



02/01/2022

I wish you all a happy and a blessed year 2022!
With health, love, friends, colors and light, with wonderful moments and the power to cope with the difficult moments.

I took a break the last days, I am afraid of the extremely arising infections in Greece and did not want to be with people.
And after the decision I realized that I needed that break after that year, after all these years. As a friend from Oikopolis told me: "Try to relax as we don't have many things to do at the

moment, before we will be busy again."

It was difficult for me to know that the two other people have to do my work, but it is true: Many activities don't take place at the moment and it was fine that I did only the "back office" the last days.

I feel kind of ready to get in touch with all the needs again.

I feel kind of ready to continue with what we are doing since years.

I feel kind of ready to face our helplessness and our tiredness. Feel that I want to and can accept it.

Thank you everyone for the emotional and financial support during 2021, I have do admit that we are counting on it also in 2022. Alone we cannot make it.

Happy New Year! Καλή Χρονιά!



05/01/2022

„It is so difficult”, she said. She is responsible for the coordination of the support in her organisation in which refugee women can get support. “We had to stop our Greek and English lessons. We don't have coupons anymore to support the women financially and so also some colleagues lost their jobs”.

She just wanted to ask if we can support a woman - since more than one year we are cooperating and I know that she appreciates our work and even more because it is voluntary. We also spoke a bit how we feel and what happened in our lives the last couple of months. “I don't get involved anymore emotionally. I think it is good

and also bad.”. - “You protect yourself”, I replied. “Yes”, she said from the deep of her heart. She has to. We have to.

06/01/2022

In Greece at Epiphany the "blessing of the waters" takes place. The orthodox priest does this by casting a cross into the water and some men try to recover the cross. The person who gets the cross first swims back and returns it to the priest, who then delivers a special blessing to the swimmer and their household.

This year pictures of men getting refugee children out of the water or of sinking boats in the Mediterranean get viral with subtitles like "Humans who caught the cross".

No blessing for them in Greece. Actually they are facing prison for trafficking.

As God doesn't know about religion and the many times weird traditions, I know they are blessed.



Pictures: unknown sources



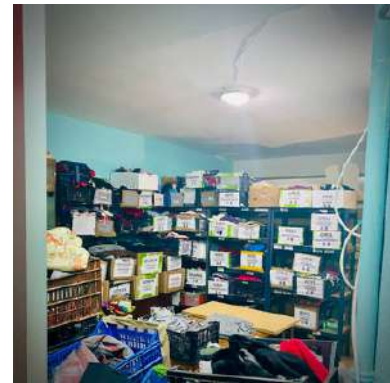
09/01/2020

She has been volunteering a couple of times with the organisation of clothes. Today she told me that only to see us she realised that we are all the time in a situation that is not easy to cope with. „Of course“ I said, because I am aware of it, but she meant something specific: „You never see a result, you never see that something is getting better, you always see only the needs. Again and again. And this must be psychological stress.“ Hmmmmm... Yes. She nailed it.

10/01/2022

Wow, what an opening for me after so many days in which I had put myself in quarantine:

First a woman who was angry that she could not come a second time to take clothes because someone else was inside and then threw us the content of her bag in front of the door, then the guy who told me „the donations are for us and not for you“ when we could not give them again sleeping bags etc (as they already took the last two times). Insisting and insisting on taking more and more I told him that he and his mother have to leave and while leaving the place he told me that it is my job to help him and that I don't have the right to make decisions here and what my name is.



...we are still laughing who of us few people who are running equally and voluntarily unpaid the place could be interested in learning my name by him to tell me that I am fired.



14/01/2022

We had a huge donation from a supermarket. So we informed some of our families that they can come and take some foodstuff. As we don't go at the market due to thousands of covid infections in Thessaloniki it is great that we can do this.

„You supported us already so many years“, she wrote. „Give it this time to other families who are also in need“.

This touched me.

This doesn't happen very often.

It is not always „each for him/her/itself“.

15/01/2022

It is always nice when she is coming. We prepared for her a package with foodstuff and wrote her name. She asked me what to do with the paper and I said „take it if you want.“ She took a pen and drew a heart for us. She is so lovable.





16/01/2022

„Who left the baby there?“ he asked and I was laughing. Of course the mother was still around the corner to take - as she is doing from time to time since almost a year - clothes and foodstuff. She is carrying the newborn wrapped in a blanket in front of her through the city.

I don't speak dari, she doesn't speak none of my languages, but she knows that she can let the baby with me and I know that she is deeply thankful for our support and we smile at each other in the same language.

The baby was screaming

17/01/2022

We are supporting them since two years maybe. The son is the only one allowed to hug me in that time in which I am staying away even from my closest friends. But this 14 years old guy is just so thankful that we support him and his mother and doesn't know how easy they make it for us because they are so beautiful people.

