

THE PROTECTION STRATEGY OF SOLIDARITY NOW IN GREECE: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS



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Internal Evaluation Report

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Foreword

Solidarity Now (SN), a Greek Non Governmental Organization (NGO) and *Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli* (CISP), an Italian NGO, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on January 9, 2017 in order to define a global framework under which specific forms of collaboration can be developed.

The MoU originates from a shared vision of the contemporary society, that can in short be described as follows. In Greece, in Italy, in many other areas of the world, some individuals and organized groups are committed to build and reinforce walls, borders, lines of separation between cultures, nationalities, religions, identities. In the same countries, other individuals and organized groups are committed to build and reinforce bridges, as they believe that peace, stability and development can be achieved only strengthening at various levels integration, communication, openness. SN and CISP definitely belong to these second groups.

The two organizations think that efforts have to be done in order to translate in the real life of the peoples all the non discriminatory principles and declarations formalised in a variety of charts and binding documents countersigned by the United Nations member states. “No one should be left behind” is in short what SN and CISP are committed to achieve through their projects and advocacy initiatives.

Said that the MoU between SN and CISP originates from a shared vision of the society, its aim is to reinforce the effectiveness of both organizations. The two NGOs intend to share their methodologies and approaches and to create consortia and lines of collaboration in order to maximise the impact of their actions, reinforcing their efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, impact and sustainability.

In line with this joint objective, SN and CISP have decided to undertake an internal evaluation of the SN led protection programmes in Greece, which took place in Athens and Thessaloniki on April 2017. This report gives account of the main findings of the evaluation, which was made possible by the openness, the availability and the outstanding commitment of the management, the staff, the collaborators, the beneficiaries of SN in Greece.

This report is elaborated by CISP and endorsed by the two organizationsⁱ.

1. The theory of change of Solidarity Nowⁱⁱ

The theory of change (ToC) of SN, as evidenced by the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analyses conducted with its staff in Athens and Thessaloniki, the focus groups with the beneficiaries and the analysis of the documents elaborated by the organization, can be summarized as follows.

According to SN a number of contextual factors are currently hampering the protection systemⁱⁱⁱ that is in place for migrants and asylum seekers in Greece. These factors can be categorized as follows.

Policy and institutional framework: ever changing, unclear guidelines and rules regarding the implementation of existing policies, lack of information sharing and coordination mechanisms, lack of

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services from the national system, particularly for most vulnerable groups within the migrants and asylum seekers communities.

International actors and NGOs' response: lack of clear criteria and guidelines, competition and lack of co-ordination among the international and national NGOs.

These critical factors may lead – and in some cases lead – to a lack of trust from the assisted communities, and weaken the response to their needs.

SN works hard to contribute to find permanent solutions to the identified threats, as evidenced in this report. The assumption of SN is that providing effective responses, through high quality services to the needs of migrants and asylum seekers (which in short means finding suitable solutions to the main problems affecting their livelihoods) may lead to define a strategy of intervention that could be after scaled up at national level.

In Greece two different patterns of support to migrants and asylum seekers are currently co-existing: the assistance in the camps – mainly in the islands and Northern Greece – and the integration within urban and semi urban areas. SN is also operating in camps with Blue Dots but has made a strategic choice for the second option.

The driving SN's objective is the provision of decent response to primary needs, with the final aim of preparing the ground for an open, intercultural society where different identities co-exist. SN bears in mind the reality of the countries of origin of the foreigners arrived to Greece: many of them, for reasons totally independent from their willingness, will not be able to go back to their countries, at least for a foreseeable period of time. They have therefore to be enabled and empowered to cope with a new life, a new language, a new society.

This strategic choice implies for SN to shoulder a great challenge: the possibility to mitigate, if not totally avoid, potential tensions with some sectors of the Greek society. Leaving migrants and asylum seekers in the camps, far away from the everyday life of the urban population, is less “socially risky” than accommodating the same persons in urban areas, particularly in an historical period where Greece is one of the European countries most severely impacted by the economic crisis. Nevertheless, SN does not see alternatives other than decent and human living conditions, regardless of country of origin or socioeconomic status.

SN tries to win this challenge in two ways. First, avoiding conflicts between foreigners and Greek hosting communities originated by the perception of the latest to be discriminated in the access to social services. As evidenced in this report, a number of concrete services offered by SN are also delivered to Greek communities and families needing them. In addition to this “field approach”, SN is very active in the spheres of advocacy and policy dialogue, networking with Greek and international actors and promoting a political culture inspired by the values of openness, integration, solidarity.

There is a lot of coherence between the field, operational work conducted by SN and its policy and cultural advocacy initiative: this coherence is the most important asset of the organization.

The report indicates also some areas for improvement as it is always the case in any social development programme. Solutions to existing problems can be found. Values and commitment cannot be created if

not already rooted in one organization. They are very strongly rooted, at all the levels of the organization, in SN.

2. The protection services^{iv} and activities of Solidarity Now in Greece

SN was established in 2013 with the support of the Open Society Foundation^v. The mission of the organisation is to assist and support those most affected by the economic and humanitarian crises in Greece through the provision of services to both Greek poor citizens and migrant communities.

To implement these programs, SN collaborates with civil society groups and public bodies with funding from Open Society Foundation, UNHCR, EU, UNICEF, CARE International, the Radcliffe Foundation, EEA (European Economic Area) Grants, the Norwegian Embassy in Greece.

