



The Effective Integration of Young Asylum-Seekers into the Greek Society

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Key points

As our country hosts a significant number of refugees and asylum-seekers in its territory, we should care about their integration, the active participation and the entirely social inclusion taking into account all the steps that the European Union or even the international community has already done in order to achieve this ambitious goal. The European Union and consequently the Member-States ought to protect those who seek asylum, as it is defined by the Charter of Fundamental Rights in article 18 and according to the obligation that results from the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951). The immigration policy belongs to the area of freedom, security and justice (article 4 of Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union) and the Lisbon Treaty mentioned that the EU shares competence in this field with the Member-States (European Parliament, 2018). Furthermore, the legal basis for the immigration policy is located at the articles 79 and 80 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (European Parliament, 2018) and it consists one of the ten priorities of Juncker's Commission (European Commission, 2015). Finally implementing migration policy, we should also take into account the function of the Common European Asylum System, the European Agenda on Migration, the Action Plan on the Integration of third-country nationals (2016), the European Integration Network, the European Migration Forum and undoubtedly the Dublin Regulation. Only through strong cooperation and coordination we can face the refugee crisis and gain benefits from this challenge.

The integration, and especially of the young asylum-seekers, is undoubtedly a precondition for a cohesive society. Concrete and decisive measures should be taken into account in order to ameliorate the existing situation.

- The government ought to implement a more effective, forward-looking strategy and improve its migration and integration policy.
- Agencies should be founded and the proportion of the budget should be increased in order to have more functional results.
- Their housing, healthcare and learning of the Greek language is necessary.
- Promoting solidarity through campaigns and social networks could be ideal.



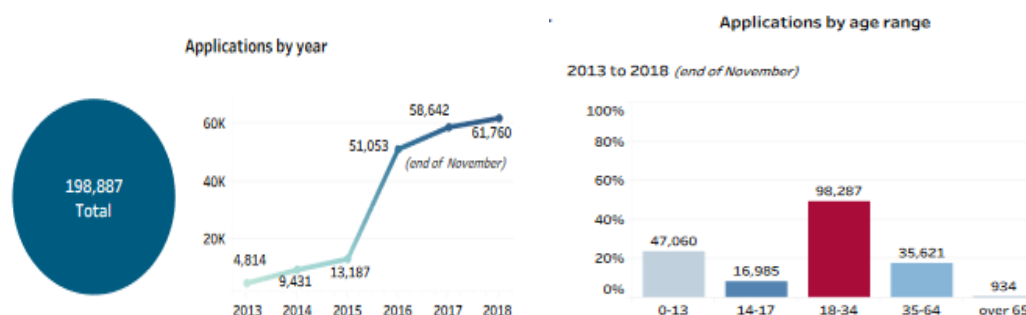
- Social inclusion could be accomplished only through their access to employment.
- Stricter sanctions for the entrepreneurs who support the undeclared economic activity are imperative.

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Introduction

One of the main challenges nowadays for the European Union is the refugee crisis, which has been broken out in 2015. Migration to Europe is a longstanding phenomenon, as Europe is perpetually attracting many migrants. European Union is an institution that protects human rights and ensures freedoms, a single market with around 500 million population that produces numerous opportunities for finding a job or creating an enterprise and it is a Union of 28 different member-states which each and every of them offer a wide range of facilities and choices.

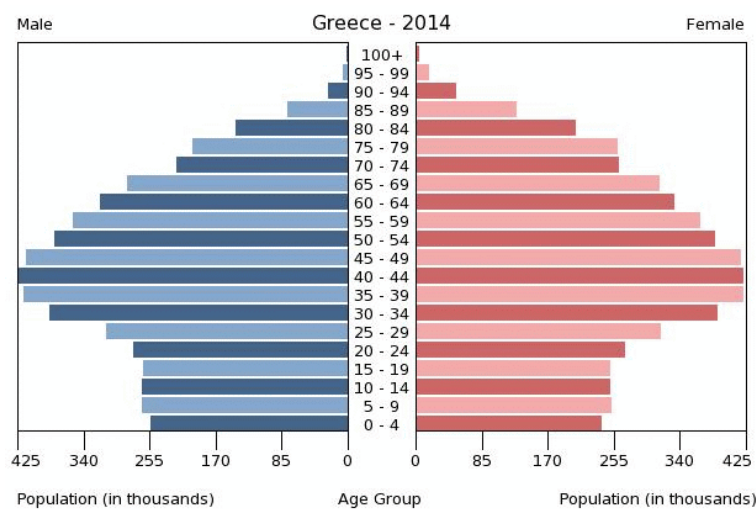
The European Union has been facing a refugee crisis since 2015, when millions of people were forced to flee their home due to human rights violations, conflicts, civilian wars, political persecutions or poverty. This unexpected flow of migrants and refugees presented as a transnational crisis, but European Union and its Member-States were not ready to respond. The majority of the above come especially from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Tunisia and Pakistan. In Greece, specifically, 31% of the asylum-seekers from 2013 to 2018 were from Syria, while our country was one of the main receivers with 198.887 applications in this period (Hellenic Ministry of Migration Policy, 2018). The steep increase was presented in 2015-2016 when the applications were augmented at a rate of 287.1% (Hellenic Ministry of Migration Policy, 2018). Finally, it is also significant to mention that more than 98.000 from these applications, nearly 50%, are young people (18-34 years old). Despite the decompression of the Greek islands and the integration of some children to the educational system, unfortunately there is not a concrete strategy yet for the integration of the young potential employees, who are between 18 and 34 years old.





