

Boston Latin School  
Tufts IGL Inquiry 2019  
*Cities at the Vanguard*  
Toronto Simulation

# *Athens, Greece*

*Briefing Paper*

## **Introduction**

In the contemporary state of the migrant crisis, Athens fully acknowledges this urgent obstacle. As the birthplace of western democracy, our city believes that only through soliciting the perspectives of various parties can we ultimately reach a viable and long lasting solution. Athens embraces this conference as a collaborative effort of various foreign entities to invest in adequate accommodations for all migrants in order to ensure their rights to healthcare, shelter, stability and other essential needs.

We hope that foreign entities will be willing to continue in this commitment and increase investments in our city whether through providing monetary aid or supplies. In the recent years, many of our migrants have come predominantly from the Balkan countries, the Middle East, as well as Asia. Although we still face immense challenges to integration these populations into our society, we are optimistic that the situation will improve in the foreseeable future.

## **Demographics**

- The ethnic Greeks compose the majority of the populations in Athens. Other minorities in the demographic include Jews, Romani, and Muslims
- The official religion in Athens, as well as Greece, is the Eastern Orthodox church. Other religion in Athens include Catholicism, Islam, and Judaism.
- Within the City of Athens, there are noticeably segregation in residential areas in accordance with wealth and racial status.

## **Key Points**

- Increased humanitarian aid to refugee camps
- Additional emergency funding from EU nations
- Established policies towards migrants who progress to other EU nations
- Enhanced technology for documentation of migrants
- Border policies of neighboring countries

## **Background and History of Athens**

Athens is an ancient city rich in ancient traditions gathered during the millennia of our existence. We, the citizens, are very proud that the efforts and creativity of our predecessors has created great institutions and schools of thoughts. These are all factors that have helped us reach an ever greater prominence in the theaters of the ancient world. Furthermore, provided with a strategic location in the Mediterranean and Aegean sea, a crucial crossroad of trade and commerce, our city has amassed glorious wealth over the centuries. Our moist Mediterranean climate has given us an agricultural advantage during ancient times, allowing us to export exotic products such as wine, figs, olives. In return, we received spices, fish, and glass from other regions. Ancient Athens has also fostered a reputation for the gathering of great knowledge and diffusion of ideas. Over the centuries, it was a place where some of the world's greatest philosophers including Plato and Socrates have debated. In our city, we also have great architectural achievements such as the renowned Parthenon, which symbolized our masterful blending of art, religion, and engineering skills. The entire structure a strict ratios in order to fully bring out its harmony and aesthetic elegance.

Given our prosperity in trading and flourishing achievements in the various arts, we Athenian citizens have always demonstrated great valor during wars in order to protect our homeland and common identity. During the Greco-Persian war, our soldiers led a fierce and successful defense against the Persian invaders. Later, during the Peloponnesian War, Athens led the Delian league in a battle against the Peloponnesian league led by the Spartans. Unfortunately, our city eventually capitulated in this battle and lost great prestige; nevertheless, we demonstrated great resolve to persevere. Finally, arriving upon our modern history, the establishment of Greece also drew our city into even larger global prominence, especially during our bitter involvement with the wider European conflicts. Particularly, during the midst of WW2, the Nazi invasion of Greece led to one of the very tragic chapters in the recent history of Greece. As consequence, there were widespread famine that crippled the Greek nation. The situation was especially severe in Athens due to the population density of the large urban cities. During the mass starvation, many of our witnesses painfully recount that the Nazis were exporting food out of the country on a large scale.

Perhaps, one of the most important aspect of Athenian history is how our citizens have encountered many different forms of governance. Yet, there is one type that we are most proud of: the time-honored concept of Athenian democracy. During the latter parts of the 5th century BCE, our statesman Solon of Athens introduced a system where majority were able to hold political representation for the first time in our history. This is a very revolutionizing idea because it meant those of us who did not own land or property were now considered full citizens. It is important to note, however, that there were significant shortcomings including the failure extend this right to women and slaves. Another important aspect of Athenian democracy was many many of its political entities resembled those that is widely adopted in contemporary society. For example, the *Dikasteria* was revolutionary in the incorporation of jurors in the judicial system.

It was only in the early 19th century, there was an important turning point for the history of Athens: the Greek independence. The for effort for Greek independence garnered a lot of local support through appealing to the sense of a common Hellenic identity (a term that originated from the diffusion of ideas during the expansion of Alexander the great). Even many decades before the official start of the revolution, a nationalistic sentiments were embodied by passionate writers. One of the most distinguished is Rigas Feraios who wrote the poem *Thourios*. Using literature to express our desire for liberty demonstrates how education and cultural ties has always in a integral part to us the Athenians, and the Greeks. During the Greek independence movement, there were also various interventions and aid by European nations such as Russia and Great Britain. Many historians believe that freedom of Greece, as the cradle of western civilization, held great sentimental values to western nations. From other perspectives, it might've also symbolized the conflict between the Western power and the Eastern power.