Since April 2016 SN implements “**Home for Hope**”, a package of hosting and accommodation programs for refugees and asylum seekers. The goal of the program is to provide asylum seekers with housing provided by Greek residents. This particular accent has the ultimate goal of helping form bonds of solidarity between host communities and individuals on the move, by bringing these groups together, in order to contribute to overcome nationalistic and xenophobic rhetoric.

SN provides refugees and asylum seekers who are eligible for relocation with **accommodation in hotels**, information and interpretation services, psychosocial and legal support, recreational and educational activities, case management with the aim to facilitate their temporary stay in Greece. By the end of 2016, 2,729 people have benefited from this program in Athens, Evoia (Rovies), Peloponnese (Kranidi) and Epirus, while being accommodated in UNHCR-leased Hotels.

Accommodation is also provided in **shelters and independent buildings** and beneficiaries receive a wide range of free services (information and interpretation services, psychosocial and legal support, recreational and educational activities, case management). This package is provided to asylum seekers and refugees in Thessaloniki and Sindos through two independent blocks of apartments and a shelter for vulnerable cases. By the end of 2016, more than 500 individuals have been benefited through these programs.

As LGBTQI^{vi} refugees face multiple risks and need additional protection, SN implements a specialized housing and support program dedicated to them, known as “**Safe Refugee**” with the support of UNHCR and funding by the European Union. Under this program LGBTQI refugees are accommodated in independent apartments in Athens and Thessaloniki. Psycho-social assistance to this group is vastly needed to handle and resolve issues they have experienced, such as trauma, violence, abuse, exclusion. Besides, a range of free-of-charge services, such as accommodation in fully equipped apartments, referrals to medical assistance and legal counselling and inclusion in educational and recreational programmes are provided.

SN is currently implementing the “**Blue Dots**” programme, initially launched as a pilot initiative at the Piraeus Port. The Blue Dot program, supported by UNICEF, with funding from the European Commission’s humanitarian aid department is implemented by SN through mobile units that provide a

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comprehensive package of services to migrants and refugees in regions where availability of support is limited. After its successful piloting, the programme was expanded nationwide.

Mobile Blue Dot units:

- Ensure information sharing to refugees and migrants (on their rights before and after applying for international protection), and providing referrals to services
- Identify and refer vulnerable persons (vulnerable families, single mothers, at-risk and/or unaccompanied children, persons with disabilities or illnesses, cases of suspected trafficking, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence) to proper structures of support
- Provide general psychosocial services and referrals
- Refer unaccompanied minors and vulnerable persons to reception facilities for applicants of international protection through the National Center for Social Solidarity
- Refer applicants for international protection to open reception facilities and hosting programs.
- Create child-friendly spaces that provide recreational and educational activities for minors
- Create breastfeeding corners and provide reproductive, neonatal, and postnatal care and counselling

SN has created two **Solidarity Centers** operating in Thessaloniki and Athens. Each Solidarity Center serves as a space for civil society organizations to provide various services to the most vulnerable populations of the city. The services are free of charge and include primary healthcare, medication, legal aid and counselling, job training and employment services and support programs for parents and children.

The **Athens Solidarity Center** (ASC) started its operations in December 2014 and has an “open door” policy, meaning it is accessible to all people regardless of nationality, religion, ethnic origin or social status, providing need-based and not status-based services.

The first phase of ASC was implemented in partnership with the Municipality of Athens and civil society organizations, including PRAKSIS, ARSIS, Network for Children’s Rights and Together for Children, with the financial support of the European Economic Area Grants (EEA Grants).

Free primary healthcare services, legal aid and counselling, employability services to assist with job acquisition and labour market re-entry, and a comprehensive service system for mothers and children were provided. In September 2015, the Greek Asylum Service began its operations at the Center, with a specific focus on cases of vulnerable persons.

Starting from 2016 the centre was reconfigured and enriched with a more comprehensive set of services addressed to refugees, migrants and Greeks who are in need, such as:

- **Legal support:** Legal advice, mediation, litigation and advocacy;
- **Social Work:** counselling and guidance on connection with services and availability of aid, access to services and referrals, protection;
- **Psychological support:** evaluation of psychological needs, counselling and support, diagnosis and guidance to specialized aid /specialized therapy;
- **Helpline and Counselling for Families, Children and Adolescents**, in collaboration with Together for the Children;

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- **Children Friendly Space** through the Network for Children’s Rights; and
- **Asylum Office Services**, following a booked appointment by the central Asylum Service.

Athens Solidarity Center was established through the Open Society Foundation, EEA Grants, Norway financial support, in cooperation with the Municipality of Athens until the end of April 2016. Since May 1st 2016, ASC has been financed by SN and the Open Society Foundation. Moreover, since May 1st, complementary services provided by the ASC are funded by EaSI (acronym standing for Employment and Social Innovation) in the context of “Employment enhancement and Social services integration in Athens” - Municipality program.

The **Thessaloniki Solidarity Centre (TSC)** offers holistic approach, support and referrals. It is organised in 2 clusters: services and activities. The centre has a constant interaction with the local community, it has also a component of mobile interventions, it provides a common ground to grassroots networks and smaller organisations.