The mother spoke today the first time Greek. The first time the son repeated in Kurdish what I said „speak by yourself, you can do it.“ What she wanted to say - and I am so happy that she did it in Greek - was that they got asylum now.

The older son (and maybe also the father) are in England, but there they cannot go due to the Brexit. To Germany they will go when they have their passport. Another couple of people who will get stuck there in the Dublin III procedure. Who have to begin again anew.

I hope he will find there again people he can hug.



21/01/2022

We are wondering these days - these very cold days - why only a few families are coming to take clothes. We are sure that there are people in town and in the camps around who need warm stuff.

It is so difficult to coordinate all the time supply and demand.

27/01/2022

Sometimes it is so easy to make a little boy happy. Sometimes there is that blessed moment when there is time - and there are some little cars. And from a shy not-looking-at-me we made it to shouts of pure joy. Sometimes it is so easy to make a refugee just a little boy.





28/01/2022

He is listening all the time to music or social media on his phone-with the speaker not with earphones. He is all the time at the phone. In his language. With the speaker not with earphones.

A child was playing with some of the toys we have. I just saw him taking the child (literally) and push it to its mother. „Why?“ I asked him. „The noise“ he said...

Tolerance isn't an easy thing. For no one.

29/01/2022

I put him a chocolate in his pocket and he did not let this pocket for the next half an hour while his father chose clothes and vegetables. He could not believe that he could take two toys but most of the fun we had with a paper bag he put on his head. I remember that I read once on a poster “children need love, chocolate and books”. This child needed chocolate, toys and some attention to be happy. And happy he left. With his hand on his pocket of course. Hardly believing his luck.



30/01/2022

No, she cannot come to learn English, she said, the baby, the babies... well not she said it, the children translated. Two of them spoke quite well Greek, the older girl I guess doesn't go to school, maybe she had to take care of the younger siblings.

The mother did not even look at me, she expected from her children to translate in both directions.

Her only argument why she could not learn to communicate: baby, babies.

The children have been full of fear and full of many bad experiences in their small life, I could see and feel it.

They took teddy bears. The three of them took teddy bears. More than one. Huge ones. They needed them I guess.

02/02/2022

Inspiring and encouraging

We are living in difficult times. That's what everybody says. But maybe we are living in very normal times if I think that every time has its difficulties and that there are always crisis in the world.

In Greece we are still in the economic crises, although people in other European countries think it's over. It isn't, and with the covid-19 pandemic it is getting even worse.

People use the word “refugee crisis” that I don't use. If it is a “crisis” and not a situation it is a humanitarian or a solidarity crisis in Europe. But anyhow, there are refugees in Greece. Many refugees and since a long time.



Now, begin 2022, I am living since a little more than 4 years in Thessaloniki, in the North of Greece. Since Spring 2016 I was coming for a couple of weeks or months before I moved. So since almost 6 years I am now involved in the refugee issue. I went almost 2 years into a camp, I was distributing food and clothes in the streets and in different organisations as a volunteer. I met so many refugees of whom some of them became friends. They left the country, because Greece is never the country where refugees want to stay, it is only the first European country on which they put their feet after coming from Turkey across the Mediterranean Sea by boat or crossing Evros river on the land borders. According to the Dublin III law they have to apply for asylum here, but try to leave as soon as they can. Legally or illegally.

I see refugees almost every day, as I am organising with two other people a place in which they are coming for clothes, food, meals, furniture or whatever they need and we could have. I see one shop after the next closing because the pandemic was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back.

I hear from friends who have to move back to their parents because they cannot find work or are badly payed so that they cannot afford their own apartment.

I hear from former volunteers that they cannot come to help because... well, they don't say it, but I can hear the "because I need my energy for myself".

I am afraid of covid as I have a lung disease and as I live alone.

How to keep optimistic? How not to lose hope and the energy we need for our daily life in job, with the beloved ones and for the voluntary work with and for the people on the flee?

How to be inspiring and encouraging for the people who are coming to us to seek for help and for the friends, the people around me that need it?

I guess I am an optimistic person by myself (that's at least how I explain that I moved from Germany to Greece and not the opposite as so many Greeks are doing). Maybe also because I learned very early in my life that optimism and hope is the only thing that can save you. I always can find a little something that is good in a very dark situation. Well, not always, but often.

And I see all these people (refugees, locals, friends, unknown people) who need encouragement. Who need to be inspired.

This is maybe what inspires me: To see people who need to be inspired and to find somewhere inside me something that can inspire them. As long as I feel only a little bit of courage and optimism, as long as I can encourage someone only for the next hour, I will try to do it.

Yes, I am a believer. And my help doesn't come by my own. My help does come "from the maker of heaven and earth" (Ps.121,1). And whenever I forget that my help comes from Him, I have luckily people who remind me to fall on my knees and to pray for help.