Throughout millenniums, the Athens was a stage for interaction between many different groups and cultures whether they be the ancients Mycenaeans, Hellenic traders, and ever the fierce Ottomans. Every time, our citizens have brazenly executed their resilience as well as intellectual creativity in order to preserve the integrity of our city and transform it into one of the most significant centers of human civilization. Thus, it is fair to say that the vicissitudes of history, characterized by the frequent and often violent changes in leadership, has only added to the

complexity of Athenian history. At the same time, it has never succeeded in obliterating the identity of the Athenian people. For example, many thousands of years later, there are still Athenians celebrating the Dionysus festival, honoring an ancient pagan god. We the Athenians are also very proud of our traditional cuisine, not only because it derives the ingredients for local sources, but also because it unites family members. Some of our famed national dishes include Saganaki, made of a hard cheese as well as the Horiatiki Salata, a type of vegetable salad.

While retaining its former glory, the Athens of today undoubtedly faces many challenges. Many visitors to this ancient city will be quick to notice the strong dichotomy between the classical structures and the surrounding residential dwellings. The inadequateness of urban planning in the past century of so has always been a pressing problem in our city. In the recent decades, many people from the surrounding countryside migrate to Athens in search of greater opportunities causing a great stress on the local housing markets. The increase in population in our city also led to another recent crisis, the worsening pollution in our city, particularly damaging to the quality of air. The lingering recession did not particularly help the case as it increased the prices of heating oil. This means that many people in Athens who have limited economic means would resort to the alternative of burning logs, which releases carbon dioxide along with toxic particles. In light of the recent refugee crisis, our city of Athens looks forward to address how we may accommodate and integrate additional populations while fully considering the limitations imposed by living space, environment, and natural resources.

## Issues

### Leadership and Governance

- Rise of neo-Nazi political parties
- Registration and documentation of migrants

### Urban Planning

- Access to basic needs such as water and electricity
- Movement of migrants from coastal ports to mainland

### Economic Integration

- Incorporating the skills and knowledge of migrants
- Financial Aid to Greek economy

### Social Cohesion

- Reconciling different perspectives on immigration
- Gender imbalance in the migrant population

#### Youth & Education

- Integration and assimilation of migrant youths
- Incorporating of multiculturalism and global perspectives

#### Health

- Prevention of diseases in migrant communities
- The nutritional needs of migrants

#### Resilience

- Strengthening the Migrant Integration Center (KEM)
- The importance of adequate housing for migrants

## **Committees**

### **Leadership & Governance**

Political representation for immigrant groups in Athens is extremely limited because many constitute the undocumented groups. Furthermore, many immigrants have limited access to different political protections such as workers right because they labor in the informal sectors of the economy. Additionally, many immigrants to Greece do not hold the intention of remaining permanently, and instead focus on moving along to other European countries.

The model of representation trends toward majoritarian rule. Currently, one of the largest political party in our country is called the Coalition of the Radical Left, also abbreviated as Syriza. They have many ideas that they strongly promote, currently including the lessening on austerity policies as well as an increase in wages for workers. The supports of Syriza include a significant portion of our population, especially from the sectors of lower income.

On the other side of the spectrum, there are the right winged groups such as the Independent Greeks who is firmly against the any bail-outs from the European Union. The views of the Independent Greeks is important for us to consider because it demonstrates how there are certain groups within our population who are more opposed to any limitations imposed by the EU, possibility impacting our negotiations in the refugee crisis.

Many asylum seekers crosses the Aegean sea in order to disembark on many of our islands in the eastern parts of the country. Some of these islands are accessible by boat cross from the Turkish coastline. Our federal government is in charge of distributing the loans from EU nations to fund the various shelters around our country. According to a statistics, the loans average to around

\$7000 dollars per refugee in 2017 (Data Source: The Guardian, *Greece has the means to help refugees on Lesbos – but does it have the will?*). At the same time, our federal government also recognize that the conditions in certain shelters such as the large camp of Moria have inadequate facilities to accommodate all the temporary inhabitants. In the future, our city of Athens and other cities hope to see a closer cooperation with our federal government in order to most efficiently distribute the funding from our EU neighbors and to reduce waste.

The Athens government work with other Greek cities in order to provide accommodation for the refugee camps. The Moria camp on the Greek island of Lesbos is currently under the immense pressure of supporting around thousands refugees from Middle Eastern countries while its maximum capacity is a fraction that number.

