued funding and support from the MoE.

2. Institutional integration

- Collaboration with the MoE and the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) strengthened systemic buy-in, with efforts to align the program's methodologies with national educational priorities. These relationships are critical for embedding the program's practices into broader education frameworks.
As the Director of EWC highlighted: "We brought together an extreme number of stakeholders and facilitated dialogue between civil society, the MoE, and local governance. As an international NGO, we were well-positioned to be a neutral facilitator of this dialogue"
- The program's engagement with municipalities in later phases signaled potential for local ownership, though this remains underdeveloped and would require further collaboration to scale effectively.

3. Challenges to sustainability

- Teacher turnover and the lack of systemic mechanisms to retain institutional knowledge pose significant risks to the program's long-term impact.
- Without integration into formal teacher training curricula, the tools and practices developed by S4A may not reach broader audiences.

Evaluation conclusions

Effectiveness

The S4A program demonstrated substantial effectiveness in transforming schools into more inclusive and democratic environments. While the program met or exceeded many of its output targets, such as mentoring visits and action plans, its most significant achievement lay in the cultural shifts it inspired. By fostering collaboration and building educators' confidence, the program created lasting changes in attitudes and practices.

The mentoring model was a cornerstone of this success, offering hands-on, tailored guidance that helped educators apply theoretical concepts in practical ways. The holistic whole-school approach encouraged active collaboration among teachers, students, and parents, resulting in stronger, more supportive school communities.

However, the program faced challenges in addressing systemic barriers, such as teacher and student mobility, which disrupted continuity in some cases. Additionally, the evaluation highlighted the need for stronger monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, particularly to measure long-term impacts and systematically track changes in school environments and student outcomes.

Ultimately, S4A's success extended beyond numbers, as it empowered teachers and reshaped schools into environments where inclusion and diversity could thrive.

Efficiency

The S4A program effectively utilized its resources to achieve meaningful outcomes, balancing the cost-intensive mentoring model with the qualitative improvements it brought to schools. By allocating over 60% of its €1.5 million budget to direct outputs, the program ensured significant investment in mentoring, training, and material development. Despite this focus on quality, the program maintained reasonable cost efficiency, leveraging its mentoring network and collaborative hubs to extend its reach and impact.

The program demonstrated adaptability in the face of challenges, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated a transition to online delivery methods. While this shift reduced in-person engagement, it maintained continuity and allowed for the engagement of broader audiences through webinars and online resources. However, delays caused by structural inefficiencies, such as centralized teacher assignments and insufficient baseline data, highlighted the need for more agile management approaches and robust planning frameworks. Despite these setbacks, the program's capacity to adapt and sustain operations during disruptions reflected its overall operational resilience and commitment to maximizing impact.

Sustainability

The S4A program laid a strong foundation for long-term impact through the development of critical resources and institutional partnerships. The two

comprehensive manuals, which include best practices and actionable methodologies, are valuable tools for ongoing and future educational initiatives. Although data on their adoption is currently limited, their potential to influence broader educational systems remains significant.

The creation of a pool of 45 regional mentors is a notable achievement, providing a skilled network that can continue to support inclusive practices in schools. However, the sustainability of this network depends on ongoing funding and its integration into national educational frameworks. The program's collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) strengthened systemic buy-in, positioning the program's methodologies for broader adoption.

A key challenge to sustainability lies in the lack of systemic mechanisms to retain institutional knowledge amidst high teacher turnover. Moreover, while the program focused on individual schools, its legacy extends to creating a cultural shift across educational communities. To secure this impact, future efforts should prioritize integrating program tools and practices into pre-service teacher training and formal education policies, as well as fostering local ownership through municipal collaboration.

OUTCOME 2: “Increased opportunities for integration and social inclusion for vulnerable individuals”

Project promoter: Solidarity Now (project title: Increased opportunities for integration and social inclusion for vulnerable individuals)

Numeric overview of results

The table below presents the outcomes and outputs of the Athens Solidarity Centre (ASC) program across its three distinct project periods, comparing actual results against the set targets. To facilitate clarity and visual differentiation, the font colors correspond to each project phase as follows:

- Black: Outcomes/outputs from Project 1 (2019–2021)
- Green: Outcomes/outputs from Project 2 (2022–2023)
- Purple: Outcomes/outputs from Project 3 (2023–2024)

This color-coding highlights the program's progress and achievements over time, providing a clear overview of its evolution and impact.

Outcome/ Output	Expected program results	Indicator	TARGET 2019-2021 TARGET 2022-2023 TARGET 2023- 2024	Actual (reported)
Outcome 2	Increased opportunities for integration and social inclusion for vulnerable individuals	Number of beneficiaries of services provided or improved	10,000 1,350 1,200 TOTAL: 12,550	7,630 ¹ (24% below target) 2,153 (60% above target) 1,763 (47% above target) TOTAL: 11,546 (8% below target) Gender Female: 33% / 40% / 39% Male: 67% / 59% / 60% Beneficiaries declaring vulnerability: 430 / 283 Age: 5-12 yrs: 2% / 1% (0-12ys) 13-17 yrs: 8% / 8% / 9% (0-17 yrs) 18-29yrs: 36% / 29% / 39% 30-64 yrs: 50% / 57% / 49% 65+yrs: 3% / 5% / 3% 7042 additional beneficiaries received information and were referred
		Number of people accessing social benefits (including accommodation)	1,500 200 200 TOTAL: 1,900	1,670 243 134 TOTAL: 2,047
		Number of successful legal cases supported	80	98
		Number of children supported through tailored activities to reduce school dropouts	200	155
		Share of employability	25% 28%	34% 27%