Sometimes this is not enough. Sometimes I just want a human being beside me that can give me a hug – impossible in times of the pandemic we are in.

Also I am struggling a lot these weeks and months.

Also I have personal crisis.

But every time something inspiring is coming to me. May be a text. A message from a friend. A word by someone. A bible verse. Having a coffee with a friend and we are speaking only about beautiful things. Realising that after four years I am living my life completely in Greek and in Greece. Listening to someone who tells me that he/she has been inspired by something I said or did....

Maybe it sounds now a little bit like a fairytale or a trashy novel or a telenovela.

But maybe that's the reason why I wanted to write that text: To encourage myself to have the energy again to inspire and encourage others.

In the economic crisis in Greece. In the pandemic. In a situation with thousands upon thousands of people on the flee in my country and in so many other countries of the world. In a – looking back in history – very normal time with difficulties and normal people who try to cope with it and who need each other.



05/02/2022

Distribution of food and clothes.

I tried to keep a distance to the people. Asked them to cover the nose with the mask.

One came very close. I went a step back. He showed me a paper on his phone. I cannot see without glasses but I understood when he said „three times vaccination, no worries“.

I am really too tired of it and I don't speak Kurdish so I did not even try to explain him that he still can get infected and also can pass it by to

someone - to me in that case.

Is it really so difficult to take care of the others a bit?

12/02/2022

„So you have siblings in England and in Germany and you are here in Greece“, I said to the 14-year old guy I know since a couple of years. „Mmmm...“, he replied. „When you are an adult you can write your story.“ I proposed. He did not really react. I continued: „So that everyone can see how brave you are.“

He began to cry.



22/02/2022

"Come", she said. "I want to tell you"...

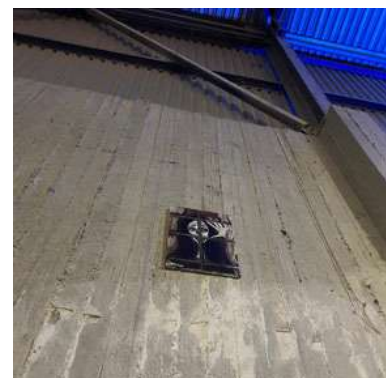
Her son (14 yrs) cried today so much because of me and the place. She got her passport today and soon they will go to Germany, so he faced today the upcoming goodbye. The son speaks Greek, is going since 3 years to school and doesn't want to leave. "I told him Germany is a good country", she said. "Please don't leave without saying goodbye", I said.

25/02/2022

I am glad that people at the borders to Ukraine host the newest war refugees there.

But what about the war refugees from Syria, Afghanistan... who got stuck at the borders the last months and are dying in the cold of the forests?

It has been, it is, it will be about colour of skin and about religion if you get help or not...





26/02/2022

For the people there is no difference. For them we are one of the organisations where they take what they can get. They don't see how tired we are. That we are not payed for that. That we are struggling so much to manage all these things (donations, volunteers, tasks, topics). There are vegetables, brought with a lot of work, but the question is "is there no bread today?". There is cooked food, cooked by a cook who brought from his own money some supplies in the

morning and the answer is "is there no rice?"...

Anyhow. It is just going on and on and on and there is no end.

And we are struggling beside these solidarity activities with the climate change, with human rights, gender issues, peace work and... I forgot what else. I am very tired today.

02/03/2022

Pity and fear – the classic base for a catharsis.

Ukrainians are closer to us than the people in Syria, Afghanistan or other countries from where people have to flee. Pity.

A war in Europe is closer to us than the climate crisis that until now affects us not enough every day of our life, nuclear weapons in stand by: fear.

Writing, posting, speaking about Ukraine: interesting.

Doing the same about refugees in Greece, in Libya, in Belarus, the Taliban in Afghanistan, all the homeless and hungry people, the impacts of the climate crises, floods in Australia...: no pity, no fear, no catharsis, no interest.

I know we cannot check everything all the time.

Just saying...



03/03/2022

„People should go where they have relatives“. No Dublin III for Ukrainian refugees.

That is great!

Please, this is what we demand since 2003!

People should go where they already have family! Every refugee!

There are no "real" and "unreal" refugees!

17/03/2022

Since more than two weeks we are standing every afternoon for an hour at the main square in Thessaloniki. We replace then the Ukrainian community that stands there one hour before us and walks then to the Russian embassy. We are not shouting, we are just standing still with our banner, some candles and sometimes some peace signs. Some people take pictures, others get in touch with us.

We are so few people, it is so difficult to mobilise more.



The first refugees from Ukraine also reached our organisation. We try to help with housing, the main problem, although it is nearly impossible for us. We can give clothes, we can give foodstuff. Still we can. More people in need in Europe, in our country, in our city.