As the City of Athens, our immigration policy is in alignment with that of the government of Greece. We recognize that many of the refugees who embark on our various islands are in urgent need of basic facilities and often medical aid as well. Unfortunately, there is a limit to the capacity of these reception centers and we would like to request aid from other European countries. While our neighbouring countries such as Italy and Spain has tightened their doors on immigration, Athens maintains that maintaining this type of attitude is not the most efficient or humanitarian way to resolve the crisis. While we will continue our operation of refugee centers both in our city as well as others, we believe that it is only fair for us to receive help. Having access to those aid will not only expand the temporary care we are able to provide to our incoming refugees, but also further expand our ability to conduct thorough registration with those who seek entrance into our city, and eventually into our country.

Another policy that we have towards immigration is that we do not allow refugees to enter our city or country through resettlement. This means that no refugees may gain legal access into our country by coming from another European country. It is important to observe, however, that most refugees who enter through the many ports in our country actually have a long term plan to immigrate to other European nations with top choices being more economically stable countries such as Germany.

Currently, many of our undocumented migrants live in sub-optimal conditions. Our national police force is the Hellenic police which seeks to ensure the safeties of all communities regardless of their legal status or identity. One obstacle however, is that many of our undocumented migrants face serious difficulties in seeking access to police services because of the language barrier. Another service we offer are homeless shelters to minors. In those shelters we provide many shelters to inform the youths of their legal rights as well as give them an education to better integrate them into our society.

In regards to technology, increased fundings from our UN neighbors will help us improve our

registration system for refugees who have embarked in our city. Athen firmly believes that only if we can document all migrants will we then be able to provide them better services and integration into our society.

Within the various communities in our city of Athens, there is a great diversity in views regarding the influx of migrants and refugees. Currently, one of the most resonating voices come from the parties leaning towards the right of the political spectrum. Our most right winged group is the Golden Dawn. Although in a decline in the recent years, the Golden Dawn at one point had gained significant political standing in the recent years becoming the third largest group in our nation's congress. Like many other smaller right wing political organizations, the Golden Dawn had galvanized support through rhetorics for various new policies such as the tightening of our country's borderlines in order to curb the influx of asylum seekers.

Our residents in Athens recognizes our significance of our city in world history, whether it be the convening of different cultures and religions. Thus, we do not see ourselves as vulnerable to the new cultures that the asylum seekers may bring into the fabric of our society. In explaining the prevalent hostility against many of the incoming migrants, it is more effective to analyze the economical impacts, whether real or perceived that they might impose on our currently fragile system.

As a recipient of loans from more economically stable countries such as Germany, we are encouraged by other European countries to assume austerity measures such as cutting government spending and increasing taxes. This decision has negative impacts on our economy with a quarter reduction and souring unemployment summing to around 50 per cent for our youths (Date Source: The Balance, *Greek Debt Crisis Explained*). This finally brings us to the most critical reason for the hostility against migrants. Many native citizens in our city or Athens as well as in Greece are concerned that the influx of a new labor force will overly burden the fragile market and lead to competitions with the original inhabitants for jobs.

## **Urban Planning**

We, the delegation of Athens and committee on Urban Planning, not only recognize the legitimacy of the need to securely house refugees, but we do so with an open embrace. We are the most densely populated city in Greece, with a population of 3 million people. Anybody walking through our streets can easily identify the effects of the global refugee crisis in our city. In our recent history, due to our location and proximity to these conflicted nations, we have been a popular city for refugee relocation as they escape the violence and oppression they were subjected to. As a state and as a people, we have been accepting of refugees, and willing to contribute to their reintegration into safe civilian life. In Greece alone, 2,000 refugees enter every day, and from those, many find themselves calling Athens their new home.

Despite our limitless efforts to support and contribute, we admit that our refugees aren't in the best housing arrangements. Due to a lack of space, and the growing influxes of refugees, tens of thousands of refugees are currently staying in makeshift camps. These camps are mostly comprised of tents held up by trees, and other lacking accommodations. Given the masses, these conditions are completely beyond our control. The refugees who come to our camps are usually seeking asylum from war and chaos in their homelands. Although the camps provide the basics for sustained life, and are leagues above what the refugees would have otherwise, they are also a danger to the refugees' physical and mental health. We are cognizant of this, and as a state, are looking into calculated measures we can pursue to solve this issue.