¹ **Types of services:** Social service: 6,300 / 1,647 / 1,517 = 9,464 - Accounting: 3,177 / 461 / 278 = 3,916 Legal aid: 1,299 / 385 / 181 = 1,865 Employability: 944 / 371 / 0 = 1,315 Psychological support: 254 / 0 / 30 = 284
Nationalities: Afghanistan: 19% / 9% / 6% Pakistan: 15% / 16% / 5% Syria: 10% / 5% Egypt: 10% Eritrea: 8% Ukraine: 7% / 6% Somalia: 6% Nigeria: 6% Albania: 5% / 4% Greece: 8% / 12% / 6%

		service beneficiaries who find a job		28% women 36% men 18-29yrs: 35% 30-64 yrs: 34% 65+ yrs: 14%
		Share of successful asylum applications and family reunification cases	50% 65% (only asylum applications)	65% 82%
		Share of users who are satisfied with the services provided	65% 75%	89% 89%
		Number of tax numbers issued	1800	476
Output 2.1	Services provided to vulnerable individuals	Average number of sessions per beneficiary	3 2.5 2.5	3 3 2.59
		Number of legal representations (asylum service and court)	2,400 300 180 TOTAL: 2,880	975 539 351 TOTAL: 1,865
		Number of psychological sessions carried out (individual and group)	4000	2,796 to 254 individuals
		“Child friendly space” for children of beneficiaries of services provided operational for the duration of the project	Yes	Yes
		Number of tax declarations submitted	900 200 30 TOTAL: 1130	1714 216 14 TOTAL: 1944
		Number of people receiving administrative support to facilitate their social inclusion	250 350 TOTAL: 600	461 Female: 255 Male: 205 278 TOTAL: 739 18-29yrs: 82 30-64 yrs: 332 65+ yrs: 47
		Number of children supported by Child Friendly Space activities	100	111

		Number of people attending job interviews	400	318 Female: 91 Male: 227
Output 2.2	Collaboration between the Athens Solidarity Centre (ASC) and CSO's enhanced	Number of organisations which carry out complementary activities in the ASC	25	6
		Number of external referrals made (to services outside the ASC)	12.000 1,200 1,500 TOTAL: 14,700	7,042 2,329 549 TOTAL: 9,920
		Staff participation in external coordination meetings	150	126
Output 2.3	Improved operational efficiency of ASC	Number of ASC inter-departmental / internal coordination meetings	100 12 12 TOTAL: 124	82 25 12 TOTAL: 119
		Number of ASC staff trained	28 14 14 TOTAL: 56	32 12 14 TOTAL: 48
		Psychological supervision made available to staff	Yes	Yes

Evaluative overview

The Athens Solidarity Centre (ASC) program played a crucial role in addressing the immediate and evolving needs of socially excluded and vulnerable populations in Athens. Spanning three distinct phases between 2019 and 2024, the program adopted a multidisciplinary, holistic approach that combined psychosocial support, legal aid, employability services, and financial guidance. These services were complemented by strong partnerships with the Municipality of Athens, the Greek Asylum Service, and a network of civil society organizations (CSOs), ensuring a comprehensive response to complex social challenges.

The program was notably effective in reaching its intended beneficiaries, providing critical support to over 11,500 individuals, including asylum seekers, refugees, and Greek citizens facing systemic barriers. It successfully facilitated integration pathways through tailored employability initiatives, achieving a 28%-36% employment success rate, and addressing key legal challenges with an 82% success rate in asylum-related cases. Furthermore, its centralized, “one-stop-shop” model enhanced accessibility and fostered trust among beneficiaries, contributing to high satisfaction rates (89%) across services.

A key achievement of the program was its successful navigation of funding transitions, ensuring uninterrupted service delivery and securing alternative financing until 2026—a testament to the program’s strong governance and financial planning.

Despite facing external challenges, such as the dynamic and evolving needs of its target populations, the ASC demonstrated adaptability and resilience. It expanded its scope to address emerging needs, such as support for Ukrainian refugees, and prioritized long-term inclusion through systemic interventions. The program’s legacy includes not only its direct impact on beneficiaries but also its role in advancing best practices for holistic social support and integration at both the local and national levels.

Evaluation findings

Effectiveness

Program outcomes and outputs

1. Service reach and beneficiary support

- Across its three phases, the ASC program supported 11,546 beneficiaries, achieving 92% of its cumulative target of 12,550.
- Services included:
 - Legal aid for 2,880 beneficiaries, with an 82% success rate in asylum applications and family reunifications.
 - Employability services leading to 408 beneficiaries securing employment, with success rates varying between 28%-36% by demographic.
 - Psychological support provided through over 4,000 individual and group sessions.
 - Financial services, including 1,944 tax declarations, exceeding the original target of 1,130.
- Satisfaction rates were consistently high, with 89% of beneficiaries expressing positive feedback about service quality and accessibility.

2. Service adaptability and expansion

- The program successfully adjusted to evolving needs, incorporating targeted interventions for Ukrainian refugees and addressing emerging challenges such as digital literacy gaps exacerbated by the rapid digital transformation of public services.

Success factors and challenges

1. Interdisciplinary and holistic approach

- The ASC’s integration of legal aid, psychosocial support, employability services, and financial counseling into a unified delivery model was central to its success.

By addressing the multifaceted needs of beneficiaries under one roof, this approach ensured seamless and comprehensive support, fostering empowerment and self-reliance. Beneficiaries frequently highlighted this model as pivotal to their progress, underscoring the value of accessing diverse services in one trusted location.

- The program's reliance on interdisciplinary case management meetings was a critical enabler of its holistic approach. These meetings facilitated collaboration among professionals from various disciplines, such as social workers, legal advisors, psychologists, and financial experts. By working together, staff could develop tailored interventions for each beneficiary. During the focus group discussion on the holistic approach and potential expansion highlighted that addition of medical services, speech therapist, physical therapist, and remedial education would enhance the holistic approach.
- The ASC Coordinator further encapsulated the essence of the approach with the metaphor: *"The corridor of integration is visually the corridor of the ASC center. It represents the journey beneficiaries take, step by step, as they access the services they need to regain stability and independence."* This analogy underscores the ASC's commitment to guiding beneficiaries through a structured, yet adaptable process tailored to their unique circumstances.

2. Strong partnerships and institutional support

- Collaboration with the Municipality of Athens and co-location with the Greek Asylum Service significantly enhanced service delivery, enabling seamless referrals and improving access to public services. This arrangement allowed beneficiaries to access a broader range of services tailored to their needs. The ACS Coordinator emphasized: *"Cohabitation with the Social Services of the Municipality of Athens is critical. People come to visit them, and they are immediately referred to us. On the other hand, we support them with services they do not have, like accountancy or interpretation for non-Greek speakers"*.
- Partnerships with organizations like Odyssey and ActionAid's Community Center ensured comprehensive service delivery through cross-referrals.

