

10. 'SEARCH II' in Greece

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**OKANA ("Organisation Against Drugs"),
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1. Brief description of OKANA

The Organisation Against Drugs (OKANA) was founded in 1993 after the Greek parliament unanimously voted for a law that eventually came into force in 1995. It is a self-regulated legal entity, supervised by the Ministry of Health and Welfare.

General aims of the organisation:

- Planning, promoting, co-ordinating (inter-ministerial) and implementing national policy concerning primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of drug dependence.
- Scientific research on the problem of drug use at a national level.
- Providing valid and reliable information to the public and raising awareness.
- The establishment of community drug prevention centres in Greece, treatment units, social rehabilitation programmes and vocational training centres.

General responsibilities of the organisation:

- To approve and finance primary, secondary and tertiary prevention programmes.
- To supervise their implementation by the local government organisations, non-governmental organisations as well as by the organisational network of the community.
- To provide a liaison with the European Drug Monitoring Centre.
- To establish and operate the Greek Focal Point of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drugs Addiction.
- To actively participate in the international organisations involved in responding to the problem of psychoactive substance use and abuse.

Currently OKANA is in the 2nd year of implementing the National Action Plan Against Drugs (2002-2006), and is focusing its efforts on pursuing the objectives set in the demand reduction field. These efforts include establishing new programmes, implementing new co-operation schemes between different agencies and launching innovative interventions. These are all geared towards furthering the action taken against drug addiction in various fields and settings and enabling existing needs to be better met.

2. Brief description of UMHRI

The University Mental Health Research Institute (U.M.H.R.I.) was founded in 1989 – originally as the Academic Research Institute on Mental Health. The institute is a non-profit organisation linked to the University of Athens (Medical School) but administratively and financially independent.

The objectives of the U.M.H.R.I. are:

- To conduct and promote research at a national and international level on the basic sectors of mental health (biological, psychological and social), in collaboration with relevant organisations in Greece and abroad.
- To undertake advisory roles and offer relevant medical information and services to the government, domestic and foreign universities, other public or private agents, individuals, medical organisations and, in general, any organisation related to the medical profession.
- To plan and develop educational programmes on mental health corresponding to the needs and perspectives of the existing post-graduate programmes of the University of Athens Medical School; to help in dissertation work for post-graduate students.

In order to fulfil its objectives, the institute:

- Designs and implements proposals and undertakes research programmes relating to the fields of interest of the scientific organisations involved.
- Organises conferences, lectures and seminars and promotes any educational or other activity relevant to its objectives.
- Collaborates with domestic and foreign universities, school departments, research institutes, ministries and other public and private agents or organisations consistent with its scientific remit, as well as with any person who may provide information and assistance to the advancement of the institute's work.
- Provides financial support for post-graduate scientists studying subjects relevant to its aim, undertaking responsibility to pay part or all of the expenses that accrue.
- Publishes books, research projects and other educational material. It also issues material for publicising the institute.
- Collects all relevant information from a variety of sources in order to establish a library and archive, and acquires all necessary supporting equipment to sustain the aforementioned activities.

3. Final Report

The geographical position of Greece makes it a transit country for migrating populations, as well as for drug trafficking between other continents and Europe.

This report attempts to outline the scale of drug misuse among migrants in Greece so that in future best practices can be implemented for this particular population.

3.1. Historical review of the migrant situation in Greece

Traditionally, Greece was just a transit country for migrants. It was only in the early 1990s (1993) that it changed into a reception country as a result of economic and political changes of a national and global scale.

Historically, the phenomenon of national immigration in Greece started in 1952 and lasted until the mid-1970s. The two world wars and the 1947-1949 civil war prevented the country from evolving technologically, and agriculture (the only sector available to the population) was not sufficiently large enough to absorb the Greek labour force. Unemployment became the most serious problem afflicting post-war Greece, leading to serious economic repercussions. The solution proposed was intensive emigration. Between 1951 and 1981, 12 per cent of the Greek population emigrated to countries such as France, Belgium, US, Canada and, above all, to Germany.

A particular feature of this emigration flow was its temporary nature. It was stemmed by international events such as the oil crisis of 1973 and domestic ones such as the restoration of democracy after seven years of dictatorship and improvements in the Greek economy. Similarly the Greeks, imitating the Spanish, Italian and Portuguese guest workers in the northern Europe, started returning to their homelands. However, a substantial percentage decided to remain permanently in the guest countries, and southern Mediterranean countries started importing labour from Africa to cope with the acute labour shortage in rural areas.

