

LGBTQIA+ refugees & asylum seekers in Greece



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What is the problem? LGBTQIA+ refugees and asylum seekers in Greece

Individual - No support network, often excluded from their own (ethnic) communities, facing isolation.
& >90% of PWS are survivors of torture

Social services - LGBTQIA+ refugees with no documents or expired documents have no access to health care

Hormonal treatment/transition is offered for free through the GR NHS after a successful referral from a specialised psychiatrist, only to documented asylum seekers => 1. Health risk for those already on hormonal treatment that are forced to interrupt their treatment or source it illegally and unmonitored. 2. Surgical procedures are not covered by GR NHS.

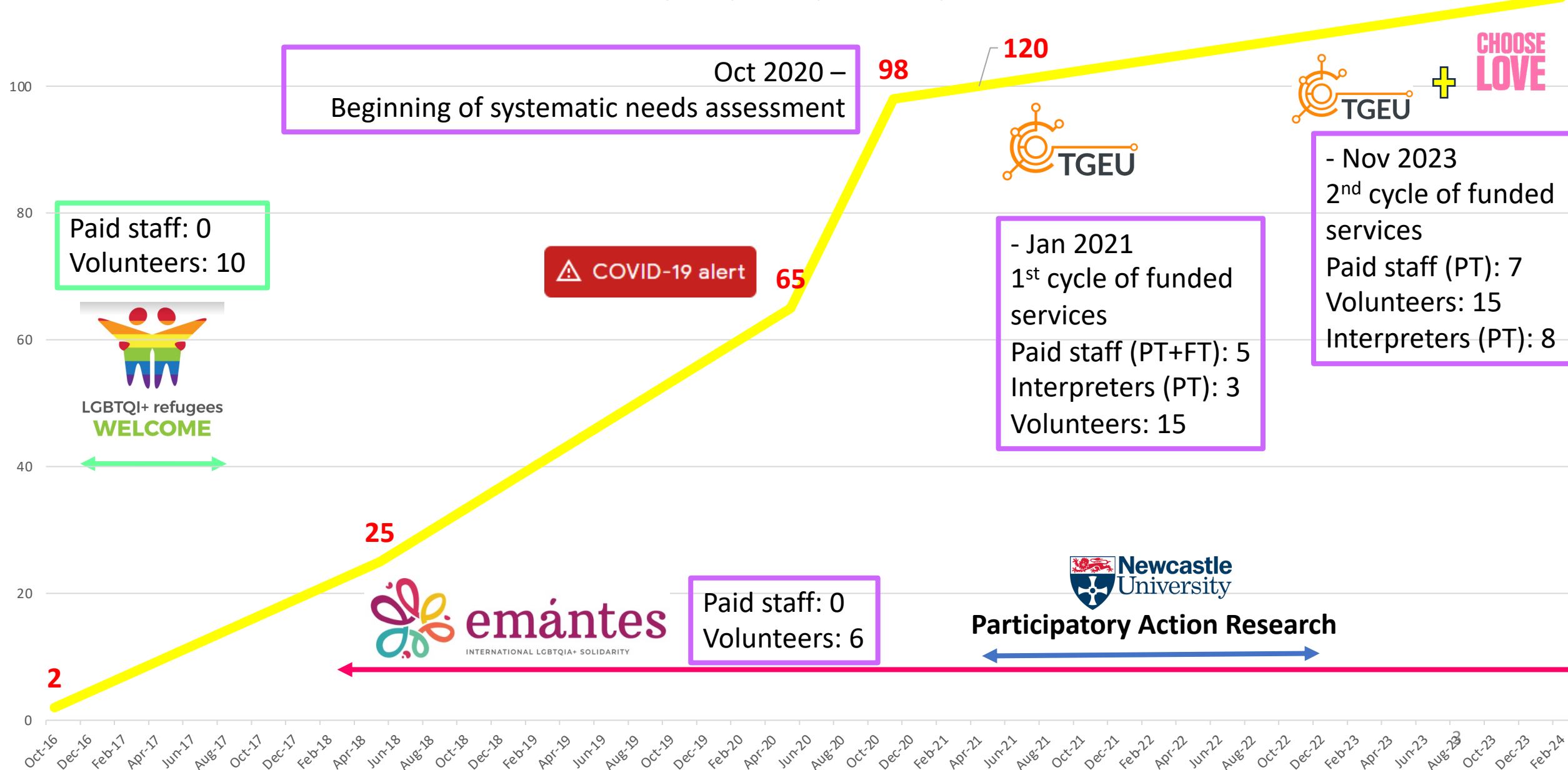
Accommodation: LGBTQIA+ refugees and especially TGNC are at risk of homelessness, and lack of housing alternatives. For asylum seekers there is no housing alternatives other than vacancies in camps which are in remote and or rural areas=> High risk for GBV and unemployment. Many “prefer” to be homeless in Athens.

Asylum application procedure: 1. Harassment and verbal attacks for LGBTQIA+ refugees while waiting in related processes. 2. Interpreters can discriminate against them, compromising their cases. 3. Placing trans women in detention cells with cis men / asking traumatic and intimidating questions during interviews / misgendering applicants. 4. Lengthy delays in interviews (6-18month delays) 5. Limited funding for annulment appeal

Who we are? Emantes is the only organisation solely addressing LGBTQIA+ refugees and asylum seekers in Greece

Today: Total number of case entries: **447**

Emantes' New Entry Requests per time period 2016-2024



Paid staff: 0
Volunteers: 10



COVID-19 alert

Oct 2020 –
Beginning of systematic needs assessment



- Jan 2021
1st cycle of funded services
Paid staff (PT+FT): 5
Interpreters (PT): 3
Volunteers: 15



- Nov 2023
2nd cycle of funded services
Paid staff (PT): 7
Volunteers: 15
Interpreters (PT): 8