3. Accessibility and inclusivity

- The center's strategic location (next to the central railway station) and welcoming physical environment (ground-floor access, warm and safe spaces) increased its accessibility, including beneficiaries from outside Athens.
- More recently the ACS has also become accessible to people with disabilities.

4. High-quality and stable staffing

- The ASC program maintained low staff turnover, which played a crucial role in ensuring service quality and fostering trust among beneficiaries. This stability was particularly highlighted as a strength during transitions and changes in the

external environment. As noted by the Director of Solidarity Now: “*Very low turnover of staff helps us maintain partnerships and ensures the quality of services delivered.*”

- The consistency of staff allowed for long-term relationships with beneficiaries, providing a reliable point of contact for vulnerable individuals navigating complex systems. It also supported sustained partnerships with other organizations, further enhancing the effectiveness of service delivery

5. Psychological support challenges

- The demand for psychological support services at the ASC increased significantly, particularly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, as mental health challenges became more acute among beneficiaries. While the program provided over 4,000 individual and group sessions, staff identified capacity constraints as a key challenge, particularly in offering long-term psychological care.
- Group sessions were highly valued by beneficiaries for fostering a sense of community and emotional relief, but language barriers, especially among refugee populations, limited their accessibility and effectiveness. The need for additional psychologists – child psychologists in particular - and systemic interventions, such as family counselling, was consistently emphasized by stakeholders as critical to addressing broader psychosocial needs more effectively.

6. Dependency concerns

- The program’s holistic and interdisciplinary model encouraged beneficiaries to access multiple services, resulting in an average of two visits per individual. This approach was generally effective in addressing complex, intersecting needs without fostering long-term dependency. As an ACS informant noted: “*Obviously, they are all individuals facing vulnerabilities, so the absence of an exit protocol helps build their trust in us.*”
- However, stakeholders noted that some beneficiaries, particularly those engaged over extended periods, relied heavily on ASC’s unique combination of services, as comparable alternatives were not readily available. Staff worked to mitigate dependency by gradually empowering beneficiaries to take on tasks independently, focusing on capacity-building and resilience as part of their case management strategies.

Efficiency

1. Delivery of planned results

- The ASC program demonstrated strong alignment with its planned results, achieving the majority of its output and outcome targets across its three phases. Beneficiaries supported (11,546) represented 92% of the overall target (12,550), while key service-related targets, such as 2,880 legal aid cases and 4,000 psychosocial sessions, were achieved or exceeded.

- Changes in the operational context, such as a decrease in refugee flows and shifts in asylum registration processes, initially posed challenges. However, the closure of other programs (e.g., Praxis Center in 2019) and reduced funding for international actors (e.g., DRC, IRC) increased demand for ASC services. This unexpected influx of beneficiaries allowed the ASC to exceed its targets, highlighting its adaptability and established reputation among vulnerable populations.

2. Cost-efficiency

- A significant proportion of the budget was allocated to output-related costs, emphasizing resource prioritization for direct service delivery:
 - **Project 1:** 80.4% (€1,608,245 of €2,000,000).
 - **Project 2:** 79.7% (€358,607 of €450,000).
 - **Project 3:** 72.3% (€252,849 of €349,675).
- The cost per beneficiary was counted as follows:
 - **Project 1:** €173.24 (€107.62*)
 - **Project 2:** €333.33 (€ 122.31*)
 - **Project 3:** €291.40 (€199.91*)

**If add if add those referred to services outside ACS*

3. Timeliness and delays

- The program generally adhered to its timelines, with minimal delays reported in service delivery. The COVID-19 pandemic caused temporary disruptions, particularly in in-person services, which were largely transitioned online. This hybrid approach maintained continuity while adhering to safety protocols.
- Shifts in donor priorities during the pandemic, particularly toward health-related programs, further impacted the operational landscape. However, ASC successfully adapted to these changes and sustained its service delivery without significant interruptions.

4. Impact of COVID-19 on efficiency

- The pandemic required rapid adjustments in service delivery methods, including a transition to primarily online sessions, with limited in-person interactions. These changes preserved accessibility for beneficiaries while ensuring adherence to public health guidelines.
- The heightened demand for social services during the pandemic, coupled with reduced activity from key international actors, placed additional strain on resources. Despite this, ASC maintained efficiency and exceeded expectations by leveraging its established network and trusted reputation.

Sustainability

1. Lasting effects of benefits on medium and long term

- The ASC program demonstrated significant potential for lasting impacts, particularly in its ability to empower beneficiaries through skills development, employment assistance, and legal aid. Employability services, which facilitated the placement of 408 individuals into jobs, were particularly noted for fostering self-reliance and economic inclusion.
- Legal aid provided beneficiaries with durable solutions to complex challenges, such as asylum applications and family reunifications, with an 82% success rate. These outcomes contributed to long-term stability and security for vulnerable populations. Access to high-quality legal support often requires significant financial resources, which are typically beyond the reach of vulnerable individuals. By covering these legal expenses, the ASC removed a critical barrier, enabling beneficiaries to navigate complex legal systems effectively. This not only ensured that their rights were upheld but also prevented prolonged legal disputes that could lead to further instability and financial strain on both beneficiaries and public institutions.
- While the psychological support services addressed immediate mental health needs effectively, stakeholders emphasized the need for systemic, family-centered approaches to ensure broader and more sustainable psychosocial outcomes.

2. Advocacy and policy influence

- Advocacy was a complementary component of the ASC program, supporting its primary focus on service delivery, implemented through an evidence- and solution-based approach. While not all efforts were successful, they highlighted systemic issues and sought to influence policy changes for the benefit of vulnerable populations.
- Examples of advocacy efforts include:
 - Addressing the impact of increased ratable property values, which disqualified beneficiaries at risk of poverty from accessing the KEA minimum guaranteed income benefit.
 - Raising concerns about legislative barriers to legalizing long-term undocumented migrants. Solidarity Now successfully advocated for a legislative amendment reducing the required residency period from seven to three years, although this was later reversed by the government.
 - Highlighting the oxymoronic requirement for non-Greek residents to have a job contract to issue an AMKA (social security number), while simultaneously needing an AMKA to sign a job contract.

