

European Policies for the Inclusion of Refugees in Higher Education: The Case of Greece

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Abstract

The abrupt influx of refugee populations in Europe in the last few years has, undoubtedly, posed many challenges in European countries. Higher Education is considered to be vital for the successful settlement of refugee communities into their host societies. Therefore, it is necessary to establish whether potential refugee aspirations to gain access in HEIs of their host country can be met at all. The present paper examines Greek policies regarding the inclusion of refugees in Higher Education (HE) and attempts to illustrate the range of initiatives taking place in Greek universities, directly or indirectly related to refugees, by highlighting the levels of authority involved, the locations, sources of funding and subject matter. Overall, what is made evident is that, in concurrence with dominant EU trends, the Greek government lacks a coherent policy for the inclusion of refugees in HE in Greece. It is most likely that the initiatives taken by researchers and academics (co-)shape what is considered to be the dominant policies regarding refugees in Greece and are not so much linked to their inclusion into HE as to other aspects of their presence in the country also involving separate target groups (teachers, local communities, researchers and others).

Keywords: refugees and asylum seekers, access to higher education, higher education policies, comparative education.

1. Introduction

Since 2015, large numbers of people – immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers¹ – from countries in the Middle East, Asia and Africa have reached Greece with the aim of moving on to other countries in Western Europe. Several thousands have been trapped in Greece, waiting for the processing of their asylum claims (Tzoraki, 2019). Specifically, the number of refugees

¹ In this paper – unless specified otherwise – the terms refugee and asylum seeker is used collectively, for all third-country nationals who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or a stateless person, who, being outside of the country of former habitual residence for the same reasons as mentioned above, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it and to whom Article 12 of Directive 2011/95/EU does not apply. Asylum applicant/seeker, in particular, refers to the person having applied for international protection or having been included in such an application as a family member (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary>, accessed in 20 September 2020).

claiming asylum in Greece in 2016 was close to 50,000; 35,000 of those remained in mainland Greece and 15,000 on the islands, while in 2017 the number reached 57,000 (see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019). Further, according to the latest statistics of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the total number of refugees that have entered Greece so far in 2020 is 10,458.

- The Greek state has not yet developed a coherent policy for the integration of refugees aged 18+ into Greek HE, following the dominant EU trend.
- Policies related to the inclusion of refugees in Greek HE are for the most part limited and comprise of initiatives undertaken by academic teaching staff within Greek universities, mainly through European funding.
- The initiatives implemented by Greek universities relate both directly and indirectly to refugees, have a guidance/training and research character or are undertaken within the remit of the university's social function and are mainly financed by EU funds and private entities, or are occasionally self-financed.
- Greece, for the moment, chooses not to utilize the human capital that the refugee population could provide in the country's development through its integration in Greek HE, and subsequently in Greek society.

The present paper will examine some of the state policies with regards to the inclusion of refugees in Higher Education (HE) in Greece, framing current policies by the Greek state within the context of other countries in Europe – the related field of educational research, remains relatively under-developed (Lambrechts, 2020). It will present a number of actions and initiatives taken by Greek universities and elaborate on their connection to refugees and the issue of migration. After briefly discussing the research methodology and presenting the research tools that were used, it will delineate the different levels of authority involved in the initiatives (supranational, national, regional) the differences in, and role played by, geographical location, how different initiatives are funded (state, public, private) and their subject, content and groups they are aimed at. These educational policies are differentiated from the national educational policy which, until a few decades ago, monopolised the national education system (Stamelos & Vasilopoulos, 2013). The paper aims to start a debate on the challenges faced by Greek universities in integrating refugees in academic settings as well as to consider the multiplicity of issues at stake. The authors argue that taking into account the large number of people arriving in Greece, Higher Education (HE) can be seen as a fundamental tool for their social inclusion and their familiarisation with European values, as well as enabling the use of their resources, both professionally and academically.

2. European policies for the inclusion of refugees in higher education

In 2017, approximately half a million third-country nationals were granted refugee status in the EU. There is no reliable statistical information with regards to how many of them were higher education students in their countries of origin. However, we do know that half are aged between 18 and 34 years old (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019). That is, they form a group of people that could potentially be involved in HE but unfortunately possess limited chances of being able to continue their studies at a European university.

