



NOVAMIGRA

NORMS AND VALUES IN THE
EUROPEAN MIGRATION AND REFUGEE CRISIS

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Hospitality in Civil Society: Practices during the European ‘Refugee Crisis’.

Main editor(s): Angeliki Dimitriadi¹, Haris Malamidis (Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy, Greece)

Contributors: Elżbieta M. Goździak, Izabela Kujawa, Izabella Main (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland); Franziska Böhm, Ingrid Jerve Ramsøy, Brigitte Suter (Malmö University, Sweden)



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¹ Corresponding author: angeliki@eliamep.gr

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Key recommendations

The report examines the concept of hospitality, a critical value in the EU in the period 2015-2018 during the European 'refugee crisis'. The advent of more than 1 million asylum seekers, revealed significant differences in how member states understand solidarity, burden sharing, but also hospitality and humanitarianism.

Hospitality is intrinsically linked to asylum and reception. It has been codified in the European asylum law through the Reception Conditions Directive. In practice, hospitality is offered by the State as the official 'host' and responsible for asylum processing, and by the civil society from professional NGOs to grassroots movements who receive and care for asylum seekers. State-led reception practices coexist and are often complemented by the work of civil society and professional NGOs, grounded in "humanitarian ethos", i.e. a shared sense of humanitarianism and ethical responsibility to assist. In this report, this type of hospitality is approached as social hospitality, since it is not administered by the State and seeks to produce social relations between guest and host. In both cases, reception is the practical implementation of hospitality.

The report draws on fieldwork in Greece, Hungary, Poland, Germany and Sweden and analyses how hospitality manifested in the period 2015-2018 through the process of reception and, particularly, accommodation. Rather than looking at State-led hospitality, which has been thoroughly researched in the past, we focus on professional NGOs and civil society. Their role and contribution in most cases has been significant in both welcoming and hosting asylum applicants.

The report highlights the divergence between the countries of focus. Greece represents one side of the spectrum, where the State relied extensively on NGOs for the reception of asylum seekers and hospitality. Germany and Sweden pursue a middle-of-the road approach, with national reception systems established, where NGOs and civil society complement state-led policies. On the other end of the hospitality spectrum, the cases of Hungary and Poland reveal civil societies that sought to assist and welcome asylum applicants despite the official policies.

The report discusses how hospitality is understood and practiced, and the limitations encountered seeking to approach reception not merely as the offer of services but as the contemporary interpretation and practice of the value of hospitality. Some of the key recommendations based on our field research on hospitality include:

- ◆ **Ensuring safe access to EU territory.** Hospitality begins with access to the territory of member states.
- ◆ **The reduction of asylum processing time.** Field research showed it impacts family reunification procedures and quality of reception particularly for short-term hospitality.
- ◆ **The incorporation of the role of NGOs in the Common European Asylum System,** to create a formal framework of cooperation with the national and supranational levels.
- ◆ **State and NGO partnerships for accommodation in national reception systems,** particularly for countries falling short in the provision of reception services.
- ◆ **Recognition of the needs of refugees and local societies** through skills & needs assessments
- ◆ **Inclusion of civil society in the consultation processes** regarding the design and priorities of EU and national migration policies.
- ◆ **Defining the practical application of hospitality at State and civil society levels** to reduce divergence between countries and organisations and produce a level of harmonisation where possible.

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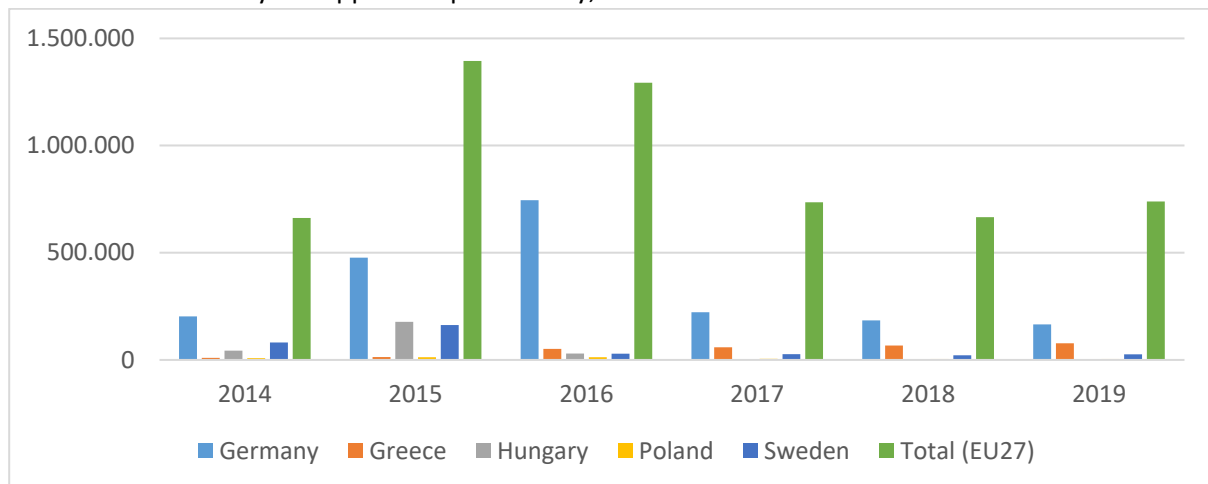
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1. Introduction²

In 2015, 1,032,408 irregular migrants (including economic migrants and asylum seekers) entered the EU via external borders³ – 850,000 were recorded entering at the Greek-Turkish sea border between May and December 2015⁴. The “long summer of migration”⁵ unfolded predominantly in the South-eastern Mediterranean in three stages: firstly with the arrival and disembarkation of arrivals on the Greek North Aegean islands, secondly with their transfer to the mainland and urban centers (Athens and Thessaloniki), and thirdly with their transit journey through the Western Balkans. Main destinations included Germany, Sweden, Austria and the Netherlands.

Despite the absence of a unified approach, most EU Member States, such as Hungary, initially allowed transitory movement through their territory, and recorded significant first-time asylum applications (see Chart 1). However, from the chart, it is clear that Greece only began recording significant numbers post 2016, as a result of the EU-Turkey Statement (March 2016). The numbers increase, as they reduce in Sweden and Germany largely due to the closure of the Western Balkan route and the implementation of the geographical containment on the Greek islands (part of the EU-Turkey Statement)

Chart 1. First time asylum applicants per country, 2014-2019



Source: EUROSTAT 2020, author’s compilation

However, the EU response fell short considering the scale of arrivals. This is evident in the relocation programme of 2015 (initially intended for 120,000 people) that was adopted with a qualified majority, despite the dissent of Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Romania.

*“There is not enough Europe in this Union.
And there is not enough Union in this Union”.*

Former EU President Jean Claude Juncker, September 2015

² We would like to thank the numerous individuals that agreed to be interviewed for this research. Though they remain anonymous this report is only made possible due to their input.

³ UNHCR Operational Portal available from <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Kasparek, B. and Speer, M. (2015): *Of Hope. Hungary and the Long Summer of Migration*. available at bordermonitoring.eu.

The ‘refugee crisis’ revealed significant differences in how member states interpret solidarity, burden sharing but also hospitality and humanitarianism. Hospitality, in addition to solidarity,⁶ dominated public policy discourses in different ways. A ‘welcome’ policy was adopted in 2015, largely in response to the unfolding situation of thousands arriving at the external borders of the EU.

This was prompted, in part, by Chancellor Merkel’s statement, “*Wir schaffen das*” (“We can do this”) during a press conference in early September 2015. Civil society also played a crucial role driving protest movements throughout Europe, which claimed rights for people seeking asylum.⁷ The value of hospitality was extensively acknowledged in official state discourse in countries like Greece and Germany, but also as a means of analysing how the European ‘refugee crisis’ and subsequent response was unfolding.⁸

The present report focuses on hospitality and examines the practices and actions of the civil society, particularly NGOs, across Greece, Germany, Sweden, Hungary, and Poland. The aim is to identify how civil society organizations understood but also implemented the value of hospitality amidst the evolution of the European ‘refugee crisis’.

Hospitality has been historically “a religious and ethical duty, a sacred commandment of charity and generosity to assign strangers an – albeit ambivalent – place in the community. With the development of the modern nation state, these ethical obligations have been inscribed into the procedures of public political deliberation, legal procedures and administered law that determine rights and duties”.⁹ Hospitality is offered by the host, to the guest. It has been a ritual and a social custom practice for centuries,¹⁰ it can be offered by states to citizens of another polity with the host unable to deny entrance to a foreigner (endowed with legal status of citizenship) if it would lead to the demise of the stranger¹¹, it can refer to a friend but also to an enemy (*hostis/hospis*)¹².

*The term hospis, as the Greek xenos and xenia, refers to an alliance, a reciprocal pact which could be transmitted and inherited to those who follow. The term hostis can refer to the stranger but also the enemy. In the Homeric poems the stranger, is also a guest, situated outside the legal and political institution of the city state. However, the guest can transform also to a threat. This ambivalence, the possibility the guest transforms to an enemy, results in what Derrida coins *hostipitality* – a moment when “the cosmopolitan project becomes mired in hostility rather than hospitality”* and where the guest is offered an in-between space in the receiving society, between integration and exclusion.*

*Kate E. Tunstall (Ed) (2012). *Self-evident truths? Human rights and the Enlightenment*. The Oxford Amnesty Lectures) Bloomsbury Academic.

⁶ For an analysis of the EU Value framework during the refugee crisis see Dimitriadi, A. & Malamidis, H. (2019). Talking of Values: Understanding the Normative Discourse of EU Migration Policy. *NOVAMIGRA-Deliverable D2.1: Norms and Values in the European Migration and Refugee Crisis*. <https://doi.org/10.17185/dupublico/49360>.

⁷ Della Porta, D. (2018). “Contentious Moves: Mobilising for Refugees’ Rights.” In *Solidarity Mobilizations in the “Refugee Crisis”*. *Contentious Moves*, edited by D. Della Porta, 1–38, Cham: Springer International Publishing.

⁸ DeBono, D. (2019). Plastic hospitality: The empty signifier at the EU’s Mediterranean border, *Migration Studies*, 7 (3):340–361 <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnz015>.

⁹ Friese, H. (2010). The Limits of Hospitality: Political Philosophy, Undocumented Migration and the Local Arena. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 13(3), 323–341.

¹⁰ Boudou Benjamin, « Éléments pour une anthropologie politique de l’hospitalité », *Revue du MAUSS*, 2012/2 No 40, p. 267-284.

¹¹ In its contemporary format this is the principle of non-refoulement. See Kant, Immanuel. *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*.

¹² Honig, Bonnie (2008) ‘Another Cosmopolitanism? Law and Politics in the New Europe’, in Seyla Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism: Hospitality, Sovereignty and Democratic Iterations*. Expanded Tanner Lectures with Commentaries by Jeremy Waldron, Bonnie Honig and Will Kymlicka, pp. 102–27. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hospitality allows for the construction of a relationship between guest and host which includes generosity, solidarity but also hostility, rejection and a demarcation of boundaries that cannot be crossed. Therefore, it has limits and can result in membership to a group but also exclusion from one.¹³

Hospitality is intrinsically linked with asylum. From the ancient work of Homer *Odyssey* to the *Suppliant Women* in Aeschylus's tragedy, hospitality is the measure that distinguishes "barbaric" from "civilised" societies.¹⁴ It is also an act that acknowledges the individual, who is seen and recognised by the State, either as an asylum applicant, a recipient of international protection or an individual whose application for protection has been rejected.