- A notable success involved the refugee population's lack of access to family certificates, which barred them from services such as municipal social grocery stores. Through advocacy meetings with KYADA, Solidarity Now secured an agreement allowing the organization to confirm eligibility with an official letter, enabling beneficiaries to access these services.

3. Sustainability of capacity-building results for public entities

- The program's collaboration with public entities, particularly the Municipality of Athens and the Greek Asylum Service, strengthened institutional capacity. This was reflected in improved referral systems and the integration of ASC services into existing public frameworks.

4. Challenges and risks

- The reliance on ASC's unique holistic model raises concerns about the capacity of other institutions to replicate similar outcomes without comparable resources or expertise.

Evaluation conclusions

Effectiveness

The ASC program successfully addressed the diverse and intersecting needs of its beneficiaries through an integrated, holistic service delivery model. By consolidating legal aid, psychosocial support, employability services, and financial guidance under one roof, the program provided accessible and comprehensive assistance to over 11,500 individuals across three phases as well as referred almost 10,000 individuals to external services. The program's centralized "one-stop-shop" approach not only simplified access for beneficiaries but also fostered trust, long-term engagement and integration.

A key strength of the ASC was its adaptability to emerging challenges and shifting needs. For example, the program expanded its scope to support Ukrainian refugees and adjusted to changes in asylum registration processes. However, resource constraints in psychological support, particularly in offering long-term care and addressing language barriers, highlighted areas for improvement. Despite these limitations, the ASC's emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration and tailored interventions ensured that it achieved or exceeded its key output targets, leaving a lasting impact on the lives of its beneficiaries.

Efficiency

The program demonstrated commendable efficiency in its use of financial and human resources, achieving a strong alignment with its planned results while maintaining reasonable costs per beneficiary. Across the three project phases, 72%-80% of the budget was allocated to direct output-related costs, reflecting the ASC's focus on maximizing the impact of its funding. The cost per beneficiary ranged from €107.62 to €333.33, depending on whether external referrals were included in the calculation, highlighting cost-effective service delivery.

Of course, this calculation does not account for the significant **indirect benefits** that the program generated for society and other organizations. By equipping beneficiaries with employability skills and facilitating job placements, the ASC contributed to economic activity and reduced dependency on public welfare systems. Similarly, its legal aid services often prevented costly legal disputes and facilitated smoother integration processes for asylum seekers and refugees, indirectly benefiting public institutions by alleviating administrative burdens.

Moreover, the ASC's strong referral network with other civil society organizations (CSOs) amplified its impact by ensuring that beneficiaries received specialized services that the program itself did not provide, such as healthcare or advanced training programs. This collaborative approach not only enhanced the efficiency of service delivery but also strengthened the overall ecosystem of social support in Athens, enabling other organizations to focus on their core expertise.

In this context, the ASC's efficiency extended beyond its direct beneficiaries, contributing to a ripple effect of positive outcomes for society, public institutions, and partner organizations. This highlights the program's role as a catalyst for systemic change and a model for integrated, resource-efficient social support.

The ASC's ability to adapt to the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic without significant delays in service delivery further exemplifies its efficiency. By transitioning to online and hybrid service models, the program maintained accessibility and minimized delays, even under constrained conditions. Moreover, the ASC's reputation and established networks enabled it to absorb increased demand when other organizations scaled back or ceased operations, ensuring continuity of critical services.

Sustainability

The ASC program laid the groundwork for durable and meaningful impacts, particularly through its emphasis on empowering beneficiaries and strengthening institutional frameworks. Legal aid and employability services were particularly effective in fostering long-term stability, with many beneficiaries achieving legal resolutions or securing employment as a direct result of the program's support.

While advocacy was a complementary aspect of the ASC's work, it played an important role in addressing systemic barriers and influencing policy. Successes, such as resolving access to municipal social grocery stores for refugees, demonstrated the potential for advocacy to enhance the program's broader impact. Additionally, the ASC's partnerships with public entities, such as the Municipality of Athens and the Greek Asylum Service, enhanced the integration of services into public systems, providing a degree of sustainability beyond the program's funding cycle.

Despite these achievements, challenges remain. The ASC's unique holistic model, while highly effective, may be difficult to replicate in other settings without comparable resources or expertise. Addressing systemic gaps, such as fragmented public services and shifting

donor priorities, will be essential to sustaining the program’s outcomes and expanding its legacy.

OUTCOME 3: “Social Inclusion, Youth Employment & Poverty”

Project promoter: ADDMA (project title: Skills on Demand)

Numeric values of results

Planned / Amendments		TARGET	Actual (reported)
OUTCOME 3: Increased employment among recently unemployed people			
Outcome 3 indicators	1.1 Number of certified trainees hired by participating businesses within 3 months of training completion	500 / 75 Disaggregation by gender / age	0
	1.2 Share of certified trainees working in occupations relevant to the training they received within 3 months of training completion	70% Disaggregation by gender / age	0%
	1.3 Share of participating businesses that hired certified trainees	80%	0%
	1.4 Share of participating businesses that hired certified trainees reporting satisfactory results from the recruitment	80%	0%
Output 3.1. indicators Capacities of vulnerable unemployed people are enhanced	1.1.1. Number of beneficiaries trained and certified (Training comprises 120 hours of theory and 80 hours of practice, following which beneficiaries are certified.)	1000 / 150 Gender / ROMA	25 17 female/ 8 male/ 0 Roma
	1.1.2. Share of certified trainees reporting improved capacity to meet labour market requirements	95% / 85% Gender / Age	100% (female/male as above – 8 young adults, 17 adults)
	1.1.3. Number of workstations set up for beneficiaries who lack the necessary ICT equipment to follow the training courses	40 / 2 Gender / Age	8
	1.1.4. Average number of psychosocial support sessions delivered per beneficiary	3 / 0	3
	1.1.5. Average number of employment counselling sessions provided per beneficiary	3 / 4	3
Output 3.2. indicators Businesses are engaged in the network	1.2.1 Number of businesses supported with coaching and consultancy sessions	500 / N/A	0
	1.2.2. Average number of coaching and consultancy sessions received per participating business	2 / N/A	0
Output 3.3 indicators*	1.3.1. Fit-for-purpose information technology system operational to match beneficiaries with jobs	YES	YES