The **services** being offered by the centre are as follows:

- **Social service** (Psychosocial support, Psychological counselling, counselling for addictions, family counselling, support services regarding benefits and allowances, information provision);
- **Women space**: activities for women, women groups, support for breast feeding, support to mothers and care givers, nutrition and hygiene information, emotional support, care and support to victims of sexual gender based violence, gender focal point;
- **Employability**: cv building, job opportunities, connecting with possible employers, preparation for interviews, etc.;
- **Legal support**: legal information, counselling and court representation;
- **Financial advisor**: housekeeping financial issues, tax declaration;
- **Food security**: voucher program for food items for family with low income;
- **Medical service**: medical visits, medicines, medical screenings to those in need, through private medical actors and pro-bono services;
- **Mobile outreach support unit**: supporting those in need outside of the office, delivering NFIs and providing information and food when needed.

The **activities** being organised are as follows:

- **Child friendly space**: recreational activities and creative playtime, informal learning and life lessons;
- **Education**: informal education for teenagers and adults, e-learning sessions for English, Greek language and IT, vocational trainings, general subject sessions etc.;
- **Recreational activities**: board games reading, dancing, yoga, astronomy, painting, sewing, chess, computer games, acting, open to all with the help of local community and volunteers;
- **Internet corner** and WI-FI access to all.

The **Blue Refugee Center – Blue Dot** operates in Thessaloniki since October 2016 as part of SN’s projects in Northern Greece.

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It was created to complement the TSC and addresses specific needs of refugees and asylum seekers. It serves as an open space where people can come to receive various services, including education and livelihood programs, attend social and recreation events. The project is supported by UNHCR, UNICEF and the European Union.

The Blue Refugee Center – Blue Dot provides reproductive, neonatal and postnatal counselling and care to mothers, designated spaces for breastfeeding (“breastfeeding corners”), child-friendly spaces and targeted services to beneficiaries, including legal, social, and psychological support.

The Center’s Front Desk offers a variety of services linked to the daily lives of beneficiaries: administrative matters, contacts with social services, logistical advice, information on how to file complaints and concerns, referral services, basic legal advice and document translation services. It includes also a peer2peer helpline operated by staff and volunteers from the same communities.

In all accommodation programmes (Athens and Thessaloniki) SN implements the “**CASH4Solidarity**” project through UNHCR funding, targeting those who are current verified resident of a SN accommodation facility.

The aid is delivered through prepaid cards covering the needs of food commodities (where free meals are not provided), transportation, communication (i.e. cell phone), everyday needs of medication (paracetamol, aspirin, etc.), clothes, items for personal hygiene, etc.

Those who are eligible to receive a card by SN must hold a valid official identification document, issued by the Greek government (asylum card). One card is given to support:

- a. Single-parent families (single parents with all their children, below 18 y.o.);
- b. Nuclear families (card is assigned to either one of a couple, with or without children);
- c. Individual adults (over 18 y.o.) that are not part of a family unit.

No shelter (provided through UNHCR), nor long-distance transport for asylum service appointments is included in the amount. Each card is loaded once per month. The amount received is intended to cover the needs of the whole family, it cannot be changed and it is identical for every organization, site, or accommodation facility. It is meant to replace in-kind support. All other in-kind support is being provided upon availability. The funding is provided by the European Union (ECHO), in agreement with the Ministry of Migration Policy (MoMP) and the inter-agency Cash Working Group (CWG).

The monthly amount differs according to the facility (catered / non-catered) and it increases slightly for those beneficiaries who reside in not-catered facilities, as below indicated.

Table n. 1 Monthly amount deposited to each card in non-catered facilities and catered facilities providing free meals

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Family members	Monthly Amount (families without free meals)	Monthly Amount (families with free meals)
Individual over 18 y.o.	150 €	90 €
A family of 2	280 €	140 €
A family of 3	340 €	190 €
A family of 4	400 €	240 €
A family of 5	450 €	290 €
A family of 6	500 €	310 €
A family of 7 or more	550 €	330 €

3. Methodology of the evaluation

The objectives of the evaluation carried out by CISP and SN are: a) to effectively address protection risks and concerns for the benefit of SN beneficiaries; b) to empower and further enhance SN staff capacity to better address protection risks and concerns; c) to maintain an high level of accountability to donors, institutions and beneficiaries ; d) to identify areas for improvement and needed actions ; e) to identify areas of collaboration between SN e CISP and to gather information and ideas to be used for future projects' designs.

The evaluation is mainly qualitative and is addressed to appraise the main programs of SN on refugees protection with a focus on the most vulnerable categories. The analysis has started from the main gaps /shortcomings identified by SN headquarters staff in the field of protection. The task of the evaluators has been to assess, according to the perceptions and the knowledge of persons met, the protection programs of SN with regard to the criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

These criteria have been freely considered in the light of the existing SN's protection interventions and the field work done during the evaluation. The operational concepts utilized are described below.

Efficiency : capacity to address in a timely manner the main needs of the beneficiaries and to valorize the existing human resources.

Relevance: The extent to which the objectives of an intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partner' and donor's policies.

Effectiveness: the extent to which the intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance; the capacity to find concrete solutions to the addressed needs.

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Sustainability: capacity to contribute to the continuation of benefits from an intervention after major assistance has been completed. The probability of continued long-term benefits. The resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time.

Impact: contribution given to the long term solutions of the addressed problems.

The evaluation has taken place in Greece from April 7 to 12, and it has been conducted in Athens and Thessaloniki through SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis with SN staff, focus groups with beneficiaries, meetings with relevant stakeholders and review of the projects documentation.