'Asylum', as the most recognized form of hospitality provided by a State, is a process which includes different stages. In almost all the ancient tragedies, deliberations take place on whether to accept the suppliants (i.e. asylum seekers) to the city and the obligations that derive from such an act. The contemporary analogy to this exists and has been codified in the European asylum law. 'State-led hospitality', a form of hospitality governed and offered by the State and therefore bound by bureaucratic rules and procedures, manifests through the Reception Conditions Directive.¹⁵

The Reception Conditions Directive outlines the minimum standards Member States ought to uphold regarding the reception of applicants in need of international protection and those deemed to be vulnerable. The Directive incorporates standards specifically regarding housing, food, clothing, health care, education for minors and access to employment under certain conditions. Thus, it can be inferred that from the perspective of the legislature, reception should provide an asylum applicant with the assistance necessary to remain in the country. This often serves as the first step to integration since many of the asylum applicants will receive international protection and remain in the host countries. Integration in democratic regimes, as defined by the European Commission in the early 2000s, "presupposes the acquisition of legal and political rights by the new members of a society, so that they can become equal partners ... [but it] can also mean that minority groups should be supported in maintaining their cultural and social identities, since the right to cultural choices is intrinsic to democracy".¹⁶ Our approach to migrant integration is both practical and contextual. Of fundamental importance for the ability of migrants to successfully claim and achieve equal treatment is

"the acquisition of basic tools, foremost the learning of the host society language, a task that engages the responsibility of national and local authorities to make the necessary provisions for it. Integration also presupposes that state authorities actively and resolutely enforce equality and non-discrimination. At the same time, national and local authorities must also take into account the specific needs and conditions experienced by different migrant groups – an issue that may sometimes require special efforts on their part, if not distinctive and even temporarily preferential treatment".¹⁷

As highlighted in the present report, Germany and Sweden have established practices, in contrast to Greece, Poland and Hungary.

¹³ Friese, H. (2010).

¹⁴ Isayev, E. (2018). 'Hospitality.' *Migration and Society* 1(1), pp 7-21.

¹⁵ Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32013L0033>. European Commission. Reception conditions available from https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/reception-conditions_en.

¹⁶ Anagnostou, D., Kontogianni, A., Skleparis, D. and Tzogopoulos, G. (2016). Local Government and Migrant Integration in Greece. Mainstreaming and Monitoring Immigrants' Integration in Local Government in Greece (LOMIGRAS) project. Athens: ELIAMEP & EEA Grants.

¹⁷ Anagnostou, D., Kontogianni, A., Skleparis, D. and Tzogopoulos, G. (2016). p. 14.

In addition to the first level of hospitality, which is provided by the state as a result of its legal obligation, a second level of hospitality is the product of 'humanitarian ethos'.¹⁸ It is grounded on a shared sense of humanitarianism and ethical responsibility to assist, and is predominantly offered by civil society organizations, NGOs, and individuals, with varying levels of bureaucratization, professionalization, and expertise.

We consider this second level of hospitality as social hospitality, since it is not administered by the State and seeks to produce social relations between guest and host. Similar to State-led hospitality, it constructs barriers and seeks to mediate the guests' behaviour, particularly in relation to integration. Depending on the country in question, social hospitality can also move beyond the humanitarian ethos into a form of resistance (e.g. squats organised by civil society groups), either due to the absence of State-led solidarity or due to the presence of State-led 'hostility' towards the guest – with 'hostility' referring to deterrence measures, ranging from fences to refusal to receive asylum seekers.

State-led and social hospitality manifest themselves in the form of reception. Reception addresses the immediate needs of those arriving, drawing from EU and international human rights law to offer social and medical aid. For countries like Greece, at the external borders of the EU, this type of reception is known as 'first reception', indicating the initial assistance offered on arrival and during the asylum application. However, as de Bono¹⁹ highlights, 'first reception' in the EU focuses on identifying, registering, and classifying arrivals, as seen in hotspots since 2015. A second stage in the process is 'secondary' reception, which refers to the access to services beyond the initial emergency (see Reception Directive above). 'Secondary' reception typically applies to recognized refugees and is linked with integration, i.e. the provision of assistance for the settlement of recipients of international protection in the country. Acknowledging that this distinction between 'first' and 'secondary' reception does not exist as such across the EU, the report adopts the general term reception, utilizing 'first reception' only in reference to Greece.

Before we proceed with the analysis of how hospitality was understood by civil society during the 'refugee crisis', we provide information about the methodological approach that enabled us to identify the respective practices followed by the studied NGOs.

2. Methodology and outline of report

The report explores the different meanings of hospitality adopted by NGOs. The report is based on desk research (online sources, media articles and relevant bibliography) as well as insights from field research primarily conducted in Greece (ELIAMEP), complemented by fieldwork in Poland, Hungary, Sweden and Germany. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted in Athens over a period of three months in the spring/summer of 2019. The organizations explored had been identified earlier on through desk studies seeking to determine different 'value agents'²⁰ and the practices and strategies they use to transmit these values. We sought to sample NGOs offering a wide range of services to asylum seekers (see table 2), including accommodation, interpretation, cultural training, and legal assistance – all critical elements in reception. Religious and gender-oriented NGOs were also approached to identify if and how their values and services differ. Previous research²¹ had identified that hospitality

¹⁸ Barnett, M. (2011) *Empire of humanity: a history of humanitarianism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. pp. 10-11.

¹⁹ DeBono, D. (2019).

²⁰ 'Value agents' is a term used by EU policy-makers to refer to a variety of individuals responsible for transmitting 'European values' to newly arrived refugees and immigrants. See Goździak M. E. and I. Main (2019). Summary report on value agents in public and civil society institutions. Deliverable D3.1 NOVAMIGRA project. <https://doi.org/10.17185/dupublico/70631>.

²¹ Goździak M. E. and I. Main (2019).

offered by NGOs was in fact a critical component of the ‘management’ of the ‘crisis’. Hospitality was one of the values identified by the NGOs. Information on hospitality practices were also provided based on empirical research conducted in Poland and Hungary (Center for Migration Studies (CeBaM) at the Adam Mickiewicz University (AMU) as well as Sweden and Germany (Malmö Institute for Studies of Migration, Diversity, and Welfare (MIM), Malmö University). Interviews were anonymized.

The role and responsibility of the host is prolonged when hospitality is understood as part of long-term settlement that can ultimately result in integration. However, these responsibilities vary from host to host. As field research shows, interviewees clearly distinguish between social and State-led types of hospitality.

Hospitality has two dimensions: first, how open you are and what you do for those entering the country, and second, how you provide them with accommodation in an organized manner.²²

This distinction is embedded in the report that seeks to outline social hospitality, i.e. the hospitality provided by non-State actors. Of those, a choice was made to focus on professional NGOs that have been providing services since the early days of the ‘refugee crisis’. The main reason is that the NGOs offering professional services to asylum seekers have a clear mandate and an embedded value-framework in their work that determines how they approach hospitality and what services they offer.

Table 1. Sample

Public institutions	Service provision
Municipalities	Accommodation, transportation, general service provision
Civil society organizations	Service provision
Humanitarian NGOs	General service provision (food, clothes), accommodation, transportation, interpretation, legal assistance
Medical NGOs	Healthcare, advocacy
Faith-based organizations	Basic service provision (food, clothes) and language training; Democracy/advocacy training; Continuous clothing drives; advocacy on national level and involvement in ecumenical advocacy for humane asylum politics
Youth organisations	Training, advocacy for rights of second-generation migrants Protection, accommodation, advocacy, training courses, basic service provision (food, clothes)
Gender-oriented NGOs	Cultural training courses, language courses, day care, vocational training courses, psychological support

The report is structured on the basis of the themes identified in the empirical fieldwork, namely the different levels of hospitality, with a focus on accommodation. The latter was identified by interviewees as the most critical component of hospitality.

Acknowledging that the countries studied are different in how they have experienced the ‘refugee crisis’, but also in terms of capacity and level of NGO deployment, the report draws insights and relevant information where appropriate. However, the purpose here is not to compare, but rather to

²² Former Senior member of Athens Municipality, Interview 10, Athens, 10 July 2019.

show, where possible and relevant, how NGOs implemented hospitality through reception practices. The national framework and geography are also important and result in different input from the countries. The report does not seek to offer a comprehensive analysis of the different national frameworks and practices. Instead, it serves to illustrate that hospitality by professional NGOs across the different countries is in one way or another engrained in the practices of reception. Similarly, hospitality implemented by social movements (for example grass root movements) is not included in this report, as it is a distinct subject and widely researched.²³

The report neither discusses events between 2015 and 2018 nor the long history of reception and migration in the studied countries, as there is a wealth of material available already, both for countries with long history of receiving asylum seekers (Germany and Sweden) as well as for countries that stood on the opposing end in the period 2015-2018 (Poland and Hungary). It also does not examine EU policies and hospitality. From an EU perspective, hospitality manifested itself with the proposal for an emergency relocation mechanism to assist Greece and Italy. The European Commission proposed to relocate 160,000 people in clear need of international protection and requested an additional 20,000 places be approved. The Visegrad Four objected to the compulsory scheme that had passed with a qualified majority vote, while the overall number of those relocated from Italy and Greece fell short of envisaged numbers.²⁴ Initially, the proposal included Hungary in the relocation mechanism, acknowledging that it had already received a significant number of asylum applications. However, the Hungarian government argued against the proposal since, “Hungary is not a frontline country,” and “almost all migrants who arrive in Hungary first stepped onto EU soil in Greece”.²⁵ In the end, relocation was not successful.

Rather than looking at the supranational levels, we chose to delve into the practice of reception by NGOs. This is primarily due to the fact that NGOs responded early on with concrete assistance to those arriving at the external borders, an assistance that continued throughout their journey in the Western Balkans, Hungary, Germany, and Sweden and was often complementary (as in the case of Germany and Sweden) or in opposition (Poland, Hungary) to official government policies. NGOs provided a range of services, at times critical to the survival of asylum seekers along their journey, and often were the first respondents during search and rescue and disembarkation, particularly at the external borders. Thus, their role has been critical throughout the time period in question.

Regarding terminology the report refers to asylum seekers and/or refugees, where applicable. Particularly State-led hospitality in the member states tends to focus on asylum seekers (in line with the Common European Asylum System) and recognized refugees. Social hospitality particularly on entry (first reception) is indiscriminate of one’s status; it focuses on offering initial assistance irrespective of how one is ‘classified’ by the official authorities (e.g. economic migrant, asylum seeker). For this reason, we opted to utilize the terms asylum seeker and refugee, with the latter utilized only where services are offered specifically to recipients of international protection.

The report begins with a brief overview of the countries researched, and the response of national governments and civil society. State-led reception is briefly explored, serving as a brief introduction for the reader to the countries discussed in the report. Section three (3) and four (4) discuss aspects of social hospitality, i.e. the reception services offered by NGOs on arrival to the different countries of the report. Special focus is on accommodation in section four (4), since this has been the most critical

²³ Della Porta, D. (eds) (2018). *Solidarity mobilizations in the ‘refugee crisis’*. London/New York: Macmillan Publishers Limited; Dadusc, D. Grazioli, M. & Martínez A. M. (Eds). (2019). Citizenship as inhabitance? Migrant housing squats versus institutional accommodation [Special Issue] *Citizenship Studies*, 23:6, 521-539, DOI: [10.1080/13621025.2019.1634311](https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2019.1634311).