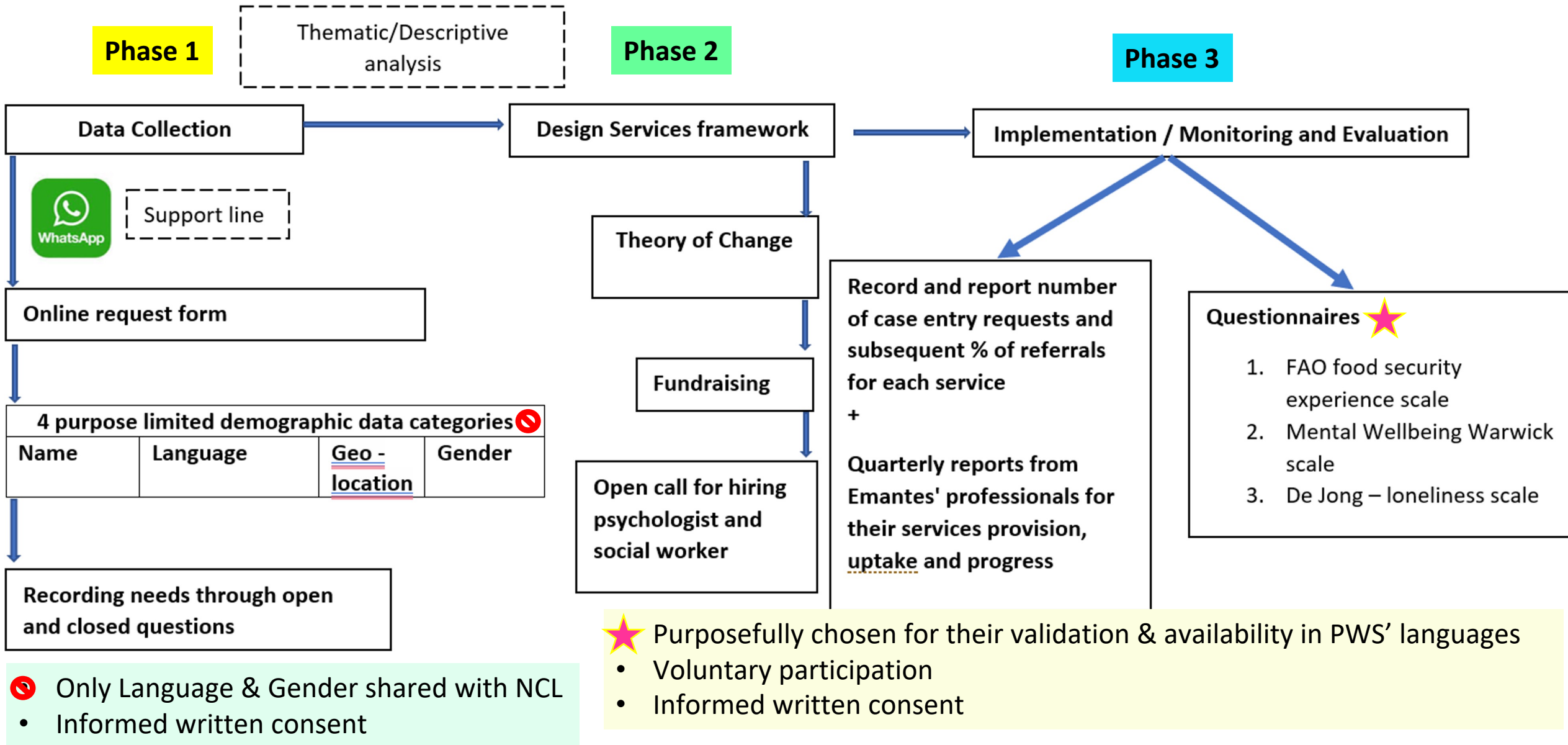
Paid staff: 0
Volunteers: 6



Participatory Action Research



How we work - Process flowchart



Phase 1

Participatory needs assessment



Needs Assessment - Carried out through Emantes' support line and an informed consent formal online survey administered before intakes.

What kind of support do you need?

- Medical Support
- Legal Support
- Psychological Support
- Social Support
- Housing
- Food
- Non food items
- Connection with LGBTQIA+ community
- Educational Support
- Other: _____

Please describe briefly your current needs or issues

Your answer

Terms of use and Privacy Policy *

Agree

Disagree

Figure 3-4: Example of written informed consent; extracted from Emantes' online request form (Google forms).

How we use your Personal Data

Emantes (we, us, our) are a Social Cooperative Enterprise. Our [organisation](#) offers support exclusively to adult refugee/migrant [Lgbtqia+](#) and GNC (Gender Non Confirming) people, through various services, activities, campaigns and interventions.

By filing this form, you give us consent to collect and store your personal data. We may share your personal data with collaborating entities/ persons (NGOs, lawyers, psycho-social support services, health services, research teams/entities/programs), in order to [analyse](#) the needs of our field of intervention and improve our services, and only to the extent that these data are absolutely necessary and serve the abovementioned purposes.

Regarding special categories of sensitive personal data, such as country of origin or sexuality, you give us your explicit consent to the processing of the aforementioned data for the purposes specifically described herein, by filling the relevant fields.

We collect and store personal data, in order to offer evidence-based and [personalised](#) services and evaluate our activities, that have been designed through participatory planning and beneficiaries' engagement. We

Do not use your data for marketing or advertising/commercial purposes.

Do not collect your data to create prediction models based on your profile and/or personal preferences.

This questionnaire is based on Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES), designed by The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). We have adjusted the questionnaire on Emantes' specific target group of beneficiaries ([lgbtqia+](#) refugee/migrant populations). Data you provide (NOT following sensitive categories: e.g. geolocation, sexual activity) will be shared with our researcher in residence [Project Title: LGBTQ+ refugee and asylum seekers in Greece: needs assessment and proposed services framework] so we can collaboratively carry out needs assessment and measure food security at population level to help us design our services for LGBTQ+ [refugees](#) and asylum seekers as well as to inform our policy. This research has been approved by Newcastle University Ethics Committee (Study's Ethical Approval Reference number: 17456/2021).

After the completion of the questionnaire, you are not an identified natural person for Emantes' team. More specifically, we collect based on your statement the following personal data/information:

- Gender
- Sexuality
- Age
- Country of origin
- Legal status
- Accommodation status
- Available house equipment
- Food related conditions (e.g. allergies)
- Access to food
- Eating habits

The above data are used to [analyse](#) the specific needs and obstacles that our target beneficiary group usually confronts. These data will help us establish the food security level of the population we support.

Only the employees or members of the Emantes' team who are responsible for the completion of this form or/and the process of the abovementioned data have access to them. Emantes, as the controller, does not share your personal data with any third party, natural or legal person, for advertising/commercial purposes. We keep your data safely stored, for three years after the completion of our research. Any publication related to the above-mentioned research will not include identifiable information/data.

This form is completed via a third-party website (Google Forms), please note that the aforementioned provider has its own privacy policy and that we do not accept any responsibility or liability for this policy. Emantes encourage visitors to be informed about Google Forms' privacy policy.

Emantes values your privacy. Should you have any further questions, queries or concerns, don't hesitate to contact us: info.emantes@gmail.com

Figure 1: Closed and open needs assessment survey questions; extracted from Emantes' online request form (Google forms).