Two SWOT Analyses have been carried out, one in Athens and one in Thessaloniki. Starting from the previously shared and defined objective of improving the protection services/activities of SN, the SWOT analysis aimed to identify with SN staff : a) Strengths, attributes of the projects & implementing agency that are helpful to achieving the objectives; 2) Weaknesses, attributes of the projects & implementing agency that are harmful to achieving the objective; 3) Opportunities: external conditions that are helpful to achieving the objectives; 4) Threats, external conditions which could do damage to the objectives.

Fourteen persons participated to the SWOT Analysis in Athens, including coordinators, members and psychologists of social teams of different kind of reception center (hotel, apartments) and of mobile units, the Programme Performance & Quality Advisor and the Head of MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, Learning) and Performance Quality.

In Thessaloniki, four persons working in the SN led protection services have participated to the SWOT Analysis, including Program Coordinator for Northern Greece, Sindos Coordinator, Blue Dots coordinator and Blue refugee Centre Coordinator.

The focus groups meetings with the direct beneficiaries of SN programs were mainly aimed to disclose : a) the perceptions on the coherence between the protection mechanisms and the actual needs; b) existence and typology of uncovered needs; c) recommendations and suggestions for the improvement of the protection measures in place.

Six Focus groups have taken place, four in Athens and two in Thessaloniki. The beneficiaries who have taken part to the meetings are: LGBTQI refugees, hosted in apartments in Athens; families in apartments in Athens, mainly from Syria; migrants and asylum seekers hosted in the Elefsina camp (Athens) mainly from Afghanistan; families hosted in hotels (Sindos), in Thessaloniki; people living in shelter and apartments (Monasteriu) in Thessaloniki. On average participants to each focus group were ten, plus two / three SN staff.

It has been clearly explained to the participants that the meeting was aimed to contribute to strengthen the quality of the provided services, addressing the beneficiaries needs and expectations.

Finally, a meeting has been done with a Municipality of Athens representative in charge for migrants and refugees projects. The aim of the meeting was to know the main initiatives and strategies put in place by the Municipality in the field of assistance to refugees and migrants living in Athens and to identify the main perceived challenges in this field.

In addition to collect and categorize information, evaluations and perceptions, the evaluators, with the assistance of SN headquarter staff, have analyzed projects documents (projects texts, projects reports and operative tools for information sharing and case managements).

Once drafted, this report has been reviewed by the key SN personnel in charge for the project monitoring and evaluation.

4. Main findings of the participatory evaluation

4.1 Relevance: main findings and recommendations

The protection's services and activities performed by Solidarity Now are in line with existing international priorities and strategies^{vii} and address needs highly perceived by the migrants and asylum seekers. The strong focus put on integration by SN has to some extents anticipated and inspired the national political debate; it is here worth to note that the Director of the Asylum Service^{viii} is also addressing "integration" as an issue deserving attention and political will.

The actions of SN are also in line with the Greek legislation on protection of vulnerable categories. Several critical issues have been identified in the system, such as: i) the accurate identification of all the different vulnerabilities ; ii) the lack of public health structures specialized in identifying or assisting torture survivors in their rehabilitation process; iii) the lack of sustainability of the private services put in place; iv) the weak age assessment of the unaccompanied minors^{ix}. SN deals with these critical issues in its daily work on protection of vulnerable groups.

All the beneficiaries met during the evaluation have confirmed that they badly need the different forms of protection support delivered by SN: shelter, financial support, psychological support and referral to third entities for specific needs of different nature (mainly medical, legal and psychological). It has been therefore confirmed that no any intervention carried on by SN in the field of protection appears far, neither superfluous at the eyes of those assisted. Beneficiaries in some cases claim for more assistance and other kinds of support but in all cases they witness that what is currently offered to them correspond to their needs and wishes.

The meeting with the LGBTQI community in Athens has confirmed the need to provide specific attention and protection to this group of asylum seekers, as they have in common a personal story of threats and persecution in their home countries. This was ascertained during the focus group. In addition, it should be considered the legal framework and the political atmosphere on LGBTQI prevailing in the countries of origin, which are threatening the life of this category of people. Both legally and psychologically LGBTQI people therefore are in need of specific forms of support; also in this case, the SN's action is coherent with the existing and perceived needs and therefore is relevant.

In Athens, during the meeting with the LGBTQI community it was learnt the story of a couple of men from Iraq. They left their country because of their homosexuality. The member of the couple met reported that he was stranded on an island where he had "many problems" before reaching SN. He is currently waiting for an interview to get his papers and he is applying to get a refugee status as he

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cannot be relocated. All the assistance received from SN (shelter, food, transport card, access to medical assistance, translators, lawyers) is badly needed.

A 49 years old Lebanese woman assisted in an apartment in Thessaloniki reported that the support received by SN is addressing her main needs: the education of the two children living with her and the medical care. She was before hosted in Polikastro, where she was not given many opportunities of dialogue and interaction with the organization in charge for the camp's management. She has also raised some uncovered needs, such as clothing for her children; it is in any case interesting to report here that the Lebanese woman met, as well as many other beneficiaries, need – among many other things – to know that the door of the dialogue with the helping organization can be knocked and be opened.