²⁴ Dimitriadi, A., & Malamidis, H. (2019).

²⁵Zalan, E. (2015). Hungary rejects EU offer to take refugees. available at <https://euobserver.com/migration/130217>.

challenge for Greece. Most countries receiving asylum seekers have a national reception system in place. Thus, State-led hospitality is pre-established as regards accommodation. Greece is an exception to this, since it is the only country that both received migrants but also lacked State-led hospitality. Instead, and unlike any other EU Member State, the limited reception offered was done in partnership with International Organisations and NGOs. For this reason, the partnership between State-led and social hospitality is explored in more detail in Section 4.1 when looking at accommodation. The latter is one of the main steps in the reception process. Integration-related services are another key element discussed in section 4.2. Section five (5) examines the guest-host relationship and how the roles are (re)negotiated as hospitality unfolds. The policy report concludes by offering a set of recommendations, largely drawn from the interviews and issues discussed with NGOs, but also by drawing from the overall research that has taken place in the NOVAMIGRA project.

3. Hospitality at national levels

Prompted by either State and/or civil society initiatives, in 2015 hospitality emerged in the countries of destination and along the different migratory routes. Each EU Member State reacted differently depending on their capacity, the number of arrivals, and their position in the migratory journey, i.e. whether they were a country of destination or transit. Countries that did not consider themselves destinations, including Greece, Serbia and Slovenia, initially linked hospitality with transit. Transit implies a continuation of the migratory journey; thus, hospitality is short-term. For example, Greece has encouraged transit as an ‘escape’ to shift the ‘burden’²⁶ to the ‘traditional’ destination countries for more than a decade. The Western Balkan countries, similarly, adopted a hospitality discourse until the gradual closure of the route.²⁷ On the one hand, hospitality enabled these countries to show they were in line with European values and, on the other hand, the ‘cost of hospitality’ was short-term since migrants sought to continue their journey elsewhere. In fact, continuous movement was encouraged and expected from the entry point (Greece) to Hungary and Slovenia.

Hospitality practices differed between Member States. In some cases, like Germany and Sweden hospitality is embedded in the formal governance of reception. In contrast, Poland and Hungary lacked State-led hospitality, though social hospitality was offered by NGOs and civil society where possible.

Hungary only emerged in 2015 as a country on the receiving end of a significant number of asylum applications from third country nationals (see chart 1 above). It is the first country in the EU to undertake a major restrictive turn on migration due to the European ‘refugee crisis’. Since 2015, and with the exception of the Helsinki Commission that provides legal representation to asylum seekers in Hungary, no other services are offered.²⁸ Nonetheless, during the summer of 2015, many Hungarians assisted refugees in their journey through Hungary to other European countries, sharing and preparing food, organizing trips onward, while a few offered to host refugees in their homes. For example, volunteers in Debrecen managed to solicit a lot of assistance, including financial resources to cover train tickets for refugees going on to Austria from Arabic-speaking students studying at the local university.

²⁶ Papadopoulou-Kourkoulou, A. (2008). *Transit Migration: The Missing Link Between Emigration and Settlement*. Palgrave Macmillan.

²⁷ Sicurella, F.G. (2017) The Language of Walls Along the Balkan Route, *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 16 (1-2): 57-75.

²⁸ The only additional services available to immigrants focus on some specific categories of immigrants, such as Hungarians from Venezuela and Chinese immigrants on investor visas. See Goździak E.M. (2019) Using Fear of the “Other,” Orbán Reshapes Migration Policy in a Hungary Built on Cultural Diversity. Migration Policy Institute available at <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/orban-reshapes-migration-policy-hungary>.

The hospitable (*ksenios*) Zeus, the king of the Gods, is the ultimate symbol of hospitality. He is associated with the welcoming of strangers in a foreign land, destined to be transformed into a friendly and homely space. It is worth noting that interviewees often defined hospitality by referring to the role of *filoxenia* (φιλοξενία) and asylum (ἀσυλο) in Ancient Greece, as well as to Aeschylus's play 'The Suppliants'

In Poland, a country that did not experience an increase in asylum seekers during the period in question, the field research reveals that many people engaged in practices supporting refugees already residing in the country²⁹ as well as organizing financial resources for those in other locations. There is a culture of hospitality in Poland reflected in a Polish proverb that says, "Guest at home, God at home". On Christmas Eve, Poles leave one extra table setting at dinner for the Stranger who might appear out of nowhere and should be welcomed. Poles also claim hospitality as one of their national traits, however this did not translate into the country's willingness to welcome refugees.

In Greece, the absence of a State-led reception system in 2015³⁰ meant that the responsibility fell on NGOs³¹ and informal grass-root initiatives to assist arrivals. However, unlike Hungary and Poland, they were supported in this by the political narrative, which portrayed Greece as a hospitable country with Greeks "rescuing the shipwrecked, welcoming those landing on their shores and looking after their immediate needs".³² Greece lays claim to a notion of hospitality rooted in the ancient past. Memories of the forced relocation during the Greek-Turkish population exchange in 1923 have also played a significant role in accepting refugees in Greece.³³ However, the discourse on hospitality differs from the practice. Over the past twenty years, Greece has failed to develop consistent and holistic approaches to migration from reception to integration.³⁴ Although hospitality is engrained in the historical narrative of Greece, State-led hospitality is lacking, with civil society carrying the burden of the response since 2015.

Germany did not consider itself a country of immigration, nor did it aspire to become one.³⁵ It is only in 2005, that the *Zuwanderungsgesetz* (Immigration Law) comes into effect introducing the principle of support and demand – that "refugees should not only receive welfare benefits but they should be pushed to actively participate".³⁶ Nonetheless, Germany has strong State-led hospitality in regard to reception, particularly for vulnerable categories, such as unaccompanied minors and women. In early 2015, Germany also adopted a narrative of hospitality. The *Willkommenskultur* or 'welcome culture' came to define an attitude of kindness and hospitality towards asylum seekers. This was supported by the official discourse which urged Germans to accept asylum seekers and see them as a long-term benefit to society³⁷ but also by the suspension of Dublin returns for all Syrians as early as August 25th

²⁹ Womack H. and Kostrzynski, R. (2019). *Young Tajik family finds home with Polish politician*. UNHCR Central Europe. available at <https://www.unhcr.org/ceu/11226-young-tajik-family-finds-home-with-polish-politician.html>.

³⁰ Dimitriadi, A. Sarantaki, A-M. (2019): National report on the governance of the asylum reception system in Greece. In *CEASEVAL RESEARCH ON THE COMMON EUROPEAN ASYLUM SYSTEM* (20). Available online at http://ceaseval.eu/publications/WP3_Greece.pdf.

³¹ Most NGOs are not funded by the Greek State. They receive private donations and EU-funded projects through the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) or grants by private institutions.

³² Douzinas, C. (2017.) *Syriza in Power: Reflections of an Accidental Politician*, Polity, p. 212.

³³ Anastasopoulou, M. Echoes of memories of forced displacement: The case of the Greek island of Lesbos. In E.M. Goździak, I. Main, & B. Suter (Eds.) *Europe and the Refugee Response: A Crisis of Values?* Abington: Routledge.

³⁴ Dimitriadi, A. (2017a). "The Long Road to Integration - Possibilities and Obstacles for Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers in Greece". In: H. Giusto, I. Graus, E. Laino, E.M. Schneider (Eds) *Story of a Journey Across Europe: From First Reception to Integration of Migrants*. Foundation for European Progressive Studies – SOLIDAR, pp.14-35, p. 17.

³⁵ Rietig, V. and Müller, A. (2016) *The New Reality: Germany Adapts to Its Role as a Major Migrant Magnet*. Migration Policy Institute. available at <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/new-reality-germany-adapts-its-role-major-migrant-magnet>.

³⁶ Hamann, U. and Karakayali, S. (2016). Practicing Willkommenskultur: Migration and Solidarity in Germany. *Intersections*. *East European Journal of Society and Politics*, 2: 4, 69–86. pp. 81.

³⁷ The Guardian (2015) *Merkel urges Germans to see refugee arrivals as an opportunity*. available from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/31/merkel-urges-germans-to-see-refugee-arrivals-as-an-opportunity-in-new-year-address>.

2015. Volunteers at train stations welcomed arrivals while cheering, singing, and applauding. Germans offered temporary accommodation in their private homes and organized drives for clothing and other necessary items. Germany has a long history of receiving asylum seekers. On September 5th 2015, Chancellor Merkel gave her famous statement on ‘*Wir schaffen das*’ (‘We can do it’) shortly after announcing that Germany would admit Syrian refugees irrespective of their registration in the first country of arrival.³⁸ She further declared that “If we now have to even start apologizing for showing a friendly face in emergency situations, then this is not my country.”³⁹ It was an unprecedented step for a country that has been a hesitant host to migrants and refugees for decades.⁴⁰

Hospitality for asylum seekers is also engrained in Sweden. A major receiving country of both asylum seekers and resettled refugees since the late 1970s and 1980s, Sweden became known as a humanitarian heaven, embracing people fleeing persecution from Cold War blocs.⁴¹ Hospitality was also prevalent in 2015. Various initiatives welcoming refugees popped up across the country, with volunteers providing “clothes and refreshments, sanitary products and toys, information and practical guidance, money for their continued journey or shelter for the night”⁴², but also by facilitating initiatives to support their integration. They organized language cafes, CV writing courses, sports and other leisure time clubs, and parenting courses. Folk high schools (adult education schools) received funding from the government in 2015 to arrange language and civic orientation courses for groups of newly arrived asylum seekers. The country had shown hospitality towards Syrian refugees much earlier than the ‘refugee crisis’, e.g. in 2012 Sweden received at least 14,000 Syrian refugees. The statement of the Swedish Prime minister in 2015 is indicative of the importance placed on hospitality, “My Europe does not build walls” and “we should not be speaking about a maximum number of asylum seekers, we help everybody in need”.⁴³

4. The shift in hospitality

By November 2015, a series of events triggered a shift from hospitality to more restrictionist practices at national level. Different drivers affected different countries. The high number of asylum seekers that were received in only a few countries (Sweden and Germany), the concerns over transforming into a multicultural society (Hungary) or national elections with religion serving as a critical driving force (Poland),⁴⁴ as well as the terrorist attacks in Paris on November 2015 and the reports of sexual assault on New Year’s Eve in Germany in 2015-2016 resulted in a backlash towards migrants. This newfound ‘hostility’ took different forms from outright attacks on housing for asylum seekers (Germany), border closures and a rise in anti-immigrant discourse (Hungary), to social benefit limitations for asylum seekers (Germany and Sweden), and geographical containment and detention for all irregular arrivals (Greece). Hungary initiated restrictions on migration early on, due to the European ‘refugee crisis’ with the aim to deter all irregular entries including asylum seekers. On October 2015, Hungary, announced the completion of the 348 kilometres fence along the Croatian border and proceeded with border closures. It

³⁸ Vox (2015). Germany just did something huge for Syrian refugees — and for the future of Europe. available at <https://www.vox.com/2015/8/28/9220395/germany-migrant-crisis>; Holmes, S. M., & Castañeda, H. (2016). Representing the “European refugee crisis” in Germany and beyond: Deservingness and difference, life and death. *American Ethnologist*, 43(1), 12–24.

