

Newsletter 2017



Help to Help



Dear Friends,

another challenging year has passed and Echo100Plus is now entering its third year of aid programmes for refugees in Greece. Our NEWSLETTER 2017 shall update you on this year's operations and current needs, but foremost we want to thank everybody who has supported us in 2017: Without the help of your generous donations and the support of this year's 250 volunteers, none of this would have been possible.

Current Situation:

Unfortunately, the situation in Greece has not turned to the better: Although numbers of arrivals had dropped significantly after the implementation of the EU-Turkey agreement in March 2016, the influx has recently picked up again. With approx. 14,800 people arriving since September, the camps on the islands are - once again - overcrowded. At the same time, EU funding for international NGOs has subsided as of last summer, and as a result many have left Greece, leaving behind a precarious void, that authorities are unable to fill.

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- *The reception conditions on most of the islands are deplorable. This demands the urgent deployment of additional staff, especially in the areas of health, psychosocial support and protection of unaccompanied children. The increase in arrivals and inadequate reception conditions on the islands have created tensions and anger amongst some local residents. Medical services in the hotspots on the islands remain limited as the deployment of national service medical staff under the Ministry of Health has not been completed yet. This affects access to primary healthcare and psychosocial support for asylum seekers and migrants and creates severe delays in the vulnerability assessment.*
- *Conditions in the mainland are generally improving as the Government is closing temporary sites and people are moving into housing. However, arrivals peaked in September and October, when 6,000 people arrived by sea and land. Border reception centres are critically overcrowded, conditions and protection deteriorate. Children and vulnerable people are at particular risk.*

Echo100Plus key activities in 2017:



With the tireless support of this year's **250 volunteers**, Echo100Plus was able to continue its two main projects in Greece, one on **Leros** Island and the other at **Ritsona Refugee Camp** on the mainland. Through our own Echo-Hub, we managed to further enhance our services on Leros, now offering a wide range of educational and recreational activities to the stranded camp population.

At Ritsona, we played a key part in the logistics of basic care by distributing water, food, and clothes, and by soliciting and arranging in-kind donations. A few weeks ago, we ended all our operations at Ritsona, definitely with a laughing and a crying eye, but after one and a half years on the ground, and under the impression that the camp residents are in the meantime well attended by other NGOs, we felt it was time to move on. We are currently reviewing new projects.

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Echo100Plus working at Ritsona to improve camp life

- *Continued work and collaboration with IOM, "Lighthouse Relief", "I Am You" and other actors in camp to constantly improve the daily life of residents*
- *Distribution of drinking water provided by IOM*
- *Distribution of milk, tea & coffee and hygiene items funded by Echo100Plus*
- *Securing financial support and in-kind donations for restocking supplies*
- *Setting up the 'Ritsona Boutique' as a new and more dignified way of distributing clothes and shoes.*
- *Creation of the Ritsona Football Club in collaboration with ISMP (International Sports and Music Projects), construction of a football field, sponsoring of 3 adult teams, 1 minor's teams and 5 children's teams. Organized 2 championship tournaments, one hosted in a local football club, in close collaboration working with the local Greek community*
- *Created and staged the 'Ritsona's Got Talent' show*
- *Offered guitar lessons in collaboration with ISMP for all ages in camp*
- *Organised beach trips during the summer months*

Link to Ritsona Film :

<https://www.facebook.com/echo100plus/videos/1385258108234825/>

Pioneering a new approach: The Echo-Hub Leros:



In December 2016, we launched the Echo-Hub, a day centre offering a range of classes, activities, and events for adult refugees AND local people. Refugees, stuck on the island for months until they get the decision of the asylum services, need and seek an outlet from the island's "hotspot," a prison like, cramped container compound run by the Greek authorities. By providing a space, where members of the host and of the guest community can meet, exchange ideas and develop skills together, we hope to contribute to the individual's mental well-being and to the community's peace.