Not many people who want to spend their time for others - demonstration or with practical help. Not many people here can help with any kind of financial support. 8 years of a rough situation with refugees in Greece beside the economic crisis and the pandemic left their mark.



20/03/2022

I could be a refugee...

A day full of work. But also with music and dance and friends and food.

And a woman, the cousin of a friend, from Ukraine, with her 6yo daughter and her mother. The husband and the father there in the war. After two weeks in shelter they decided to go to relatives in Greece.

„It must be strange to see how people here continue their lives while yours fell apart“, I

said. „I don't know how it will continue.“

„It will take years and generations to recover from that. To rebuild the country but also to rebuild all the souls.“ I thought out loud. - and began to cry. And was ashamed in front of that strong woman. Both with tears in our eyes we did not find any words anymore but understood each other. „I am so sorry“ I said and tried to hold myself together.

I don't know why it touches me so. I met so many people on the flee. Maybe it is because I always knew that I could have been born in Ukraine. Or in Russia. Maybe I am wondering how my mother feels who broke up with her Ukrainian mother and never could reconcile with her or the language or her roots. Maybe because her mother looks very similar to mine. Maybe because I am very tired these days. Or... I don't know.

All I know is: today we sang and danced and had a good time and tomorrow we could be refugees.

21/03/2022

Why does it touch me so much?

Everyone who knows me a little better knows that I cannot really cry. One of the aims of my current psychotherapy is to express finally sadness, hopelessness, despair with tears to get rid of it.

So it was even more strange to me that I began yesterday to cry when I met a young woman from Ukraine. In an open space. Where I was working. With many people around me, people that I know and many that I don't know.

Yana is the cousin of a friend, she came one week ago from Kyiv to Thessaloniki to stay in the empty apartment of his mother, her aunt.

Her husband and her father stayed in Ukraine, she decided to leave with her 6yo daughter and her mother. So they became from one day to the next refugees. With an unclear future.

I am working since almost 7 years with refugees. I hear these stories every day. I see the videos they show me from the boat in which they made it from Turkey to Greece. Pictures from the bombed houses in Syria, dead friends or relatives shot by Taliban.

I cannot say that I get used to it, but I have some kind of "callus" on my soul.

Why does it touch me so much?



Many reasons, I guess, not only one.

First of all I am tired. I am tired from the world's horror and wars. I am tired to see people who have to leave their country and who don't know how to continue their lives. Tired from their unfulfilled hope, their hope and desperation.

Maybe I am overwhelmed by these "new" refugees from Ukraine because they come to Greece with the purpose to come to Greece. I mean, no refugee ever wanted to come to and

to stay in Greece. Literally everyone wanted to go to Germany or some of them to a couple of other countries. Greece is the first state in Europe where they arrive, but it is not their goal to live here. Now there are coming people who come intentionally to our city and are trying to continue somehow a part of their life here. Still unsure how it will continue, how long this war will last.

And then there is my personal background: My grandparents – who I did not really met – came from Ukraine and Russia. I don't know many things about them and their lives, my mother broke up with them and so I only know a few things. My grandmother came as a young girl as a forced labourer during the Nazi regime from Western Ukraine to Germany and stayed. My grandfather deserted the Russian Red Army to the British Army and also stayed after the liberation in Germany. That's how they met there and stayed in the country in which I was born and in which I grew up with the knowledge and related thereto with the feeling that I am not a "german German". I am grown up 12 km away from the French borders, I learned French from the first year of school and I could see that the houses, the trees, the people looked exactly the same as I knew it from the other side of the borders. I always thought of myself as "a European" and never really as "a German". I always knew that I could have grown up either in France or in Ukraine or Russia.

Now I am a German in Greece with grandparents from Ukraine and Russia. Russian began a war towards Ukraine.

Is it why it touches me so much?

2014 when the peaceful revolution in Kiyv at the Maydan, the main square began, my church in Munich began peace prayers for Ukraine. Munich is the partner city of Kiyv and also my church has been in close contact for years with the Lutheran German church there. The pastor and his family are friends of some church members and so we have been somehow very close to the events.

Afterwards I stayed in touch with the pastor when he moved back to Germany and could read a couple of years ago from my texts about refugees in Greece in his new church.

Now I am still reading what they are writing on Facebook about their friends in Kiev.

Now I see how the Ukraine people become refugees.

Now they also came to Greece. To Thessaloniki.

It seems to be a circle.

A strange one.

And it touches me so much.

I will meet Yana the next days. Will find some beds for friends of them who have luckily a place to stay but no furniture.

I will see many refugees also this week from everywhere, also from Ukraine. I will stand their sadness, their hopelessness and despair.

It will need generations to heal what get hurt right now there.