³⁹ Monath, H. (2015). "Dann ist das nicht mein Land" *Der Tagesspiegel*. available [from https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/angela-merkel-rechtfertigt-fluechtlingspolitik-dann-ist-das-nicht-mein-land/12325248.html](https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/angela-merkel-rechtfertigt-fluechtlingspolitik-dann-ist-das-nicht-mein-land/12325248.html).

⁴⁰ For a discussion on the Welcome culture in Germany see Fleischmann, L. & Steinhilpe, E. (2017). The Myth of Apolitical Volunteering for Refugees: German Welcome Culture and a New Dispositif of Helping. *Social Inclusion* (5):3, pp 17– 27. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17645/si.v5i3.945>.

⁴¹ <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/sweden-restrictive-immigration-policy-and-multiculturalism>.

⁴² Povrzanović Frykman M., Mäkelä F. (2020) *Post-2015 Refugees Welcome Initiatives in Sweden: Cosmopolitan Underpinnings*. In: Hemer O., Povrzanović Frykman M., Ristilampi PM. (eds) *Conviviality at the Crossroads*. Palgrave Macmillan.

⁴³ The Local (2015) Swedish PM: 'My Europe takes in refugees'. Available at <https://www.thelocal.se/20150906/thousands-to-rally-for-refugees-in-stockholm>.

⁴⁴ Goździak, M.E. Main, I. Kujawa, I. (2020).

had previously sealed off the border with Serbia, effectively trapping thousands of asylum seekers along the Western Balkan corridor and diverting the movement to Slovenia. Legislative procedures aiming to criminalize the provision of assistance to migrants as well as the latter's irregular entry in the country (typically an administrative offense in the EU) have been approved by the parliament. The government explicitly argued against multiculturalism, immigration⁴⁵ and passed constitutional amendments that curtailed the right to asylum – actions deemed incompatible with the Asylum Qualifications Directive and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. In response, the European Commission initiated infringement procedures.

Poland stands separate from the other countries regarding the 'refugee crisis'. Poland only received 12,190 asylum applications in 2015, a rapidly declining figure that has reached fewer than 6,000 since. It opposed the arrival of predominantly Muslim refugees, with religion playing a crucial role⁴⁶ and utilized the Paris attacks to highlight the security dimension of the 'refugee crisis'. In his analysis of the role of Poland during the 'refugee crisis', Bachman argues that the Polish society is not anti-immigrant per se but anti-Islam, with religion playing a critical role in the acceptance or rejection of refugees.⁴⁷

Unlike Hungary and Poland, Greece utilized a mixed approach. The country retained the hospitality discourse but in practice sought to deter arrivals and fast track returns of those crossing the maritime borders with Turkey. The shift is predominantly attributed to the closure of the Western Balkan route and the EU-Turkey Statement that transformed the country from a place of transit to a place of immobility. The EU-Turkey Statement of March 2016 *de facto* differentiated the asylum procedures applied in Greece between the islands and the mainland and imposed restrictions and prioritisation of returns. Asylum seekers arriving after 20 March 2016 are subject to a fast-track border procedure (not applicable in the mainland and land border) and excluded from relocation to Europe via the EU Relocation Programme (2015-2018).⁴⁸ Conditions rapidly deteriorated in the hotspots due to an overcrowding of asylum seekers but also a lack of adequate service provision. As a result of the Statement and ensuing legislative reforms to its implementation, the mobility of asylum seekers was restricted and "the options for official recognition of their status were reduced"⁴⁹. In addition, while in 2015 and the first months of 2016 relief efforts focused on assisting people in their transit to the Western Balkans, with the closure of this route Greece was asked to provide reception facilities as well as implement border procedures and large-scale registration and examination of asylum claims. Absence of State-led hospitality in the form of formal reception resulted in a rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation, particularly on the islands.⁵⁰

Greece was not the only country to implement changes, though it is the only country currently implementing two different asylum procedures in its territory. Germany and Sweden undertook amendments and legislative changes in 2015 and 2016, however it is important to note that to this day both countries continue to offer strong State-led hospitality and access to the asylum procedure, particularly in comparison to Greece.

⁴⁵ Juhász, A., Hunyadi, B. and Zgut, E. (2015). Focus on Hungary: Refugees, Asylum and Migration. Available at https://cz.boell.org/sites/default/files/hungary_refugees_asylum_and_migration_web.pdf.

⁴⁶ Goździak, M.E. Main, I. Kujawa, I. (2020).

⁴⁷ Bachman, B. (2016) Diminishing Solidarity: Polish Attitudes toward the European Migration and Refugee Crisis. Available at <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/diminishing-solidarity-polish-attitudes-toward-european-migration-and-refugee-crisis>.

⁴⁸ Petracou, E., Leivaditi, N., Maris, G., Margariti, M., Tsitsaraki, P., and Ilias, A. (2018) Greece – Country Report 2018: Legal & Policy Framework of Migration Governance. *Working Papers Global Migration: Consequences and Responses Paper 2018/04, RESPOND* available from <http://uu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1248305/FULLTEXT01.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Ibid: 67.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

It is worth noting that Germany’s hospitality was neither open-ended nor unconditional. According to Rietig and Müller, “Asylum policies never translated into an unlimited welcome for all – they were merely more open than those of other European countries”.⁵¹ The suspension of Dublin was only for the Syrians and only temporary, from August to October 2015. The first restrictive change came with the Integration Law introduced on 31 July 2016, Its main features were the introduction of mandatory residence requirements for recognized refugees, the re-introduction of the possibility to cut social security benefits below subsistence level for rejected asylum seekers, and the requirement to show integration achievements in order to be eligible for a permanent residence.⁵² In 2017, the legal framework also changed concerning the deportation, monitoring and access to personal data of asylum seekers⁵³ with deportations becoming a priority, with legislative changes continuing in 2019 to facilitate deportations of persons obliged to leave the country.⁵⁴

In response to the increasing numbers, the Swedish government also reintroduced border controls followed by a highly restrictive asylum and reunification law in mid-2016 – a major policy shift. The temporary asylum law limits opportunities for asylum seekers and their family members to be granted permanent residence permits. The law has restricted asylum seekers’ rights to social and economic provisions.⁵⁵ Since 2016, access to benefits, such as free housing and a daily allowance, has been eliminated for rejected asylum seekers or those who have received an expulsion order as well as for those who have ignored the deadline for voluntary return. Originally intended to only be applied for three years, Sweden continues applying it, pending the reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).

Throughout 2015 to 2018, NGOs sought to assist and offer hospitality to asylum seekers, often complementing State reception practices and other times undertaking the initiative in offering a variety of services such as interpretation, medical assistance, and accommodation. The remaining chapters look at how solidarity manifested through NGO practices, i.e. social hospitality, in the reception of asylum seekers.

5. Social hospitality and reception

Social hospitality can be offered at an informal level, through volunteer initiatives and ad hoc group service provisions. It can also evolve to transform into a professional service provider, an experience common across Europe during the ‘refugee crisis’. The present chapter focuses exclusively on civil society and NGO initiatives, which were often complementary to pre-existing national reception systems (e.g. Sweden and Germany). In 2015, many of the countries on the receiving end of migration were overwhelmed by the challenge of first reception, since thousands moved swiftly from entry points to EU Member States, often unregistered. Civil society mobilized to assist, offering different services.

A concrete example of this can be found in Sweden, a country far removed from the external EU borders, that nonetheless, in 2015, practiced registration and identification of arrivals. The project, *Vård på Centralen* (Healthcare at the central station), was initiated by a third-year medical student in Stockholm. Upon hearing of the daily arrival of thousands of asylum seekers to Sweden, she utilised social media to raise donations for medical supplies and motivate volunteers to offer healthcare services. Six

⁵¹ Rietig, V. and Müller, A. (2016).

⁵² Funk (2016).

⁵³ Infomigrants (2017) Germany tightens asylum law: what you need to know. available from <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/3299/germany-tightens-asylum-law-what-you-need-to-know>.

⁵⁴ ECRE (2019) German Parliament passes “Orderly-Return-Law” available from <https://www.ecre.org/germany-parliament-passes-orderly-return-law/>.

⁵⁵ Skodo, A. (2017). Swedish Immigration Is Not Out of Control – It’s Actually Getting More Restrictive. *The Independent*, March 4, 2017.

weeks later, she estimated that around 300 volunteers were involved in either donating over-the-counter medical products or helping to man the station and meet refugees.⁵⁶ Similar examples can be found across Sweden, such as in the city of Malmö and the port of Trelleborg in Southern Sweden, where NGOs, the national and local governments, and the Church of Sweden collaborated in organising the reception of new arrivals. A similar situation unfolded in Germany's train stations, especially in Munich, where interpretation and assistance to newly arrived asylum seekers was offered by the refugee charity, *Willkommen in München* (Welcome to Munich), which offered interpretation in five languages to assist with the government-organised registration.⁵⁷ In many cases, volunteers arranged accommodation in their own homes when the public system was overburdened.⁵⁸

Several of the interviewed organizations in Poland stressed that their main aim was to address refugees' most urgent needs, such as assisting with legal issues, offering packages with toiletries, clothes, and school supplies. Others put a lot of effort in creating safe physical spaces for refugees to rest from the outside world, share similar experiences, and organize any activities they found useful. A few civil society organizations coordinated actions to welcome refugees, either by organizing their accommodation in private homes (Fundacja Ocalenie) or by providing assistance to asylum seekers.

With respect to Greece, in 2015 an unprecedented number of volunteers aided refugees on the islands and on the mainland of Greece. The closure of borders and the EU-Turkey Statement signaled the exclusion of solidarity initiatives "from 'reception' duties (FRONTEX) and the provision of first aid on the islands (now covered by NGOs)".⁵⁹ NGOs assisted with disembarkation, set up of coordination centers on the islands (and later on in the port of Piraeus), and assisted with food distribution, medical care, interpretation, legal assistance, transportation for those having registered and moving to the mainland.⁶⁰

One of the interviewees in Greece, a senior staff member at a medical NGO, explained how during the deployment, an assessment takes place of the 'emergency' to identify not only the needs of those arriving but also those receiving, and the infrastructures available to both.

"In these occasions, we support the society which accepts these people in order to secure, first, the host, so as to secure the guest".⁶¹

In response to an emergency, this level of hospitality ceases when needs are addressed. Additional aid included the daily operation of soup kitchens, shower facilities, distribution of clothing, shoes, bed-clothes and basic household items,⁶² as well as emergency supplies and protection services.⁶³ Nationality identification, interpretation and inter-cultural mediation were crucial services offered by some of the NGOs,⁶⁴ all critical at disembarkation. Particularly in 2015, the assistance offered by NGOs accounted for the swift processing of arrivals, which in turn allowed asylum seekers to leave the islands

⁵⁶ Radio Sweden (23 October, 2015). Volunteers give some refugees their intro to Swedish healthcare. Available at <https://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=2054&artikel=6284963>; Azavedo, C. (January 2016). Dealing with uncertainty: CSOs and government responses to the "refugee crisis" in Sweden, in Jakov Bojovic (Ed.) *Special Report on the civil society responses to refugee crisis*. Available at <https://politheor.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Politheor-Special-Report-on-Civil-Society-Responses-to-Refugee-Crisis.pdf>.

⁵⁷ Conolly, K. (2015). Germany greets refugees with help and kindness at Munich central station. available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/03/germany-refugees-munich-central-station>.

⁵⁸ OECD (2018), Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees in Berlin, Paris: OECD Publishing, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264305236-e>. pp59.