The MoA effectively promotes the employment of vulnerable unemployed people	1.3.2. Labour Market Survey mapping labour supply and demand completed	YES	YES
	1.3.1. Number of unique training programmes developed	60 / 18	15
	1.3.2. Number of vulnerable people registered in the IT system for support Gender / Age	1100 / 160	159 (114 female/ 45 male)
	1.3.2. Number of certified trainees matched with businesses and attended job interviews (The matching process is facilitated by the recruitment experts, through the filtering and screening of the IT system's suggestions and recommendations about the available job vacancies (demand) and offered skills (supply). Certified trainees will be matched with at least one open job vacancy) Gender / Age	1000 / 75	0

Evaluation overview

The Skills on Demand (SoD) program was an ambitious initiative aimed at empowering vulnerable unemployed residents of Athens through tailored employability interventions, training, certification, and job placement support. Initially designed to benefit 1,000 individuals and engage 500 businesses, the program sought to bridge gaps between the labor market and vulnerable populations by fostering skills development and facilitating employment opportunities. It included components such as a modular IT platform, labor market surveys, and business consultancy services to ensure relevance and sustainability.

However, the program faced significant challenges in achieving its intended results. Factors such as competitive national employment schemes, delays in preparatory activities, and insufficient outreach mechanisms limited its effectiveness. Despite amendments to reduce targets and extend timelines, critical components like business engagement and psychosocial support were not fully realized. While some milestones were achieved, including the development of an IT system and a limited number of certifications, the program's overall impact fell short of expectations. This evaluation assesses the program's effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability based on its revised scope and outcomes.

Evaluation findings

Effectiveness

1. Program outcomes and outputs

- The program significantly underperformed against its initial targets. Of the planned 1,000 beneficiaries, only 159 individuals registered, and 25 successfully completed certification, representing just 2.5% of the initial target.
- Business engagement fell short, with no recorded consultancy sessions or active participation from the 500 targeted businesses.

- While the IT system was developed and operational, its utility was limited by low beneficiary engagement and minimal matching between certified trainees and job opportunities.

2. Factors contributing to limited effectiveness

- **Competitive environment:** National employment programs offered more attractive incentives, such as financial allowances and salary subsidies, drawing potential beneficiaries and businesses away from the SoD initiative. The program's inability to recruit beneficiaries stemmed in part from competition with national vocational training programs offered by the Public Employment Service (DYPA), which provided an educational allowance, was cited by project managers as the main obstacle. However, ss evaluators we must note that we have documented that other civil society-led vocational training initiatives have succeeded without such allowances, therefore we question this obstacle as being the exclusive reason for the unsuccessful recruitment.
- **Inadequate outreach:** Promotional efforts, though extensive, did not effectively engage the target population. Multipliers and mediating organizations lacked sufficient buy-in or capacity to drive beneficiary enrollment. It would need further investigation the fact that despite the Municipality's role as a program promoter, referrals from its Social Services were not secured, which is a significant gap given its direct access to vulnerable populations.
- **Delays and management challenges:** Significant delays in preparatory activities, including the hiring of key staff and development of the IT system, hindered the program's ability to implement planned activities on schedule. Project managers facing significant recruitment challenges, decided to delay initiating the tender process for developing the educational programs and IT platform. While they raised their concerns with the fund operator, the response was delayed—reportedly taking seven months. This delay, however, appears to have stemmed from efforts to avoid outright program failure by renegotiating the scope. Ultimately, the fund operator counter-proposed a substantial budget cut, a timeline extension, and reduced deliverables, enabling the program to proceed on a scaled-down basis with partially achievable targets.

3. Positive outcomes

- Despite challenges, the program successfully developed a modular IT system, which holds potential for future employability initiatives.
- The labor market survey provided valuable insights into local labor dynamics, laying the groundwork for more targeted interventions.

Efficiency

1. Resource utilization

- The program's reduced budget (€895,000 from an initial €2,468,000) aligned with its scaled-down scope. However, the cost per certified beneficiary was disproportionately high, reflecting inefficiencies in resource allocation.

2. Delays in implementation

- Initial timelines underestimated the time required for preparatory activities, leading to cascading delays. Key components, such as the IT system and beneficiary recruitment, were significantly delayed, limiting the program's capacity to achieve its goals.

3. Impact of external factors

- The COVID-19 pandemic and economic recovery in the tourism sector contributed to reduced unemployment, limiting the pool of potential beneficiaries. Additionally, competing programs offered more comprehensive packages, further diminishing the appeal of SoD.

Sustainability

1. Legacy tools and learnings

- While the program underperformed in achieving its primary objectives, its legacy includes the development of an IT platform and training modules that have been successfully integrated into subsequent initiatives. For example, the platform is now being used for EU-funded programs, including training 2,500 municipal employees in cleaning services. Both IT system and training materials represent valuable resources for future programs. These tools could enhance data management and beneficiary-job matching if integrated into broader municipal or national initiatives.
- The labor market survey offers a foundation for more targeted skills development initiatives in Athens.

2. Lack of systemic integration

- The program failed to establish strong synergies with existing employment support systems as well as the wider ecosystem of civil society organization and business sector, reducing its long-term relevance and scalability.

Evaluation conclusions

Effectiveness

The Skills on Demand program faced significant challenges in achieving its intended impact. The lack of alignment with beneficiary needs and preferences, coupled with competitive pressures from national programs, undermined its effectiveness. While some infrastructure

and insights were developed, the program's reach and outcomes fell far short of its original goals.

Efficiency

The program's resource utilization was hampered by delays, high costs per beneficiary, and limited engagement. While the reduced budget reflected the amended scope, the inability to attract sufficient participants or deliver key components highlighted inefficiencies in planning and execution.

Sustainability

The program's sustainability was compromised by its limited integration with existing systems and insufficient stakeholder engagement. However, the tools and methodologies developed hold promise for future employability initiatives, provided they are better aligned with systemic frameworks and beneficiary needs.

