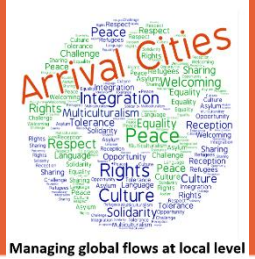

Val de Marne, France

Case Study, Thessaloniki, 18.01.2018

« Civic participation of refugees in Thessaloniki: The Migrants Integration Council »

by

Dora Kokozidou - Hadi Al Khatib - Meric Ozgunes

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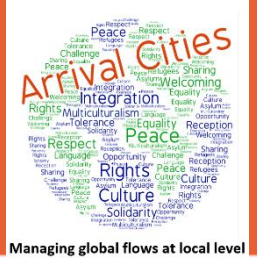
1.Introduction



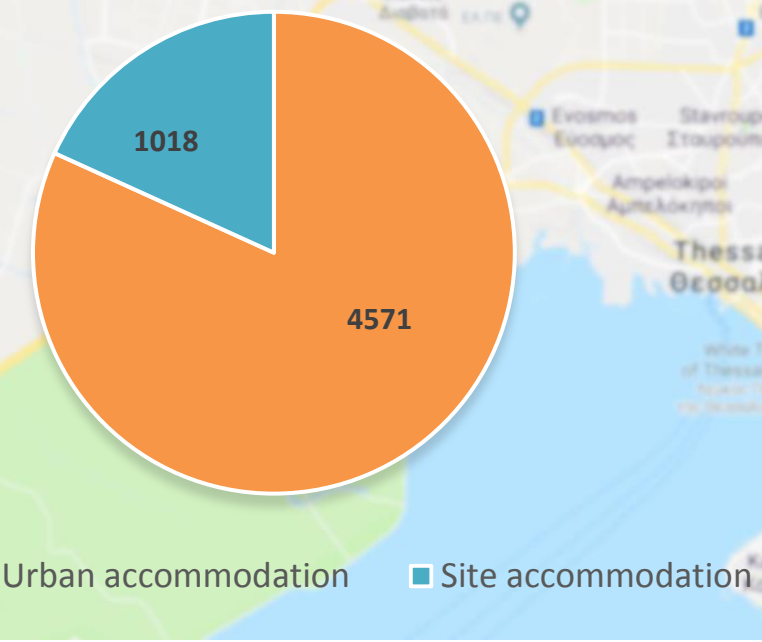
Thessaloniki, Greece

- On the 20-5-2016 Municipality of Thessaloniki was one of the first Municipalities in Greece that acceded to the refugee accommodation scheme, funded by the E.U. and implemented by UNHCR.
- The Municipality then, took over the responsibility of ensuring 660 places in rented apartments for asylum seekers, located all over the metropolitan area of the region, the so called REACT programme (Refugee Assistance Collaboration Thessaloniki).
- Currently, the targeted capacity of REACT is 830 places, while it is expected to supervene 1000 during 2018.