Needs Assessment - Carried out through Emantes' support line and an informed consent formal online survey administered before intakes.

Gender	Num. of entries =441
Male	273
Female	74
Trans	71
GNC/Other	23

Type of requests	Num. of recorded requests	Type of requests	Listed as main priority need (Num. of entries= 441)
Food	241	Legal support	123
Legal support	232	Accommodation	75
Social support	197	Medical	60
Accommodation	170	Social support	60
Mental health	142	Mental health	49
Medical	131	Food	20
Connection with LGBTQIA+ community	144	Connection with LGBTQIA+ community	26
Non-food items	91	Emantes certificate	9
Education	65	Employment	6
Employment	20	Education	3
Emantes certificate	15	Non-food items	1

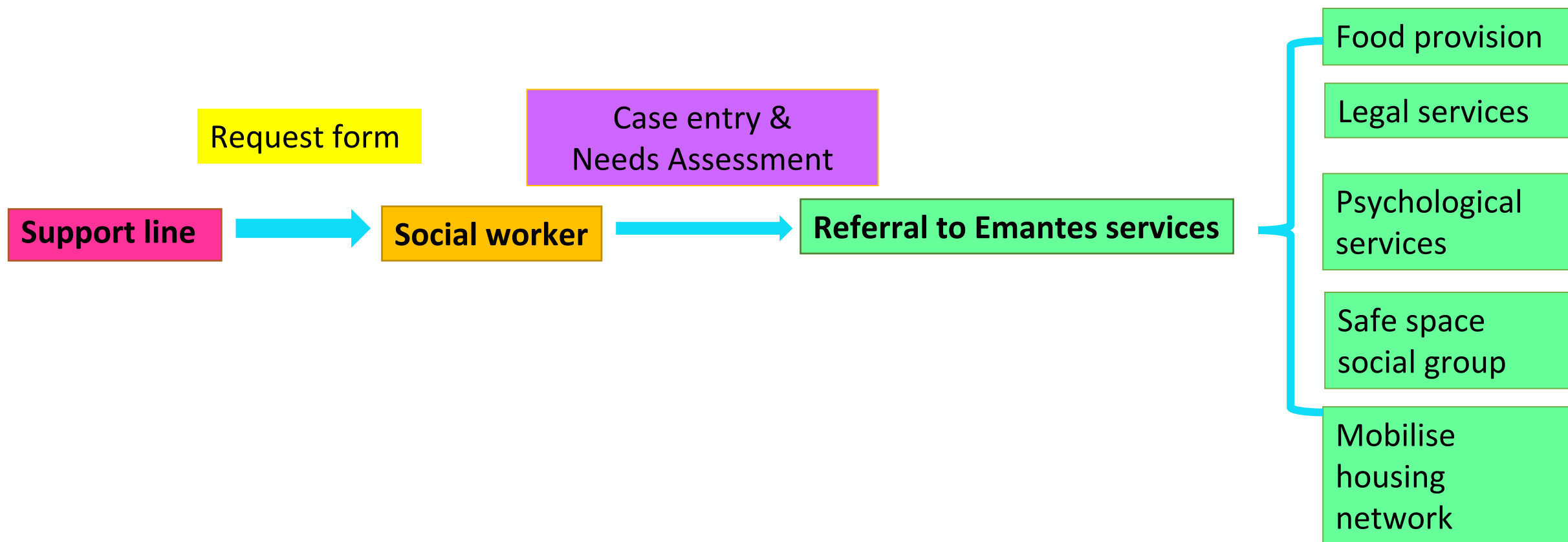
Languages spoken	Num. of recorded languages
French	152
English	126
Arabic	60
Farsi/Dari	50
Urdu/Punjabi	21
Spanish	13
Portuguese	3
Bengali	2
Lingala	4
Turkish	5
Albanian/Greek	1
Russian	2
Ukrainian	1
Chinese	1

Phase 2

Design services framework



The pipeline of Emantes services (directly informed by needs assessment => bottom up and participatory action research)



Meet d' TEAM

Spyros Koulocheris
Lawyer



Mariangela Psyrraki
Social worker



Betty Siafaka
Psychologist



Behind the scenes... + 4 interpreters + 12 volunteers



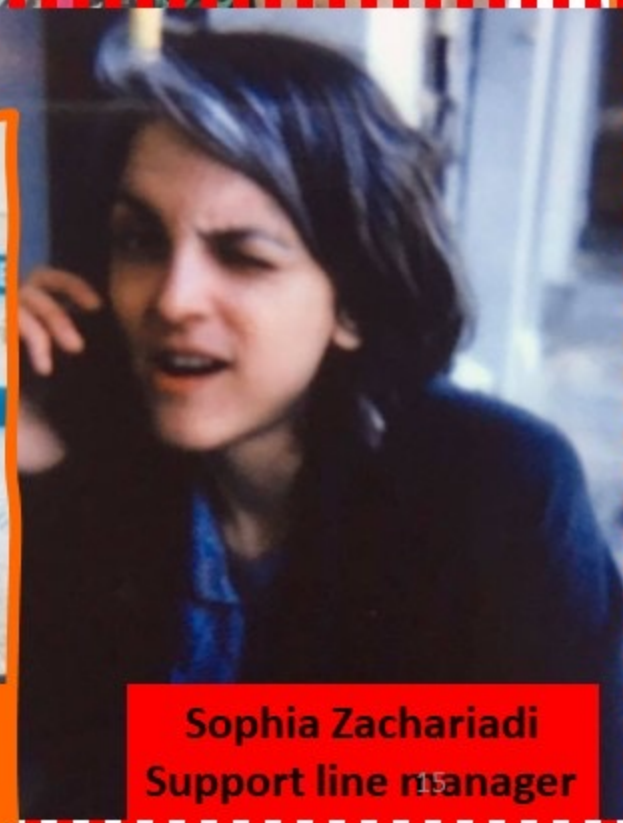
Lia Zachariadi
Food provision & community coordinator



Suma Abdelsamie
Community coordinator, interpreter & consultant



Eleni Hadjigeorgiou
Researcher & Strategic planner



Sophia Zachariadi
Support line manager

Phase 3

Implementation / Monitoring and Evaluation

Examples of food provision and mental health support



Monitoring and evaluation **Food security assessment**

2021/2022

Phase I

** Lack of targeted funds for food provision=limited food provision in Emantes
+
Ukraine War further

How we responded? Emantes' 2023-2024 food provision intervention is 3-fold:

- 1. **Food Coupons** – Supermarket coupons are administered weekly to PWS upon severe food insecurity assessment AND/OR unemployment AND/OR with chronic or acute illness AND/OR with children.
- 2. **Emergency meal provision** is be administered during appointments to all PWS.
- 3. **Bi-monthly access to pantry scheme** is made available to beneficiaries who are severely food insecure AND are able to utilise food upon severe food insecurity assessment. **Also administered to employed refugees with very low income or precarious work.**

Severely food insecure (7-8)

Experiencing hunger

55

83

References: 1- Henjum, S., Morseth, M.S., Arnold, C.D. et al. "I worry if I will have food tomorrow": a study on food insecurity among asylum seekers living in Norway. BMC Public Health 19, 592 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-019-6827-9>; 2. Mansour, R., Liamputtong, P., & Arora, A. (2020). Prevalence, Determinants, and Effects of Food Insecurity among Middle Eastern and North African Migrants and Refugees in High-Income Countries: A Systematic Review. International journal of environmental research and public health, 17(19), 7262. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17197262>



Monitoring and evaluation **Warwick mental wellbeing scale**

Baseline population assessments:

- Response rate: 48% (administered to 120 individuals)
- **Low and moderate mental health wellbeing: 96%**

Low mental wellbeing **significant correlations** were observed **with:**

1. Accommodation status/ living in a camp: 67%
2. Feelings that they are in threat of eviction: 64%
3. Unemployment: 90%

Other observations from 1-to-1 assessments : Sleeping disorders, Anxiety, travelled through and crossed the borders with Turkey.

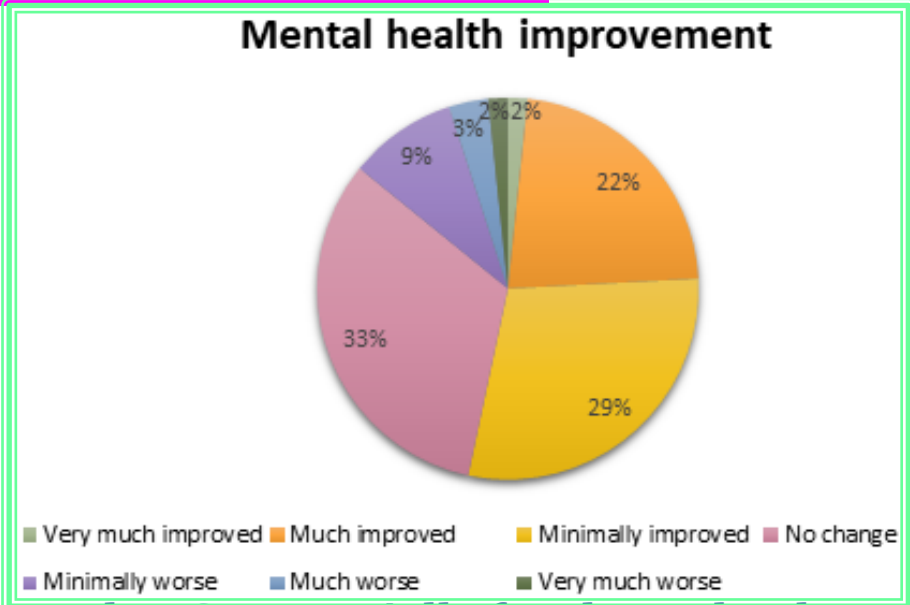
How we respond as Emantes? Internal 1-to-1 therapy sessions and/or group sessions with a psychiatrist when deemed necessary.

Phase II: No statistically significant changes in wellbeing status at population level
mental health in those receiving mental health support

Betty Siafaka
Psychologist



Psychological wellbeing goes beyond coping with psychopathological symptoms at an individual level. Recognizing and challenging structures that marginalize and oppress trans and gender non-conforming refugees is a crucial mental health intervention



Quantitative Impact

53% improved

33% stable

14% exacerbated

Qualitative Impact

- Affirmation of trans identity and empowerment
- Reduction of mental health stigma
- Increase of autonomy: e.g. by enabling PWS to use social pharmacies to get their psychiatric medication by themselves



Emantes is keeping up with the participatory bottom up design to inform their services and democratise their processes

PAST (ongoing)
Through online request form we inform and design services



PRESENT
Through the monitoring and evaluation of bottom up designed services we carry out research at population level



FUTURE
Inform future services as well as policy and establish the fields in need for advocacy

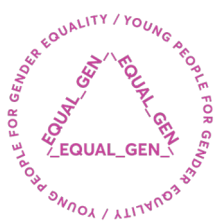
- Employment Support 
- Food provision (systematic, culturally, and health appropriate) 
- Legal services
- Psychological services
- Safe space social group
- Mobilise housing network
- Gender transition support 
- LGBTQIA+ consultancy for stakeholders 



Identified and expressed need for new services

What are the LGBTQIA+ refugees experiences?

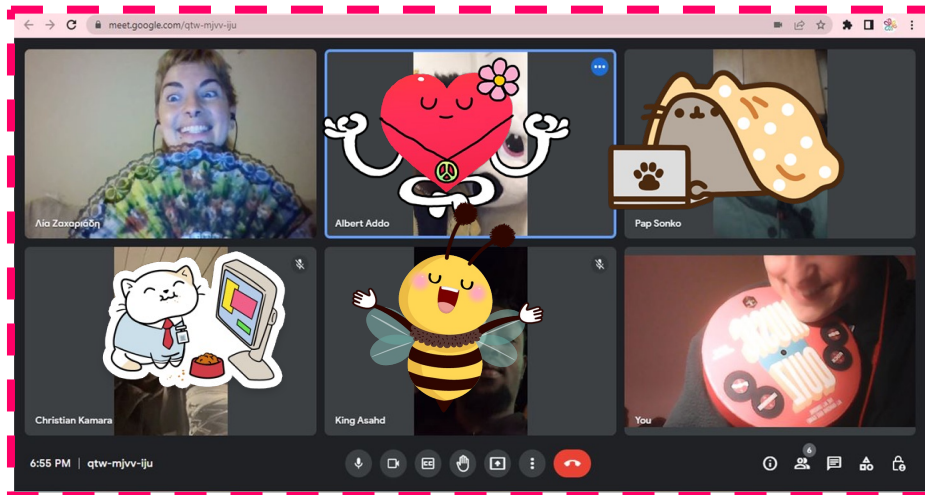
A series of exploratory PAR workshops.



Series of Participatory Workshops— **In person & online**

30 hybrid workshops were carried out with 77 LGBTQIA+ refugee participants between 2022-24:

“Homogeneity” necessary to reveal as much Context based Mechanisms and Outcomes for targeted actions.