Refugees face a multitude of problems, obstacles and difficulties related to access to HE in a number of European countries. This is to a large extent due to the fact that, despite the significant increase in the numbers of people seeking asylum in the last five years, the majority of European countries do not yet have a comprehensive, coherent policy for their inclusion in HE. This is partly because, on the one hand, the sudden influx of refugees has potentially led European

states to adopt measures to *manage the situation* rather than make centralised political choices: 16 EU countries have adopted nationwide measures rather than policies for specific academic institutions or any given geographical region (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019). On the other hand, the number of countries actually hosting refugees is limited. According to the EU's relocation and resettlement plan which came into force in September 2015, the hundreds of thousands of migrants arriving in Europe and sheltering in refugee camps in Italy and Greece are promised to be equitably distributed across Member States (European Commission 2015). The Netherlands agreed to a legal commitment to host 5,947 refugees before the end of September 2017. However, as of 14 November 2017, the Netherlands had only accepted 2,551, constituting less than half the agreed number (EU Commission, 2017). Spain pledged to host 17,337 refugees from the European relocation and resettlement quotas. However, as of summer 2017 Spain only took in 11 per cent of the number agreed, also taking into account that the agreement ended in September 2017. Similarly, the EU-Turkey Statement which came into effect on 18 March 2016 was agreed by EU Heads of State and/or Governments and Turkey with the aim of ending irregular migration flows from Turkey to the EU, assuring the protection of several hundred thousand fleeing the Syrian War, and creating safer conditions and legal channels to Europe for them (European Commission, 2018). Its results, though, seem somewhat dubious.

At any rate, the requirement for people who had likely been violently forced to flee their place of residence to present proof of academic qualifications, as well as the process of recognising these qualifications, are two of the most basic obstacles to the inclusion of refugees in the HE systems of European countries. Refugees themselves rank these obstacles very highly in their prioritisations and recognize they have significant consequences for their integration to the societies of host countries. In addition to these, there are also obstacles such as the lack of information and guidance about HE procedures and systems of host countries, differentiated access procedures even within the countries themselves, discrimination with regards to status (International students Vs Home students), lack of financial means and, of course, lack of knowledge of the language of instruction. All these, combined with the absence of policies for the reinforcement of language acquisition for refugee populations, constitute a partial list of the fundamental obstacles to the inclusion of refugees in HE in Europe (Lambrechts, 2020; Yildiz, 2019).

With regards to the last point, thirteen European countries have established a form of language support for refugee populations which, on most occasions, takes the form of financial help for learning the language of the host country. Twelve countries have a system of scholarships providing financial support for the payment of refugees' study fees; in Italy for example, 100 such scholarships are offered to refugees wishing to attend programmes of study at Italian universities. Eight countries have created entry programmes within their HE systems, called "welcome", or "introductory" programmes, while in ten countries individual guidance for third country nationals is given in order to facilitate their integration within HE (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019). Conversely, in Spain refugees are treated in the same way as migrants or other third country nationals who are permanent residents, which means that they are required to provide copies of their degrees and other relevant qualifications in order to gain entry to various university faculties² (Yildiz, 2019). Schneider (2018) provides evidence that German HEIs commonly subsume refugee populations and asylum seekers under the more general admission classification of *international students*. She argues that *an intentional blindness of the background of non-European Union students in the admission procedure is*

² For a complete account of the access and admission system for University Degrees in Spain, see also Arraiz Pérez A. et al. (2015), The Access and Admission system for University Degrees: current situation and perspectives in Spain, *Academia*, vol. 5 (no. 1), 2015.

justified on the grounds of equal treatment but findings indicate that refugees experience the disregard for their distinct struggles as particularly stifling and disillusioning (Schneider, 2018).

On the issue of qualifications, Article 7 of the Lisbon Convention provides a clear legal framework for the recognition of qualifications held by refugees with the aim of facilitating their recognition. However, the application of this specific article in European countries is limited at most, as only sixteen countries have a clear legal requirement for procedures to be followed. Malta and Italy are two host countries that have developed a very effective and clear legal framework in relation to the procedures refugees must follow in this regard. A 2016 report of the LRC Committee monitoring the implementation of the convention found that in 35 out of 50 countries surveyed, this article was not formally implemented – neither through national level regulations, nor through recognition bodies or agencies at the national level. As a result, while waiting for their skills and credentials to be recognized, most of the highly educated refugees are employed at a level lower than their qualifications or they remain unemployed³.