BILATERAL OUTCOME: Classrooms against bullying - CAB

Lead Partner: SolidarityNow

Co-Partner: The European Wergeland Centre

Cost: 50,000 euros

Numeric values of results

Outcome/Output		Indicators	Planned	Actual
Bilateral Outcome	Enhanced collaboration between beneficiary and donor state entities involved in the programme	Level of trust between cooperating entities in Beneficiary States and Donor States	4.5	N/A
		Level of satisfaction with the partnership	4.5	N/A
		Share of cooperating organisations that apply knowledge acquired from bilateral partnerships	50	N/A
Bilateral Output 1	Cooperation between donor state and beneficiary state entities facilitated	Number of projects involving cooperation with a donor project partner	1	1

Evaluative overview

The "Classrooms Against Bullying – CAB" initiative successfully fostered collaboration between Greek and Norwegian entities, promoting knowledge exchange and innovative practices to combat bullying in schools. Key achievements included a three-day study visit in Oslo and expert meetings in Athens, which allowed participants from diverse sectors to share insights and adapt Norwegian methodologies to the Greek educational framework. These activities facilitated the development of a guidebook on bullying prevention, available in both Greek and English, serving as a practical tool for educators.

However, it should be noted that there are no specific data corresponding to the declared bilateral indicators and targets as outlined in the Results Framework. While qualitative descriptions in the report suggest positive outcomes in terms of trust, satisfaction, and knowledge application, the absence of measurable data makes it challenging to evaluate these dimensions against the stated targets. This gap underscores the need for future projects to incorporate systematic measurement tools for tracking bilateral outcomes more rigorously.

Despite the project's achievements, some limitations were noted. While the workshops provided immediate impact and equipped educators with valuable tools, the absence of post-project follow-up mechanisms poses challenges to ensuring the long-term application of the learned practices. Additionally, the scope of participation could be broadened in future initiatives to include students, thereby integrating their perspectives and fostering a more comprehensive approach to bullying prevention.

Overall, the CAB project exemplifies the potential of bilateral partnerships in addressing complex social issues, combining localized knowledge with international expertise to create impactful, sustainable solutions. Future efforts should prioritize robust follow-up mechanisms, systematic indicator measurement, and expanded stakeholder involvement to enhance the long-term impact of such collaborations.

E. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter consolidates and organizes the key recommendations derived from the evaluation findings across all outcomes, aiming to guide future programming and improve the implementation of similar interventions.

Outcome 1: Integration of Refugee Children in Greek Schools

For Future Programs

1. Expand mentorship networks:

- Strengthen the mentorship model by providing ongoing professional development for regional trainers and creating opportunities for peer-to-peer learning among teachers.
- Ensure the mentorship framework is embedded into regional educational structures to sustain inclusive practices beyond the program lifecycle.

2. Strengthen local governance collaboration:

- Work closely with municipal authorities and regional coordinators to enhance the autonomy of schools in addressing refugee integration challenges.
- Promote the development of localized action plans that reflect the specific needs and capacities of schools and their communities.

3. Target vocational schools:

- Expand the scope of future programs to include vocational schools, where the student population often faces compounded vulnerabilities. Equip vocational educators with tools to promote integration and democratic citizenship.

4. Deepen the whole-school approach:

- Ensure that inclusive education principles are embedded across all aspects of school operations, including classroom management, extracurricular activities, and staff collaboration.
- Highlight the pivotal role of school directors in driving cultural shifts within schools. Provide training and resources for directors to lead inclusive practices effectively.
- Actively involve parents, local communities, and other stakeholders in creating supportive environments for refugee students, enhancing their sense of belonging and integration.

5. Enhance monitoring and evaluation mechanisms:

- Develop comprehensive tools to systematically track long-term changes in school environments, student outcomes, and the application of program methodologies.

- Introduce participatory monitoring approaches, involving teachers, students, and parents, to gather qualitative insights into the program's impact.

For the Ministry of Education (MoE)

1. Institutionalize inclusive education practices:

- Integrate the program's methodologies, tools, and manuals into the national pre-service and in-service teacher training curricula, ensuring sustainable knowledge dissemination.
- Establish mandatory modules on inclusive education and refugee integration within teacher certification programs, drawing on the program's best practices.

2. Strengthen the role of school leadership:

- Recognize the critical importance of school directors in fostering inclusive cultures. Provide dedicated training for school leaders on managing diverse school populations and implementing whole-school approaches.

3. Leverage the trained pool of trainers/mentors

- Deploy regional trainers strategically by utilizing the existing network of 45 trained mentors to support schools in implementing inclusive practices across diverse regions.
- Expand their role in systemic initiatives by integrating the trainers into national education frameworks, such as curriculum development and professional development programs, to institutionalize inclusive methodologies.

4. Address systemic barriers:

- Improve the teacher assignment process to ensure stability and continuity in schools with significant refugee populations. High teacher turnover disrupts program implementation and long-term sustainability of practices.
- Streamline processes for the timely establishment of reception classes and address logistical challenges, such as student transportation from refugee camps to schools.

5. Promote inter-school collaboration:

- Institutionalize mechanisms for inter-school exchanges, such as the school hubs model piloted by the program. These hubs facilitate dialogue, best practice sharing, and joint initiatives, fostering a networked approach to refugee inclusion.

6. Strengthen collaboration with local and international actors:

- Work closely with municipalities, NGOs, and international organizations like the EWC to expand the reach of inclusive education initiatives and integrate them into broader policy frameworks.

7. Enhance data systems:

- Invest in digital infrastructure to track the adoption and impact of program tools, such as the manuals, and generate insights to guide future interventions. This includes collecting data on manual downloads and use in schools.

For Donors

1. Support teacher training reforms:

- Provide funding for large-scale integration of the program's methodologies into national teacher training frameworks, emphasizing long-term systemic change.

2. Invest in scaling successful models:

- Expand support for mentoring networks and school hubs, focusing on their replication in regions with significant refugee and migrant populations.

3. Facilitate stakeholder alignment:

- Fund initiatives that bring together the MoE, regional authorities, and NGOs to align inclusive education policies and practices.

For Implementing Organizations

1. Broaden program scope:

- Include vocational schools and focus on secondary education institutions in future programming, ensuring broader coverage of vulnerable student populations.
- Develop targeted interventions to support educators in addressing the unique challenges faced by older refugee students.

