

INEQUALITIES IN GREECE

HIGH YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT, TAX
EVASION AND THE ONGOING IMPACTS OF
THE ECONOMIC CRISIS ON VULNERABLE
PEOPLE HOLD BACK GREECE'S PROGRESSIVE
LEGISLATION TO TACKLE INEQUALITIES

By Marianella Kloka, World without wars and violence











EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Income and employment

Greece is recovering from its deep recession,1 with rising employment and reforms which have returned national accounts to surplus. But this is progress from a very low base and all social indicators show that there is still a long way to go. In 2018 unemployment was 20.8% (down from 28% in 2013 - one of the fastest rates of unemployment reduction in the EU) but unemployment among young people, at 40%, remains distressingly high.² Wages are low: the rate of in-work poverty in Greece is 14.1%,3 the second highest in the European Union, and 34.8% of the population are at risk of poverty or social exclusion.⁴ Income inequality is fourth highest in the EU with the top 20% of earners receiving more than six times the bottom 20%.⁵ High rates of taxation and high levels of tax evasion create inequalities and are obstacles for growth. Labour market reforms have boosted employment, but at the expense of fair wages and productivity. Workers are trapped in low-skill and low-wage jobs which do not match their skills. Lack of opportunity drives young people to emigrate, accelerating the brain drain.⁶⁷

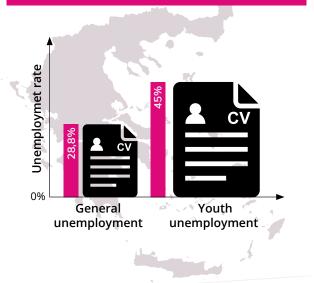
Gender

The employment rate of women is 49%, markedly below the EU average (67.4%), while that of men is 70.1%.8 One in four managers are women, the second lowest proportion in Europe (average - one in three). In all occupations women are paid less than men, but the gender pay gap is 12.5%, which is below the EU average (16%).9 On the other hand, Greece has the widest household and childcare gaps in the EU: 95% of women, compared with 53% of men, take care of their children on a daily basis and the gap is even larger for cooking and housework - 85% of women compared with 16% of men.10

Social protection

The economic crisis, together with an ineffective social protection system has driven up poverty levels, especially among families with children, the young and the unemployed. The high in-work poverty rate prompted the government to raise the minimum wage in early 2019 to €650 euros a month and to abolish the sub-minimum wage (a lower wage paid those under 25 years of age).¹¹ Two million households benefit from social security allowances and policies,¹² but there are gaps in coverage and delays caused by the complexities of the system. There is a simpler system for disability benefits which are provided at regular intervals and without delays.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN GREECE



Source: Taxheaven Newsroom https://www.taxheaven.gr/news/news/view/id/40162

Legislation

In the past four years the government has taken steps to reduce inequalities. It has passed legislation to support asylum seekers;¹³ to recognize the rights of LGBTQI+ persons with civil-partnerships¹⁴ and gender identity;¹⁵ to ratify the <u>Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence</u>;¹⁶ to provide health services to people excluded from the welfare system;¹⁷ to increase access to medicines;¹⁸ and to support people using psychoactive substances provided they are under supervision.¹⁹ Additionally, laws have been passed to set up and support cooperative enterprises assisting vulnerable people into employment.²⁰

Conclusions

Greater progress on SDG10, in particular, targets 10.1, 10.2, 10,3 and 10.4, is needed to tackle the causes of inequalities and to support populations affected by economic crisis, discrimination and inequalities. Civil society should monitor SDG10 implementation to see who is being left behind, and why. In July 2018, Greece published its Voluntary National Review on SDG progress,²¹ but a national Strategy and National Action Plan for the Agenda 2030 has yet to be agreed.