⁵⁹ Oikonomakis, L. (2018). "Solidarity in Transition: The Case of Greece". In D. della Porta (Ed) *Solidarity Mobilizations in the 'Refugee Crisis': Contentious Moves*, Palgrave, pp. 65-98, pp.66-67.

⁶⁰ NGO senior representative, Interview 3 Athens, 11 July 2019.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² NGO Senior staff, Interview 6, 8 October 2019.

⁶³ NGO Staff, Interview 8, Thessaloniki, 23 July 2019.

⁶⁴ Head of NGO, Interview 11, Athens, 12 July 2019.

and continue their journey to the mainland and Western Balkan route. When the hotspot approach was implemented, the same assistance became critical in identifying vulnerable populations (eligible for transfer to the mainland) and for pre-registration of the intention to apply for asylum.

Hospitality, in all its manifestations, is embedded in ‘first reception’ regarding Greece and is integral in covering basic needs, with many interviewees referring to the Maslow pyramid as the guideline for the identification of basic needs.⁶⁵ The NGOs’ service provision can be roughly broken down to three areas; provision of healthcare services, social services and legal aid. Healthcare services consist of medical and mental support during the ‘first reception’ procedures, medical and psychosocial support in ports, camps, prisons and public squares, medical mobile units and vaccination programs, as well as psychosocial counseling. Apart from these broad categories, advocacy is an activity always present in all organizations studied, though it is often described under the terms of social responsibility or awareness raising.⁶⁶ Some organizations concentrate on the rights of long-term migrants, while others pay more attention to the rights of asylum-seekers. Additional actions include the protection of victims of gender-based violence, which is not only limited to NGOs focusing on women.⁶⁷

6. Hospitality and accommodation

Hospitality is embedded in reception, with the latter setting the boundaries of the guest/host relationship envisaged to unfold over a longer period of time. It reflects the period of waiting asylum seekers undergo while their application is being reviewed. In many countries as previously discussed (e.g. Germany and Sweden), it is combined with language and training courses acknowledging that the individual will likely remain in the country for a period of months or years waiting for a decision, and upon it being positive, integration procedures will be initiated. Accommodation is one of the most critical elements of reception. The experiences in this domain vary from one Member State to the other.

In Greece, ‘first reception’, refers primarily to accommodation. This stems from the absence of a formal reception system until 2016, including accommodation structures,⁶⁸ which in turn made the creation of accommodation spaces a critical and urgent component. As one of the respondents from an NGO explained, solidarity and hospitality cannot be limited to statements of support; in other words, the discourse alone is insufficient to address the needs of migrants and refugees.

“Hospitality is the obligation of the State, and therefore it should absolutely be defined, without being based on general claims regarding the hospitable Greeks.”⁶⁹

In the case of Greece, NGOs perceived the absence of State-led hospitality as a structural failure.

The relocation scheme, closure of the Western Balkan route, and pressure from the European Commission urged Greece to offer accommodation to migrants in camps. Although described as temporary accommodation units, refugee camps remain to this day as fixtures on the Greek mainland. Though they constitute a national response which is not the focus of this report, they are important to note

⁶⁵ NGO senior representative, Interview 3 Athens, 11 July 2019.; NGO Senior staff, Interview 6, 8 October 2019; NGO senior staff, Interview 7, Athens, 23 July 2019.

⁶⁶ NGO Senior staff, Interview 6, 8 October 2019.

⁶⁷ NGO Staff, Interview 8, Thessaloniki, 23 July 2019; NGO staff, interview 1, Athens, 9 October 2019.

⁶⁸ see Petracoou, E. et al (2018) and Dimitriadi & Sarantaki (2019).

⁶⁹ NGO staff, Interview 4, Athens, 18 June 2019.

because in all of them, Site Management⁷⁰ was the responsibility of either the International Organisation for Migration or NGOs until 2018.⁷¹ In fact, NGOs quickly became implementing partners for the Greek government as well as for International Organisations (e.g. UNHCR). This is unique in comparison with other countries.

Greece is the only Member State where funding was directly offered from DG ECHO and DG Home to establish accommodation and cash aid assistance and where the synergy between International Organisations and NGOs was crucial in setting up accommodation for asylum seekers. Though the Greek State technically has responsibility over the facilities (including hotspots, camps, apartments, and hotels) in practice, the day to day operation remained, until recently, the responsibility of the implementing partners. The scheme limits the role of NGOs only in the implementation phase, i.e. they do not participate in the design of the project. As such, it leaves little room for flexibility since they “*are obliged to respect some contractual obligations and objectives these programs have*”.⁷² Nonetheless, the partnership between the State and NGO offers an understanding of how hospitality is approached as regards accommodation.

The ESTIA (Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation) program is the only accommodation scheme that seeks to transfer migrant populations from camps to urban centers. It is important to note that the program was led by UNHCR with funding from the European Commission. It was not, therefore, a State-led accommodation system. Until January 2020, almost 25,600 accommodation places had been made available to asylum seekers⁷³ in shelters and apartments. Initially known as Housing and Relocation Program, ESTIA was set up in October 2015 and aimed to provide safe shelter to asylum-seekers that were eligible for relocation.⁷⁴ Two years later, the program opened for all asylum applicants, prioritizing applicants eligible for Dublin reunification and vulnerable groups.⁷⁵ Camps, apartments and hotels were introduced as complementary forms of accommodation in the asylum bill introduced in 2016 (Law 4375/2016).

“We do not consider camps and safe zones as (practices of) hospitality, and we are hesitant to accept hotels as forms of hospitality. But we are closer to it with forms like the semi-autonomous or autonomous accommodation units”,⁷⁶ adds a member of a Greek NGO.

Nevertheless, all those accommodation schemes seem to occupy a rather temporal and short-term approach to hospitality. Even ESTIA was not designed for permanent housing, because once the individual receives positive recognition, they have 30 days to leave the accommodation facilities. This applies not only to the ESTIA program but to all accommodation facilities under the purview of International Organisations and NGOs and the Greek State. Those that refuse to leave are evicted. Interviewees⁷⁷ noted inconsistencies in the program, the most prominent being the inability to create bonds

⁷⁰ Site Management Support (SMS) is offered by NGOs and International Organisations. It seeks to ensure protection of and assistance to refugees and migrants living in formal settlements (i.e. State-led reception), as well as to monitor informal settlements and advocate on behalf of their residents to ensure assistance. Depending on location and service provider, it can range from advocacy to actual management of services offered in the settlement.

⁷¹ According to the IOM report in October 2019 there were 29 camps hosting around 22,300 people. 8 of these camps were under the management of the Reception and Identification Service, 6 under the Ministry of Defence, 13 were jointly managed both by Reception and Identification Service and the Ministry of Defence, 2 were under the jurisdiction of municipal and regional authorities and 2 refugee camps found to be without any representative at all. Moreover, 27 of the refugee camps were considered Long Term Accommodation Sites, 1 site consisted of 9 hotels and 1 site was considered a transit site. Available at https://greece.iom.int/sites/default/files/October_2019_1.pdf.

⁷² NGO Senior staff, Interview 6, 8 October 2019.

⁷³ UNHCR (2020). ESTIA program. available at <http://estia.unhcr.gr/el/>.

⁷⁴ Dimitriadi, A. (2017), pp.14-35, p.17.

⁷⁵ Kourachanis, N. (2018b) "From camps to social integration? Social housing interventions for asylum seekers in Greece", *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-08-2018-0130>, p.5.

⁷⁶ NGO senior staff, Interview 7, Athens, 23 July 2019.

⁷⁷ NGO Senior staff, Interview 6, 8 October 2019.

with the hosting societies. The fact that those who receive protection are faced with the prospect of eviction (with evictions having started in May 2020) poses a broader challenge to integration. Nevertheless, it is one of the most concrete examples of hospitality in terms of accommodation in Greece to this day.

The temporal element is also visible in the accommodation offered to unaccompanied minors placed in foster family programs. This practice was implemented for unaccompanied refugee minors, with domestic families providing hospitality until the completion of the family re-unification procedure. Again, a specific timeframe is envisaged in the scheme that concludes once family reunification takes place. An interviewee notes,

“This is the ultimate example of solidarity [...], it is very touching, you open the door and you take someone into your home, a foreign kid. And the most amazing thing is that you help the kid while knowing that it isn’t going to be yours! You help it in order to save it from the streets. And after 7 or 8 months, the kid leaves to Germany. This is extremely difficult and there are families that have been destroyed because they could not handle the separation.”⁷⁸

The temporal element is critical here. Though the measure is undoubtedly beneficial, hospitality is linked with temporary stay.

ESTIA apartments and shelters constitute the majority of accommodation places but they are not the only ones. Many NGOs run their own shelters, which can be better positioned within the integration perspective on hospitality. These types of shelters use their own channels of resources, ensuring that they could plan their activities in the long term. One example is the shelter of an organization with capacity up to 40 persons, which implements a community-based approach.

“The meaning of hospitality and the meaning of retribution to the hosting society, the meaning of community hospitality is reinforced. We organize many actions in the shelter which are open to the neighborhood; respectively, other actions may include refugees cleaning the neighborhood’s square. In general, there are efforts to create real bonds between the neighborhood and the refugees.” (NGO staff, Interview.4, Athens, 18 June, 2019)

Taking for granted that migration flows will continue unabated; interviewees note that hospitality includes aspects of caring. The aspect of care is quite important here since it serves to convert hospitality from a one-way process (host provides hospitality to the guest) to a two-way process (guests can complement the needs of host). In the case of Greece, caring enables refugees to better complement the needs of the Greek society and economy. As an interviewee comments, hospitality does not only include accommodation, but also employment, skills assessment as well as other tasks which serve refugees’ integration that should start immediately upon arrival in Greece.⁷⁹ Hospitality endorses the issue of accommodation but it does not limit itself to that; rather, it facilitates the creation of a secure environment, where the provision of food, clothes, education and legal assistance as well as access to healthcare ensure that refugees’ basic needs are met.⁸⁰ In this sense, hospitality is part of social integration and continues all along the integration path until the acquisition of citizenship.

⁷⁸ Head of NGO, Interview 11, Athens, 12 July 2019.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ NGO staff, Interview 4, Athens, 18 June, 2019.

“Hospitality is primarily a procedure to understand that we are not alone on this planet; that we are just a drop in the ocean; that our lives are interconnected. [...] After many wars, we managed to establish some principles in order to understand each other as humans. But I think sometimes solidarity loses its meaning. For us, solidarity is to put yourself in someone else's shoes.” (NGO staff, interview 8, Thessaloniki, 23 July 2019)

Accommodation, however, was a challenge even for countries with an organised reception system. Germany, for example, has structured its accommodation system for asylum seekers in such a way as to offer emergency/reception accommodation (temporary for 6 months), collective/decentralised accommodation (for asylum applicants with high recognition rates) and separate facilities for the vulnerable. However, in cities like Berlin that received a high influx, public venues (including schools, gymnasiums and parts of the former airport building in Tempelhof) were transformed into temporary emergency accommodation.⁸¹ As of March 2018, asylum seekers continued to reside in temporary emergency accommodation, which is characterised by limited private space and lack of infrastructure.⁸² Accommodation is structured and implemented at the local/regional and national level, in partnership with NGOs that do not undertake the same level of responsibility as in Greece.

Field research in Sweden underscores that the unprecedented volume of asylum seekers revealed significant housing shortages. However, in contrast to Greece, where accommodation overshadowed all other concerns, in Sweden and Germany accommodation is one part of a holistic response, which includes language courses, training schemes and cultural integration.