2. Focus on school-wide cultural change:

- Deepen engagement with school directors to ensure whole-school approaches are consistently adopted and sustained across participating institutions.
- Prioritize the integration of inclusive practices into school routines, involving parents and local communities as active participants.

3. Leverage program tools:

- Disseminate the manuals widely and provide training on their use, ensuring that educators can apply them effectively to address integration challenges.

4. **Enhance outreach:**

- Engage regional educational coordinators to identify schools most in need of support and tailor interventions to their specific contexts.

Outcome 2: Increased opportunities for integration and social inclusion for vulnerable individuals

For Future Programs

1. **Foster community-based integration initiatives**

- Design localized programs that engage vulnerable individuals in cultural exchange, community-building, and social inclusion activities.
- Develop tailored support mechanisms to address barriers such as language skills, limited access to public services, and discrimination.

2. **Strengthen private sector collaboration**

- Partner with businesses to co-create employment and vocational training programs aligned with local labor market needs.
- Facilitate mentorship programs where private sector actors guide marginalized individuals toward economic inclusion and professional growth.

3. **Enhance employability pathways**

- Expand comprehensive training programs for beneficiaries, ensuring alignment with labor market demands and skills gaps.
- Develop partnerships to offer internships, apprenticeships, and other work-based learning opportunities to bridge the gap between skills and sustainable employment.

4. **Address systemic barriers to access**

- Simplify bureaucratic processes for marginalized populations to access housing, healthcare, and social services.
- Support policy advocacy to address challenges such as delayed work permits and restricted access to social security systems.

5. **Develop robust monitoring frameworks**

- Implement systems to track outcomes such as job retention, social mobility, and community integration over time.

- Incorporate beneficiary feedback into evaluation processes to ensure interventions remain relevant and effective.

For Donors

1. Support flexible funding mechanisms

- Allocate adaptable funding to address emergent needs, such as unexpected migration flows, shifts in the economic landscape, or unforeseen crises.
- Prioritize investments in holistic models, such as community centers serving mixed populations which integrate multiple services—legal aid, psychosocial support, employability training, and medical care—under one roof to address the intersecting challenges faced by vulnerable people.

2. Fund innovative and scalable pilot projects

- Invest in experimental programs, such as mixed housing models, community-driven economic empowerment projects, and comprehensive service hubs, to identify replicable solutions for sustainable social inclusion.
- Provide resources for evidence-building and research to evaluate the impact of holistic service delivery approaches and inform future policies and programming.

3. Facilitate multi-stakeholder collaboration

- Fund platforms that bring together state actors, NGOs, businesses, and communities to align efforts, share expertise, and promote integrated approaches to social inclusion.
- Support the establishment of partnerships aimed at creating or expanding community centers as focal points for delivering holistic services and fostering community cohesion.

For Local Authorities/State Actors

1. Promote and support holistic service models

- Facilitate the development and sustainability of community centers that integrate legal aid, psychosocial support, employability training, and other essential services, ensuring comprehensive support for vulnerable populations.
- Incorporate holistic service models into local and regional action plans to address social inclusion challenges in a more coordinated and impactful manner.

2. Enhance local governance and coordination

- Develop frameworks for municipalities to take an active role in coordinating services across sectors, ensuring that community centers are effectively managed and linked to broader social support systems.

- Establish dedicated units or focal points within municipal governments to oversee the implementation and monitoring of holistic service delivery models.

3. Address systemic barriers

- Introduce measures to address bureaucratic challenges, such as delayed access to work permits and social security numbers, that hinder the effectiveness of integration programs.
- Strengthen local infrastructure to improve accessibility to services, particularly for marginalized populations in remote or underserved areas.

4. Incentivize collaboration

- Establish incentives for local partnerships between municipalities, NGOs, and private sector actors to promote the creation and expansion of community centers.
- Encourage multi-stakeholder approaches by recognizing and rewarding municipalities that demonstrate leadership in fostering inclusive practices and innovative solutions.

5. Support capacity building

- Provide training and resources for municipal staff to implement and manage holistic service models, ensuring the sustainability and quality of these initiatives.
- Develop localized action plans that align with national priorities but reflect the specific needs and resources of individual communities.

For Implementing Organizations

1. Advocate for systemic reforms

- Lead advocacy efforts targeting national policies to address critical barriers such as delayed issuance of work permits, bureaucratic challenges in accessing public benefits (e.g., social security numbers), and other systemic inefficiencies affecting vulnerable populations.
- Leverage data collected to highlight service gaps and advocate for policies that promote equitable access to housing, healthcare, and education for marginalized groups.

2. Enhance the holistic service model

- Expand the ASC’s service portfolio to include additional offerings, such as remedial education programs, medical support, and vocational training, to address the comprehensive needs of beneficiaries.
- Continue interdisciplinary collaboration among legal, psychosocial, employability, and financial experts, ensuring tailored and integrated solutions for beneficiaries.
- Strengthen partnerships with healthcare providers and educational institutions to facilitate seamless referrals and broaden the impact of the center’s services.

3. Promote collaborative action plans with stakeholders

- Engage municipalities, community leaders, and civil society organizations to co-create localized action plans that reflect the unique needs of urban and marginalized populations in Athens and across Greece ensuring tailored solutions for diverse regional contexts.
- Foster partnerships with businesses to enhance employability outcomes for beneficiaries, ensuring job placements align with labor market demands and employer expectations.

4. Expand beneficiary engagement efforts

- Increase outreach campaigns to ensure that vulnerable groups, such as refugees, asylum seekers, and long-term unemployed individuals, are aware of and can access the ASC’s diverse service offerings.
- Address intersecting challenges, such as childcare for parents attending employability programs or language barriers for refugees seeking legal aid, through customized support mechanisms.

Outcome 3: “Social Inclusion, Youth Employment & Poverty”

For Future Programs:

1. Strengthen program design and alignment with beneficiary needs:

- Ensure vocational training programs include mechanisms to make participation more appealing to beneficiaries. Avoid ‘re-inventing the wheel’ or stretch capacity limits of project promoters when collaboration – for instance - with certified Centers for Vocational Training (KEKs) could be an option.