1.1 Statistics

Managing global flows at local level

Refugee population in the Metropolitan Area of Thessaloniki



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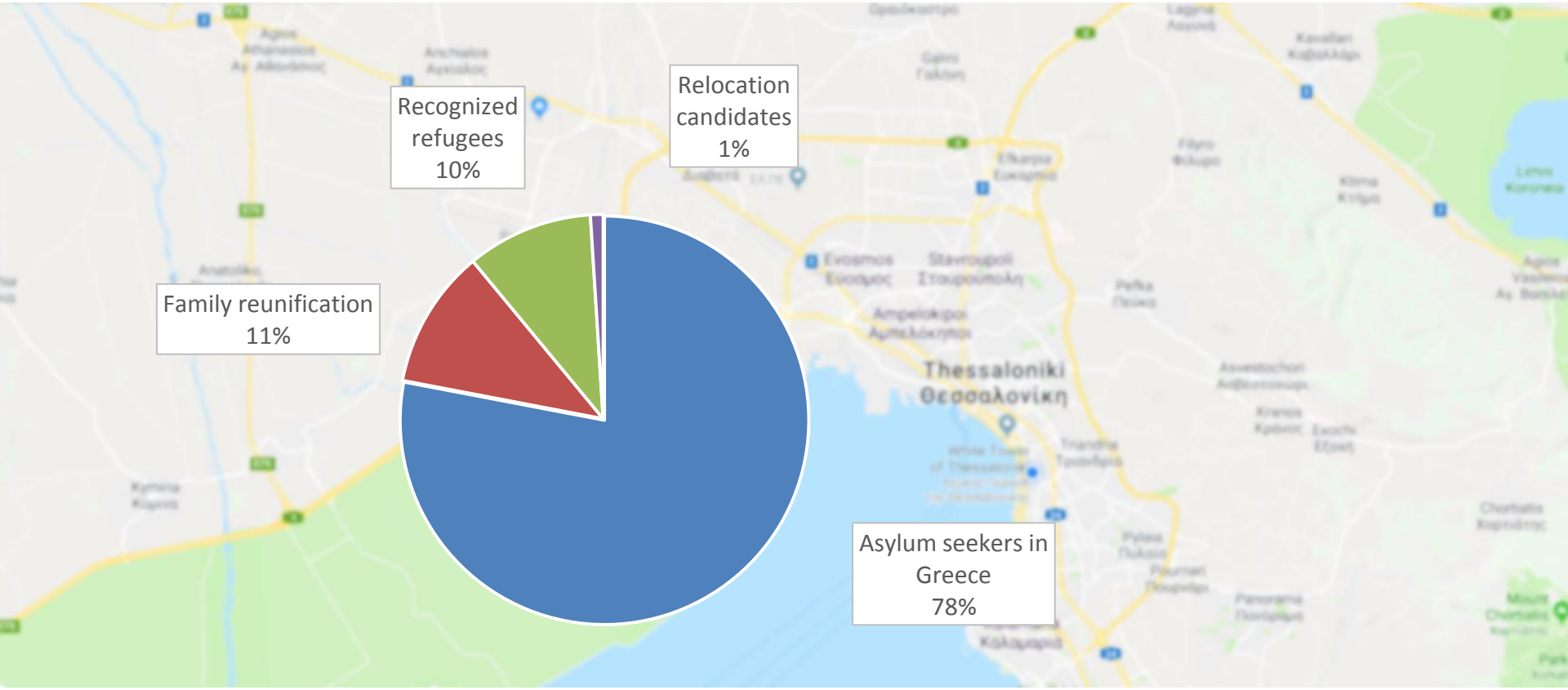
1.2 Legal status



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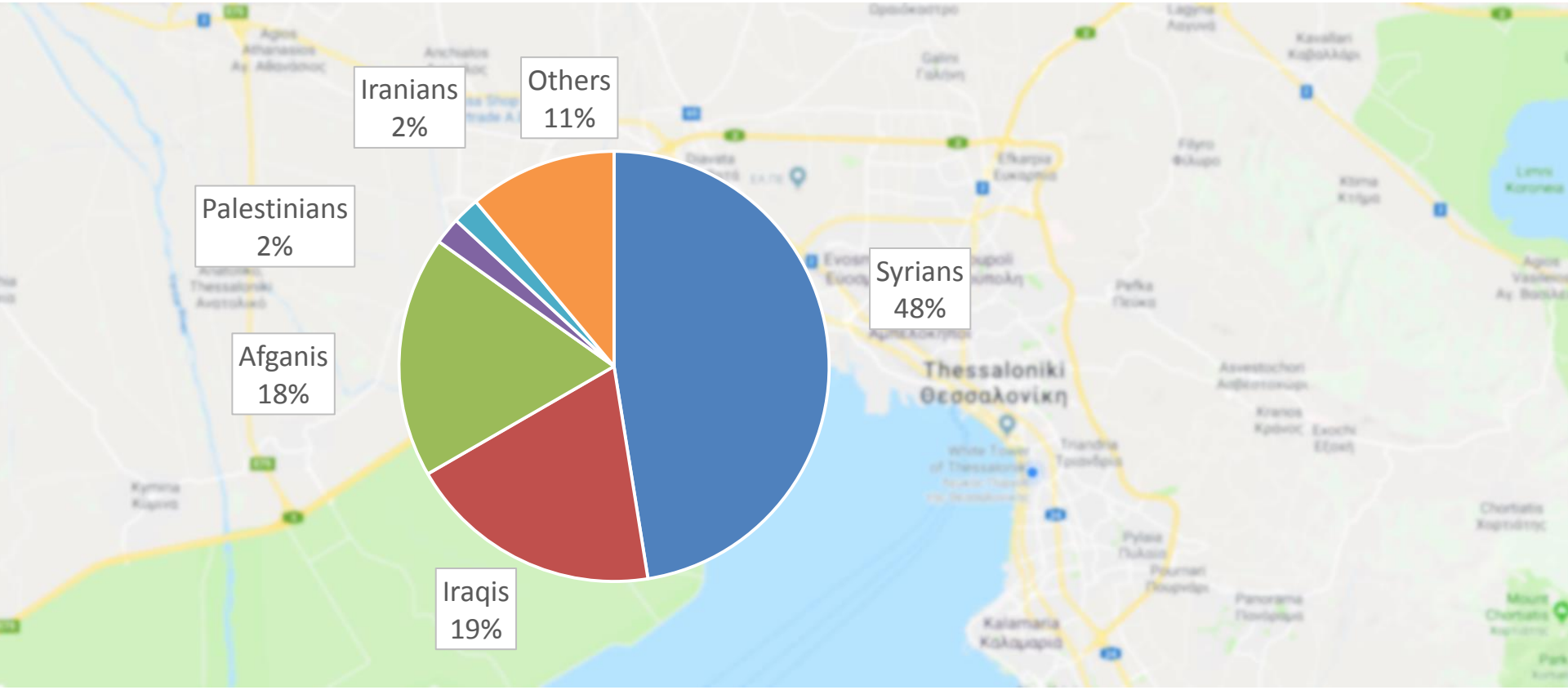
1.3 Nationalities