1st Workshop: Individual Journey Mapping— Access to services & Lgbtqia+ refugee identity

What has your journey been as an LGBTQIA+ refugee??

- * Entry Point
- * Asylum Process
- * Accommodation
- * Access to Services
- * Work



Workshop 1: Personal Journey Mapping

Hello!

In the first workshop we ask you to record your **personal journey** in 5 main categories.

1. The asylum process
2. Access to housing
3. Access to health and other services in general
4. Access to employment
5. Your social life

When filling in this form, please think about

1. your **PERSONAL** experiences only
2. **focus on the difficulties** you have faced
3. **VERY IMPORTANT: focus on the additional difficulties** you have faced as an LGBTQIA+ refugee.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask one of the facilitators. We are waiting for your answers!

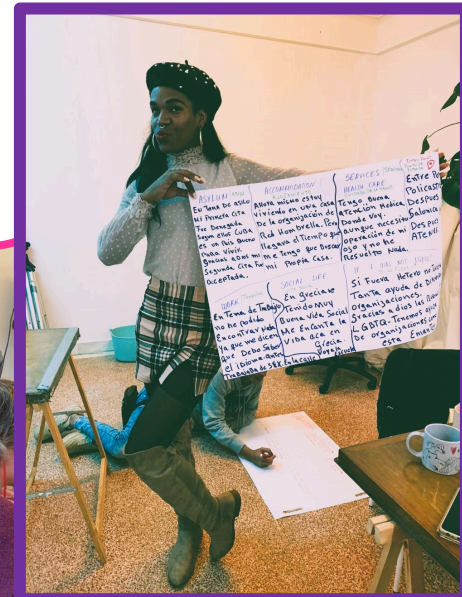
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Not shared

* Indicates required question

ASYLUM PROCESS: *

Have you faced any **difficulties** as **gay/bisexual man** during your registration and/or interview(s) and/or during the procedure(s) of applying for asylum?



couldn't go & go not identity

you need discrimination.

Will things be different? You will be able to cook and you could freely speak on the phone and not have to leave the container. MIC: I would not need protection as gay.

Social Life // Coming Out

Would things be different? MIC: A straight guy would have face the same. MH: Psychologically I would feel differently.

Would things be different MIC: No i would still have the language barrier. No, i would still be discriminated as black person but i would be able to talk about my sexuality



2nd Workshop/Information Session: LGBTQIA+ rights in Greece

LGBTQIA+ rights in GR

Prevention and treatment for HIV and STD

Access to GR services

Step by step guide through a GBV incident



HIV/AIDS prevention

Are HIV & AIDS the same?

How is the virus transmitted?

sperm and blood ONLY

Protection measures

Before Sex

condom and PreP

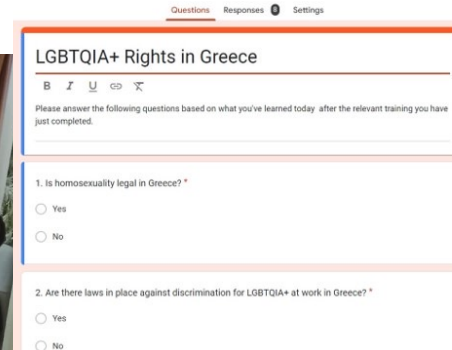
After Sex

In case of exposure to the virus we take immediate PEP

Support to LGBTQIA+ refugees & asylum seekers



REDMI NOTE 8 PRO AI QUAD CAMERA



4 steps to deal with (domestic) violence



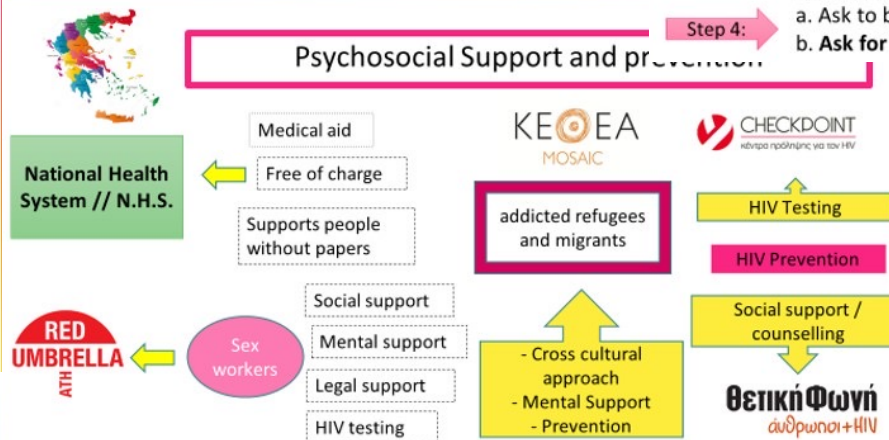
Step 1: Get away from the place where you are in danger

Step 2: File a complaint at the nearest police station. *Better go with a friend who speaks and understands Greek, even better with a lawyer.

Step 3: At the police station: a. Request a Forensic Examination b. Request a copy of the forensic examination c. In case the police delays to call a coroner, call a lawyer to put pressure.

Step 4: Go to the hospital or call 166. a. Ask to be recorded in the hospital's incident book as abuse. b. Ask for a copy of the medical report

Psychosocial Support and prevention



National Health System // N.H.S.

Medical aid
Free of charge
Supports people without papers

addicted refugees and migrants

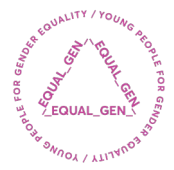
HIV Testing
HIV Prevention

RED UMBRELLA ATH

Sex workers
Social support
Mental support
Legal support
HIV testing

- Cross cultural approach
- Mental Support
- Prevention

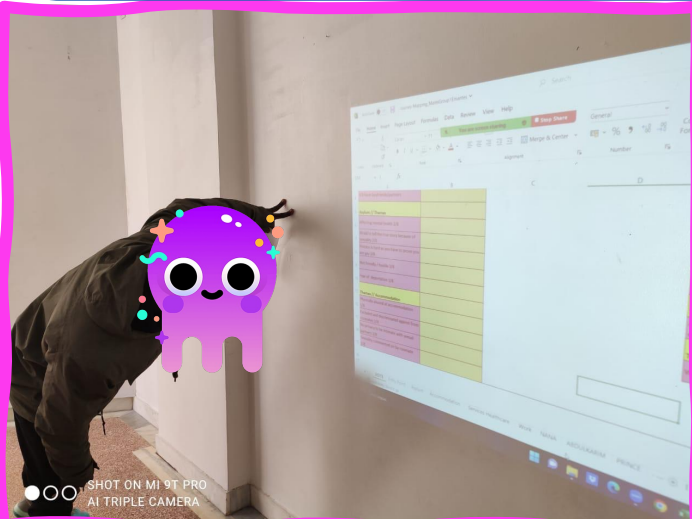
Social support / counselling
Θετική Φωνή
αυθάρτητα+HIV



3rd Workshop: World Café – Discussion over common themes of individual Journey Mapping

(Thematic Analysis and descriptive statistics)

- Prioritisation - through voting - of the emerged themes on equality through the individual journey mapping process that need advocacy -> Reflection on collective/shared experiences
- Discussion around the multiplicity of identities -> intersectional approach with case study examples (Albert)



ASYLUM PROCESS WAS HARD FOR Albert? Why he was ashamed?