We are a large city with a large social framework, and it's difficult to integrate in tens of thousands of refugees. You see, the reason that our camps are in bad condition is because of our rising amount of refugees and migrants coming into our city from the border of Turkey. We are facing a housing shortage. Unfortunately, due to our debt crisis many of our refugees and migrants are stranded in camps. We are not fully equipped to respond to the masses of people seeking asylum. Although we are classified as a major metropolitan area, we do lack the infrastructure necessary to support large waves of newcomers, especially on a consistent basis. Our nation has also recently faced a renowned financial crisis that rendered our federal capital virtually nonexistent. Without the public financial backing, we would have to rely on international humanitarian funds from a mostly inactive global network, a loan that would push us deeper into inescapable debt, or sponsorships from multiple private companies either domestically or internationally. Regardless of the infrastructure, we lack the funds needed to invest in social programs that would aid our newcomers in social integration as it relates to assimilating into urban culture. Our financial crisis has left our housing system for refugees unstable. We understand that we must urgent steps to help the thousands of people in squalid camps. As a result of our housing shortage the refugees have been forced to stay in relatively unfavorable areas.

At first, many of our camps were located on our islands. However, we now realize that our camps are not the most safe or healthy place for our refugees. Many of our refugees are now moving towards the mainland and to Athens. We are doing everything in our power to make sure that the migrants are safe and healthy. We are providing them shelter in hotels and apartments. However, we are anxious about the rising amount of refugees and migrants coming into our city. It has become harder for us to keep track of them. So as you can imagine, it's getting hard for us to find them all a home. We are currently sheltering around 67,100 refugees and migrants. Although we are trying to get them to safety, a lot of them are still staying in squalid camps. Unfortunately, winter is coming and that is a big threat to the refugees that are still in camps. We also have issues with our staff capacity. The director of our asylum service even states "People

are working under adverse conditions. There is clearly an issue of staff capacity that we need to resolve.”

We are trying our best to get all of our migrants and refugees to the power grid. The migrants who are currently living in hotels and apartments do have working electricity. However, we still have a large group of migrants that are still in squalid camps. Whether it is the camps on the islands or the camps on the mainland, they do not have access to electricity. This is because of the rising amount of migrants and refugees. We are still not quite financially stable, and we are having trouble housing all of our migrants. The arrivals we have had have been up to 50% in the last year. It is hard for us to keep track of all of the migrants especially when they “hide” after applying for asylum due to the fact that they are scared that they will be rejected and sent back to their country.

The migrants that are currently staying in hotels and apartments have access to electricity. However, the migrants and refugees that are still in squalid camps do not have access to electricity. They do not have access to proper heat either. This is problematic especially in the Winter. We are doing everything in our power to get as many migrants out of their camps, but with the rising amount of migrants coming in, it is getting very hard. Many of our migrants are refugees from Turkey. They usually come seeking asylum. However, it has been very hard keeping track of them all. This is because once the refugees apply for asylum they hide. They fear that they will be rejected and sent back to Turkey. This has made it very hard for them for us to find them, and give them safe housing and access to electricity.

## **Economic Integration**

The economy in our city, and our country overall, is in shambles. After the global recession in 2008, we had to borrow heavily, and thus had to pass extreme austerity measures in order to curb government spending to pay off our national debts. We passed a total of 14 such measures between 2010 and 2017. This drastically minimized benefits for the poor and government workers, and it thus sunk our economy deeper and deeper into recession due to the immense amount of money we owed the European Union.

Our most important sectors are industrial supplies, agriculture, and tourism, but tourism is by far the most predominant sector of our economy. Petroleum accounts for 29% of all Greece’s exports, Portland cement accounts for nearly 700 million euros in revenue per annum, agriculture, more particularly olives, cotton, rice, and livestock, is an instrumental part of our economy, and, obviously, tourism is the biggest generator of revenue because of our magnificent national heritage. Tourism is much more prevalent here in Athens, Greece’s biggest city.

Historically, migrants have participated in the agriculture sector, despite the change in the demographic makeup of our migrant population. The dramatic high and low seasons of tourism allow for many opportunities for employment, which many migrants are able to take advantage of (such as is the case in Italy and other European countries).

As there is a great lack of money within the Greek government, very few people have extra money to hire more people. Since most immigrants also only use Greece as one leg of a trip to get farther away, it is unlikely general businesses would hire immigrants. Immigrants also have very few connections in a country with an 18.5% unemployment rate, so jobs are beyond scarce.

Migrants are entrepreneurial in our city, despite the unemployment rate being so much higher than the national average. The fact that migrants are able to make their way to Greece and carve out a notch for themselves is impressive. There are of course those who are not entrepreneurial, but there are always a few bad apples in every bunch of people, and it is never safe to make generalizations.

There are not services in place to assist migrants with finding work. The government has very little money and cannot even afford to protect its border from migrants. While there are organizations that help migrants survive in Athens, their work is being stretched out far with the large number of migrants, and they are only able to help less and less, especially with the nationwide lack of money.

