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Friday, 13 October 2017 14:54



Action at the Habibi.Works Center in Katsika for their first steps towards a new life as members of Greek society - Important facts about the current situation by Rory O'Keeffe, a humanist and journalist

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While the refugee is back on the agenda due to the increase in flows to the islands, which have again reached a marginal state, Handelsblatt states that "Greece is threatened with a new refugee chaos" in Epirus, which it is not possible to accept a new wave, refugees are preparing for their new life as members of Greek society.

According to the Ministry of Migration Policy, the public administration should serve not only the 30,000 asylum seekers but also the refugees who will remain in our country.

The ministry is about to announce the next Strategic Plan - Roadmap for the integration of asylum seekers and refugees by 2020. However, many immigrants have been staying in the country for more than two years. Sources say that efforts are being made to take measures to integrate immigrants to a horizontal level in education, health and work, in the context of the difficult conditions currently in place in the country.

Rory O'Keeffe, a humanist and journalist who reports on North Africa, the West and the Middle East and the refugee, says "Morning News", "Tens of thousands of men, women and children who have arrived in Greece for the past two years to escape the war, terror and chaos in their homelands, they must now take the first steps to join the Greek society. But as newcomers to the state, how will they know how, or even what they need, to do it?" He observes aptly.

To achieve this, a preparation is needed, which has been initiated at local level through actions. One such event took place on Sunday in Ioannina.

A first step

Refugees from Syria, Iran and a lady from Cameroon gathered at the Habibi.Works Center in Katsika for an action designed to help them discover and prepare for their first steps towards a new life as members of Greek society.

The event was attended by forty refugees from the St. Helen Center, accompanied by representatives of the Second Tree Organization, created to "co-operate" the local community with newcomers and help them get their position, representatives from Ioannina and Katsika and Cleopatra Papakitzou, from KEAN Ioannina, the local branch of an information center for refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable groups in Epirus.

Mimi Hapig, a founding member of the German "Soup and Socks" organization, who created the Habibi.Works Center in Katsika, said: "We are very happy to have hosted this event. It is extremely important because the challenge to a new situation in each case is difficult and of course men, women and children who have left their countries have experienced much more stress and pressure than others have.

"Now that the process of people acquiring full citizenship and restarting an independent life is underway, it is vital that everyone gets information on what to do to live here, how to access them health services and education, how it will receive VAT and what it can not buy or register without it".

Today there was an opportunity for people to do this and interact with other people who live here. It's a good first step for everyone," he concluded.

Fears of the next day

As a result, the main question is how long will the funding of the relevant programs be continued by the EU, especially after the procedures for examining the request have been completed. Then we will talk about refugees who have to look for work so far to ensure shelter and food.

Rory O'Keeffe has the following features: "There are 63,000 refugees in Greece and given that the EU refugee relocation program (which promised to transport 66,400 people from Greece from September 2015 to September 2017, but actually moved only 19,747) was completed, all those who will receive asylum in the EU will be granted to Greece.

While the refugee is underway, thousands of people are expected to leave the current system of 'refugee accommodation' over the next six to twelve months.

However, unemployment in Greece is high (21.3%) and there are fears that without much help, refugees in Greece may not be able to build lives here and become active citizens," he concludes.

Habibi.Works, located in Katsika, is a former furniture and storage center, which has been transformed into a community center for use by refugees and locals. Includes machining and woodworking workshops, sewing room with materials and machines, woodcutting printer, 3D printer, computer center with internet access, kitchen for food preparation and arts and crafts, as well as library, relaxation area, gym and outdoor area recreation.

It is free to be used and fully staffed by volunteers. Among its users, they are men, women and children living in the centers of refugees in Epirus who come to socialize, do things and eat together.