And I will maybe learn how to cry and I will maybe also heal my own traumata that have a lot to do with these countries that are at war.

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02/04/2022

We are always laughing when people from abroad are asking us "How do the refugees know that they can come to you?"

We are laughing because the problem isn't to inform people, the problem is how to handle all the people (who learn from each other that we are there).

Yesterday we did not go to the market because we did not have enough (greek speaking) volunteers. Luckily. Because from an early hour on people came, behaved like going to a supermarket, complained what we did not have - and after some hours we gave away so many rice and beans and tomato sauce and pasta that our

shelves are almost empty again.

They know very quickly where to go, and they have not very much to do during the day. We are wondering how we can continue to manage our working life, our personal life AND this life that means many hours of organisation in order to put the foodstuff as well as the jam etc. that we are making ourselves on the table from which they grab what they can get.

25/04/2022

It is challenging to live with Afghan refugees. My friends and their community close to the Swiss borders are trying their best to integrate the family with four children and the single woman who came from Kabul as „local staff“ after the taliban took over the country again.

It is challenging as no one speaks German, neither german well enough. Because the children are not supervised and are running outside and the other parents take care then if they want or not. Because they have their story, their traumas, their difficulties...

I realised how much I am used to have these children in my daily life, to speak „campish“ with them, to play and to encourage them. We played, we watered the flowers together, we practised respect...

It is challenging and to be honest I am glad that I can close the door to my apartment and can lock out that challenge from time to time.





17/05/2022

This day... 17.5.2016... I came to Greece in order to help in the situation with the refugees. I had the phone number of one person who - friends in Munich said - speaks German. I did not know if I really could be useful somewhere. Greece hasn't been on my map then. Idomeni only a name from the news. All the people and organisations unknown. The language Greek to me...

17.5.2016. The day that changed literally my life and brought me to a new city, a new country, a

new language, a new life.

Yesterday I have been asked if I never had regrets after my decision I made in 2017. And as always I could say „Especially the first year was so rough and nothing is easy. But not even a single second I had regrets!“

It began 6 years ago, although I didn't know it. I don't have many specific memories about that first two-weeks-long stay, but I remember the feeling.

I am thankful for everyone who was part of my way from that day on when I arrived the first time in Thessaloniki

28/05/2022

After six weeks back at the distribution. ...one woman we know since years brought cookies she made. “for you”, she said.

...two women who made problems from the first moment they entered the building.

...“look: English lessons from Tuesday on“ - „no English. Farsi.“ (aaaaaaaaa)

...“No English. Will go in three week. Germany.“ (aaaaaaaaaaaa)

...nice people. Difficult people.

...it is good to have a break. It is important to have breaks from these distributions.



29/05/2022

Since years I am thinking both sides.

The one: how can we share foodstuff but to have enough also for the next weeks.

The other: how will the family of 5,6,7,8... live from the 7 potatoes, the little flour, the little rice we have?!

Since years these thoughts. These feelings.



01/06/2022

This is happening so rarely - and it is wonderful: Barely we get a "thank you" from the people taking clothes or foodstuff.

Today I got a picture and a message from a colleague in another organisation from where she sends us from time to time people to support them. And she wrote me already yesterday evening that the woman was so happy about the stuff we gave her and even sent a picture to prove her happiness.

We also need that.

04/06/2022

„No food?“ - „my wife... when... Friday?...“ - „ohhhh.“ - „what time today?“ - „Me wait?“ - „Me sit outside?“

We dared to cancel the collection of fruits and the distributions today. We have this weekend 3 other activities for the environment and even for those we don't have enough volunteers.

I don't know what is worse: the disappointment of the people or that they even don't understand „we are closed“ in English and I have to show it with my hands and feet, to repeat and maybe also to dance it...



12/06/2022

64 families... doesn't sound a lot?

Imagine a day from 9:30-18:30. Coordinating many different things: a cook who needs some supplies and a clean kitchen, volunteers who come for a couple of hours and need to be coordinated for the sorting of the clothes, preparation for different other activities... and in between 64 families.

64 families who are disappointed because we did not go to the market yesterday due to the bad weather. 64 families from whom only maybe 10 speak Greek (the locals or some children of refugee families) or English (2-3 refugees). From whom maybe 10 say "thank you". To whom I gave all the same but many feel I gave them less. Who wanted more although we had a lot yesterday. 64 families with one person coordinating inside and one outside in order not to have 20 families at the same time inside.

Doesn't sound a lot?

For us it has been again a very stressful Saturday and it means we have to order new foodstuff, to find an appointment when we have some volunteers to receive the order and that I have to put it in the shelves, to find people who help to put beans, rice etc. in small bags and so on and so on...

"We feed the whole city", we said yesterday - knowing that there are more in need, that we will have more and more and more families.