After being as high as almost 21%, the national unemployment rate has fallen to a more manageable (but still high) 18%, but in stark contrast the unemployment rate of foreign-born inhabitants of Greece is a staggering 35%, nearly 2 times the national average. This is quite clearly a very pressing problem that should be addressed immediately.

Many migrants come to our city from all classes and walks of life, particularly as a result of the Syrian conflict, because the civil war there has devastated all levels of the social order. Thus, many skilled professionals come to our city with very advanced and specialized skills, whereas others come to our city with little more to offer than manual labor. Because of the diaspora of the middle class, though, there is a lot of “brain waste”, so to speak.

The nation of Greece does not have the economic standing to provide welfare to migrants. While people are nice to migrants, and there are churches and other businesses to help them on their journey to their final destination (which is usually not Greece), they do not receive help from the government in the form of money due to the lack of money in the Greek government and population as a whole.

All citizens cost money, and the sheer magnitude of the migrants coming from Albania, North Africa, and Syria cause a strain on our social services system. This is also because our economy was in shambles before the refugee “crisis”, and the hundreds of thousands of new migrants did not necessarily relieve our economic woes. Some make migrants out to be more of a social strain than they really are, but to some extent immigrants are a social strain on our city.

Whether or not migrants are a strain on the social services system, they are perceived by many Greeks and by many far-right parties such as Golden Dawn as an enormous strain on the social services system. However, much of the opposition to African and Middle Eastern (and Albanian, but that was mostly in the 1990s) migrants is more from a nationalistic point of view that immigrants are “killing” the national identity of Greece (not all too different from the outrage when Macedonia decided to name its country such).

While the Greek people are friendly to migrants, it is very hard for a migrant to get a job, especially if passing through Greece. Without a job, it becomes harder to contribute economically, however they do come from one country to another and bring money for food and water. The only limitation to this being that they probably did not leave their home countries with too much money.

## **Social Cohesion**

Over the past 20 years, many of our migrants come from countries in Eastern Europe, such as Albania and Bulgaria. The majority of migrants coming to our city in recent years are those fleeing wars in the Middle East and seeking refuge in Athens, Greece, and Europe. In 2014 the top countries from which refugees were granted asylum in Greece are Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Syria. The Syrian refugee crisis in 2015 brought an overwhelming amount of Middle Eastern migrants to our city. Coming from the Middle East, the majority of these migrants are Muslims. Many of the people coming to our city are coming individually and seeking employment in our city. These migrants take jobs in our workforce and many stay in our city illegally.

With the increasing number of migrants in our city and country, we have had different responses of our local native population. Some citizens in Athens have been more accepting than those in the islands of Greece. We have had some of our citizens offering their support including a solidarity march with migrants that took place in Athens in 2016. Along with this accepting attitude, we have also seen an increase in attacks on refugees in cities across the country. There have been more racist and neo-Nazi attacks since the increase in migrants. Our citizens are feeling the pressure of the mass number of migrants in our city and there is a growing negative sentiment toward them.

Greece is one of the main entrance points of migrants for entrance into Europe, making our country overwhelmed with immigrants seeking refuge and aid. With the Syrian refugee crisis in

2017, the Balkan countries north of Greece have blocked much of the migration from Greece into Europe. This has only further heightened our struggle with the influx in our city. Many of these migrants are from the Middle East and are fleeing war in their home countries. They come into our city and seek employment. At this time, we are struggling to provide enough jobs for our native population and therefore find it increasingly difficult to accommodate the migrants. With the financial state of our country, we can not provide successful opportunities for the mass number of migrants seeking permanent residency in Athens.

Throughout the history of our city, we have had many waves of immigrants coming into our country and they usually become part of the workforce. Through all of this immigration, we have remained welcoming to refugees seeking asylum and safety. But we are unable to fully process all applications for asylum because of the overwhelming amount of refugees with an unequal amount of resources. We want to continue to be welcoming to refugees and migrants seeking asylum, but we need aid with the large number of migrants who are seeking entrance in our city.

We have tried to make sure migrants coming into our city have the opportunity to succeed but with our current resources, many migrants face difficulty doing well in Athens. We have opened hostels and apartments for the migrants coming into our country in an attempt to make refugees' opportunities in our city more hopeful. Although this is our goal, with a lack of financial aid and large number of migrants, we haven't been able to fully integrate migrants into our community effectively and provide them with adequate resources.