This is another dimension of the relevance of the SN's protection strategy. Foreigners arrived to Greece have been deprived of many material, psychological, emotional assets. They deserve to be heard, without be considered only as passive receiver of external assistance. SN pays a lot of attention to this need in order to restore people's dignity. That is why SN frequently consults beneficiaries in order to gather their views on the appropriateness of the aid delivered and of the services activated. During the focus groups it was perceived that the beneficiaries feel to be heard and that their needs and concerns are taken into consideration.

The main recommendation related to the relevance of the SN's protection activities is to reinforce the dialogue and the synergies with the public Greek institutional framework in charge for asylum seekers and migrants. In a period where, as also evidenced by the UNHCR' declaration here reported, efforts should be addressed to shift from the relief dimension to the structural solutions, this dialogue is very much needed. SN, thanks to its commitment, reliability and strengths – such as the persons centred approach, the high level of internal referral and response, the interdisciplinary approach, the knowledge of the local context and operational actors, the strong link between field work and advocacy - can be the promoter a national mechanism of permanent consultation among NGOs, donors and Greek authorities and institutions, addressed to elaborate policies and concrete permanent responses to the needs raised by foreign beneficiaries, taking into account the strengths and the weaknesses of the country and the existing opportunities and limitations offered by the European Union.

During the evaluation exercise, it was met the office of the vice mayor of Athens for migrants and refugees and it was learnt that the municipality intends to promote a forum made of working groups, focusing on different issues (protection, housing etc.). The Forum is conceived as a means to help to build the strategic plan for integration . In addition, the municipality is likely to disclose soon the findings of a social investigation where needs, aspirations, perceptions of migrants and hosting communities have been recorded.

This report suggests that SN play a proactive role in the dialogue with the municipalities, providing them with ideas, suggestions, information born from its outstanding experience, especially in the protection of vulnerable groups sector in Greece (including standardizing operational modalities and become a partner for Greek institutions).

4.2 Efficiency: main findings and recommendations

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The Swot Analyses conducted in Athens and Thessaloniki with the staff of SN have underlined a number of issues related to the efficiency of the protection’s operations. Many strengths can in fact be categorised as positive dimensions of efficiency and classified as follows.

Table n. 2 Efficiency: positive elements arising from the Swot Analyses

Category	Positive elements
Staff management and organization and division of tasks and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attitude and practice of unrestricted exchange of information among the staff and prevalence of collaboration over competition. Strong team’s spirit built on a shared vision - Deep knowledge of the local context of the staff, including the knowledge of the weaknesses and the strengths of other actors (this knowledge is facilitated by the fact that SN has been acting as a donor) - Capacity of the staff to build trust with beneficiaries - Strong interdisciplinary approach facilitated by the variety and complementarities of skills and know how (for instance: psychologists, social workers, mediators, lawyers)
Services delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capacity to update continuously the referral system - Existence of an internal codified procedure to get information on the relevant social status of the beneficiaries (needs, health situation, social status, etc.) - Flexibility of project’s design and differentiation of the interventions to suit each beneficiary’s needs depending on her/his vulnerability - Clarity in presenting the services offered to the beneficiaries - Existence of direct relations with beneficiaries and permanent presence on the territories

The above mentioned positive judgments on the efficiency of the services delivered are also empirically confirmed by the judgments of the beneficiaries met during the evaluation.

Almost all the beneficiaries met in Thessaloniki have disclosed to be in need of medical care, that they regularly receive thanks to the referral system put in place by SN.

In Athens, a 25 years transgender from Tunisia has explained the peculiarity of her needs, that embrace different protective measures of psychological, financial, legal nature. Although she has claimed that the financial help received is not enough, she has recognised that the SN’s interventions are tailored to meet simultaneously a number of different needs, which is not always the case in other programmes run by other organizations.

One of the most important asset of SN is its reliability. This judgment is substantiated by the opinions of all the beneficiaries met and by the variety of operational partnerships put in place in the Solidarity Centers. People trust SN’s interventions, its staff, its management. It is thanks to this priceless asset that SN can positively address some efficiency shortcomings emerged during the evaluation’s exercises. The shortcomings underlined during the SWOT analyses are summarised in the following table.

Table n. 3 Efficiency: critical elements arising from the Swot Analyses

Category	Shortcomings
Staff management and organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The staff perceives to be overburdened, with too many tasks to be accomplished - An insufficient level clinical supervision - Internal training, particularly as regards intercultural communication is felt as missing or in any case not adequately provided - While the communication among the staff working in the same locality seems adequate, it is perceived a weak exchange of information and evaluations among the different projects run in different localities
Services delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is perceived the absence of agreed procedures for psychological referral and the lack of shared / unified tools used by the psychologists. Again, it is mentioned the lack of identified settings for psychological consultation - There is not adequate space for individual counselling, in hotels and apartments. This constraint threatens the needed level of privacy

The main recommendations related to the efficiency are the following:

- ✓ To strengthen the exchanges between the staff in Athens, Thessaloniki and other locations, horizontally also foreseeing periodic (for instance bi-annual) joint workshops, to analyse existing problems and facilitate the capitalization of the experiences;
- ✓ To revise the terms of reference of the staff in a participatory manner;
- ✓ To identify further areas for internal training. One area to be addressed is the deep knowledge of the social, cultural and political contexts of the countries from where migrants and asylum seekers are coming^{xi}. In addition, SN should employ a training and orientation policy structured as follows: a) orientation and training for entry-level staff lacking experience to handle specialized cases; b) capacity building of social teams on incident reporting and management;
- ✓ To find, through the collaboration with third parties, solutions to the structural problems currently hampering the efficiency of the psychological services.
- ✓ To assume protection as a cross-cutting issue and competence, clearly identifying staff roles and responsibilities

4.3 Effectiveness: main findings and recommendations

The protection services managed by SN provide beneficiaries with concrete solutions to their problems; in other words, the services cover existing needs. This is in short what effectiveness means in the context of this evaluation. The main sources of information to reach this conclusion are the focus groups, where the voices of the beneficiaries have been heard.