It is a shame that we have to do it.

And it is a blessing that we still are able to do it.



18/06/2022

Almost 70 families.

About 100 people in some hours at the place. Foodstuff, cooked food, plates, curtains, shoes, bags, beds, toys.

„I am a machine“, I said after the first 30 families: „hello, how are you? Look, this is for you, and here is cooked food, potatoes, pasta, soup, take what you need.“ - the same in Greek and French. We complain that most of them don't say thank you, one women even did not look at me while

speaking on the phone, taking the stuff and leaving the place.

They complain that the others get more - what is of course not true.

I explained in three languages that the Saturdays we will be closed until September but that we are open during the week. One girl who had to translate for her mother did not understand well. I said "In two months, 9 weeks.". She asked then: „Ok. And what time?“...

20/06/2022

World Refugee Day.

Empty words also this year.

People drowning in the Mediterranean.

People behind walls in camps in our country.

People with basic needs in our organisation.

Tired people on the flee. Tired volunteers who are doing the job of the government, of the EU.

This year „good“ and „bad“ refugees: Those who can chose where to go, who can begin to study without proofing anything. Those who hear „we cannot accept your degree if your lost your papers on the flee“.

World Refugee Day.

As every year I wish I would not see the people we are calling refugees in the streets, in the organisations and in the media. I wish there would be no war, no climate crisis and no needs.

I wish I could close my eyes - as so many people are doing.

World Refugee Day. 2022.



29/06/2022

15 women in front of the door. Without masks, jostling into the place. Different African languages, „arabi“, „kurdi“... no English, no Greek, no way to explain them to wait outside. Voices clatter, children screaming, overwhelmed volunteers, me after a difficult day in a difficult week overwhelmed too. It is so tricky to organise these distributions as we don't do them on Saturdays now during the Summer. How can

we organise it that it is fair?

At least I understood from the whole situation that I have to try to explain again that they have to wait, and as some spoke French the whole situation got more quiet because they could understand me: that we are volunteers who are coming after our work because we want to support them. But that we would be happy to have some cooperation: wearing masks, waiting outside, don't behave like they have the right to give us orders.

...language changes everything. They have been quiet (6 of the women who understood), they have been nice.

"Madam", said the kurdish woman and showed me her dress: she waited for clothes. Her friend was inside. What did she expect? We couldn't communicate. Not at all.

It is so exhausting.

We want to support. But we are also human beings.



06/07/2022

"How can I help you?", I asked.

"I brought her", and he showed a woman behind her "she needs help".

"Ok, first of all, can you please wear a mask?"

- ...the guy freaked out, said he will not wear a mask and that this is not the law, and why can I ask him to wear a mask. "That's the rule here." was all I said.

His answer was: "you shouldn't work here."

I tried to explain that none of us is working here

that we are all volunteers, but I did not come very far, he did not listen, shouted, came closer, changed to Greek, told me how long he is in Greece and that I could not speak with him like that (well, actually I couldn't, he did not stop shouting) and I have been afraid the first time as I was alone with the two head taller guy. Eventually he left, the woman wore her mask and we found out she speaks French. I explained her what this place is, she said "you know, he is crazy" and we could give her clothes and foodstuff.

It went worse, he shouted also outside when I put a poster there and I had to close the door and waited not to be alone anymore.

When they left I was only thinking what this man is to that woman. She said he isn't family, neither a friend. But he waited for her outside.

Poor woman. Poor baby in a couple of months.

07/07/2022

I got the opportunity to hold a workshop in the framework of a Summer School with the title "solidarity in practice". To 39 participants from around 10 countries I could give a glimpse into the situation in Thessaloniki, the origin and meaning of the word, the difference between charity and solidarity, and we could discuss the potential limits of solidarity. A huge group, a small room, but a couple of hours in which I could teach and I could learn, as I love to do it in my seminars and workshops.





08/07/2022

I knew that he will call me as he was announced and I gave my number.

And it was a really good chat with a very professional, quiet and nice person: the head of the Red Cross Greece center for refugees in Thessaloniki.

He will send us people who need foodstuff.

The Red Cross sends US people to support them.

How else can we explain the situation in my

town?

14/07/2022

Ein Artikel über meine Arbeit bei Oikopolis von [Paul-Philipp Braun /epd](#)

Auch wenn ich es nicht so mag über mich zu sprechen und manches anders gesagt habe, wir sind froh über jede Aufmerksamkeit die wir aus Europa bekommen...