In conclusion, as is shown by the information presented, the majority of European countries do not have a comprehensive, coherent policy for the inclusion of refugees in their HE systems. The development and implementation of suitable policy frameworks for access to HE for those with refugee backgrounds in Europe in particular, has been somewhat variable, and mostly inadequate (Lambrechts, 2020: 804). Thus, to date, despite the continuously growing levels of human displacement globally only about 3% of the world's 25.9 million refugees have access to HE opportunities in the host states – a long way from the target of 15% set for 2030 (UNHCR 2019).

Universities, on the other hand, maintain the ability to adopt initiatives to develop possible short, medium and long-term actions with the aim of facilitating access to HE for refugees who were university students in their countries of origin. Some, have already created their own programmes through the “Student-refugees Welcome Program” initiated by the European University Association (EUA). This campaign serves as an instrumental tool which documents initiatives by higher education institutions and organizations concerning refugees’ access to higher education. The platform is designed with the purpose of allowing refugees to start or continue with their academic studies in the host countries via a regular university programme. In doing so, universities which are part of the EUA network introduced separate procedures for the registration of refugee students which is rather different from usual admission procedures. For example, the inHERE Good Practice Catalogue (GPC) is the product of an in-depth analysis of almost 300 initiatives from 32 countries of HE institutions and organisations committed to welcoming refugees that participated in EUA’s Refugees Welcome Map Campaign up until early 2017.

3. State policy for the integration of refugees in the Greek education system

It is true that the Greek state has recognised the importance of policies on migration in the country's overall development strategy and the safeguarding of social cohesion. For this reason, it has been noticeably active in the last few years, taking legal steps to ensure that Greek legislation complies with that of the European Union on issues of migration and towards the rationalisation of the existing institutional framework. This has been done with the aim of simplifying the processes for the issuance of residence permits but also of establishing a network of rights, so that third country nationals can benefit from increased protection in accordance with

³ See also, [http://www.enic-naric.net/fileusers/Monitoring the Implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention 2016.pdf](http://www.enic-naric.net/fileusers/Monitoring%20the%20Implementation%20of%20the%20Lisbon%20Recognition%20Convention%202016.pdf), accessed in 21 September 2020.

the principles of equality and non-discrimination with regards to race, gender, language or religion, and with respect to their particular circumstances.⁴

As pertains to education in particular, the Greek state legislated for the inclusion of children from third countries in primary and secondary education long before the escalation of the refugee issue in 2015. Specifically, already from 2005, Legal Act 3386/2005 on “Entry, housing and social inclusion of third country nationals in Greek territory”, stipulated in article 72 that underage third country nationals who are living inside Greek territory are subject to compulsory school attendance, as are Greek nationals, and have unrestricted access to activities run by schools or wider education community. With regards to this, emphasis is placed on the fact that Greece, on the issue of the education of refugee children, consistently applies Article 28 of the Convention for the Rights of the Child which is related to education (Hajinikolaou, 2020). This Article acknowledges that by exception, children of third country nationals can be registered in schools even with inadequate documentation, as long as: (a) they are under the protection of the Greek state as refugees or under the protection of the United Nations High Commission; (b) come from areas in which there is unrest and upheaval; (c) have filed for asylum; and (d) are third country nationals residing in Greece, even if their legal right to reside in Greece has not yet been settled. Legal Act 4415/2014 also contains legislation in relation to education taking place in Greek and multicultural education, alongside other clauses. More specifically, in Article 20 the concept of Multicultural Education is linked to the building of relationships between different cultural groups with the aim of combating inequalities and social exclusion. In addition, article 21 refers to the means by which the aims of multicultural education are to be achieved, such as: (a) the enrolment of children of diverse cultural origin in the same schools as those of locals; (b) the strengthening of the democratic function of the school on the basis of respect for democratic values and the rights of the child; (c) the preparation of appropriate educational programmes, textbooks and material; (d) the handling of negative discrimination based on cultural difference, xenophobia and racism; (e) the adoption of measures and the application of support structures that assist in the educational and social inclusion of children with a migrant background in the context of equality and respect for the preservation of their cultural identity; and (f) the creation of appropriate training programmes and other multicultural activities aimed at all members of the educational community (Mavroviti, 2018).