Discriminatory racist violence against migrants and refugees in Greece is a large problem that is slowly rising, especially in our city, as well as in the Greek islands. Quite often it takes the form of physical assaults, and according to RVRN "perpetrators appeared to execute instructions given to them by their organizations based on premeditated plans." Our city strives to fight internal violence of all kinds, and while it is difficult for us to house migrants the ones that are housed should not be put under threat of attack. Religion is also an area in which migrants and Greeks can come into conflict.

As stated by Greeka, "The Greek population in mainland Greece and the Greek islands is Christian Orthodox per 98%." The vast majority of our country is Orthodox Christian and this can cause conflicts at some times. Greece carries this Orthodox heritage and refugees may cause strife with our people by trying to conflict with this. When the mayor of the Greek city of Livadia supported the construction of a mosque for the benefit of refugees, she was labeled by the populace as "a member of jihad." While religion does present challenges, our city is doing its very best to incorporate and accept migrants and provide them with the best accommodations possible for us.

While our city does not discriminate against migrants on the basis of gender, gender differences can present problems. Nearly 70% of migrants to Greece are male, and around 30% female. However, there are some stresses that excessively affect those of one sex. A study by Oxfam

concludes that female refugees in our city feel a lack of access to female healthcare professionals, with whom they would feel more comfortable discussing their health concerns, as well as clearer access to contraceptives for both males and females. We recognize the differing needs of these migrants and attempt for both men and women's requirements to be recognized and dealt with.

The media in Athens is not a major influence on the situation with migrants. Our media condemns the awful living conditions of many refugees, but not the refugees themselves. It has taken a similar stance on refugees as many other countries, seeing the crisis as an important one but not the fault of the refugees. Most hate against refugees in our country comes from xenophobic people themselves in our country, not influenced by the media.

Technology, and especially access to the Internet, has become a necessity for migrants. Many migrants and refugees have family in their home countries that they have not spoken to since their leaving. The only possibilities for interviews for asylum seekers is in person, or through Skype video chat. However, many migrants have a variety of reasons why face-to-face meetings are impossible. Therefore, non-governmental aid groups cooperate with our city to provide connectivity for migrants and refugees. Our city sees this as of utmost importance and fully supports any and all initiatives to provide access to technology to migrants.

## **Youth & Education**

The youth of our society are the path to our future success, so education has always been an aspect of life that Athens takes great pride in. Athens was an intellectual oasis in Ancient Greece with a strong sense of arts, mathematics, and physical fitness. This secure educational background is what helped our democracy thrive. Today, we have not lost this desire for a strong educational system and the principles of free education are highlighted in our constitution. Presently, The Ministry of Education, Research, and Religious Affairs is successfully overseeing public education in Athens, providing a curriculum, staff, and funding to our schools.

Education is required by law for students between the ages of 6 and 15. However, even before the age of 6, there is a system for early education and care. Children between the ages of 6 and 12 participate in Primary Education and those from 12 to 18 are enrolled in a Secondary Education. Beyond a basic education curriculum, students participate in classes of arts, music, and physical education. There are also a variety of schooling options available to students with physical and mental disorders. Students in Secondary Education learn both the English language and another foreign language of their choice. Religion is an important part of our education system. Orthodox Christianity is the main religion in Greece and its principles are discussed from the basic levels of education. There is the availability of a higher education and a large percentage of students attend a university, but this usually occurs at an additional cost to the individual.

The Ministry has adapted a redesigned model of education in recent years based on recent scientific findings globally. It is extremely important that we stay versed with the teachings of the rest of the world so our students are able to act successfully in global partnerships. Most of the population relies on the public school system, with only 10% of students enrolling in private institutions. (*source: Paideia-Ergasia*). The public schools in Athens are extremely successful and produce highly educated students. However, the public school system faces a competing sector of private education that seeks to profit from student learning. Public education finds it difficult to compete with these highly funded private institutions. However, the Greek constitution requires free education to be available to all students. Adding fees or tuitions to public schooling would require an alteration of this constitution and it is our goal to continue to offer free education to the entire population.

The teachers in Athens are hired in accordance with the nation of Greece. Our Education Minister, Kostas Gavrolgou, is currently the head of an operation to hire 15,000 teachers to the public school system by 2022. There is no discrimination when it comes to staffing our schools, although some patterns are visible in the overall makeup of the staff. For example, 71% of all primary school teachers are women. Most teachers are ethnically Greek and identify as Greek Orthodox following the overwhelming majority of Greek Orthodox citizens. There is also a high demand for English speaking teachers to lead instruction as many of our citizens prefer their children to be well acquainted with the English language.

Students never have to worry about the cost of education in Greece. The constitution guarantees free education to all Greek citizens. Therefore, no fees are paid by students. State-run schools do not charge a tuition. Textbooks are also free to all students.