The Hellenic Network to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion²² and the Basic Income Initiative²³ are assessing inequalities, good practices and proposals for better implementation of SDG 10 in Greece. We are looking at the impact on vulnerable groups of the various legislative initiatives described, always with a gender lens, and considering what still needs to be done to make a difference. We are looking in particular at asylum seekers, LGBTI people and people who use psychoactive substances.

Recommendations

- Formulate a legal definition of, and establish the right to, an 'adequate standard of living', taking into account the work being done within the European campaign to establish a minimum guaranteed income.
- Ensure the right to temporary or permanent accommodation for the homeless.
- Restructure the taxation system so that it is redistributive.
- Launch pilot projects of Universal Basic Income across Greece, governed by principles of universality, unconditionality and adequacy. It will be important to use the pilots to assess the impact of Basic Income on both recipients and on the community in which they live.
- Continue to support vulnerable populations with monthly benefits until there is national coverage of the Basic Income Grant.

The Greek Government

Concerning the Greek Government, last year, in July 2018, Greece published a voluntary National Review on the on the implementation of the 2030 agenda on World Sustainable Goals. This was presented in the UN High Level political forum for Sustainable Development, in same July in New York. Since then, the inter-ministerial committee, that includes about 50 members of the Greek state, has only met once and without presenting a draft national strategy on the SDGs. Extracts from the National Review, concerning

SDG 10, will be included in the following pages. The inter-ministerial committee is accompanied by another body, the Economic and Social Committee of Greece. It is important to mention that civil society sector, although it is foreseen as a participatory actor, it is not represented in the committee by the Hellenic Platform of Development (HPD). The HPD has not established yet a permanent communication with other bodies that promote activities on the SDGs as a whole or especially with promoted goal of the year (#10), like Universities, Regions, Chambers, CSR, etc.

Economic and Social Committee of Greece (ESC)		
Group A (Employers)	Group B (Employees)	Group C (Other Categories)
Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV) Hellenic Confederation of Professionals Craftsmen and Merchants (GSEVEE) Hellenic Confederation of Commerce and Entrepreneurship (ESEE) Association of Greek Tourism Enterprises (SETE) Hellenic Bank Association (EET) Union of the Greek Shipowners (EEE) Association of Greek Contracting Companies (SATE) Hellenic Federation of Real Estate Developers (OMKOEE)	 Greek General Confederation of Labour (GSEE) Supreme Administration of Greek Civil Servants' Trade Unions (ADEDY) 	 Panhellenic Confederation of Unions of Agricultural Cooperatives (PASEGES) General Confederation of Greek Agrarian Associations (GESASE) Lawyers Steering Committee Panhellenic Greek Medical Association Union of Hellenic Chambers of Commerce Technical Chamber of Greece (TEE) Economic Chamber of Greece (OEE) Geotechnical Chamber of Greece (GEOTEE) Consumers Environmental protection organisations National Confederation of Disabled People (ESAEA) Organisations for gender equality issues Central Union of Municipalities of Greece (KEDE) Union of Greek Regions (ENPE) Supreme Confederation of Multi-Child Parents of Greece (ASPE)

Legislative progress on inequalities

Reading the national evaluation report of the Greek state it is clear the way that SDG 10 is perceived. "A declared cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda is to end poverty and hunger everywhere, to combat inequalities within and among countries, to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies, to protect human rights and to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. In this respect, universal access to health care, education and social protection, is a prime objective for Greece. This national priority relates to SDGs 10 and 5 for the implementation of which concrete policies and measures and important legislation that secure access of the most vulnerable social groups to public services and goods have been established. At the same time special attention is given to the elimination of gender inequalities, the smooth integration of immigrants and other population groups into Greek society and the reduction of regional disparities."