During the 1980s, dramatic political changes in Europe utterly transformed the migration flows. The Iron Curtain fell and the reunification of Germany heralded a new era that was to have unpredictable consequences for all communist countries. The eventual collapse of the USSR and its fragmentation was followed by the subsequent collapse of all the socialist countries in and around the Balkan region as their economies failed. The situation worsened in the 1990s, with the disintegration of the former Republic of Yugoslavia, the bloody civil wars and the bombarding of Kosovo, leading to the displacement of millions of people in search of a better future. This constitutes one of the driving factors responsible for changing the immigration patterns in southern Europe, particularly in Greece, with the largest group of immigrants residing in Greece now coming from former communist countries (SIADIMA, 2001).

These abrupt changes, the short space of time, the pressures resulting from immigration, the lack of any previous experience and perhaps even the lack of any political will have left Greece with no room to organise an adequate infrastructure to accommodate this population.

3.2. Current situation

Irregular transit migration is a continuously increasing phenomenon. A recent study by the International Organisation for Migration estimates that, worldwide, between 15 and 30 million people are regularly moving between countries. According to Eurostat, since 1989 net migration accounts for most of the annual population change in the European Union. In 2000, the annual net migration rate was 2 per

1000 population, representing around 65 % of the total population growth. Without positive net migration, the populations of Germany, Greece, Italy and Sweden would be in decline.

In order to sufficiently understand the key parameters for immigration in Greece, it is imperative that we have some idea of their number, nationalities and occupations. Immigrants are mostly employed in the seasonal or tertiary economy, (before they were mostly employed in large-scale industries). Their social position is at the bottom of the social scale with little opportunities for integration. They are not organised in trade unions, most of them are illegal and lastly, greater numbers of women are migrating, with considerable changes in the gender patterns.

The status of the migrants depends on several factors. If they are political immigrants and refugees, they are granted a temporary residence permit in Greece. There are also some immigrants that come to Greece with temporary work or tourist visas. However, the overwhelming majority of the immigrants that reside in Greece are illegal. Today, data on immigration in Greece varies according to the source. In 1999, government estimates suggested there were 500 – 600,000 legal and illegal migrants, which represents 5 per cent of the labour force, whereas other estimates suggested there were more than 800,000 legal and illegal migrants. Based on the last population census of 2001, the National Statistic Service of Greece (NSSG) estimates that the number of legal and illegal migrants is 797,093. With a total population 11 million, this means that 7 per cent are migrants.

According to a research study from the Operational Programme for Migrants of Panteion University, Greece has the highest proportion of migrants in Europe after Luxemburg, and the highest proportion of irregular migrants.

In an effort to deal with the problem of irregular migration, from 1996-98 the Greek Government implemented a selective procedure allowing for "conditional legalisation" of irregular migrants for a limited period. It effectively offered a kind of 'amnesty' to undocumented immigrants already residing and working in the country.

The immigration communities responded positively. According to the official report: 373,000 applied for and received the 'white card', which entitled them to reside in Greece for an undefined, short-term basis, seek work and meet the requirements necessary to obtain a 'green card'. Approximately 220,000 workers then went on to apply for a 'green card', which, if they met its requirements and could prove that they had been employed during their temporary stay, entitled them to a work and residence permit for up to 5 years. Although the percentage of legal and illegal immigrants was very low (below 7 %), the law was amended with a second law being introduced in 2001. This enabled foreigners to legalise their situation if they could demonstrate that they had entered Greece before 2002. Following this second law, approximately 380,000 immigrants were documented. Provided that the legalisation procedures are successfully implemented, it is estimated that the percentage of documented immigrants could increase to 40-50 %. From the above numbers, it can be estimated that only one out of three migrants holds a green card, i.e. has the right to work, has health insurance and all the privileges or obligations that any citizen enjoys.

Finally, the Amnesty International Report for Greece states that 205,000 undocumented immigrants were arrested in 2002 for illegal entry and residence.

3.3. Asylum seekers and refugees

The latest data estimates that there are 25 – 30,000 asylum seekers.

Asylum applications:

1999	2000	2001	2002
1528	3004	5499	5664

Between 1999 and 2001, 10,031 applications were submitted; in the rest of the EU the number of applications for the same period was 1,167,554.

The recognition rate for Greece is 11%, and 16 % for Europe. (Source UNHCR - United Nation Health Council of Refugees). The percentage change in pending cases for Greece is 71 %.