Municipal authorities also played a significant role in the ‘refugee crisis’. In Greece, increased arrivals of asylum seekers during the summer of 2015 resulted in large migratory flows in the northern border, while groups of migrants also concentrated in the urban centres of Athens and Thessaloniki. Municipalities located at respective geographical areas received increased pressure and tried to assist in the accommodation needs of asylum-seekers.⁸³ Athens’ City Council offered a space in the area of Elaionas (an industrial run down area in Athens) to the Ministry for the creation of the first open reception center and set forward an initiative for the coordination, exchange of ideas and best practices of civil society actors.⁸⁴ The municipal authority of Thessaloniki collaborated with civil society organisations and neighboring municipalities. Moreover, it partnered with the UNHCR in the Refugee Assistance Collaboration Thessaloniki (REACT) program in order to provide housing to asylum seekers and vulnerable groups.⁸⁵ In all the initiatives, NGOs were implementing partners, offering services ranging from interpretation to psychological counselling and legal assistance.

In Poland, several city councils also extended hospitality to refugees and proposed to offer them support and a place to live, when the government refused to participate in the allocation of refugees.⁸⁶ They undertook actions to improve the situation of refugees and migrants already residing in the country. It was also possible to fund stipends and bring several Syrians to study at Polish universities (granting them student visas but no asylum) (e.g. in Poznań).

⁸¹OECD (2018), *Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees in Berlin*, OECD Publishing, Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264305236-e>.

⁸²OECD, 2018.

⁸³ Dimitriadi, A., & Sarantaki, A.-M. (2019) , pp. 25.

⁸⁴ Dimitriadi and Sarantaki, (2019): 25-36.

⁸⁵ Dimitriadi and Sarantaki, (2019), pp 25.

⁸⁶ Womack, H. (16 February, 2018) *Polish city leads the way in solidarity with refugees: The city of Gdansk has offered a warm welcome to migrants and refugees*. Available at <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/stories/2018/2/5a83febd4/polish-city-leads-way-solidarity-refugees.html>.

In Sweden, asylum seekers are mainly accommodated in private houses and apartments rented by the Migration Agency or provided by private entities. Though accommodation is provided by the State, NGOs have had the responsibility for organising activities that seek to engage asylum applicants in a meaningful way since 2017, including activities that “promote the target group's knowledge of Swedish, knowledge of Swedish society and the Swedish labour market and health”.⁸⁷ As in Germany, Swedish civil society involvement is complementary to a pre-existing and robust national framework.

7. Hospitality beyond accommodation

Contrary to the mere provision of accommodation, field research shows that a number of NGOs across different Member States moved beyond basic reception practices, offering different social services. For example, in Greece, housing programs often include the provision of schooling equipment as well as creative occupations for minors.⁸⁸ The range of social services provided included the provision of vouchers for supermarkets, the organization of numerous recreational activities in camps, apartments, and NGOs’ premises, cultural mediation actions and organisation of inter-cultural sports events.⁸⁹

These actions aim to introduce asylum-seekers to the social and cultural aspects of the domestic society in order to further ease their respective integration. Inter-cultural mediators are used in order to establish relations with beneficiaries who have quite different social and cultural characteristics. However, their roles differ.

Intercultural mediators are usually permanent residents in the country of arrival with migrant or second-generation backgrounds. They are able to foster trusting relations with beneficiaries and, when possible, are able to introduce aspects of the country’s domestic culture and value system to beneficiaries. Many organizations note that it is quite important for their employees to be of migrant origin, since it enables NGOs to understand in-depth anxieties, stress, fears and the everyday needs of their beneficiaries. One of the NGOs noted that 60% of their employees are migrants

“It’s an interesting experiment because we have multiple issues that emerge,” referring to the cultural and religious differences. The interviewee notes that, *“We address everything from the same starting point; first and foremost, we are human beings. The humanity is common.”*⁹⁰

On the one hand, this experience is quite empowering and emancipatory according to interviewees. The process of helping yourself while helping others also highlights elements of fulfilment, belonging and personal transformation. On the other hand, it is a dynamic process, without rigid roles for senders and receivers.

This is part of a broader understanding of hospitality that aims to produce long-term stay and eventually also integration.

The Church of Sweden, a religious civil society actor aiming for integration, exemplifies this. As the largest civil society organization in Sweden as well as the former State church, it held a key role during

⁸⁷ Asylum Information Database (AIDA). Conditions in reception facilities Sweden. available at <https://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/sweden/reception-conditions/access-forms-reception-conditions/conditions-reception>.

⁸⁸ NGO Senior staff, Interview 6, 8 October 2019; NGO founding member, interview 9, Athens, 1 July 2019; Head of NGO, Interview 11, Athens, 12 July 2019.

⁸⁹ NGO staff, interview 1, Athens, 9 October 2019 ; Head of NGO, Interview 11, Athens, 12 July 2019.

⁹⁰ NGO Senior staff, Interview 6, 8 October 2019.

the period in question regarding the reception of asylum seekers. According to field research conducted in Sweden, refugees were hired by the Lund diocese as inter-cultural mediators between refugees and the parish volunteers. The idea came to fruition following the engagement of a former refugee in the aftermath of the ‘refugee crisis’. There was a need for linguistic services but also for the agent to be culturally familiar with the service recipients in order to carry out work targeting asylum seekers. Eventually, a group of ten former refugees were hired part-time to facilitate the communication between refugees attending church initiatives catering to their needs and the parish volunteers and members who are in charge of these initiatives. According to the fieldwork from Sweden, these ‘bridge builders’ are recruited among refugees who have attended the church initiatives regularly and who have reached a relatively high level of Swedish fluency. The initiative can also be understood as a form of integration effort, as it supplies selected refugees with salaried work. One bridge builder who was interviewed underscored how this engagement, although only for a few hours a week, was much better than other type of ‘integration’ initiatives offered in his municipality.

Cultural understanding can facilitate economic and social integration. The latter is crucial for minors, especially those unaccompanied. In Greece, an initiative was introduced between 2016 and 2018, known as the ‘buddy’ program by an NGO assisting minors. With many refugee shelters in its jurisdiction, the organization assigned each of its volunteers to a minor. Buddies were responsible for guiding asylum-seeking minors across the city of Athens and introducing them to different social and cultural traditions of Greece. In this way, the buddy became the mentor of the respective asylum-seeker. Apart from being of similar age, buddies and minors developed equal relationships, and, as the interviewee admits, eliminated tensions that could arise. This is clear in examples where minors preferred to trust and inform the buddies, and not the social workers working in the shelters, for some health problems they faced.⁹¹

Mentoring programs for migrants organized by NGOs also took place in Poland. One example is MINT (Mentoring for Integration of Migrant Children), which supports newly arrived migrant and refugee youth by coupling them up with local youth, who first underwent a training program. MINT is organized by Fundacja Ocalenie in a partnership with Terre des Hommes Hungary, Organization for Aid to Refugees (Czech Republic), Terre des Hommes Romania, and Slovene Philanthropy (Slovenia).

Overall, hospitality is not limited to the provision of accommodation. Organizations infuse their services with additional cultural and recreational activities, such as photography, theatre and cinema groups, and organizing excursions across the cities.

“Accommodation is a nodal service, but it does not stand alone. [...] hospitality, meaning the provision of accommodation, for us it is combined with case management, taking care of bureaucratic issues, such as social insurance, tax and unemployment agencies, teaching them how to move around the city and going to the supermarket, developing new capacities and skills in order to find employment, etc” (NGO staff, Athens 9 October 2019)

Apart from coupling accommodation with additional actions, another central element accounts for the diversity of NGOs’ beneficiaries. A decade of economic hardship decimated social service provisions. As a result, in most cases NGOs could not afford to focus only on asylum seekers or migrants but needed to offer different service provision to different groups, including Greek citizens. For example,

⁹¹ NGO senior staff, Interview 7, Athens, 23 July 2019.

an NGO in Greece which specializes on the prevention of children's social exclusion does not only focus on the minors. As an interviewee states, "*If parents are unemployed or homeless, then children are de facto affected.*"⁹² Following the same logic, some organizations running shelters for minors, do not differentiate asylum-seekers from other children.

This model of interaction, where different target groups come together, is applied by many organizations. For example, when residing in camps, many women who are victims of gender-based violence do not have any interaction with other women. Bringing all women together when organizing workshops, is a practice which, according to an interviewee, enables the development of mutual respect, the exchange of experiences with other women and a shared sense of empowerment.⁹³ It also facilitates the process of integration, where possible. Thus, a holistic approach is applied that brings reception together with integration.

The provision of language courses, educational activities for human rights, seminars regarding access to the labor market (such as vocational training or instructions on how to write CVs and apply for jobs), as well as seminars on how to search for housing, serve an integral role in hospitality.⁹⁴ The education of asylum-seeking minors and the assistance provided by NGOs regarding their incorporation in the domestic school system are also crucial elements of hospitality. According to our field research in Greece, these actions do not only refer to the incorporation of migrants in the domestic life of the countries of arrival, but also serve to strengthen their general skills, which can be used in other social environments in case of relocation.

Apart from Greece, NGOs hold an active role in integration initiatives in many other European countries. Germany is a country with strong civil society integration initiatives that had been active even before the crisis, often with the support of foreign (institutional) donors. Research for this report in Germany identified civil society implementing integration initiatives, such as organizing schooling for refugee children and general language courses (tandems), as well as creating joint sports associations.⁹⁵ In Poland, some organisations sought to provide practical support to improve the lives of asylum seekers. An example is the group 'With bread and salt' created in 2012 which was transformed to 'Polish Hospitality Foundation' in 2017. They describe their goal as, "actions meaning to improve the lives of immigrants and refugees"⁹⁶ by raising awareness among Polish people and providing reliable social communication.

Sweden is another country where a strong civil society is engaged in recreational activities (culture, sports, politics) with less emphasis on the production of lasting social services. In the past two decades, this has been slowly changing. Since 2000⁹⁷ and 2010 the government has sought to increase the role of civil society in the production of social services. In 2016, civil society's role in integration efforts became more explicitly defined,⁹⁸ including involvement in language training, civil orientation, labour market integration and health. Another crucial aspect is its role in the provision of social contacts. In the fall of 2015, civil society actors were involved in both immediate help (shelter, food, clothes, information) and facilitation of integration. Even after 2015, civil society organisations continue to be involved in facilitation of integration through organizing language cafés, CV writing courses, inclusion in

⁹² NGO Staff, Interview 8, Thessaloniki, 23 July 2019.

⁹³ NGO staff, interview 1, Athens, 9 October 2019.

⁹⁴ *ibid*; NGO founding member, interview 9, Athens, 1 July 2019.

⁹⁵ See also European Website for Integration available at <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/governance/germany>.

⁹⁶ Polish Hospitality Foundation, mission statement available at: <http://polskagoscinnosc.org/en/>.

⁹⁷ Government Offices (2000) *En uthållig demokrati! Politik för folkstyrelse på 2000-talet*. (A sustained democracy! Politics for people's governing in the 21st century). SOU 2000:1. Department of Culture: Stockholm.

⁹⁸ *Government Offices (2016) Palett för ett stärkt civilsamhälle (Palette for a strengthened civil society)*. SOU 2016:13. Department of Culture: Stockholm.p.13.

sport and other leisure time clubs, and parenting courses. According to field research conducted in Sweden, ethnic organizations were involved in integration activities, however their role was not thoroughly supported by the public authorities.