A Syrian 35 years old gay man reported that only after meeting SN he felt that there is someone caring for him. He can now regularly meet a lawyer and receive medical care. This makes his life safer, he said.

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A refugee from Syria with two children arrived to Greece one year and a month ago. Initially he found a very difficult and depressing situation; SN – he said - helped him a lot. Now he and his family have everything a family needs, waiting to be relocated in Switzerland.

A Kurdish man from Iraq left from his country because of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) attacks. The brother used to work at a United States representation office as an interpreter and was able to help him to leave the country. Upon his arrival to Greece, he experienced very harsh conditions. In Iraq he had 3 children (two daughters and one son). His son, 9 years old, had a serious hearth problem that was found out and solved in Greece. He said that he left most of his beloved ones behind, but he found a new family in SN. He found what family usually provides: care, love and protection.

A man arrived from Syria with five children applied for family reunification in Germany; in the meantime SN provided him and his family with shelter and medical assistance and helped his children to be enrolled to the school.

An eighteen years old person from Syria ran away from his country because of the war and he had to interrupt his studies. He was fifteen years old when he went to Turkey and started working as a sewer to help his family. He came to Greece with his sister and her husband. He wanted to go to Sweden, but there is not any chance for relocation to that country. He was in Idomeni for 2 months, than he started sleeping in the street and in stations before reaching Sindos. He is going to the Blue Refugee Centre run by SN to attend English classes. He is very grateful for the services being received: accommodation, legal assistance, medical care.

Only few cases are here reported showing the gratitude expressed to SN by the beneficiaries and their perceptions of the positive impact of the SN's interventions on their life. As it will be evidenced at the following paragraph, the expectation of almost all the beneficiaries is to establish themselves and their families somewhere else, in The Netherlands, in Germany, in Switzerland, in other countries. Two factors are leading the beneficiaries aspiration: family re-unification (many of them have relatives already living in other countries) and social and economic expectations. Migrants and asylum seekers are very well aware of the difficult economic situation that Greece is facing, which reduces job and income opportunities; nevertheless they also perceive that a number of concrete problems affecting their livelihood – psychological, legal, medical problems – have to be solved now, in Greece, regardless from where they are going to live in the future. And they perceive that these problems are going to be solved or at least tackled thanks to the interventions and the services managed by SN. It is therefore suggested that donors financing SN's protection programmes can feel proud of their support.

From the evaluator's point of view, these levels of concreteness and trust among the beneficiaries are extremely important. Without them, in fact, analysing existing shortcomings and finding solutions to them would be a purely academic exercise, without any real link with the life of the people assisted. In other words: the SN's interventions are extremely concrete and effective, as they are making the difference in the life of the people supported. During the focus groups it was learnt that beneficiaries consider all the assistance received as a concrete response to their basic needs. They sometimes feel that the assistance is not covering all the needs – for instance in the case of the cash which is felt below the daily needs - but recognise that their very same survival might have not be guaranteed without the projects run by SN. In addition, beneficiaries have shown to be aware precisely of the SN's mandate. The following underlined weaknesses – in terms of effectiveness – deserve therefore to be analysed and discussed. Solutions can be definitely found.

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In terms of services delivery, during the focus groups some recommendations have been expressed by the beneficiaries; the main ones are the following:

- To speed up some services. It has for instance in some cases been reported the delay in the money transfer intervention, which was mainly due to technical problems;
- Quality and timing of food provision should be improved and specific dietary needs should be taken into consideration. This threat, however, is not falling within the SN capacity area;
- SN should pay more attention to the relationship with the hotel staff in order to prevent / solve problems related to the presence of beneficiaries;
- There is an high demand – not always met – for “diversified activities” felt by the beneficiaries as relevant to their present and future welfare. These include sport, recreation, vocational training in different fields.

Another issue deserving consideration is the involvement of beneficiaries in services delivery. This involvement could be promoted in different ways: employing beneficiaries further to proper training and orientation and/or promoting their active participation in the design and functioning of services and activities.

According to the SN’s staff self-assessment, in general terms, the organization needs to consolidate its own protection’s methodology, inspired to existing international standards and tailored on the existing needs arising from the Greek context. More specifically, as evidenced by SN’s staff before and during the evaluation, the following areas for improvement deserve special attention.

- Cases management. There are difficulties in defining standardized professional working relationships with beneficiaries residing in the accommodation structures. This applies particularly to long-term therapeutic needs;
- Case referral. In this case there are two areas of concern. One regards the referral from UNHCR to SN, which is not always accompanied by a sufficient level of information on the referred persons; the other concern is about the referral and the sharing of information with other organizations;
- Standardized procedures are needed. There are tools available but not always efficiently used;
- Room allocation taking into consideration protection concerns. So far room allocation focuses primarily on availability, not on targeted case planning.