We are aware of the migrant population in Athens and have done our best to accommodate for all students seeking an education in our city. According to Unicef's report on refugee and migrant children, as of June of 2018, 566 migrant children have received international protection upon arrival within Greece, but there is an estimated 23,500 migrant children in total. There are currently 3,448 unaccompanied migrant children living within Greece and 2,313 unaccompanied minors are still in desperate need of shelter and protection. Of the 566 children who receive International protection, only 33 of them were unaccompanied minors. Migrant and immigrant children can receive special Greek language acquisition classes in order to quickly learn the language. It is expected that migrant children assimilate into Greek society and culture. Many migrants and their families, due to underlying xenophobia within Greece, fair better when they convert to Greek Orthodox and learn Greek.

UNICEF has been provided a grant from the European Commission's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Program in order to help Greece's government provide better protection for the

migrant children within the country. This grant has allowed for the Greek National Center for Social Solidarity to speed up the process of identifying migrant youth and placing them into shelters. There are currently 26 intercultural schools within Athens, whose purpose is to integrate migrant or non-native children into mainstream society. Immigrant and migrant children are allowed to attend Greek public schools where they can interact with local children, as long as their families meet the guidelines of being granted refugee status, or come from acknowledged turbulent regions.

Currently, there are minority schools for muslim migrant children, not within Athens, but located north, mainly in Thrace. Within these schools, lessons are taught in Turkish and Greek. There are two Koranic schools for muslim children, as well. Within Athens, there are intercultural schools for students of different nationalities in order to meet their social and cultural needs.

Within Greece, undocumented labor by foreign migrants accounts for 24% of its GDP. Despite this, the number of work permits given to non-native Greek foreigners is only 0.33% of the registered labor force.

Although the academic success of all members of our society is extremely important, the economic burden on our nation makes it difficult for this to always happen. Funding is always an issue, but we have maintained a strong educational holding regardless. In addition, the language barrier that is surfaced with refugees continues to be a focus of our educational system. Some are also concerned about our religious connection in public education. However, religion is a vital aspect of our society and we do not discriminate against those of other religions, but it is important that all our students are aware of the importance of Christianity to our history.

In conclusion, education is an important part of Athen's culture and we continue to make substantial efforts to improve this aspect of society. Despite economic and social difficulties within the city and the overall country, The Ministry of Education, Research, and Religious Affairs works tirelessly to continue allowing the youth of Athens to prosper on a global scale.

## **Health**

The health care in Athens available to Greek citizens is acceptable compared to other European Union countries. Public health care is run by the National Health System, NSY, and it is free or inexpensive for citizens to receive health care.

The health care in Athens available to migrants and refugees is free of cost if it is an emergency. This includes clinical and medical examinations, prescription medicine, and hospitalization.

In Athens, when someone is unable to pay for healthcare, what happens depends on if the person

is employed, and is paying taxes. If they are in this situation, or if they are unemployed, but still paying taxes, the Greek state does provide free, non-emergency healthcare. If that person does not fall under that criteria, they are eligible for free emergency healthcare, but not free non-emergency healthcare.

The quality of public, free or reduced charge, health care in our city, Athens, is acceptable in terms of EU standards. If our citizens choose, they can opt to use a private health care company that has a higher cost.

If there does exist a healthcare infrastructure in migrant communities, it is woefully inadequate, as indicated by the frequent incidence of nutritional disorders, dehydration, and diarrhea, as well as widespread outbreaks of tuberculosis, scabies, and hepatitis B, among other communicable diseases. In addition, screening conducted in Turkey on the refugee population revealed the extreme prevalence of respiratory tract infections.

Many migrants and refugees do face food insecurity and undernutrition partly because the way the food is distributed in the refugee camps is erratic and inconsistent. The food distributions are very unorganized, which leads to many children, women, and elderly and disabled people unable to eat. Outside refugee camps, the migrants have no money or means of getting any, so they have a lot of food insecurity.

In Athens, we will try to treat incoming migrants who may be malnourished by providing them with food and water. This, however, is only possible in the refugee camps, where most of the migrants are. Ongoing care is feasible if migrants continue to stay in the refugee camps because when they are there, it is easier to locate and keep track of them.

There are not many resources that currently exist for mental health and trauma treatment, although that is a large problem for the refugee population here in Athens. Many refugees have trauma that goes back to their home countries, and here in Athens, they sometimes feel like they do not belong. We would like to help those refugees, but we are not equipped with the resources and knowledge on how to do that. In order to help the refugees we have now, and to help future refugees and migrants, we will definitely need to expand our resources in that area.

Athens' current system for addressing sanitation is through city government funded trash collection, and plumbing throughout the city.