Furthermore, Article 26 of Act 3879/2010, entitled “Development of Lifelong Learning and other clauses” has been put in place. In relation to the education of the children of refugees, it stipulates the establishment of Areas of Educational Priority (AEPs) in which, through the setting up and running of welcome classes, support classes, summer classes and classes for the learning of the language of students’ countries of origin, all students are able to be included in the educational process. Ministerial Decree 131024/D1 (Government Gazette 2687 B, 2016) includes regulations for the Areas of Educational Priority related to the operation of Refugee Education Welcome Facilities (REWFs) inside primary school buildings, in accordance with the new *National Strategy for Inclusion* (Ministry for Migration Policy, 2018). Article 1 classifies as AEPs all the regional authorities of Primary and Secondary Education, including specific primary school units, in which it is possible to establish and operate REWFs. The aim of these Facilities is to provide educational support to the children of refugees through the teaching of Greek as a foreign/second language and through the organisation of educational programmes and activities, so that they can subsequently be included in the Greek education system⁵ (see also National

⁴ Legal Act 4451/2014.

⁵ The total number of students enrolled in all tiers during the school year 2018-2019 was 12,867, out of which 4,577 were registered in REWFs, 4050 in Welcome Classes and 4,240 in schools without welcome classes. However, complications arise in this process related to the availability and preparedness of teachers, the limited available places in public classes, the children and parental responses, and the response of wider

Strategy for Inclusion, Ministry for Migration Policy, 2018: 21). In the same vein, provisions are made for the implementation of comprehensive training/information programmes for Primary and Secondary education professionals on issues of intercultural education, with the aim of gaining specialised academic knowledge specifically with regards to teaching and learning in a multicultural school and the management of cultural difference⁶ (National Strategy for Inclusion, Ministry for Migration Policy, 2018).

For adult third country nationals,⁷ the Greek state has legislated on a set of rights which guarantees the equal treatment of Greek citizens and third country nationals.⁸ These involve, among other things, education and professional training and the recognition of diplomas, certificates and other professional titles. As was made evident in the previous section, this is not a given for all European countries, since in contrast to what applies to Primary Education, HE is not covered under article 22 of the 1951 Convention for the Rights of Refugees to Education.⁹ However, even in this case, equality of treatment for Greek citizens and third country nationals maybe be a null point,¹⁰ since the requirement to follow relevant national procedures with regards to access¹¹ to university, tertiary education and professional training involves having sufficient knowledge of the Greek language and the payment of fees, where this applies. Similarly, the fact that Greece has not signed the Lisbon Convention for the Recognition of Qualifications (see previous section) creates significant obstacles for the integration of refugees who have the required skills and relevant qualifications in Greek HE¹². Of course, at this point it needs to be noted that even among countries that have signed the Lisbon Convention there are many which have not consistently implemented it, and in some cases appropriate recognition procedures for refugees, displaced persons, and persons in refugee-like situations do not exist (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019). Finally, integration of refugee populations in Greek HE also faces obstacles from the standpoint of refugees themselves, whose main priority is the positive outcome of their application for international protection and not the issue of their integration into education and/or Greek society, seeing as they consider Greece more as an interim destination on their journey towards other countries in Western Europe.

society. Generally, an account of the terms and processes of participation of refugee children in Greek public schools see also Nikolaou & Samsari (2020) and Zsofia (2018).

⁶ Training programmes are aimed at all teaching staff, regardless of specialism, while programmes also need be implemented specifically for language teachers on how to teach Greek as a foreign language, and to School Councillors and Headteachers on issues of school management.

⁷ In 2018, the number of refugees who applied for asylum in Greece was 58,000, of which 22,500 were children (Tzoraki, 2019).

⁸ Holders of a Uniform Residence Permit, on the retention, where applicable, of specific deviations or reservations from specific national legislation.

⁹ The 1951 Refugee Convention refers to the right of education in its Article 22: *The Contracting States shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education. The Contracting States shall accord to refugees treatment as favorable as possible, and, in any event, not less favorable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances, with respect to education other than elementary education and, in particular, as regards access to studies, the recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas and degrees, the remission of fees and charges and the award of scholarships.*

¹⁰ Zubair's story is exemplary in relation to that matter (<https://iomintandem.com/stories/zubair/>, accessed in 21 September 2020).

¹¹ Only for third country nationals who are currently, or have been in the past, in work and are registered as unemployed and therefore not for refugees.