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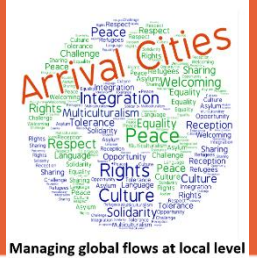
1.4 Integration challenges



- Population that is on the move. Greece perceived as a transit NOT as destination country.
- Multi-cultural and multi-lingual refugee population.
- Greece finds itself in the 8th year of a deep financial crisis.

- Very limited resources for social policy in general, including integration strategies.
- Uncertainty of the population about their future

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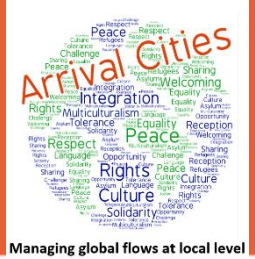
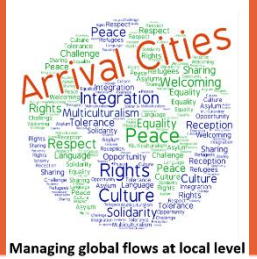
1.5 Integration phase



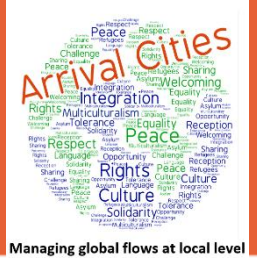
- The profile of the population has changed; The majority of the refugees and asylum seekers, will probably end up in Greece.
- Efforts to develop policies and solutions in which refugees will be stakeholders, not simple recipients.
- The institution of immigrant integration councils, is perceived as the legitimate expression of the issues which concern migrant communities and appear as barriers to integrate into the local community.

1.6 Reviving the Migrants Integration Council (MIC)



- MIC has not been operating for a year.
- As part of Thessaloniki's inclusion strategy, the Municipality had amended the MIC regulation in July 2017 and gave the opportunity to refugees and asylum seekers to participate.

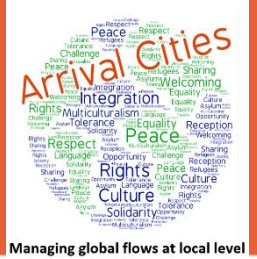
1.7 Reviving the Migrants Integration Council (MIC)



Challenges in identifying eligible refugees:

- The meetings of the MIC take place in Greek.
- The majority of refugees and asylum seekers are still dependent as regards their accommodation and the coverage of their basic needs. As a result, they are indifferent or reluctant to be included in a participatory procedure.
- There aren't still any official associations of the refugees that recently arrived in the country that could designate a representative.

1.8 Reviving the Migrants Integration Council (MIC)



- In October, the Municipal council appointed the new members of the council and anointed as President, the member of the City Council responsible for the refugee response.
- Now, the MIC is composed -both regular and alternate members- by representatives of the City Council (3), of the refugee community (3), of Greek Human Rights NGOs (3), Thessaloniki's Bar Association (1) and of migrants associations (5).