More: button

The Echo-Hub offers a full range of services as well as access to professional staff, a technology lab, a small library and other educational resources in an attempt to prepare and support adult refugees facing arduous challenges of migration and integration.

- *Language courses (English, Greek, German, Italian, French etc.)*
- *Computer and Professional Development courses*
- *Music lessons (guitar, percussion, singing, etc.)*
- *Team Sports & Fitness Classes (yoga, football, basketball etc.)*
- *Arts & Crafts Activities (pottery, drawing, drama, cinema, film, chess, etc.)*
- *And a variety of other projects and events.*

*Most courses on offer are co-educational, but in order to encourage more women to join the Hub activities, we provide **"women's only classes"** and dedicate one afternoon per week to "women only activities".

Link to Echo - Hub Film <https://vimeo.com/245642072>

The Hub Boutique:

In addition to our educational programme, Echo100Plus runs the so-called Hub-Boutique, that is regularly stocked up with donated and purchased new clothing. Individuals and families can try on and chose their clothes in a dignified way.

Supporting the local community:



Due to the refugee influx, the local community of Leros has been under stress for almost three years now. Consequently, Echo100Plus tries to support the island by including the local community in the Hub's services. Locals are actively involved as teachers and students, and they also have access to our clothing Boutique. Further, we source necessary goods and services locally whenever possible. Echo100Plus currently **employs seven local teachers and coaches** to encourage the local community to take ownership and guarantee the Hub's sustainability and quality of teaching.

LEROS FACTS: button

*Estimated Presence: **711***

(Update of UNHCR Field Unit Leros for Sunday 31 December 2017)

- *Reception & Identification Centre (RIC): 580*
- *PIKPA Settlement/Villa Artemis: 66*
- *UNHCR Accommodation Scheme/ARSIS: 63*
- *Police Premises: 2 (Deportations to pre-removal detention facility on Kos with the aim of accelerating the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement)*

Going forward:



After the refugee population on Leros had doubled to well over 900 in November, speeded up transfers to the mainland have reduced the number to about 700 people. Still, the 'hotspot' is overcrowded and all services are under enormous strain. Currently, our main focus is to cope with the growing demand for our services whilst providing a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

Given the success of our Echo-Hub on Leros, we are now reviewing opportunities to replicate this model elsewhere in Greece. – As we rely solely on your donations to continue our operations and to potentially expand our mission, we very much hope you will support us going forward.

Current Needs: button

- **Stipends for teachers:**

The Echo-Hub is a hybrid model. Overall management of all activities are conducted by our volunteers, who also teach various language classes. For English lessons (5 different levels, from pre-beginners to proficiency level), for Greek and for IT classes we hire local teachers to provide a solid curriculum. This guarantees consistency and professional teaching, and supports the local population.

- **Support for Students:**

Our new consultancy program guides our students through the application process of Education Scholarships in Greece funded by American colleges. We oversee the development of their candidacy. We are very pleased for our students who have been granted scholarships this year and are now fundraising to finance their lodgings and upkeep during their studies.

- **Volunteer program:**

We need funds to support our volunteers by providing accommodation and travel for those who are keen to serve, but cannot afford to do so. Echo100Plus prides itself on including anyone who is willing and able to help build an effective team.

- ***The Hub Boutique:***

In order to keep our “Boutique well stocked to sustain regular clothes distribution to new arrivals and local people in need, we need clothes donations or funds to buy new.

**Please consider making a donation to ECHO100Plus! [Click here to donate.](#)
Click here if you would like to [get registered as a volunteer.](#)**

We wish you Peace and Happiness for the New Year!!! Gratefully, **Gabriella Dixon,
Gabriella Herberstein, Catharina Kahane (on behalf of the Echo100Plus Team)**

Thank you to all individuals who donated so generously – big and small!

A special thanks to our family and friends who purchased the first and recently a second van to shuttle our Hub students back and forth from the hotspot!