¹² What is more, Lioffi (2019) argues that “the certification of non-formal education and informal learning in Greece is more related to the enhancement of the employability of the individual and less to the promotion of its social inclusion” (p. 92).

The new National Strategy for Inclusion, in fact, specifies the creation of a relevant legal framework for the recognition of the level of education and qualifications of third country nationals who cannot provide certificates of proof from their country of origin, as well as the provision of information to refugees about where they can apply to have the education they received abroad be recognised in order to continue their studies in Tertiary and Higher Education, or exercise any professional rights potentially granted to them by their diploma or degree. In fact, the Greek state, in accordance with corresponding European policies (see <https://ec.europa.eu/migrantskills/#/>, accessed in 21 September 2020), has committed itself to mapping out the educational background, work experience and professional skills' profile of recipients and claimants of international protection through the creation of an information system for the qualitative and quantitative processing of the skills-mapping data and its linking to relevant services (see National Strategy for Inclusion, 2018: 61). In the field of informal education, the new Strategy also stipulates the creation of language learning programmes for young people aged 15-18 and adults (18+) as well as facilitating entry to Second Chance Schools for second generation immigrants who discontinued their education in a previous phase (dropouts).

To sum up, the Greek state has taken significant legal steps towards the inclusion of refugee children and children of refugees in the Greek education system, which are primarily limited to the Primary and Secondary tier of the Greek education system. For now, in concordance with mainstream European trends, no specific legal steps have been taken, nor has a comprehensive and coherent policy been created, for the inclusion of refugees in Greek HE. The priorities for the future appear to be related to the establishment of a coherent framework for the academic and professional recognition of qualifications achieved abroad, the mapping of refugees' educational background and work experience and the strengthening of language learning initiatives at the informal level.

4. Policies for the inclusion of refugees in Greek higher education

4.1 *Research methodology*

As the present paper examines Greek policies for the inclusion of refugees in Greek HE and the actions which directly or indirectly relate to refugees in Greek universities, the research questions have been formed as follows:

- What are the policies for the integration of refugees in Greek Higher Education (levels of authority, locations, sources of funding), within the context of other countries in Europe?
- What is the subject matter/content of initiatives directly or indirectly related to refugees in Greek universities?

In this context, two research tools were chosen for data collection: textual analysis and the qualitative, semi-structured interview. Textual analysis was used to locate, delineate and study the initiatives taken by Greek universities and academic institutions related to refugees. Research was undertaken online on university websites, those of the Lifelong Learning Centres (KEDIVIM in Greek) of each respective Institution, as well as on other web pages from where relevant information and data could be obtained¹³ (see for example the EUA website: <https://eua.eu/101-projects/541-refugees-welcome-map.html>, accessed in 21 September 2020). The second data

¹³ There is yet to be an observatory of initiatives related to refugees in Greece, both in HE or any other educational tier. As a result, and as was mentioned before, the search for initiatives was limited to university websites and other pages with relevant data. This fact obviously needs to be taken into account in the limitations of the current research.

collection tool used was the semi-structured interview with academic teaching staff and programme managers at the University of Patras and the University of the Aegean. These academic institutions were not selected at random but were deemed to be appropriate firstly due to their geographical positions: The University of the Aegean spans the islands of the Aegean that host the largest numbers of refugees in the country. The city of Patras in mainland Greece also hosts a significant number of refugees. Moreover, another selection criterion for the conducting of interviews was that of access to research subjects. Overall, five interviews were conducted with individuals responsible for initiatives related to refugees that took place in the last five years, during which the refugee issue has been exacerbated.

The research data was analysed using the method of thematical analysis. Specifically, the transcription of interviews was followed by a careful reading of the resulting texts, and extracts related to the research questions were identified and collated. During this collation, “a researcher must interpret the data, namely, understand their significance and render them through a semantic definition, called a code” (Tsiolis, 2017; Clarke & Braun, 2013). Subsequently, the codes were put together into topics. The issues that came about from the processing, comparison and collation of these codes are presented below in combination with relevant extracts from interviews and data from the study of University initiatives which corroborate the findings.