<https://www.sonntagsblatt.de/artikel/menschen/gelebte-naechstenliebe-warum-verena-aus-muenchen-fluechtlingen-griechenland-hilft>

<https://www.evangelisch.de/inhalte/203430/15-07-2022/helferin-folgt-ihrem-glauben-nach-thessaloniki>

02/08/2022

<https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/kulturpaedagogin-verena-fink-nothelferin-in-thessaloniki-dlf-kultur-9c943c1d-100.html>

03/08/2022

I don't get over it. After all these years I don't get over it: when another organisation calls us to ask if we can help two refugees who just arrived and they can only help minors. When I tell them that we are closed but that they can send them for sleeping bags and some clothes and stuff. When we don't have foodstuff that doesn't need to be cooked. When I put whatever we have at least. When I see their faces and when I imagine how they will sleep tonight somewhere in the streets and when I know that it is still not safe because police still can take them and push them back.

I don't get over it.



11/08/2022

Still happening right now: on an islet in Evros river no one comes to help the group of refugees, a second child is about to die soon.

This is happening every day at the Greek-Turkish borders.

And no one seems to care.

„You are the ασπίδα (shield) of Europe“, the president of the EU commission, von der Leyen, said in March 2020 there in the Evros region. Europe is ok with what is happening.

Right now it is happening.

And tomorrow again.

How long will we tolerate that?

How many men, women and children still have to die??

17/08/2022

P: [REDACTED]
SOLIDARITAT
16.08.2022 | GUTSCHR. UEBERWEISUNG

50,00 EUR

It still touches me so much: whenever I get donations... It is more than money, it is solidarity. If I get money from someone I don't know it touches me even more. And when the purpose of the bank transfer is filled out with "solidarity" I feel that little light of hope that we need so desperately. Thank you!!

At the moment we have more and more homeless people coming to our place, so they don't need the rice, the spaghetti, the beans we have. I will buy cookies, crackers, tuna... things like that that they can eat while hiding from the police.

Times are rough. Thank you for making it a bit brighter!

22/08/2022

«Τι χρειάζεσαι;» - «???» - „What do you need? How can I help you?“ - „We are from Ukraine and we heard that you are helping people from Ukraine.“

[... well we support everyone from wherever they are from.]

I could give them some clothes, some food and the almost 6 yo girl found some playmobil princesses. The 1yo was sitting in the pram while the father (there was a father! He could leave the country with his family) found some plates.

I still cannot believe that these people had 5 months ago a normal life and now they have no idea how things will go on. I am so sorry for the girl who will need to learn Greek to go to school now. For the Father who even doesn't understand English, and the mother who tries to keep up her independence and confidence in that new situation in which she maybe never thought she will be: as a refugee.



22/09/2022

We opened the first time after 2 weeks. We had a festival and are very tired from the work there. The first two days the families overran us: every day ten families with the need of clothes, food, blankets as autumn is coming slowly. No English, no Greek. 2 children who are sent by the parents to come to us to bring what they can get. Many children. After the break I had some energy: juggling with the lemons I had, sitting with some of them and drawing. But the phone is more

interesting and needs less attention. I saw what they are watching, and it is just super stupid stuff. I try it with a special treat I still had: some extra sweet.

When I went home I found it on the ground.

It is quite difficult not to think that they are just lost...

05/10/2022

We met in order to decide how (and actually also if) we will continue. "We" that's 3 people who are running the place now since years. With coming and going volunteers. With activities for the climate, solidarity activities and all around: organising and serving the people who rent the room that gives us money for our rent. Trying to get donations. Coordinating the volunteers from another organisation, handling them, mostly young people, mostly from abroad, mostly in Thessaloniki for fun, mostly with different expectations what help and support means (it is boring! It is not. not. not at all. exciting!). Organising the donations, the money, the emails. Cleaning the place and and and...



We met and we tried to find a way to spend less time there but to be the same efficient.

And we decided to cancel an activity which was great for the people but for us so exhausting: The weekly market on Saturday.

I am sad for the people, but I cannot hide how relieved I am that we don't have to be there every Saturday from 9 to 9, to find volunteers, a driver and to do the distribution with up to 80 families.

During the last weeks I had two groups visiting us from Denmark and Germany.

They love what we are doing. They tell me that we are doing great. They even thank us.

Yes, it is great. But I am thinking more and more that this work need to be done by governments.

I took some days off. I am back: new volunteers from a College. Every day 2 other people. For 2 hours. A lot of organisational work for us. Today we sent someone to another organisation to bring us some bags full of shoes that we need so much. Tomorrow a delivery. We are thankful that we can buy foodstuff, but we have to be there in order to receive and to carry them. Every day refugees and locals who need food, clothes. People who want to rent the room. No rest.

Why do I write that?