Another issue deserving attention is related to the confidentiality protocols in place (including coding and encrypting systems of sensitive information within the organisation and in the external referral).

All the above mentioned points call for an updated global SN’s protection methodology and specific guidelines covering among others:

- ❖ Management of long term therapeutic needs;
- ❖ Standardisation of the referral system (when and how cases have to be referred? Where?);
- ❖ Standardisation of the psychosocial support;
- ❖ Standardisation of the legal support.
- ❖ Standardisation of M& E (Monitoring and Evaluation system for protection outcomes)

Despite efforts towards standardisation have to be intensified, there will be always a number of unpredictable social emergencies, for instance due to conflicts within migrants and asylum seekers and / or between them and the hosting communities, that require immediate decisions. To effectively deal with these cases can be very helpful to better pre-define how these decisions can be made, by whom and through which consultation mechanisms.

During the evaluation it was also perceived the need, for SN, to systematize and clarify better the sphere of legal responsibility as regards the dynamics within the rented apartments.

Last but not least: SN could promote a systematic exchange of information and methodologies within the humanitarian environment operating in Greece. An important step in this direction is to systematize and assess the existing evaluations already done on protection services in Greece. An example here is the study conducted by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) on cash delivery, that provides interesting suggestions and recommendations^{xii}. The IRC report suggests that “ ... there is a strong rationale for harmonizing cash implementation through a coherent approach to scale effectively and efficiently, as an uncoordinated approach is inefficient for NGOs and detrimental for beneficiaries ...”.

4.4 Impact and sustainability: a road map

The operational concept of impact employed by this evaluation refers to the contribution of the SN’s protection services and activities to the long term solutions of the problems of migrants and asylum seekers.

It is not an easy exercise, as never is the analysis of the impact in any evaluation. The difficulties in this case are exasperated by a number of concrete “macro variables” that no any humanitarian strategy can today address, in Greece, in Italy and in many other countries. Let’s see three macro variables not under the control of any humanitarian organization in Greece.

First of all it is almost impossible to predict, now, how **the situation of the countries of origin of migrants and asylum seekers** resident in Greece will evolve. It is worth to observe that when asked about their wishes for the future, no one, during the focus groups, has expressed the plan to go back home. The migrants well know that this would be almost impossible in a foreseeable period of time, due to their specific vulnerability to stigma and aggressive discrimination (in the case of the LGBTQI) and/or due to widespread violence affecting their countries.

All those who have indicated a preferential option for the future have expressed the wish to be re-located somewhere else, mainly in other European countries, for some reasons that have been already discussed in this report (see point 4.3). Again, this is an option that no any single organization can significantly achieve, as it depends from factors outside the humanitarian organizations control: the recognition or the deny of the refugee status, **the inter European agreements on re-location of foreign migrants / asylum seekers**, the revision of existing European conventions on asylum seekers^{xiii}.

A third unpredictable variable is **the evolution of the social and political fabric in Greece**. Integration implies a willingness from at least two sides: those who need to be integrated and those who can facilitate the integration. The first side is here represented by the migrants and asylum seekers that, as

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the representative of the Athens Municipality rightly told during the meeting with SN and CISP, are not intending to live in Greece for ever. Nevertheless, at least some of them could arrive to the conclusion that they have not viable alternatives; it remains the second side, the Greek society. Are in Greece going to win those building walls and spreading xenophobia or those building bridges and fighting for an open society?

All the three questions raised would deserve answers but unfortunately there are not reliable answers for them now. The management and the staff of SN know very well that the migrants and asylum seekers represent the visible and perceivable manifestations of a series of unsolved problems, conflicts, political uncertainties. In the life and in the pains of Fadia, Hanna, Mohammed, Tahani, Susan, Hawad, Fatma, Xuda and many others are reflected the violent tensions and the unsolved dramas of the contemporary world.

Again the point is: how can we figure out the impact on migrants and asylum seekers of the protection services and activities if their future life largely depends on unpredictable factors? If not complete answers, two thoughts can be expressed. The first has been anticipated at the beginning of this report, where the Theory of Change of SN is presented. Integrating field work with advocacy for justice, civil rights, integration, civil society participation is in the “DNA” of SN and this advocacy work is very coherent with the goal of granting migrants and asylum seekers with a possible free menu of options for their future.

The second thought is that protection services and activities can be – and to many extents are already – addressed to prepare the people for their future life.

The perception gathered is that according to SN, wherever migrants and asylum seekers will live, the quality of their life will greatly depend on at least seven factors:

- A. Health conditions;
- B. Psychological and emotional wellbeing;
- C. Linguistic skills ;
- D. Knowledge and awareness of their rights and their duties in the hosting society, active citizenship (in a broad sense);
- E. Preservation of the cultural identity and understanding the hosting country culture and norms;
- F. Self reliance and resilience;
- G. Access to education opportunities (especially for children and youth).

For each of these seven factors can be defined specific sets of indicators / tests, to measure the impact of the interventions on the future life of the beneficiaries.

As regards financial sustainability, a possible road map could be the following:

- (i) To upgrade the current annual cost per beneficiary (including the essential services and activities) differentiated according to the different locations (Athens / Thessaloniki / apartment / hotel / etc.);
- (ii) To promote an exchange of information on sustainability strategies in place among the national and international NGOs working in Greece in support of migrants and asylum seekers;

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- (iii) To consult public authorities, starting from the municipalities, and to discuss with them their existing future plans as regards the management of the services offered to migrants and asylum seekers;
- (iv) To elaborate a multi annual comprehensive operational and financial plan (tree years).