In social research, if one relies on a single data source, there is danger that undetected errors in the process of data production may render the analysis incorrect (Hammersley, 1984). Thus, it is essential for the researcher to triangulate his/her data. What is involved in triangulation is not the combination of different data per se, or a matter of checking whether inferences are valid. It is rather an attempt to relate different shorts of data in such a way as to counteract various possible threats to the validity of the analysis. It is a matter of discovering which inferences are valid (Foster, 1994; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Hammersley et al. 1994). In relation, finally, to reliability issues, Filstead (1970) suggested that this concept focuses on the degree of consistency in the observations obtained from the devices employed. Hammersley (1984) related the reliability issue with that of reactivity. He suggested that with triangulation of data, threats to reliability may be counteracted.

4.2 Greek university initiatives related to refugees

From the research conducted online, it appears that initiatives directly related to refugees have been undertaken by 6 universities: The National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA), Harokopeio University, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUT), the University of Patras (UOP), the Hellenic Open University (HOU) and the University of the Aegean (UOA) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Initiatives run by Greek universities related to refugees

University	Recognition	Access	Financial Support	Language and Bridging Courses	Integration Measures	Refugee researchers – academic staff	Online Learning	Strategic Approaches	Employability	Humanitarian work	Collaboration
NKUA	+		+	+	+	+				+	
HAROKOPEIO		+		+	+						
AUT	+	+		+	+	+	+				
HOU	+	+	+	+	+	+					
UOP					+					+	
UOA	+	+		+	+	+				+	

Apart from the initiatives taken by academic teaching staff at the universities directly related to refugees, there are also training initiatives primarily aimed at educators and education professionals and implemented through Lifelong Learning Centres (KEDIVIM in Greek), which are designed to support them in being better able to successfully manage the challenges they face inside multicultural classrooms. Moreover, academic teaching staff closely monitor migration as a phenomenon as a whole, as well as the issue of refugees, in order to contribute to an in-depth understanding and assist in the amelioration of the lives of vulnerable population groups. In this way, it should also be taken as a given that members of the academic teaching staff of universities implement research projects individually and/or in collaboration with researchers from other European countries indirectly related to refugees and the issues that arise from their stay in Greece.¹⁴ For the latter, it is not possible to compile systematic data. For the former, however, that is for the projects offered to educators and other interested parties through the Lifelong Learning Centres of Greek universities, the picture is given in the following table (See Table 2).

Table 2. Lifelong learning center programs in Greek universities related to the education of refugees

University	Programme Title (2019-2020)
NKUA (U.of Athens)	Intercultural Education, Language and Communication Teacher Training in Intercultural Education Teacher Training in the teaching of Greek as a Second/ Foreign Language (immigrants, refugees, Roma)
Panteion University	Intercultural Education
U. of Western Attica	Intercultural Education - Creative Learning and New Technologies
U. of Patras	Teacher Training in Intercultural Education and the teaching of Greek as a Second/ Foreign Language
U. of Western Mac.	The teaching of Greek as a Foreign Language in intercultural educational settings
U. of the Aegean	Intercultural Education: Diversity, acceptance, inclusion and the school
U. of Crete	Supporting students from diverse cultural backgrounds in school
Greek Med. U.	Intercultural Education

On this basis, and regarding the first research question, Stamelos (2009) has argued that the phrase “educational policy” was, until a few decades ago, only pertinent to state policies related to the national education system. Today, the development of a plethora of educational policies can be observed, which can be separated into different categories according to the levels of authority, locations, sources of funding and subject matter (Stamelos & Vasilopoulos, 2013: 22-23).

What is evident from the previous discussion is that, for the moment at least, state policy mostly involves the inclusion of children of third country nationals in the primary and secondary tier of the Greek education system. As has emerged from the interviews conducted with individuals responsible for programmes related to refugees in the universities of Patras and the Aegean, as well as from the examination of the relevant legislation of the Greek state, there does not appear to be a coherent policy for the inclusion refugees in Greek HE: *There is a clear policy for Primary and Secondary, REWF classes in AEPs, legislation for Primary and Secondary Education, but there is no policy that relates to Tertiary Education...But generally, there is no clear policy as there is no law which specifically mentions Tertiary Education anywhere (Interview. #4).*

¹⁴ Five such projects have been implemented at the University of the Aegean in the last decade.