2. Introduce incentives to enhance recruitment:

- Explore non-monetary incentives, such as certification recognition, post-training job matching to address competition from national employment schemes offering financial allowances.

- Provide holistic services not limited to vocational training to vulnerable populations and design tailor-made educational programs to match beneficiaries and market needs.

For Donors and Fund Operators:

1. Ensure realistic program objectives and capacity assessments:

- During project inception, set achievable targets based on thorough assessments of the project promoter's capacity, resources, and external factors such as competition from other programs and market conditions.

2. Account for institutional and bureaucratic barriers:

- Recognize the limitations of public actors, including local authorities, in project delivery. Assign roles and responsibilities that align with their institutional capacity to ensure efficient and effective implementation, while fostering the engagement of multiple actors to complement public sector efforts and bridge capacity gaps.

3. Improve responsiveness to program risks:

- Strengthen mechanisms for quicker decision-making and adaptive measures when a project shows signs of significant delivery risks. Timely and flexible responses are critical to recalibrating program scope and ensuring realistic outcomes are achieved.

For Implementing Organizations:

1. Focus on strategic partnerships:

- Collaborate with certified vocational training providers (KEKs) and employment support organizations to leverage expertise in designing and delivering training programs aligned with labor market needs.

2. Prioritize early engagement with beneficiaries:

- Launch targeted and proactive outreach strategies, including engagement with local social services and multipliers, to ensure beneficiary recruitment begins early in the project lifecycle.

3. Capitalize on program outputs for sustainability:

- Maximize the utility of developed tools, such as the IT platform and labor market survey, by integrating them into ongoing or future initiatives to enhance job matching and employability support.

For Municipal Authorities:

1. Refine the role of municipalities in program delivery:

- Focus on facilitating partnerships with expert entities, rather than directly implementing vocational training programs, to ensure quality and efficiency.

2. Strengthen referral pathways:

- Ensure social services actively contribute to beneficiary identification and enrollment, improving collaboration with implementing partners to meet recruitment targets.

F. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation of the EEA-funded "Local Development and Poverty Reduction Programme" underscores its critical role in addressing complex social challenges in Greece. By targeting inclusive education, youth employment, and social inclusion, the program exemplified a multidimensional approach to tackling systemic inequities while empowering marginalized populations. Its emphasis on holistic service delivery, community engagement, and collaboration with institutional actors has left an enduring legacy that extends beyond its initial targets.

A cornerstone of the program's success lies in its ability to bridge gaps between local communities and national systems, fostering partnerships that amplified its impact. Through initiatives like the "Schools for All" project, it transformed educational environments into inclusive and democratic spaces, laying the groundwork for systemic change in refugee and migrant integration. Similarly, the Athens Solidarity Centre model demonstrated how integrated, one-stop-shop services could effectively address the multifaceted needs of vulnerable populations, offering a blueprint for replicable solutions in social support.

The program's achievements were bolstered by the adaptability and resilience of its implementing organizations, which navigated challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and shifting policy landscapes with remarkable flexibility. These organizations were not merely service providers but advocates for systemic change, using evidence-based approaches to influence policy and embed sustainable practices within public frameworks. As noted by a project promoter, "The program's impact is not only about immediate numbers but about shifting perspectives and building systems that endure".

The role of the Fund Operator was instrumental in ensuring the program's effectiveness. By demonstrating appropriate flexibility, the Fund Operator engaged in meaningful discussions and negotiations, enabling the adaptation and amendment of project goals and timelines to address emerging challenges and contextual shifts. This responsiveness allowed implementing organizations to adjust their approaches effectively, ensuring alignment with the program objectives and maximizing its impact for beneficiaries.

The Local Development and Poverty Reduction Programme has proven that targeted, community-driven interventions can deliver transformative results, both at the grassroots level and within institutional systems. Its legacy lies not only in the immediate benefits provided to thousands of beneficiaries but also in the pathways it has created for inclusive policies and sustainable development. A cornerstone of the program's success was its emphasis on holistic approaches, as evidenced by the transformative impact of the whole-school approach in fostering inclusive school communities and the Athens Solidarity Centre's (ASC) comprehensive model of integrated services. Even in cases where challenges emerged, such as the Skills on Demand initiative, the importance of multi-stakeholder coordination to address complex social needs became evident.

Moreover, the program underscored the pivotal role of civil society as a central player in achieving sustainable change. While State actors and local authorities may often take the lead, the involvement of civil society ensures that interventions remain community-rooted,

adaptive, and responsive to the lived realities of vulnerable populations, while also avoiding the often-paralyzing bureaucracy that characterizes the public sector. By fostering collaboration, innovation, and systemic change, the program offers a compelling model for addressing social inequities and empowering communities in Greece and beyond.

ANNEX I: List of interviewees

Marilyn Polena, Director Solidarity Now

Valia Andrakakou, ACS Coordinator

Asimina Bakali, ACS Senior Social Worker

Marina Kanta, ACS Legal service & Advocacy

Thodoris Zeis, Solidarity Now Legal Service

Eleni Panagiotakopoulou, ACS Psychological support

Dora Katsamori, Project Coordinator, EWC – Regional Coordinator, S4A

Aggelos Valianatos - Head of Trainers, S4A

Katerina Papisimaki - Primary Education Teacher and S4A Trainer

Iryna Sabor - Head of Section, Early Childhood and School, Online Learning Team, The European Wergeland Centre

Ana Perona-Fjeldstad - Director, The European Wergeland Centre

Anna Maria Panagiotidou - Trainer/Mentor S4A

Aliki Vasilarakou - Teacher and Former Deputy Director of Vocational High School of Egaleo

George Stefanos – Head of EU Projects, ADDMA

Andreas Koukios - Project coordinator “Skills on Demand”

ANNEX II List of abbreviations

ADDMA - Athens Development and Destination Management Agency

ASC - Athens Solidarity Centre

CSOs - Civil Society Organizations

EEA - European Economic Area

EWC - European Wergeland Centre

ICT - Information and Communications Technology

IEP - Institute of Educational Policy

MoE - Ministry of Education

S4A - Schools for All

SoD - Skills on Demand

UAMs - Unaccompanied Minors