

Athens, 5.3.2021

Minutes of the 93rd MHPSS Technical Working Group at Babel Day Centre

Chaired by Nikos Gkionakis, Maria Ntetsika

Participants: HIAS, ADDMA, Society of Social Psychiatry P. Sakellaropoulos, Network for children’s rights, MsF VoT, MsF OCG, ARSIS, Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors/ Unit for Social Integration and Support of Unaccompanied Minors, UNHCR, Alexandra Zavos Researcher, MdM, Chamomile project, MVI, Greek Network for the Right to Shelter and Housing, IOM, IRC, GCR, EPAPSY, Spyros Koulocheris, Babel Day Centre

Agenda:

- Discussion with representatives from Helios programme
- Discussion and updates on the current situation
- AOB

<p>Discussion with representatives from Helios programme</p>	<p>IOM: Information about the eligibility criteria and the aim of Helios project as well as information about the results from the implementation of the programme were shared by IOM representatives. More information can be found on IOM website:</p> <p>https://greece.iom.int/en/hellenic-integration-support-beneficiaries-international-protection-helios</p> <p>https://greece.iom.int/en/helios-factsheet</p> <p>Description: In close collaboration with national authorities and experienced Partners, through the HELIOS project IOM aims at promoting the integration of beneficiaries of international protection</p>
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currently residing in temporary accommodation schemes into the Greek society, through the following components:

- **Integration Courses:** Conduction of Integration Courses within Integration Learning Centres set-up across Greece. Each course cycle lasts for 6 months and consists of modules on Greek language learning, cultural orientation, job readiness and life skills.
- **Accommodation support:** Supporting beneficiaries towards independent accommodation in apartments rented on their name, including by providing contributions to rental and move-in costs and networking with apartment owners.
- **Employability support:** Provision of individual employability and job readiness support, including through job counseling, access to job-related certifications and networking with private employers.
- **Integration monitoring:** Regular assessment of the integration progress of the beneficiaries to ensure that they will be in a position to confidently navigate through Greek public service providers once they will exit from the HELIOS project and start living independently in Greece.
- **Sensitization of the host community:** Organization of workshops, activities and events and production of a nationwide media campaign to create exchange occasions between the hosting and the hosted communities, highlighting the value of the integration of migrants into the Greek society.

Objective:

The objective of the project is two-folds:

- Increasing beneficiaries' prospects towards self-reliance and supporting them in becoming active members of the Greek society, and;
- Establishing an integration mechanism for beneficiaries of international protection, resulting to a rotation mechanism for the current Greek temporary accommodation system.

Target group: The target group of the HELIOS project consists of beneficiaries of international protection recognized after 01/01/2018.

Partners: Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Danish Refugee Council Greece (DRC Greece), Greek Council for Refugees (GCR), Solidarity

Now, INTERSOS, Municipality Development Agency Thessaloniki S.A (MDAT), Metadrasi, PLOIGOS, KEDHL

Areas of implementation: The project is implemented throughout Greece.

28097 individuals were enrolled to Helios project and 12669 have received the accommodation support.

A number of questions have been shared with IOM representatives before the meeting. These questions were sent by the members of the MHPSS TWG after request. The answers to these questions that were given during the meeting follow:

- To the challenges faced in cases from RICs who cannot obtain easily (or at all) a proof of residence it was mentioned that HELIOS project is in regular and systematized communication with RIC Camp Managers, while common lists of residents are shared, therefore their inclusion to the HELIOS project is not interrupted to this respect.

-The same goes for the Syrians that pass through the fast-track examination of their asylum demand and for those that they were staying in detention centers until their asylum demand was examined. For those residing in Detention Centers a Special Approval is granted in an *ad hoc* basis – there have been no cases yet of beneficiaries from PROKEKA not to be included in the HELIOS project.