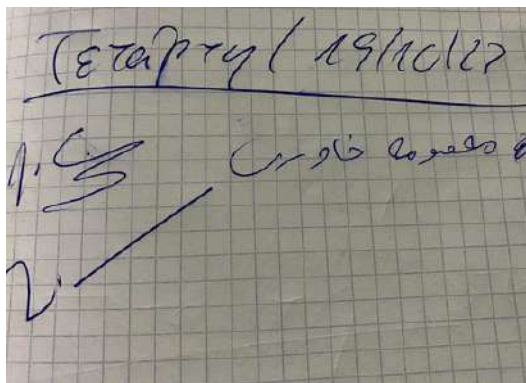
I will not feel bad if one day we decide to close the place.

I will be sorry for the people. Not sorry for us.

13/10/2022

What's up with the people?

<https://rootandbranches.org/2022/10/13/whats-up-with-the-people/>



19/10/2022

We ask them nothing. Everyone can come and tell us he/she needs food/clothes/whatever and we give them what we have.

All we are asking is to write the name and the phone number.

Today two women even could not give me the name or the phone number, just wrote their name in Farsi.

I hope no police control ever will stop them, they will be lost - or back in Turkey.



01/11/2022

I am wondering what the refugees from Ukraine are thinking - or feeling - when they come to us to take food.

There is the banner we had with us in the first weeks of war when we were standing every day at Aristotelous square to demonstrate for peace and against the Russian invasion.

Most of them don't know very well English. Most of them are so good for us because they are polite and say „thank you“.

In three languages the word „peace“ is written in the colours of the Ukrainian flag.

I don't know what they think or what they feel. But I hope they understand that they came to a place where we are supporting the oppressed and not the oppressors.

250 days of war and no end...

16/11/2022

One in 30 families speaks English or Greek well enough that we can communicate.

One in at least 30 people is polite and nice and it doesn't matter that we don't have a common language...

...there was that afghan man, my age, no word English. But he was so nice and I decided to give him a bit more than we are giving usually.

I tried to explain when he can come again. To read in the phrase book the words „2“ and „week“ in

Farsi, I needed my glasses. He tried to read it - and I understood that he also needed glasses.

I gave him mine and we laughed so much, trying to tell each other that we are old and need glasses to read. And as we know laughing is an international language.

These situations are so rare and so beautiful.



22/11/2022

„Good bye“ she said to the hundreds of little plastic balls in 4 colours we have at the moment.

While her mother chose clothes I juggled for her, I played with her and at then I was drawing something on the balls and she could not believe that these balls should be hers now.

An Afghan girl, 2 years old. Not completely traumatised. I don't know since when they are here, nothing about their way to Greece. But maybe she is born here, maybe not in a camp, maybe with a complete and somehow

healthy family.

I don't know. But she acted and reacted and interacted normally. It was possible to interact through playing.

Most of the children who are coming to us, most of the refugee children I saw during the last 7 years couldn't do that.

„Goodbye“ she said to the two boxes full of balls, but she took four of them home. On one I had painted a face, on the other a heart...



23/11/2022

Brings back memories of Summer 2015.

Sadness for all the people who fled and flee their country, anger for those who cannot imagine what these people are going through. Despair how the situation got even worse during the last 7 years in Lesbos, in Greece, in Europe.

Need a break after the first hour.

Will continue another moment when my heartbeat gets normal again.

Guys, take co-traumatisation seriously!!

02/12/2022

A good moment for all.

She arrived with her mother and ran immediately into the room. Maybe 8 years old. Hyperarousel. I guess high-grade traumatised. It wasn't the first time they came and I still try to forget how she made the last time a mess in the clothes room.

I took her immediately out, told her to sit on a chair and for some lucky reason there was a box in which I put a paper and some colours.

I gave her what she needed: a frame.

She was drawing until her mother was ready. She was with her concentration in the box. She hang on, she finished it, encouraged through my "bravo" I gave her in between.

She could calm down.

When she left she hugged me. Quietly.

A good moment for all.



[I miss to work in my field.]

13/12/2022

„For shopping“ they replied when I asked them why they came to us.

Ok... they don't speak very well Greek but still it has been kind of an affront.

Then I realised that they have been here last week, so I had to tell them that they can take next week new foodstuff. „But only a little shopping last week.“ - I insisted on our rule of every 14 days. „But only a little shopping“ the two women repeated and told me that another organisation gave them more. Yes, once a month. And: they stopped because they don't have funds anymore. And asked if they can send the people to us.

„But only a little shopping“, they said again and I turned around, ditched them with a „see you next week“.



...later I heard that last week they have been irritated that they could not get mild detergent from us. The „shopping“ wasn't just due to their elemental Greek. They really think we are like a free supermarket...

Things are getting somehow more difficult every week.



16/12/2022

I was looking for families we want to give a special Christmas present with special food- and hygiene stuff. I was going through this notebook in which we had all the families we called during the first 2 years of the pandemic. Almost 200 names. So many difficult memories, so many good ones.

Most of them left the country. In Germany they will not have work and money and a life. I hope they have someone who supports them as we did.