Because of the financial trouble Greece has had in the past years, and with many people unemployed because of that, many preventable, infectious diseases have had some outbreaks. Among those are diphtheria, leptospirosis and encephalitis coming from ticks. Greece has also had a high HIV prevalence, and is now trying and enforcing laws that stop its spread.

Athens' city government is responsible for trash collection. For inside the city of Athens, sanitation workers collect the trash, but for the refugee camps, the trash is taken to nearby landfills.

Technology, especially technology that is environmentally friendly, can help our city prepare for, mobilize around, and address the health issues of migrants in Athens. With better hospital facilities, we can create more space in them for our residents, and reduce the amount of patients who suffer from preventable diseases. Better ways to help with trash pickup and sanitation will also help prevent disease spread, and it will make life better for our citizens.

## **Resilience**

Being a city of over 600 thousand people as well as the capital of Greece, Athens is a bustling metropolis that has played and will continue to play an integral role in the refugee crisis. Greece is on the front lines of European migration and is the primary checkpoint into Europe for many refugees. Due to the open borders between members of the European Union, once migrants come to Greece, they can pass on to any other mainland European countries, like Germany and France. This makes the immigration policies of Athens, as the leading city in Greece, extremely important for the future of Europe as well as the world. The Migrant Integration Center of Athens, KEM in Greek, is invaluable for the influxes of migrants, especially those who might be fleeing trauma. These migrants may be coming with nothing but what they carry, lacking any relatives or a pre-set community within the city, by providing them specialized services. KEM works to improve the standard of living, socially integrate, and provide access to jobs for migrants. Not only does it provide counselling for the labor market, but it also offers information and helps interested migrants apply for welfare benefits, like Social Solidarity Income, or KEA in Greek.

As previously mentioned, the main department for handling the influx of migrants is the Migrant Integration Center. The KEM is extremely important for the management of refugees and offers aid and services to struggling newcomers. Furthermore, in March of 2016, the mayor of Athens, Giorgos Kaminis, created a new position entirely dedicated to dealing with the mass migration--- Vice Mayor on Migrant and Refugees. The man chosen for this new position was Lefteris Papagiannakis.

The entire country of Greece is being supported by about €440 million in emergency funding from the EU to finance migrant camps, which have already addressed nearly 5 million immigrants' pressing needs of food and shelter. Elaine Edwards, a journalist for the Irish Times, reports, "It is expected that up to 27,000 urban accommodation places will have been created by the end of this year". In Athens specifically, KEM is also a helpful tool for immigrants to get

them socially integrated into the city. KEM helps these immigrants to feel more welcome to the city by giving them the opportunity to learn the basics of the Greek language, Greek history and culture, and even computer skills. Immigrants also have access to personalized counseling sessions where they can get advice and prepare themselves more quickly for getting a job and joining the labor force. Through KEM, there is also an application process for immigrants to be additionally supported by Social Solidarity Income and Disability Benefits. Therefore, the short term needs of migrant populations are addressed in Athens because of national support and the services of KEM.

The government of Athens has taken many strides toward ensuring the safety/security of incoming migrants. For example, it has set up many refugee camps in order to accommodate refugees and give them a safe space to live. Nevertheless, many refugees have taken advantage of our hospitality and choose to squat in parts of our city, hiding away from the police and the authorities. It is important to remember, however, that Greece, as a country, is currently in a struggling economic situation. Therefore, it is important that the EU as well as NGOs offer financial backing, so that Athens and Greece may continue to welcome and take care of refugees to the best of their capabilities.

Athens is working in full cooperation with the country's Emergency Support to Integration & Accommodation System (ESTIA), which spends the majority of its budget towards working on the UN's project for more urban housing accommodations. This rental housing project puts immigrants in great position to be in close proximity to urban education and good healthcare services. KEM itself is supported financially by the European Union Social Fund and the administration of Greece. Moreover, the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) has provided over €57 million for a program devised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to help these asylum-seeking immigrants get their basic necessities for life.

Although Athens has in place many programs and departments to improve the taxing burden of giving basic living necessities to migrants and integrating these influxes, Athens still has room for further development. As Vice Mayor of Athens Lefteris Papagiannakis succinctly puts it, "We have more than 100,000 empty apartments in the region and you have to do something with them...there is no social housing in Greece... Unfortunately there is no plan for the recognised refugees. But in order to house recognised refugees you need to offer social housing to everyone or it's a disaster". Fortunately, our city has already been working hard to hit our goals of providing immigrants with necessary services, and alleviating the exigent necessity for the quick integration of a growing immigrant population into Athens' work force and society. As a result, our city is on the right path to become more resilient even in uncertain times