Significant legislative initiatives have been taken to remove inequalities in asylum seekers in our country²⁴, to recognize the rights of the LGBTQI+ population (Civil-partnership²⁵ - Gender identity²⁶), ratification of the Istanbul Convention for the Protection of Women and the Treatment of Women gender violence²⁷, the provision of health services to people left out of the welfare system²⁸, a set of issues concerning access to medicines and innovative treatments²⁹ and the rights of people using psychoactive substances under supervision³⁰. At the same time, the framework for the operation of socially beneficial enterprises (KOINSEP), which aim at assisting vulnerable populations to integrate in the labor market, was regulated. All these regulations and laws were made within four years (late 2015 to early 2019). In order to capture the impact of the above mentioned legal initiatives on the vulnerable groups and the steps that still need to be taken, we are studying in this petition in particular asylum seekers, LGBTI people and people who use psychoactive substances. In all three of these

categories we also focus on the female population to record the process of inequalities, good practices and proposals for better implementation concerning the SDG 10.

Another aspect of combating inequalities for the Greek Government consists of implementing policies that address the issues of geographical dispersion and segregation, coupled with the lack of resources and infrastructure, especially of very small islands. In this context the General Secretariat of the Aegean and Insular Policy (GSAIP), of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Insular policy (MMAIP), have been developing an integrated insular strategy having three objectives: (i) to introduce institutional instruments and measures, such as the Council of Insular Policy, the insular observatory, and "insular clause", according to which all legislative provisions should make special reference to insularity measures; (ii) to promote standard responsibilities and measures in the vital sectors of infrastructures, water sufficiency, energy and protection of the natural and built environment of all the islands; and (iii) to put forward ad hoc actions which support financially or technically small-island communities, (e.g. donations of medical equipment, fire-brigades, books for school libraries, awards and scholarships to pupils), with a view to introducing an integrated development plan for very small islands.

The establishment of the Special Secretariat for the Social Inclusion of the Roma (law 4430/2016) in the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity and the development of a national strategy for the social inclusion of this population group, which includes interventions in the areas of housing, education, health and employment, illustrates a central concern for this social issue. Important tools for the achievement of addressing inequalities within this population, are the online geographic and population database, in order to update the mapping of all ROMA settlements in the country, and the operation of an online consultation platform, which – though - it is not yet completed.

Social solidarity allowances

The organization for welfare allowances and social solidarity (OPEKA) is a state body established in 2018. The main focus of OPEKA³¹ is to provide a list of evaluation of the process of certain groups left behind and to combat them under the policy of allowances and provisions. The most vulnerable cases that are in the core of OPEKA's policy are: families (children), people with disabilities, elders left out of the social welfare system and people working in agriculture (as this organization was initially the main welfare system for them - OGA). The official report that was published by the Greek Government under the occasion of one year of OPEKA talks about triplicating the budget for welfare policies (3,2 billion euros for 2019 concerning 1 billion for 2018), reaching out 2 million families. The projection for 2019 includes the program for financing rents for 260.000 families, the program for financing children, the regulation of the allowances due to disabilities and the establishment of the new platform for the elder people while the meals for children at school are about to expand also to second chance schools or evening schools. As this is a very new policy, needs time to test the effects that will have in daily life of the people.

Asylum applications by state of procedure - number per million inhabitants

Greek government understands as part of the international cooperation the number of asylum applications accepted in the Greek territory. In the National Evaluation Report, the indicator shows the number of first-time asylum applicants per million inhabitants and the number of positive first instance decisions per million inhabitants. Source data are supplied to Eurostat³² by the national Ministries of Interior and related official agencies. A first-time applicant for international protection is a person who lodged an application for asylum for the first time in a given Member State. First instance decisions are decisions granted by the respective authority acting as a first instance of the administrative/judicial asylum procedure in the receiving country.

Although the new law (2016) gives asylum seekers the possibility to work in Greece, there are some barriers that can not be easily overcome. Ex the issue that banks deny to open accounts to asylum seekers or social services that refuse to issue them Welfare register number (AMKA) or tax number (AFM) due to bureaucratic obstacles. Different programs like HELIOS – ESTIA are designed to help refugees to have a house, to learn greek, to obtain skills and to work and live independently within the Greek territory.