What is clear and reflected in the new National Strategy for Inclusion (see Ministry of Migration Policy, 2018) is the state's willingness to create a relevant legal framework for the recognition of the level of education and qualifications of third country nationals who are not able to present proof from their country of origin: *There is, however, a big problem with the young people who were students in Syria, Afghanistan or somewhere else and who were forced to leave because of war and so to interrupt their studies. These young people find themselves at a loose end because they can't continue their studies, there is no mechanism that can assess their level and place them at University so that there can be a continuation and I think that this is something that we could look at (Interview. #5).* Additionally, the new National Strategy for Inclusion (see Ministry of Migration Policy, 2018) provides for the launching of information and guidance campaigns for refugees, providing them with assistance on having the education they received abroad recognised so that they can continue their studies in Tertiary and Higher Education, or exercise any professional rights that their diploma or degree might grant them. Another priority for the Greek state, to the same end, is the mapping of the educational background and work experience of third country nationals as well as the reinforcement of language learning initiatives at the level of informal education. However, and for the time being: *a clear policy, no. Unfortunately, it doesn't exist. There could be a comparison, perhaps even through NARIC [National Recognition Information Centre]. Meaning that if a student is in the second year of medicine in Aleppo in Syria and is forced to leave, there could be a committee at NARIC which examines what level the student is at, what courses they have taken and place them in the respective level at a Greek University. Unfortunately, something like this hasn't occurred at the institutional level (Interview. #5).*

The levels of authority involved in policies that are being developed related to refugees seem to be supranational or sub-national in terms of their origin and regional with regards to their locations, namely taking place inside HE Institutions. They are primarily financed by EU: *The HORIZON project was funded by the European Union. Greece is also part of the European Union. Generally, the European Union funds projects like these, another project, BRiDGE II was funded by the European Union. This was planned by a German University, but generally yes, the European Union funds these [projects]. And the Greek state agrees to it. The funding takes place at the level of the European Union, not the national budget. (Interview. #2).* Furthermore, they are *privately funded (Interview. #3)* or can occasionally be *self-financed* (such as the programmes of study at Lifelong Learning Centres on multicultural education, **Interview. #5**).

Actually the activities designed and implemented by academic teaching staff at Greek universities, ultimately, (co-)shape what is considered to be the dominant policies regarding the inclusion of refugees in Greek HE: *There is no, and it is not necessary for there to be a policy, the same individuals who are responsible for teaching undertake such activities and implement them and the University accepts them and welcomes them (Interview. #4).*

This discussion, of course, brings us to the second research question involving the subject and content of initiatives related to refugees at Greek Universities. As is shown through the examination of Table 1, initiatives directly related to refugees that aim towards their integration in Greek HE, within the framework of the implementation of European programmes or other initiatives by academic teaching staff, are mostly limited. These also primarily involve providing financial support and helping with language learning. Also important are the opportunities for work given to refugee researchers and academic staff in the context of relevant European policies¹⁵ and programmes implemented in Greece at four Universities (NKUA, AUT, EAP and UOP): *The aim was to reintegrate refugees who had a certain level of education, meaning who had a degree from a university of their country of origin, to include them in the*

¹⁵ See <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/science4refugees>.

academic environment/setting in some way. That was the aim; it didn't continue. We granted some scholarships to a few people who were completing or had completed a PhD, to conduct research at the University (**Interview. #3.**).

Three relevant issues arise from this current examination. The first one involves the criteria and the particular aims of a research director assuming the design and implementation of a programme related to refugees.

Interview. #3.: *Our choice has to do with the fact that it wasn't as if refugees started arriving and we then decided to get involved as good people, because the hospital told us that there were refugees there, we were involved with immigrants and Roma people before, so that it was a natural sequence of events.*

Interview. #2.: *I am aware of the issues related to refugees and multicultural education, myself and my colleagues are as well but I wouldn't like to speak on others' behalf, I'll speak about me. It is my personal choice, out of my interest in refugees that I have been involved in these initiatives.*

The second issue relates to the geographical location of each University, and the level of participation in activities related to refugees. As is shown above, in the case of Greece, geographical position plays a significant part in the adoption and implementation of initiatives directly related to refugees, such as the initiatives by the University of the Aegean in the last five years. From looking at Table 2, however, it appears that geographical position does not play a part in the cases of initiatives indirectly related to refugees which involve teachers, education professionals and members of Non-Governmental Organisations. What has emerged from the analysis of research data is that the geographical position of Universities can influence the adoption of initiatives directly related to refugees and the refugee issue: *If the city where the university is located does not have immigrants then such initiatives do not make sense* (**Interview. #2**). It does not affect, though, research activities or those related to guidance and training of members of the local population who are called to work in new multicultural settings: *Geographical position does indeed have an influence, but the truth is that due to the refugee crisis it would be important for all universities to implement similar initiatives for refugees and also as influenced by Europe* (**Interview. #1**).