No friends / family

Gay Male

ALBERTINA

50 years old from India

No English

Use of drugs or use of alcohol?

HIV positive??

Person of Colour

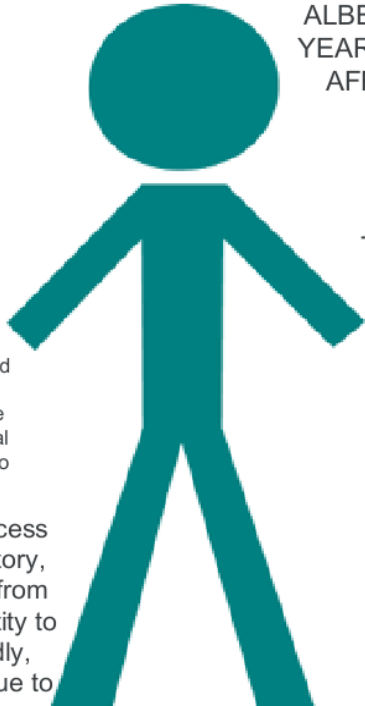
Trans Woman

ALBERT 28 YEARS OLD FROM SYRIA TRANS MAN

ALBERT 28 YEARS OLD AFRICA

Cannot read & write

Sex worker



Refugee in Greece from Nigeria. Best place to have a life. Left everything to save his life. Visa to Turkey, moving to street of Turkey, found friends in Turkey and followed them in a journey to Greece, Komotini and Thessaloniki. When he arrived he was in prison for some months without knowing why. He could not explain them due to language barrier. Feelings of stress. Discrimination. After he was released faced struggle, fear of deportation. Asylum process was hard for him. Ashamed to say in front of people he was gay in the asylum service. During the asylum interview he was ashamed to say it.

Albert is afraid to say that is gay because he doesn't have any identity to prove to the asylum. Secondly, Albert is afraid of deportation because of his sexuality. Albert is afraid because it is hard to prove because of the mentality of Africa is different between the European people. Albert is afraid because there is no friend and family to trust to discuss that he is gay. It is difficult due to mental problem to tell what happened to him in Africa

Albert, 28 years old from Africa. During the asylum process it is difficult to prove and also afraid to explain your history, because of the following reasons: Firstly, I am coming from Africa where being a gay is illegal, so you have no identity to prove you are a gay in front of the authorities. Secondly, afraid to have a negative decision during the process due to

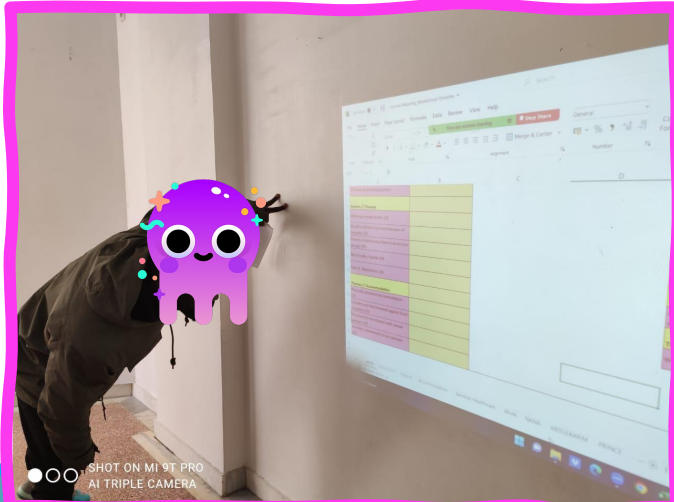
- They will face difficulty with the interpretation
- As a trans man they are going to be discriminated by the authorities (eg. clothes, boobs)
- The use of drugs makes: Albert a target and people make comments about their habit. This situation affects Albert's mental health makes it even worse.
- Albert is exposed and can be easily sexually exploited/survival sex. Because they don't have access to labor market. Not having proper protection can easily get infected with HIV.
- As a trans woman, 50 years old, she cannot find job easily.
- LAWS & SOCIETY.
- The laws may recognize rights/identities but societies do not accept them.
- You cannot prove your sexual orientation, there is no certificate for this. The interviewers cannot understand what it really means to be LGBTQ+ in Africa // Cultural differences



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LGBTQIA+ refugee experiences

Answer all below by choosing Agree or Disagree

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Not shared

* Indicates required question

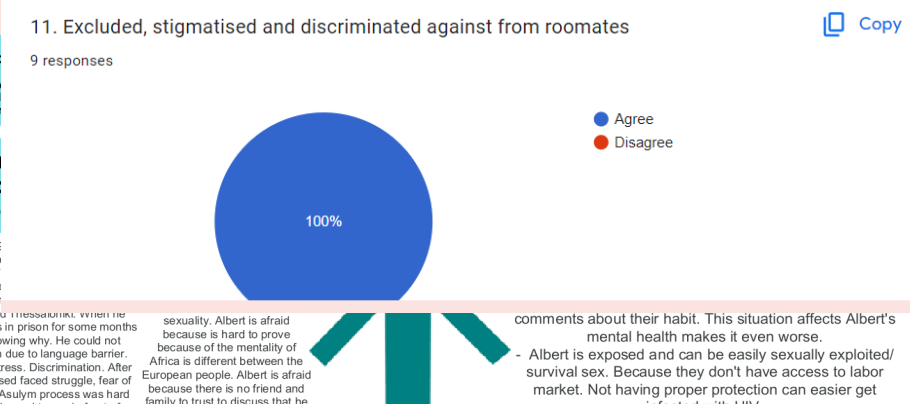
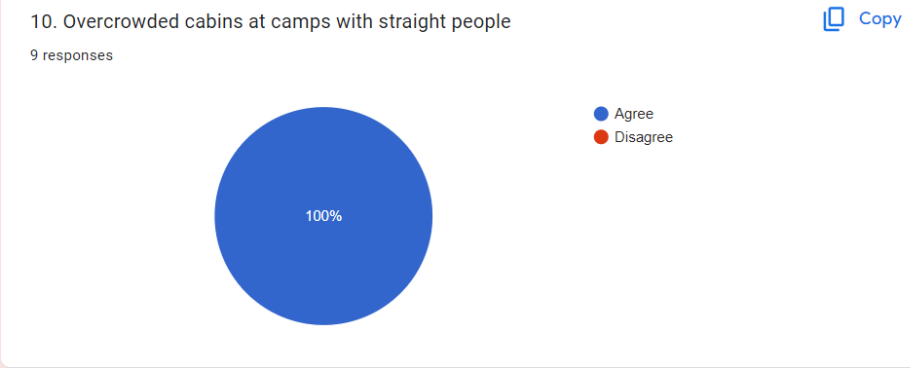
1. Asylum process affected my mental health *