-The delays and difficulties that professionals and refugees faced the last period while trying to conduct the info desk of Helios programme were mainly due to changes that were made in the implementation of the programme of accommodation support. These changes created an extra need since many questions arose, therefore the staff of the help line was overwhelmed. In order to response in this new need and following the extra pressure, HELIOS project apart from the HELIOS Helpline has created, during the pandemic, also channels of communication through phone numbers available in each ILC, while the iom_helios_info@iom.int is always available to beneficiaries, as well.

-The delays in the payment of the monthly rent are due to the change of the implementation of the accommodation support. The programmatic change mentioned at this point was the separation of the **first disbursement** (which is an amount aiming for beneficiaries to cover their first needs when renting an apartment and it serves as extra support from the monthly rental subsidies) in two (2) installments – all rental

subsidies continue to be provided from six (6) to twelve (12) months in a monthly basis.

-The Helios programme is a pilot programme that is ending in June 2021. During the implementation of the programme many obstacles and challenges arose and the IOM staff tried to receive feedback so that the programme will be closer to the current needs of its beneficiaries. For example, special mention was made to the COVID-19 pandemic and how many parts of HELIOS support was transferred to a remote basis.

Moreover, the representatives of IOM informed the TWG about the 5% of the funding for the accommodation support that is addressed to individuals that may not fall into the eligibility criteria of Helios programme but they are in a very vulnerable situation. the 5% buffer concerns the enrollment to the HELIOS project percentage. As regards to the 5% buffer, it aims to include beneficiaries of international protection recognized no earlier than 1/1/2017 who do not fulfill all standard eligibility criteria of the project so to be **exceptionally enrolled** in the project upon relevant assessment by IOM. This assessment will consider several aspects, including but not limited to vulnerability criteria, potential gaps in Reception system, e.g. unavailable Reception facilities in place of arrival, technicalities resulting from data collection, e.g. departure date from the Reception System one day before the notification of the decision granting international protection status – the aim of this percentage of enrolments is to include vulnerable cases as defined in the relevant legal framework, yet not limit such inclusion for cases which may also find themselves in conditions which may impose them into further risks. To this end, please address all relevant cases to iom_helios_info@iom.int, to Ms. Nefeli Filou (nfilou@iom.int) and to Ms. Natalia Xouria (nxouria@iom.int).

MsF VoT: The MsF representative referred to the difficulties that they face in the contact with Helios programme as well as the data that they have gathered for their beneficiaries that concluded Helios programme. Ten individuals of the clinic were enrolled out of which four have not yet found a way to rent an apartment due to not having the money or the people to share the costs with. Six managed to get the benefits and the educational support. However only three managed to complete the six-month period. Out of the three people, all three went back to precarious living conditions. Moreover, he pointed out the difficulty they face with their beneficiaries while trying to be enrolled in the programme, since many of them have not been residing in the formal accommodation scheme.

	<p>Babel: According to the data that have been collected from the staff of Babel, only a few individuals managed to get the accommodation support, two out of them ended up living in precarious conditions after the conclusion of the programme. The importance of close collaboration among Helios and the NGOs was underlined, since up to now there has been noticed a gap towards this direction. To this point it was mentioned that it is of outmost importance for HELIOS project to be in close collaboration with external actors, and to this end relevant meetings have been organized, while HELIOS representatives were present throughout the implementation of the project in various WGs, including the Inter-Agency WG.</p>
<p>AOB</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The following links were shared by colleagues during the meeting: <p>Υπουργείο Μετανάστευσης: Κατέθεσε αίτημα για συνέχιση του προγράμματος φιλοξενίας αναγνωρισμένων προσφύγων (newsbeast.gr)</p> <p>Greece: thousands of migrants at risk of homelessness as EU scheme ends Greece The Guardian</p>
<p>Agenda for the next WG</p>	<p>-Discussion on writing down a common letter providing our feedback on Helios programme</p> <p>-Discussion and updates on the current situation</p> <p>-AOB</p>

The next MHPSS WG meeting is going to take place on **Friday 19th of March** at **09:30 -11:30**.