Thank you to all volunteers who joined us – we are nothing without you!

A special thanks goes to the Kahane Foundation!

And finally thank you to the following [organizations/foundations](#):

180Degrees Consulting Bocconi Students, Aegean Solidarity Network, All Saints Church at Stanton St Bernard, Amigos de Ritsona, Amkana Hango Goodscare GmbH, Blue Star Ferries & Agoni Grammi, Burlington, Carry me Home, CHK Charities LTD, Columbia Alumni Association Greece, crystalfallsproductions, Demner, Merlicek & Bergmann, Desmos, Earthblink, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Echo100Plus UK, ELBISCO AE, Elpida Home, Ersel Societa D’ Intermediazione, Fernland Holding LTD, Global Giving Foundation, Grazer Wechselseitige Versicherung, Hope World Wide Utah, International Sports and Music Projects, Joined Hands, Kahane

Foundation, LDS Charities, London for Refugees, Mashu Marefu Onlus Foundation, C.V Maragos international Forwarding , Mercy Corps, Mishcon de Reya, Morely College and Relay for Refugee Sale, Move for Humanity, MyShoe, Neighbors in Need, Pampiraiki, PAPOUTSANIS SA, REDCHAIRity, Ribbink van den Hoek Familie Stichting, Sadie Coles Gallery, Samaritan Purse, Save The Children - Leros, SCARF, Silverstone Auctions, Seven Gates Cafe – Leros, Solidarity Now, Symi Solidarity, Star Fish Foundation, Tassos Rent a Car – Patmos, Trendtrust SA, UNHCR – Leros Field Office, Ventana Club, Vitol Services Ltd, WolffOlins, YALI-Murano Glass Design.



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CRISIS KEY FACTS: button

- Between 01 January and 30 September 2017, **138,300** refugees and migrants arrived by sea and land to Europe (Greece, Italy, Spain and Cyprus only, including arrivals to the Canary Islands and by land to Spain)

- *In Greece, the number of refugees and migrants arriving by sea reached its highest levels since March 2016 with **4,900** people arriving in September, a 60% increase compared to September last year and a 36% increase compared to August.*
- *As of 30 September 2017, over **20,000** refugees and migrants had reached Greek shores in 2017, compared to 166,800 arriving in the same period last year (an 88% reduction).*
- *Arrivals mainly originate from the Syrian Arab Republic (40%) and Iraq (20%).*
- *Most arrivals in September have been to Lesbos (49%), followed by Samos (20%), Chios (12%), and the South Dodecanese islands (13%).*
- *In addition to the sea arrivals, an estimated 3,300 people have arrived this year at the Evros Greek-Turkish land border, based on provisional data as of 30 September 2017 with over 1,000 crossing via this route in September.*
- *Relocation: According to the European Commission (EC), 29,698 asylum-seekers have been relocated from Greece and Italy as of 04 October 2017, including 20,410 from Greece (out of 66,400 originally foreseen, 30 per cent of the total) and 9,288 from Italy (out of 39,600 originally foreseen, 23 per cent of the total) respectively.*
- *Resettlement: To date in 2017, 16,535 persons have been resettled to Europe. On 11 September, UNHCR issued a global call for an additional 40,000 resettlement places to be made available for refugees located in 15 priority countries 10 along the Central Mediterranean route.*
- *Returns: In September, 29 people were returned from Greece to Turkey on the basis of the EU-Turkey Statement. The total number of people returned in accordance with the EU-Turkey Statement is 1,336 as of 30 September 2017.*

Echo100Plus is an Austrian non-profit association registered in Vienna (Austria) under the ZVR Number: 928498198. The sole purpose of the association is to support non-profit organizations in the humanitarian and social sector in Greece. Contact: office@echo100plus.com

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Every attempt was made to ensure that the information in this newsletter was accurate on the date of publication. For updated information follow us on www.echo100plus.org