- Agree
- Disagree

2. Not enough knowledge and understanding from Asylum Authorities about refugees who belong to the LGBTQIA+ community

- Agree
- Disagree

13. Afraid to express my self in a house/camp with straight people	20/21	30. Lan
14. Hard to find a house as a gay man	18/21	Them



WHY PRO... WAS FOR... Why asha...
Pe...
Co...

Refugee in C... place to hav... save his life... street of Turke... and followed th...
Komotini and... arrived he was in prison for some months without knowing why. He could not explain them due to language barrier. Feelings of stress. Discrimination. After he was released faced struggle, fear of deportation. Asylum process was hard for him. Ashamed to say in front of people he was gay in the asylum service. During the asylum interview he was ashamed to say it.

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LAWS & SOCIETY.
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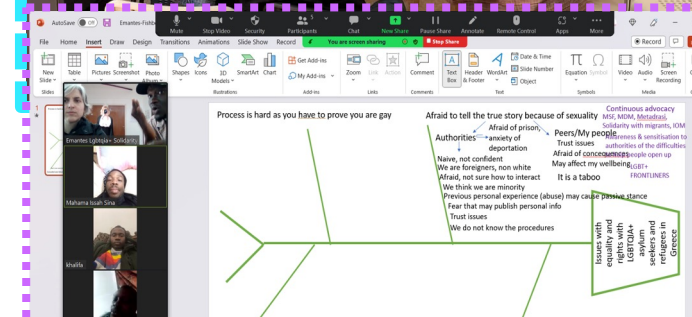
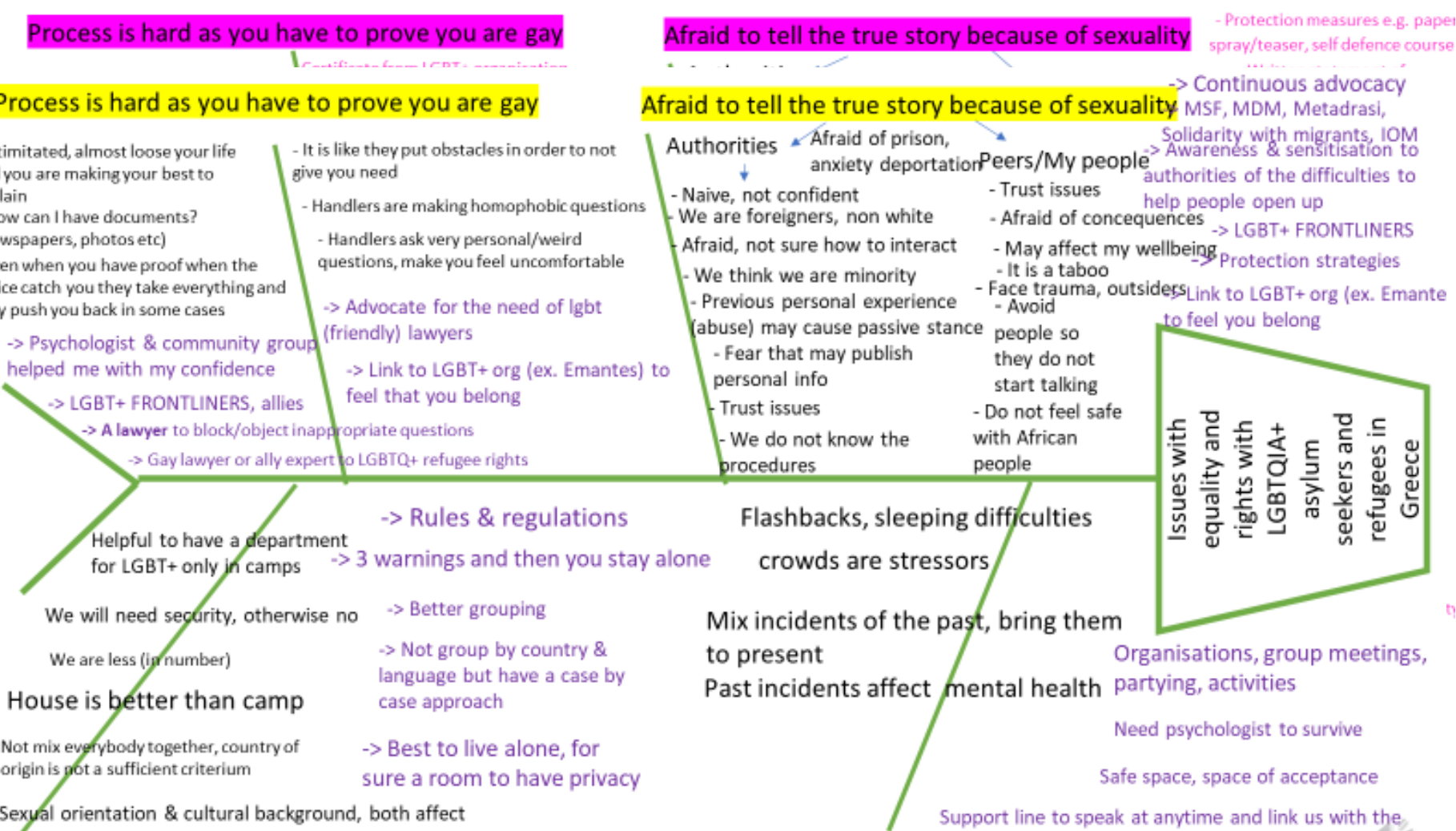




4th Workshop: FishBone Diagram – Fields for Advocacy and Awareness raising

(Thematic Analysis and descriptive statistics of World Café)

Further investigation of problems + Finding targeted solutions = Fields of advocacy/awareness raising



- Exploitation (work for little or no money)
- It does not feel there is any policy of no discrimination in hiring
- Transphobia, Racism, Stigma from employers and the society
- Language barrier
- Different name/gender on documents that these I use keep me from being
- They do not accept my documents
- Bad for mental health, I feel embarrassed

Work (transphobia, racism, impact on mental health)

What should be done?