3.4. About their origin

Data collected from applications for legalisation made after the second law was introduced is not yet available. The following data comes from the first legalisation procedures in 1997:

- a) Approximately 78 % of immigrants come from the Balkans (65 % from Albania, 7 % from Bulgaria, 5 % from Rumania, 1 % from republics of the former Yugoslavia)
- b) Another 10 % of immigrants come from central and eastern European countries (2.5 % from Poland and 7% from countries belonging to the former Soviet Union),
- c) 8 % come from Asian countries (India, Pakistan, Philippines),
- d) 4 % of immigrants come from African countries.

The asylum seekers and refugees mainly come from Iraq and Afghanistan, while a small number also come from Pakistan, India, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Sierra Leone.

3.4.1. Where do they live and work

Research in the metropolitan areas of Greece has shown that immigrants live in the poorest districts where drug trafficking, prostitution, low quality housing and infrastructure are common place. It would be incorrect to describe these areas as ghettos, however, because they are not homogeneous and they are also occupied by the indigenous population. According to a survey carried out by the Department of Urban Development & Housing, approximately 66.5 % of immigrants live under conditions of poverty in substandard rented housing. Their residence is characterised by instability because the stereotypical "criminal immigrant" influences Greek owners, who are very reluctant to rent their properties to non-Europeans. 47.26 % live in Athens and another 15.8% in Macedonia (Thessalonica).

In the urban areas, they are employed mainly in the service sector and its sub-sectors like building, domestic work, entertainment and catering. This even includes the sex industry, which in the past decade has considerably expanded as a result of women and children being trafficked from the former

Soviet Union countries. In the rest of the country they are mainly employed in agriculture. The Ministry of Agriculture points out that seasonal immigrants have saved agriculture from disaster and have increased the competitiveness of Greek products in the European market by satisfying needs in harvesting, poultry and animal husbandry. Their participation in the country's labour dynamic has steadied wages.

3.4.2. Their children

Increasing numbers of migrant children regularly attend state schools throughout Greece. In the year 2000, 105,000 pupils attended primary and secondary schools, a total of 7.9 % of the pupil population. At the moment there are 26 Intercultural Education Schools, as well as reception classes in some state schools.

3.4.3. Governmental policies

The existing legal provisions for migrants (the 1991 Act) proved insufficient for dealing with and controlling the increase influx of migrants into the country. The Greek government was forced to respond by developing a long-term immigration policy. As a result, in 2001 a law was introduced to parliament defining the conditions for giving regular/legal status to migrants entering the country, for giving them legal working status, for securing the already existing migrant population in terms of the above, and for integrating them into the Greek community/society.

3.4.4. Organisations working with migrants

Currently there are many non-governmental organisations working with migrants and refugees in the country. Overall, they provide services in the following areas:

- a) psycho-social education
- b) counselling
- c) legal help
- d) medical care (Doctors without Frontiers and Doctors of the World)
- e) financial support
- f) occupational training and support
- g) nursery schools
- h) leisure activities, such as summer camps
- i) sensitisation of the public's opinion on issues of racism and social exclusion

4. Migrants and substance abuse: steps taken for 'SEARCH II'

Within the context of 'SEARCH II', the two participating organisations OKANA and UMHRI decided that the first step would be to conduct a survey of the existing organisations (governmental and non-governmental) that are involved with migrants. The migrants' illegal status and more specifically, the nature of the sub-group of substance users and abusers, means that this population is a hidden one and very difficult to identify. In order to have access to official data from all the governmental and non-governmental organisations that come into contact with potential substance abuse migrants, a letter with a questionnaire was sent to 63 drug prevention centres throughout Greece and to 28 national and local organisations dealing with migrants. Data was gathered and processed and these are the results: The Ministry of Public Order responded by sending the statistics for drug-related indictments from 1993 to 2002. The cases and indictments involve drug possession, usage and trafficking.

Table 1: Cases and indictments

YEAR	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
CASES	2049	2531	3360	4695	6382	6948	7014	7995	9820	10424
INDICTMENTS	2958	3719	4778	6821	9507	10745	10626	12306	15026	15667
GREEKS	2708	3400	4170	5999	8555	9522	9457	11154	13750	14378
FOREIGNERS	250	319	608	822	952	1223	1169	1152	1276	1289

The National Statistic Service, under the auspices of the Ministry of Finance, provided data on drug convictions in relation to gender for each prefecture of Greece from 1993 to 1998. Drug convictions include: drug use, drug possession and trafficking, and drug cultivation.