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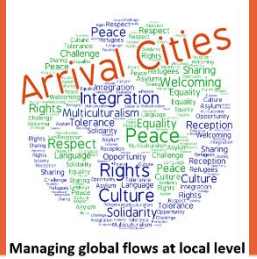
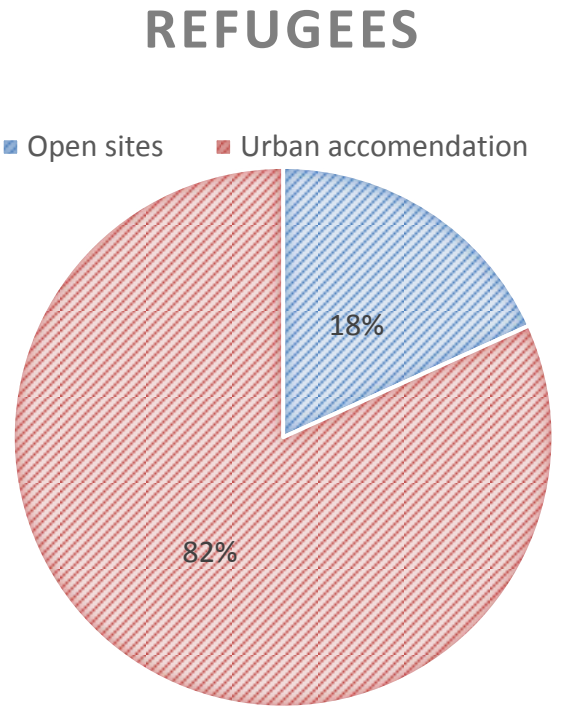
1.9 SEM committee



- What is the SEM Committee?
  - (IAC) Article 78 of law 3852/2010
  - Main objective
  - Structure
  - Eligible candidates



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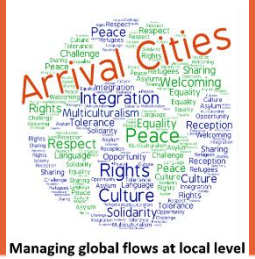
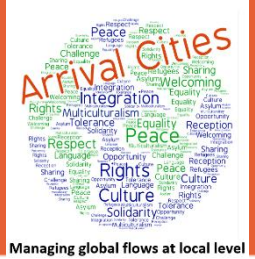
2 Community engagement



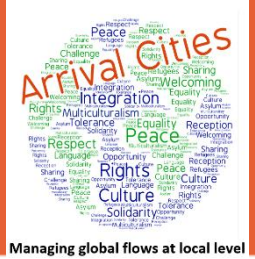
- Setting-up the SEM:
  - Mobilizing the community
  - Identifying eligible candidates/ Pre-selection process- 19th of September.
  - Personal involvement with the SEM committee
  - Community engagement – two way participation
  - Mechanism installed to trigger civic participation among immigrants and refugees

2.1 SEM meetings



- 1st meeting:
  - 13th of October 2017
  - ΟΑΕΔ Unemployment agency
  - ΟΑΣΘ bus company
  - Children enrollment in formal education