- Recognize LGBT+ as vulnerable and protected by law
- Punishments → Fines for individuals and employers who discriminate against LGBT+
- LGBT+ aware and sensitised police enforcement
- Visibility → LGBT+ in workforce & police force
- LGBT+ awareness and education in public campaigns, industries, schools

Issues with equality and rights with LGBTQIA+ asylum seekers and refugees in Greece

- No work to pay rent
- No asylum status = no work can lead to no place to rent
- No work = In some cases being enforced to being trafficked in exchange of a place to live

Sex crimes and gender-

- Neighbourhood stigma for TGNC → aggressive
- Sex work + illegal work

Accommodation (no safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ refugees)

Social life (dangerous to socialize)

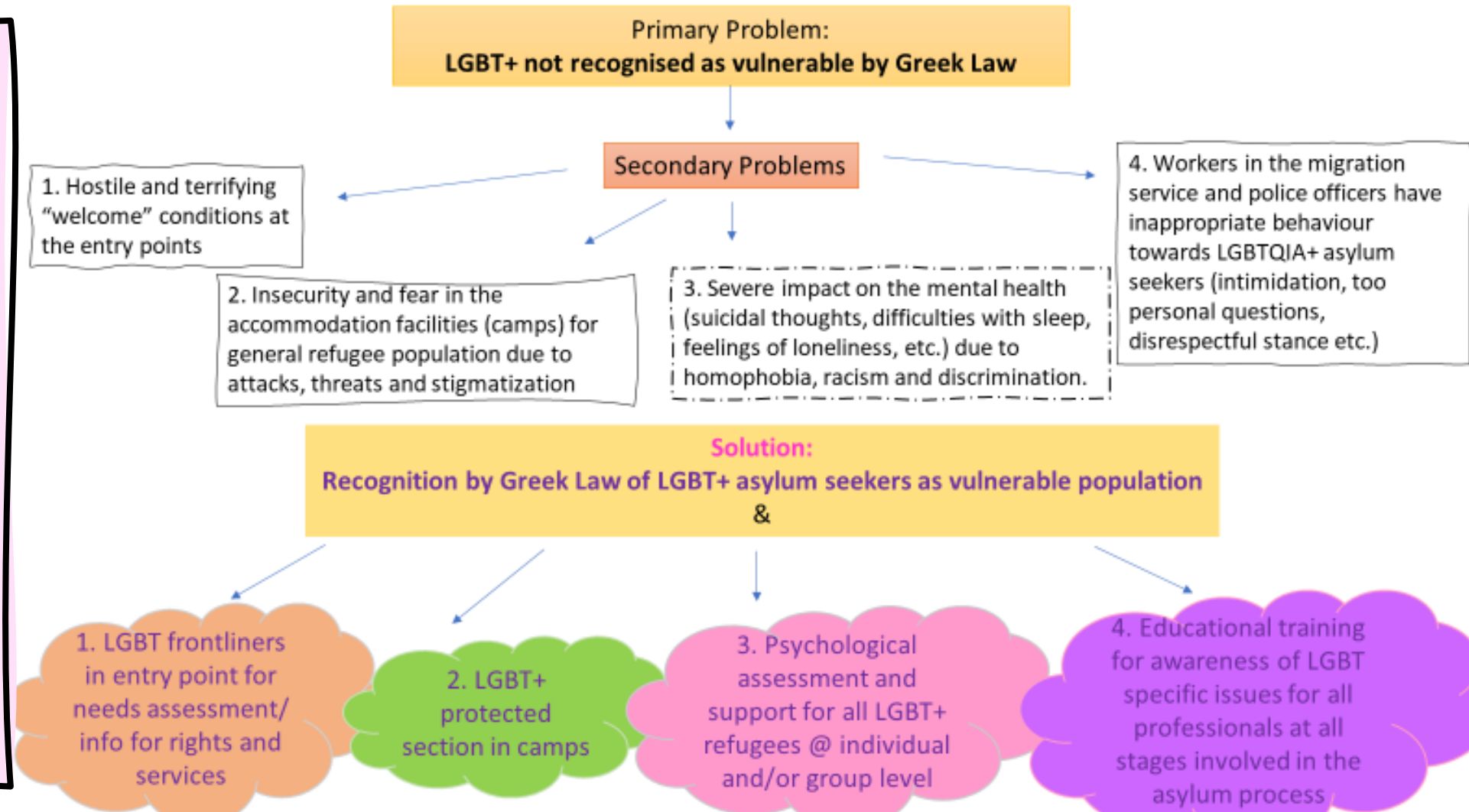




5th Workshop: Art....and awareness raising & Advocacy

=> Informing the “Equalgen” digital campaign

- Areas of awareness/advocacy from the FishBone diagram
- Presentation of ways of artistic expression through examples:
 - Podcast/radio show (interview, music show)
 - Creative writing/Poetry
 - Comics/zines
 - Video/photography
- The awareness/advocacy fields and artistic creations informed the Equalgen campaign.



Lessons Learned



Our participatory research is grounded in our inclusive culture



**Spyros Koulocheris
Lawyer**

Participatory action research allows us to actively listen to the community we try to serve. In a nice, polite, decent way preserve their dignity and at the same time encourage them to open up to us. This **helps us to give proper support** and **not allowing anyone take advantage of them and their needs.**

Why it is important to work in participatory research terms



**Community coordinator (2021-22)
Suma Abdelsamie**

- ❖ **The priority of research to be set by the community**
 - ❖ **The primary data controller to be Emantes**
(to protect personal & sensitive data where their collection is deemed necessary to deliver Emantes services)
- ❖ **Flexible design** – 1. Adapt methodology at any project point (e.g: distressed participants/de Jong scale)
2. Timeline-wise academic research has proven in the past extremely demanding and inconsiderate of our overstretched capacity
- ❖ **Trained practitioners in the field to carry out data collection & be heard in data analysis**
(e.g: researchers often impose western gender and sexuality identities to beneficiaries causing distress and confusion we are left to deal with & analysis is carried out in global north and west terms)
- ❖ **Opportunity for the work of organisations and practitioners in the field to be peer assessed and published.**

This way the voices of our community are directly contributing to the academic agenda. 25



Volunteers




THANK YOU



Considering supporting
LGBTQIA+ refugees and
asylum seekers in
Greece?

Please contact us! 



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