Table 2: Drug-related convictions per prefecture and gender

YEAR	TOTAL	FOREIGN	GENDER	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1993	1056	51	M	380	67	91	12	18	77	206	33	52	52
			F	32	2	5	2	1	3	12	2	4	3
1994	1016	45	M	399	48	103	16	16	32	182	27	51	76
			F	25	5	3	2	-	4	3	1	5	5
1995	1211	75	M	353	60	182	48	13	62	241	34	57	131
			F	17	5	6	1	-	2	-	-	5	3
1996	1484	187	M	444	93	228	30	55	38	307	58	89	60
			F	24	5	2	4	3	1	16	1	11	-
1997	1906	75	M	618	145	267	37	59	99	292	45	200	59
			F	26	1	6	1	3	5	16	-	8	3
1998	1725	82	M	614	143	139	9	66	62	346	51	148	57
			F	25	9	3	-	1	9	18	6	12	-

- A. Attika • B. St.Ellada and Evia • C. Peloponnesus • D. Ionian Islands • E. Epirus • F. Thessaly • G. Macedonia • H. Thrace • I. Aegean Islands • J. Crete

The data above is only indicative, and no conclusions should be drawn regarding substance use and the targeted population.

Another significant source of information came from the responses provided by the OKANA prevention centres and therapeutic communities throughout Greece, which deal with drug addicts and provide therapy and/or counselling. From a total of 63 prevention centres, 24 replied. Out of those, 9 centres have provided counselling and/or referral services for drug detoxification for the target population. It is important to stress that most prevention centres requested more information and educational material to help them tackle the target population's specific socio-cultural and psychological needs.

Table 3: Cases seeking counselling/referrals from prevention centres

CASES	TYPE OF HELP	LOCATION
2	Drug related counselling	Athens
4 groups of parents and teachers	Counselling	Thessalonica
5	Drug related counselling	Athens
1	Counselling/referral	Kozani
2	Counselling/referral	Kefallonia
3 +mixed counselling groups	Drug related counselling	Crete
4	Drug related counselling	Zakinthos
8	Drug related counselling	Thessalonica
Unspecified number 5-10% per cent of total visits	Drug related counselling	Athens

The Greek REITOX Focal Point provided data for the last 3 years, collected from 24 drug therapeutic units throughout Greece, regarding the total number of migrant drug users that requested drug detoxification. It also provided data from the methadone substitution programmes and the OKANA Help Centre.

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER
2000	60
2001	43
2002	63

Table 4:
Migrant drug users requesting therapy

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER
2000	5
2001	5
2002	6

Table 5:
Migrant drug users admitted to OKANA substitution programmes

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER
2000	31
2001	25
2002	19

Table 6:
Migrant drug users approaching the help centre

KETHEA (Therapy Centre for Addicted Individuals), a well-established organisation in the fields of drug therapy and prevention implementation, provided data from its Multi Intervention Drug Centre report from the year 2002. According to this, 4,681 cases of drug use among migrants were dealt with.

Finally, the newly established "STEKI", a day centre for OKANA drug users, stated that there were 21 cases of drug-dependent migrants using its facilities during the year 2003.

In an effort to compile and summarise all the above information in regards to substance use and the investigated population, it is important to stress that, in a country that has seen a large influx of migrants during the last decade, a relatively small proportion of those users seeking help are migrants. One possible explanation for this could be that, by definition, drug users are a socially marginalized group. This places a double burden on the shoulders of the migrant groups, which are already stigmatised and marginalised with serious educational and vocational problems. In order to deal with this double exclusion, government policies aimed at implementing drug detoxification and prevention programmes should take into consideration the socio-cultural and psychological needs of the target population. These should also consider issues concerning the migrant population's access to services.

5. Special action for migrants and substance use

In order to meet the special needs of this population, KETHEA has very recently established a transitional support centre called "Mosaic". This centre will be ready to receive its first members in February 2004. In the past, the same organisation has implemented a drug-related programme in northern Greece, which was exclusively conducted in the Russian language.

The OKANA Help Centre has acknowledged the need for implementing specialised programmes to accommodate the needs of this population. Although outreach workers from the centre are already dealing with migrants, they acknowledge the need for further training to help to cope with this population.

In conclusion, Greece has recently entered a period when it is receiving large numbers of economic migrants. A period of adjustment is needed, both in terms of policy-making as well as socio-cultural integration, since Greece is facing difficulties at a variety of societal, political and economic levels. Drastic changes and long-term planning are needed. Apart from the fact that there are still no adequate official records on the migrant situation in Greece, the main difficulty in working towards this goal is that policy responses are fragmented. Different ministries are left to determine and define their own competencies, which leads to a lack of common strategic goals.

Comments:

The above information on migrants and drug abuse, as well as on the organisation working with migrants, is not exhaustive and needs further investigation.