Finally, the third issue is related to the forms taken by the initiatives. From the previous discussion it is clear that we are referring to: European programmes directly related to the integration of refugees to Greek HE, research programmes predominantly funded by European funds (HORIZON 2020) or national funds (Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation), training programmes organised at Lifelong Learning Centres at different Universities and funded through fees paid by the trainees or other observational activities of the changing situation of the refugee issue, which are mostly funded by private institutions and entities (Tables 1 and 2).

5. Discussion

Relevant research, on the issue of refugee's inclusion in HEIs in Europe and elsewhere, although limited and somewhat under-developed, focuses, mainly, either on the barriers to access for refugee background students (Lambrechts, 2020; Yildiz, 2019) or the aspirations and experiences of refugees entering HE (Sontag, 2019; Schneider, 2018; Lenette, 2016). In this paper, we have attempted to portray the dominant trends in the European continent related to the integration of refugees in HE, focussing on the case of Greece and highlighting the policies of the Greek state towards the integration of refugees in the country's education system and the inclusion of refugees in Greek HE. We have also laid emphasis on the levels of authority involved, the locations, sources of funding and subject matter.

It appears, that the exacerbation of the refugee issue affected, mainly, the primary and secondary tier of Greek education, for example with the establishment of AEPs, REWFs, reception classes, learning support classes and the running of summer classes and language classes (for the students' first language). Greece remains one of the few countries that has not, yet, signed the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The sudden influx of refugees, being trapped in the country, has posed great challenges and created different, more urgent priorities -such as the creation of proper and adequate facilities and infrastructures for the accommodation of refugees. Moreover, interruptions in education either in the country of origin, or once they arrived in Greece, mean that refugee populations do not always achieve the grades, or the language fluency, required for progressing onto HE. They do not, also, possess the necessary documentation, regarding their educational qualifications, rendering recognition procedures problematic. Finally, the fact that refugees seem to think of Greece as an intermediate destination may account for the fact that this issue has not had a direct effect on Greek universities. It created, however, the need for universities to establish new services, such as the provision of technological solutions to make the daily lives of refugees easier, or the creation of facilities for psychological support. Another need that has arisen is for the design and implementation of new programmes of study, such as the development of refugees' language skills and multicultural education training for teachers, education professionals, and members of NGOs, realised through an administrative, management logic of the refugee issue. Furthermore, universities have remained true to their traditional role, studying the refugee phenomenon and flows of migration as a whole. In this sense, Greece seems to have, conveniently, followed the dominant EU trend regarding the inclusion of refugees into HE systems.

Overall, universities have conducted research on diverse aspects of the refugee crisis at the academic level. At the level of teaching, they have designed and implemented training initiatives which had as beneficiaries both local and refugee populations. Lastly, in the context of their social function, they have taken part in a series of voluntary actions/activities, separately, or in cooperation with local communities, NGOs and others. By participating in specific activities such as projects SUCRE, SCIREA, BRIDGE I and II funded by the EU, the HORIZON project and initiatives by the EUA (such as the Refugees Welcome Map), some Greek universities have contributed to initiatives aiming to integrate refugees into Greek HE.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, the policies related to the inclusion of refugees in Greek HE are for the most part limited and comprise of initiatives undertaken by academic teaching staff within Greek universities, mainly through European funding. Following from that, the initiatives implemented by Greek universities relate both directly and indirectly to refugees, have a guidance/training and research character or are undertaken within the remit of the university's social function and are mainly financed by EU funds and private entities, or are occasionally self-financed. The Greek state has not yet developed a coherent policy for the integration of refugees aged 18+ into Greek HE, following the dominant EU trend. Above all, the priorities at this time relate to the establishment of a coherent framework for the academic and professional recognition of qualifications gained abroad, the mapping of the educational background and work experience of third country nationals as well as the reinforcement of language learning initiatives at the informal level.

Largely, this means that Greece, for the moment, chooses not to utilize the human capital that the refugee population could provide in the country's development through its integration in Greek HE, and subsequently in Greek society.

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