Until now in Greece the assistance delivered to migrants and asylum seekers has been conceived under an “emergency” framework; it is therefore understandable that long term sustainability has not so far considered as a real priority. Now it is time to approach the theme, as the international and the national actors are likely to enter in a new phase, where permanent and structural solutions should be at least explored and assessed.

ⁱ In Athens the evaluation has been conducted by Giordana Francia, CISP Director for Italy and European Union and Serena Fusco, CISP consultant on migration programmes; in Thessaloniki the evaluation has been conducted by Serena Fusco. The report has been elaborated by Giordana Francia, Serena Fusco and Paolo Dieci, CISP President.

ⁱⁱ The idea of the Theory of Change (ToC) approach seems to have first emerged in the United States in the 1990s, in the context of improving evaluation theory and practice in the field of community initiatives. From the evaluation perspective, ToC is part of broader program analysis or program theory. In the development field, it also grew out of the tradition of logic planning models such as the logical framework approach developed from the 1970s onwards. The notion of developing informed social practice has a long history; practitioners have often sought (and used) tools to attempt to consciously reflect on the underlying theories for development practice. In its early conceptualization in 1995, Weiss described a ToC as “a theory of how and why an initiative works.” More fully articulated, this can be understood as a way to describe the set of assumptions that explain both the mini-steps that lead to a long term goal and the connections between these activities and the outcomes of an intervention or program

ⁱⁱⁱ There are different understanding of “protection” and “protection systems” in the humanitarian context. According to the evaluation findings it could be said that SN intends protection as protecting people’s dignity (through access to basic rights and services). As further steps would be useful to deepen which framework SN use when it comes to define protection risks (including threats and violation).

^{iv} Protection services are usually described in two ways: a) according to protection needs of the specific target population (e.g. unaccompanied children, LGBTQI ...) and their level of the protection risk (intended as the combination of type of threats or violations, vulnerability and exposure); and/or b) by type of protection activities making reference to the “egg framework” developed in an interagency discussion lead by ICRC (also included in the Sphere Minimum Standards and other international references). For an easier reference: **Egg framework** (source ALNAP Protection Guide to Humanitarian Agencies).

One widely recognised model of protection among humanitarian agencies is the so-called egg model which emerged from the interagency discussions on protection lead by ICRC.

This model uses the shape of an egg to think strategically about the different spheres of action in which protection needs to be addressed and the different types of activities required to meet protection needs.

Three main spheres of protective action gravitate outwards from the point of violation.

1. The most immediate sphere of action is closest to the victims and the pattern of abuse to which they are subjected. This sphere demands a range of **responsive actions** that aims to stop, prevent or alleviate the worst effects of the abuses.
2. Moving further outwards, the second sphere is more restorative and is concerned to assist and support people after violations while they live with the subsequent effects of a particular pattern of abuse. This sphere of action involves a range of **remedial action** to help people recover.
3. The third sphere of action is further away still from the point of violation and is concerned with moving society as a whole towards protection norms which will prevent or limit current and future violations and abuses. This is the most long-term and structural sphere of action and requires **environment-building action** that consolidates political, social, cultural and institutional norms conducive to protection.

^v <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org>

^{vi} Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersexual

^{vii} On March 27, 2017, the High Commissioner of the United Nations for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi, has declared that: “...UNHCR is fully engaged in finding lasting solutions in Greece together with the responsible authorities and the European Union. I very much hope that the coming months will pave the way for further improvement ... The

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situation in Greece can be managed. It requires moving from the current emergency response to a sustainable system, where asylum-seekers and refugees access the adequate care, support and solution they need... Improving reception conditions is a priority. This would require as agreed with the Greek Government providing more accommodation opportunities in urban areas such as additional apartments, the upgrade of some government-run refugee sites, and ensuring that all unsuitable sites are quickly closed ...”
(<http://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2017/3/58d8f15a4/stronger-cooperation-crucial-ensure-sustainable-refugee-response-greece.html>)

^{viii} The Greek Asylum Service was established by law 3907/2011 and it is the first specialized instance in the country, competent to adjudicate on applications for international protection. The objective of the Service , according to the law, is to apply the national legislation and to abide to the country's international obligations regarding the recognition of refugee status and, more generally, granting international protection to aliens who have fled their country due to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, and who are unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country

^{ix} It is an important gap of the system. However, SN is only marginally affected by this gap through its operations

^x Country report Greece 2016, curated by Asylum Information Database (AIDA), European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), Greek Council for Refugees (GCR)

^{xi} In Italy (Catania, Sicily) CISP collaborates with the “Don Bosco” integration services for migrants providing training to its operators on the history, the culture, the political fabric of the Horn of Africa, from where many migrants and asylum seekers in Sicily are coming

^{xii} https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/1357/scaleright_coordinatingimprovedcashassistanceingreece.pdf

^{xiii} See for instance the III Dublin Regulation 604/2013 approved in June 2013, replacing the Dublin II Regulation, and applies to all member states except Denmark. It came into force on 19 July 2013. It is based on the same principle on the previous two i.e. that the first Member State where finger prints are stored or an asylum claim is lodged is responsible for a person's asylum claim