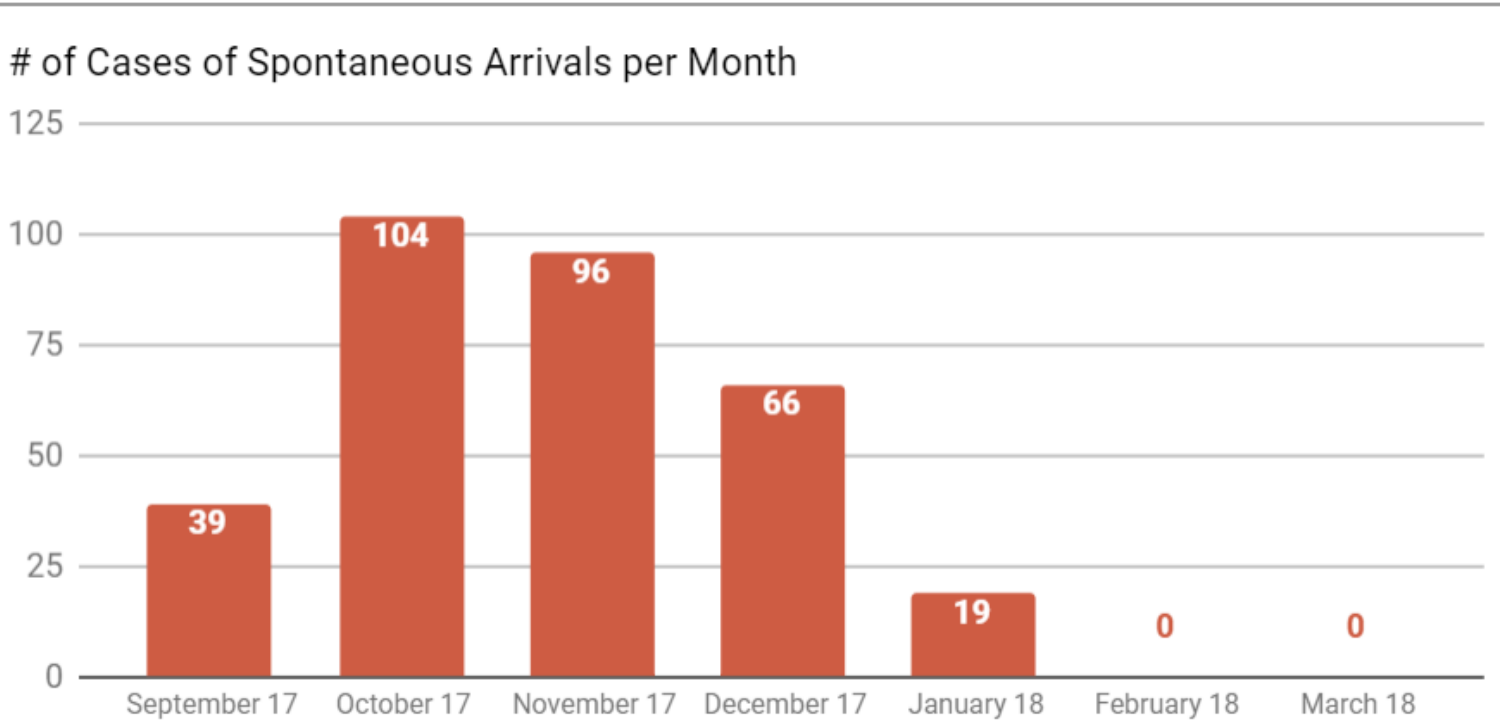
2.2 SEM meetings



- 2sd meeting:
  - 15th of December 2017
  - Access to accurate information
  - GBV cases
  - The homelessness issue/new spontaneous arrivals

2.3 SEM meetings

Managing global flows at local level



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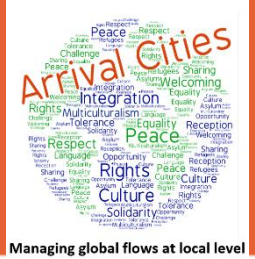
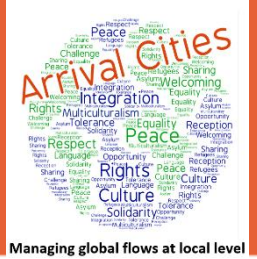
2.4 Advocacy activities



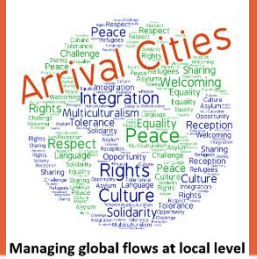
- 1st meeting:
  - Letter sent to the relevant actors
- 2sd meeting:
  - The appointed member of the city council for the refugee response has suggested possible solution to the homelessness issue
  - Access to asylum service.

2.5 Community engagement



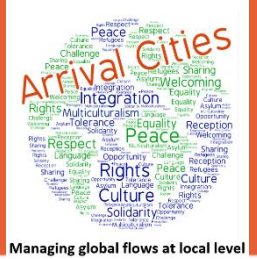
- An information campaign about the role of the MIC was conducted by all refugee community centres in the city.
- Then a meeting took place, were all people that expressed their interest to participate were invited.
- Due to the language barrier, very few people would be in the position to attend MIC.

2.6 Initial interventions



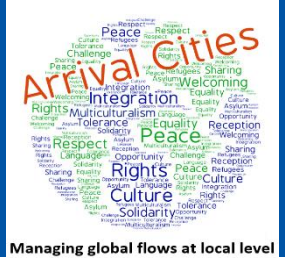
- During the first meeting of the « new » MIC in October, the refugees have raised the issue of them not being able to register as unemployed to the Manpower Employment Organisation.
- Apart from other consequenses, especially in Thessaloniki, the lack of an unemployment card deprives them of the right to use public transportation for free.

2.7. Initial Interventions



- MIC addressed both public authorities with detailed letters and strongly advocated for the problem to be solved, indicating possible solutions.
- During the second meeting that took place in December, MIC decided to organise a conference about sexual exploitation of refugee women, addressing municipal staff that works in the refugee response e.g. Staff that works on the accomodation programme.

2.8 Questions



1. How to do you enforce the role of an advocacy body that has no formal decisive authority?
2. How do you raise awareness about the necessity of civic participation among refugee populations that are still struggling with daily and basic needs? What are the appropriate mechanisms to foster participation in this context?

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