Analysis

The refugee crisis is a significant issue in the European political scene, which affects many aspects internal the member-states (their economy, their political parties and the perception of the society). Greece is one of the countries, which receives migrants, as it is located at the southern borders of European Union, on the coast of the Mediterranean. This crisis has already incomed the EU especially due to its intensity, but it is undoubtedly an emerging challenge for the member-states that could be exploited in order to improve the existing negative consequences. The Old Continent is actually aged, as its demographic pyramid presents a small improvement, an increase of population of around 14 millions the last 11 years. The European population in 2007 was 498.300.000 and in 2018 is 512.710.000, when a neighbor and candidate country for EU membership, Turkey, presents a huge increase, because in 2007 its population was 69.000.000 and nowadays is more than 80.000.000 (Eurostat, 2018). This demographic challenge is much more intense in Greece. The life expectancy reached almost the 79-80 years, when the fertility rate shows that 1.3 kids belong to each and every woman (The World Bank, 2019). Thus, the integration of the newcomers could be also a way to combat that problem.



In addition, the phenomenon of Brain Drain in Greece, which is so intense in the recent years due to the outburst of the economic recession and the implying austerity measures, created a gap in the labor market with the absence of specialized labor force that could be filled by the young asylum-seekers. In the framework of the international competition of hunting talents, Greece has a competitive advantage as it has in its territory a possible tank of talents and it could attract them. At this point, we can also point out that a recent survey of UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency) shows that the majority of the newcomers, who seek asylum, are graduate of secondary or tertiary education, many of them were undergraduate students and most of them are under 35 years old, as almost 50% is 18-34 years old (Hellenic Ministry of Migration Policy, 2018).



Thus, we can conclude that their integration is necessary as there are benefits not only for them, but also for the receiving society. They can contribute to the demographic shift and the economic development and performance (Kolovos, 2011). An effective integration should be accomplished in terms of economical, social, cultural and political participation in order to seize the emerging opportunities and tackle the existing challenges. The greatest proof for their integration is the citizenship that can be given, if the appropriate circumstances are met and if they have been granted already with the status of refugee. This process will make them to acquire a sense of belonging (Kolovos, 2011).

Recommendations

The integration is a precondition for a cohesive and prosperous society (European Commission, 2016). Especially the young can contribute and their effective integration is necessary. First of all, the government should implement a forward-looking strategy not only for the protection of borders or for tackling the human trafficking and smuggling networks, but also for the integration of those who seek asylum or have been granted with the status of 'refugee'. All actors should be involved, namely the national and local authorities, the civil society, the employers and the citizens, as volunteering is also significant. In addition, we should found agencies with parallel action with the state for more effective results and the role of the cities could be also crucial, as they can fund those activities from their own budget. We can amend cities to a hub of innovation for those efforts and their contribution could be ideal. Furthermore, the government ought to increase the proportion of the budget for the migration policy. As it is a current issue, the devotion to its solution is obligatory. Their housing and healthcare are very important for avoiding the current living conditions in the hotspots, as it is the base for their integration. Subsidies should be given to the asylum-seekers in order to find a home for their family ensuring the necessary goods. Their access to the healthcare system is mandatory, as it is important for their survival and their good quality of life. Besides, the learning of Greek language and the intercultural dialogue, which can be achieved through events, would be ideal for the removal of the obstacles. In addition, the solidarity, the cultural sensitivity and the tolerance should be promoted by campaigns in media and social networks.

However, the most important is their entirely social inclusion and that can only be achieved through their access to employment. The government can hire the young asylum-seekers at local authorities, in municipalities, can give incentives to entrepreneurs through tax avoidance or subsidies to hire them in the framework of social entrepreneurship and cooperative economy and care about their retraining with seminars in order to fill the gaps in the labor market. Their origin from another civilization with



totally different norms could boost competitiveness and creativity through innovative proposals. Furthermore, strict legislation with sanctions for those who support irregular migrants for maximizing their profits is appropriate to mitigate the undeclared economic activity and this exploitation. We should care about a fair system that its central aim would be the employment of those young people, as their contribution could be significant not only for the employers and the entrepreneurs, but also for the total economic performance. Finally, we ought to have access to the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, a creation of the European Union for allocating almost 20% of the resources for this purpose, and to apply for support when it is necessary or the situation is beyond our budgetary capabilities. We should exploit the assistance that is granted by EU, as only through cooperation we can mitigate the refugee crisis, which is not only a national but also a European issue.

In conclusion, the benefits of this emerging and serious challenge can only be gained, if the young asylum-seekers mainly integrate successfully into the Greek society. Their contribution to the economic, social and cultural development would be crucial and the smooth coexistence will be the base for this long-lasting development. Thus, a sustainable solution is important, as the problems regarding to their living conditions and also the Greek economy are unfavorable.



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