Religious organizations were also active in the provision of humanitarian support across Europe. With respect to Greece, the Orthodox Church of Greece, which is the main religious institution of the country, has a long tradition of philanthropic actions and charity work. Through local congregations, the Orthodox Church provided support to marginalized and impoverished populations, including migrants.⁹⁹ At the same time, Orthodox and Catholic Christian NGOs provided support to refugees. Pope Francis issued an appeal to Europe's Catholics for "every parish, religious community, monastery and sanctuary to take in one refugee family — an appeal that, if honored, would offer shelter to tens of thousands."¹⁰⁰

However, both the Hungarian and Polish clergy chose to ignore the call, even though some isolated priests stood in solidarity with the refugees. Quite noteworthy were the efforts of the Catholic bishop, Miklos Beer, and the Lutheran bishop, Tamas Fabiny, who joined efforts to publicly welcome refugees and show hospitality, with the former hosting refugees in his home. Additionally, the Church of Sweden coordinated clothing distribution, as well as a weekly 'clothes cellar' event. The church eventually set up a meeting place for refugees to practice the Swedish language and receive assistance with bureaucratic paperwork.¹⁰¹

8. Guest and host roleplaying

Previous sections discussed how hospitality can be seen from the perspectives of reception. Throughout the roles of hosts and guests change, as does the hospitality offered, which has limits and boundaries. This was highlighted in an interview with a representative from a municipal authority in Athens who noted that boundaries

"depend on the current capacity and strength of society. In the beginning we [Greece] were in solidarity with asylum-seekers. However, when they started arriving in Piraeus port, we addressed them as 'invasion'".¹⁰²

This view is not marginal among the studied organizations. Thinking unconditional hospitality as 'open borders policy', the head of an NGO in Greece notes that *"we do not advocate for open borders. It is not possible! Do you think that Europeans are ready for open borders? No! So, this (open border approach) is dangerous and I don't agree"*.¹⁰³

However, this view is strongly related with the characteristics that the guests bear, since hospitality should be conditional for migrants but unconditional for asylum-seekers.

⁹⁹ Makris, G. and Bekridakis, D. (2013). The Greek Orthodox Church and the economic crisis since 2009. *International journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 13(2):111-132, DOI: 10.1080/1474225X.2013.793055; Makris, G. and Meichanetsidis, V. (2018). The Church of Greece in critical times: reflections through philanthropy. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 33(2): 247-260, DOI: 10.1080/13537903.2018.1469265.; Molokotos-Liederman, L. (2016). The impact of the crisis on the Orthodox Church of Greece: a moment of challenge and opportunity?. *Religion, State and Society*, 44(1): 32-50, DOI: 10.1080/09637494.2016.1155819.

¹⁰⁰ The Guardian (2015), 'Vatican to take in two refugee families as Pope calls for 'every religion' to help' available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/06/pope-francis-calls-on-catholics-to-take-in-refugee-families>.

¹⁰¹ Goździak, M.E. Main, I. Kujawa, I. (2020).

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Head of NGO, Interview 11, Athens, 12 July 2019.

*“Africa is not possible to fit in Europe! It simply does not fit! There is not enough space and we cannot send messages such as ‘the door is open’. [...] I am telling these for migrants. For the refugees [...] we should open the door directly”.*¹⁰⁴

As the interviewee claims, unconditional hospitality applies for certain guests and not for others – a controversial approach in times when the line distinguishing between migrants and refugees is quite blurred.

The aforementioned instances refer to the first-reception approach. At the same time, hospitality through accommodation acquires a pivotal role. For some interviewees this type of hospitality prepares asylum-seekers to enter the respective societies and ideally result in the asylum-seekers’ integration.¹⁰⁵ As an interviewee from a NGO in Greece notes, this type of hospitality teaches asylum-seekers to *“respect individual property, the place which hosts them, their neighbors, etc.”* and in general, *“it teaches them how things work in Greece”*.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, many organizations note that if hospitality is to be conditioned, different limits should apply to different guests (adults, women and unaccompanied minors).¹⁰⁷

The role of hosts seems to be mostly administrative when dealing with adults and families but much more educational when dealing with minors. More specifically, in the case of adults and families, the setting is already formed and there is not enough room for maneuver.¹⁰⁸ With regards to the Greek case, the role of the host regarding adult accommodation is limited in informing and assisting adults and families with bureaucratic issues regarding their accommodation, while the host intervenes only in cases when there is violation of the accommodation rules. For example, the damage or even destruction of property in asylum-seekers’ accommodation units qualifies for intervention, according to one interviewee.¹⁰⁹ Although such incidents took place relatively often, they are usually a product of insecurity in regard to the length of stay and future options regarding housing, combined with the fact that *“pretty much all adults are diagnosed with psychological problems”*.¹¹⁰ When confronted with such incidents, the people responsible for the damages were not expelled from the housing projects; rather they were transferred to other accommodation units, where the NGO employees were more experienced in dealing with such cases.¹¹¹

On the contrary, in the case of minors, the setting is often considered fluid, therefore, the level of intervention of the host is rather flexible.¹¹² Commenting on the role of the host in apartments for families and shelters for minors, an interviewee notes,

*“The conditions are different. In the first case, there is a clear power structure; it is the parent and the kid. You cannot intervene. You do not have any role to play. You have just to look after if for example the water supply functions, if there is any health issue, if everything is arranged for the kid to go to school. But you don’t have to play the parental role. In the case of the shelter, you get some kind of authority; an authority which a family already has.”*¹¹³

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Athens, 10 July 2019.

¹⁰⁶ Interview.2, Athens, 12 June 2019.

¹⁰⁷ NGO staff, interview 1, Athens, 9 October 2019; NGO Staff, Interview 8, Thessaloniki, 23 July 2019.

¹⁰⁸ NGO senior staff, Interview 7, Athens, 23 July 2019.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ NGO Staff, Interview 2, Athens, 12 June 2019.

¹¹¹ NGO senior staff, Interview 7, Athens, 23 July 2019; Interview 8.

¹¹² Interview 7; NGO founding member, interview 9, Athens, 1 July 2019.

¹¹³ Interview 7.

However, flexibility is not only found at the levels of intervention but is also witnessed in reference to the expectations of the hosts. Commenting on hosting unaccompanied minors, an interviewee from an NGO in Greece notes that,

*“It is completely different to host refugee families or a refugee couple. Because you cannot send a fourteen-year-old minor to work on the construction sector. On the contrary, an adult, who is in a productive age, cannot stay all day long in an apartment. This person needs to make some steps (get a job) in order to get integrated, even if his stay (in Greece) is for a short time. [...] When I say that you should be more flexible with a minor, I mean that I don’t expect the minor to get a job. But you cannot be flexible with a minor in cases where he does not respect the rules of the shelter, such as not showing up on time, not respecting the other kids in the shelter, or destroying the shelter”.*¹¹⁴

With regards to unaccompanied minors, the role of the host seems to be more influential, but it is often limited to offering psychological assistance and guidance (including information from access to school to asylum). The host cannot impose, only suggest and assist. The minimal influence of the host is clear considering the lacklustre results – low school attendance and high drop-out rates. According to an interviewee from an NGO in Greece, *“Many shelters and accommodation structures for minors did not impose any obligation to minors to attend schools. Of course, there were many schools which didn’t want to accept (refugee) children. But this shouldn’t stop anybody, not even the minors themselves, from attending schools.”*¹¹⁵

“We did our best to enrol the children in schools. We had to fight the resistance of many headmasters, parents’ associations, schools’ associations, find open posts, etc. However, many children were registered in schools and after a couple of months, dropped out or they left the country themselves by following dangerous paths, due to the delays of family reunification procedures” (NGO senior staff, Interview 7, Athens, 23 July 2019)

Despite the drop-outs, schooling is critical because it encourages socialisation and offers a certain structure in the daily life of the child.¹¹⁶ Although consultation may not always accomplish its set goals (such as maintaining high school attendance) it is still considered useful and as an element of hospitality.

Hosts differentiate also on how they perceive their role in relation to the recipients of the services. Participants noted that there can be different types of hosts; those who apply a strict approach to rules and regulations and those who seek to apply a friendlier (and thus more relaxed) approach, which deals with the strict or friendly roles of hosts. Some organizations compare their host role with the type of hospitality found in the domestic sphere.¹¹⁷ The latter is usually based on loose structures and is combined with a friendly atmosphere, where hosts aim to establish equal relationships with guests. On the contrary, other organizations adhere to a ‘stricter’ dimension, as is evident in the shelters for minors. According to an interviewee from an NGO in Greece,

¹¹⁴ NGO founding member, interview 9, Athens, 1 July 2019.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Interview 7.

¹¹⁷ NGO staff, interview 1, Athens, 9 October 2019; Interview 7.

“Kids should learn to behave as if they were in a family house and not in prison or in penitentiaries. So, we believe that a shelter needs very precise and strict rules, in contrast with other NGOs which opted for less strict rules.”¹¹⁸

Having a non-strict approach creates an open environment which respects the freedom of movement for tenants. Taking into consideration that the population residing in shelters is subject to continuous changes (beneficiaries of relocation, refugee status, etc.), and the fact that shelters are considered open structures, the consulting approach is not an easy task. At the same time, this non-binding consulting type of hospitality seems to exacerbate certain vulnerabilities; the disappearance of minors is probably the most important ones in the case of Greece.

Minors’ disappearance is a common problem that NGOs involved in accommodation projects face. The significant delays of family reunification procedures leads to asylum-seeking minors to come in contact with smugglers in an attempt to leave the country as fast as possible.¹¹⁹ Research on the drivers and dynamics of Mediterranean migration in 2015 conducted by the MEDMIG project shows the extent to which smugglers are involved in transporting (mostly adult) migrants in and out of countries due to the lack of alternate safe and legal routes.¹²⁰ Our field research also highlighted the use of smugglers by minors, which results in their disappearances from the refugee shelters. The absence of strict regulations in shelters seems to further contribute to the departure of minors:

“We run open shelters. Therefore, there were many instances where we missed children. They couldn’t wait and, in their effort to reunite with their family faster, they used smugglers. So, the shelters have some rules regarding hospitality, some recommendations, such as to take care of the shelter and not paint on its walls. But at the end, they are open accommodation schemes.”¹²¹

On this ground, another interviewee comments that,

“Minors cannot be sent back to their countries of origin. They will stay in Europe. Why do they keep offering us money to create more shelters? [...] They keep rejecting their applications and kids remains in limbo for two years. [...] we (NGOs) are the ones who have to calm down a kid who cries and asks, ‘Why should I go to the Greek school since I want to go to Germany?’”¹²²

Although there are various definitions for the role of hosts and their exhibition of hospitality, their administrative and strict dimensions seem to be best aligned with the first-reception approach to hospitality. In this case, hospitality is addressed in a typical and conventional manner. Hospitality is subject to sets of rules and power relations between a host and guest. The host is approached as the sovereign: they determine the setting in which the guest is hosted and establish the rules for hospitality. The

¹¹⁸ NGO founding member, interview 9, Athens, 1 July 2019.

¹¹⁹ NGO senior staff, Interview 7, Athens, 23 July 2019.

¹²⁰ Crawley, H., Düvell, F., Jones, K., McMahon, S. and Sigona, N. (2016). Destination Europe? Understanding the dynamics and drivers of Mediterranean migration in 2015. *Unravelling the Mediterranean Migration Crisis (MEDMIG) Final Report*. Available at <http://www.medmig.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/research-brief-destination-europe.pdf>, pp. 48-59.

¹²¹ NGO senior staff, Interview 7, Athens, 23 July 2019.

¹²² Head of NGO, Interview 11, Athens, 12 July 2019.

guest is obliged to comply with the rule, whereby the guest loses their agency.¹²³ In particular, hospitality is not necessarily treated as a responsibility that should be fulfilled, but rather as standardized tasks undertaken by the host. Thinking of it as a service provided by organizations, an interviewee comments that hospitality,

“Is quite specific and narrowly defined, it includes power relations and obligations of the persons who are hosted, and therefore, it is far from an open approach of ‘you have the freedom to do whatever you want.’”¹²⁴

On the contrary, hosts who uphold an educational perspective often compare their roles with that of parents and seem to favor an integration perspective on hospitality. However, even this role faces significant limitations in regard to the potential strict exercise of ‘parenthood’.

A final aspect that is central to the guests-hosts roles deals with the role of donors. Field research in Sweden shows that much of the funding (but not all) designated for integration activities by the civil society comes from the government. Overall, the events of 2015 challenged the view of the state as the strong welfare provider and transformed the relationship between the state and civil society into one that was more equal.¹²⁵ However, field research in Greece suggests that donors are often international organizations and EU institutions which play an intervening role. This is most clearly reflected in the case of refugee shelters, where donors want to host as many minors as possible.¹²⁶ This method ensures that fewer kids will be homeless, however, it also augments overcrowding and introduces obstacles to operating smoothly. In this regard, as an interviewee shared, *“NGO employees act more as guards, who restore the order, and less as social workers,”¹²⁷* an approach shared by other organizations as well.¹²⁸

¹²³ M. Deleixhe has argued that hospitable public policies poorly implemented tend to increase the inequality between host and guest since they perpetuate the dependency and deprive the guest of her/his autonomy. Deleixhe, M. (2016). *Aux bords de la démocratie. Contrôle des frontières et politique de l’hospitalité*. Paris: Classiques Garnier.

¹²⁴ NGO staff, Interview 4, Athens, 18 June, 2019.

¹²⁵ Osanami, T. S. Öberg, K. Righard, E. (2018), The role of Civil Society in the Integration of Newly Arrived Refugees in Sweden, in Agnese, L. (ed.) *Newcomer Integration in Europe: Best Practices and Innovations since 2015*. Brussels: Foundation for European Progressive Studies.

¹²⁶ NGO founding member, interview 9, Athens, 1 July 2019.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ NGO staff, interview 1, Athens, 9 October 2019.

9. Conclusions

Hospitality was prevalent in the public discourses and policy responses of many of the countries discussed in the present report. Defined and conditioned both for hosts and guests, it results in a set of formal and informal rules. As an interviewee from Greece suggests, in the past decades elderly people used to visit friends and relatives without informing them beforehand. Back then, the host would take care of the guest, but the guest had to comply with the house rules and respect the fact that hospitality will take place for a short time.¹²⁹ Field research reveals similar narratives expressed in other European countries: Germany claims to have created an image as the ‘world champion of hospitality’¹³⁰; Sweden early on declared its willingness to accept asylum seekers showcasing hospitality. Poles also say that hospitality is their national characteristic; Hungarians consider themselves hospitable and hospitality is regarded as a Hungarian national characteristic, part of the Hungarian ethos. Hospitality in the majority of EU countries during the ‘refugee crisis’ of 2015-2018 is a mixture of boundaries but also their absence. The guests did not ask permission of the host to enter Europe, and the host(s) did not provide a specific framework either. Rather, the latter evolved and changed according to events and triggers.

Throughout 2015, local communities were empowered, made to be hospitable and expressed their solidarity to the asylum seekers reaching Europe. There are various explanations and influences for this mobilization. The shocking pictures of boats and subsequent shipwreck, the composition of the asylum-seekers’ population which consisted of women and children, but also the political leaders who adopted a welcoming approach towards asylum-seekers, motivated communities across Europe to offer assistance. By 2016, a shift became noticeable and as the years progressed, hospitality became increasingly limited to a select few arrivals.

Hospitality continues to take on different forms, both in the State-led context but also in respect to the role of civil society. Civil society organizations under study understand hospitality as temporal, set in a specific time frame and as a reaction to an emergency (in this case, the ‘refugee crisis’). Many civil society organizations offer services that are part of a broader integration framework. However, integration is generally regarded as a subsequent stage following hospitality. Although the 2015 ‘refugee crisis’ concluded according to the European Commission in 2018, the reception of asylum seekers remains critical, especially in countries of first arrival, sustaining the feeling of emergency.¹³¹

The broader political context has changed. The EU-Turkey Statement of March 2016 and the closure of the Western Balkan route altered the landscape, with Greece transforming into a destination country, while Germany and Sweden continue to receive asylum applicants albeit far fewer than before. Hungary and Poland continue to abstain from reception of asylum applicants. Civil society is also under attack for its role in the ‘refugee crisis’. From Hungary to Greece, but also Italy, civil society is increasingly being criminalized or placed under stricter control.

EU policies raised disproportionate pressure for some countries and burden sharing was mostly reduced to economic assistance. The closure of the Balkan route and the EU-Turkey Statement changed the understanding of hospitality. Hospitality was no longer a spontaneous activity offered by NGOs or individuals to asylum-seekers, but rather became an official obligation for some Member-States.¹³²

¹²⁹ NGO senior representative, Interview 3 Athens, 11 July 2019.

¹³⁰ Vollmer, B. & S. Karakayali (2018). The Volatility of the Discourse on Refugees in Germany, *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 16:1-2, 118-139, DOI: [10.1080/15562948.2017.1288284](https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2017.1288284), 2018: 127.

¹³¹ Malamidis, H. (2019b). The EU’s Refugee “Crisis” in Greece, Year Four. Available at <https://blog.novamigra.eu/2019/12/06/the-eus-refugee-crisis-in-greece-year-four/>.

¹³² NGO senior representative, Interview 3 Athens, 11 July 2019.

At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic is creating additional difficulties. Border closures are the new ‘normal’, making access to territory and protection even harder for asylum seekers. EU Member States are increasingly adopting more restrictive approaches to asylum and the benefits offered to asylum applicants. The present study sought to highlight how hospitality was understood and practiced by NGOs in 2015-2018, offering a snapshot of the key issues identified by participants in regard to the practice of hospitality toward asylum seekers. Civil society organizations throughout 2015-2018 and continuing to this day, have worked to assist those seeking protection in the EU. In other words, they have shown and continue to show hospitality on arrival and during their stay in the host countries.

10. Policy recommendations

Hospitality, whether short or long term, requires provision of services. It also requires that access is ensured to the EU and the asylum process. The policy recommendations that follow draw from the input offered by practitioners regarding the reception of asylum seekers in the EU.

- ◆ **Ensure safe access to territory of host countries to apply for asylum:** Hospitality entails access to one’s home, and in the case of asylum seekers, access to a host State. To apply for asylum, one must first be able to access the territory for the submission of an application.
- ◆ **Improve asylum processing time and family reunification procedures:** Our field research shows that both asylum applications and family re-unification procedures can be rather lengthy. Reducing the time required while ensuring a fair asylum hearing, especially for minors, is essential for facilitating short-term hospitality for those fleeing war and persecution.
- ◆ **Incorporation of the role of NGOs in the Common European Asylum System:** Creating linkages with NGOs and incorporating civil society in aspects of the CEAS (e.g. Reception Conditions Directive) would facilitate a better working relationship but would also assist in establishing a common codified framework of operation across the EU in terms of reception.
- ◆ **State and NGO partnerships for national reception systems:** Across Europe, some national reception systems have incorporated partnerships with NGOs in the provision of services; this should be further encouraged and facilitated as it allows for more flexibility and the provision of different meaningful services including training, education, and creative activities. At the same time though, NGOs’ actions should be carefully coordinated in order to reduce instances of overlapping, while they should complement each other in order to draw a holistic pathway to asylum seekers’ integration.
- ◆ **Employment of refugees in reception services:** Our field research shows that inter-cultural mediators, used in various posts, are of great importance for the hospitality of refugees. Therefore, one suggestion is to provide motives for NGOs and state authorities to hire refugees and long-term migrants for posts related to the reception and integration of newly arrived refugees. This strategy may be beneficial for refugees in terms of finding employment, and therefore, assisting with their economic integration. Moreover, this method creates a more hospitable environment for new arrivals, which can also be beneficial for their social integration.

- ◆ **Information campaigns for host societies:** For hospitality to succeed, the host society needs to be informed and ‘educated’ about rights and obligations of both host and guest. It is important to provide best practices and address concerns in such a way as to build the capacity for hospitality and reduce xenophobic sentiments.
- ◆ **Recognition of the skills of refugees and needs of local societies:** Skills assessments for refugees and needs assessments for local communities are essential, in order to ease the process of hospitality and address concerns regarding cultural, social and economic integration.
- ◆ **Encourage provision of social integration measures through civil society:** The provision of language and civic courses, as well as access to welfare services are additional stages for social and State-led approaches to hospitality and crucial for the integration of asylum seekers and refugees.
- ◆ **Inclusion of civil society in consultation processes:** Civil society’s role must be strengthened and supported by the European Commission in the design of policies and identification of priorities at EU and national levels.
- ◆ **Promote the exchange of best practices for the development of formal (State) reception systems across the EU:** This is critical for front line States like Greece that still lack an efficient national reception system
- ◆ **Clearly define the practical application of hospitality at State and civil society levels:** It would reduce divergence between member states but also between NGOs and civil society in the services offered and practices applies. In the long run it could lead to limited harmonisation across the EU of key actors in reception.

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About NOVAMIGRA

Several, partly interconnected crises have profoundly challenged the European project in recent years. In particular, reactions to the arrival of 1.25 million refugees in 2015 called into question the idea(l) of a unified Europe. What is the impact of the so-called migration and refugee crisis on the normative foundations and values of the European Union? And what will the EU stand for in the future?

NOVAMIGRA studies these questions with a unique combination of social scientific analysis, legal and philosophical normative reconstruction and theory.

This project:

- Develops a precise descriptive and normative understanding of the current “value crisis”;
- Assesses possible evolutions of European values; and
- Considers Europe’s future in light of rights, norms and values that could contribute to overcoming the crises.

The project is funded with around 2.5 million Euros under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme for a period of three years.

NOVAMIGRA Consortium

University of Duisburg-Essen (Germany)

Head of team: Prof. Dr. Andreas Niederberger (NOVAMIGRA Coordinator), Prof. Dr. Volker M. Heins

Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy ELIAMEP (Greece)

Head of team: Dr. Angeliki Dimitriadi

John Wesley Theological College Budapest (Hungary)

Head of team: Dr. Éva Gedő, Prof. Dr. Péter Tibor Nagy

Malmö University (Sweden)

Head of team: Dr. Brigitte Suter, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Christian Fernández

University of Milan (Italy)

Head of team: Prof. Dr. Alessandra Facchi, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nicola Riva

University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (France)

Head of team: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Isabelle Aubert,

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (Poland)

Head of team: Dr. Izabella Main, Dr. Elżbieta M. Goździak

Utrecht University (Netherlands)

Head of team: Dr. Jos Philips

Northwestern University (USA)

Head of team: Prof. Dr. Galya Ben-Arieh