Other members of the dialogue

At the same time the national dialogue on the SDGs is not fully opened among the Government, the private sector and the civil society. More it seems that each sector works on its own trying to understand and project some changes but without having or agreeing on a common approached national strategy.

Concerning private sector, we had the opportunity to discuss with CSR Hellas, about the way that private companies think or/and work on the SDGs, asking particularly for their work on the Goal #10. It seems that there is no big progress so far on the work with the SDGs and the needed adoption of the companies' policies to them. Particularly it seems that Goal #10 is not a priority, at least this is showed by the final results of their most recent event, in which more than 100 companies participated. This event took place in 2017. In a less recent survey that was unofficially contacted among a not very representative sample, inequalities don't seem to be one of the important goals for the private sector.

In some recent articles in the national press, several examples of companies are stated that work on the goals. Nevertheless it is more than obvious that there is no central strategy and that each company tries to adjust in the best case, parts of her work with some of the SDGs³³. Concerning SDG10, there is no explicit adjustment reported by the CSR that were interviewed.

Good practices by the Academia

Athens Universities of Economics and Business³⁴ has created a website in order to introduce the SDGs and particularly for each one to promote initiatives organized in collaboration with the private sector.

Concerning Goal #10 there are stated 4 initiatives targeting: teaching computer programming to vulnerable groups, organizing a race with participants people with disabilities, teaching daily use of computers to women ex-prisoners, tailor made programs on employment for refugees.

University of Crete (Economy sector) In June 2018 there was also another important synergy that took place in Crete, between the Region of Crete, the Association of the Greek Industry (SEV) and the Academia. We have established contact with the University asking for any kind of data or conclusions they have as an outcome of the meeting, particularly on the SDG10. SEV seems to be very active³⁵ providing with proposals the Economic and Social Committee of Greece organized 3 workshops on the SDGs between the period of 2018-2019 calling stakeholders of the region to participate. The meetings were not recorded, though, and there are not final conclusions.

NGOs

Several civil society organizations³⁶ have incorporated a page in greek explaining the SDGs, including the sub-targets. Apart from the Hellenic Platform of Development that carried out activities based on the Goal #10 trying to include other civil society organizations, there was not much work in depth of other NGOs, nor a monitor on what Greece is doing to achieve them, but rather a communication initiative on the goals and a first attempt to connect the work they do with some of the SDGs. One of the most interesting examples of designing an initiative especially to promote the connection between goal #10 and the organization, comes from the world of people with disabilities³⁷.

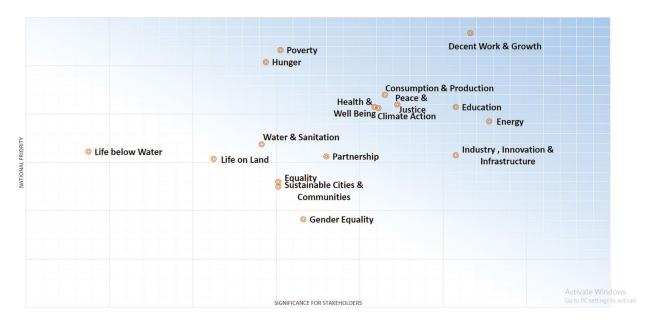
Initiative for the basic income

The Hellenic department of the international initiative for the basic income is active in Greece since 2013, organizing different kind of events in order to raise awareness on what is the Basic Income and to call for pilot implementations in different regions across the



Results of the survey on SDGs





country. It promotes Basic Income as a human right that can be given to all people, just because they are born (even to children). The members of the initiative explain in their website³⁸ extensively why the societies across the globe need to have access to a basic income but they don't associate it with the SDGs or Goal #10 and they don't adapt their demands with the Greek reality.

The Hellenic Network to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion

It is a network of some important greek organizations working on the field of poverty. The Network called to a press conference last month underlying some of the most recent data of the ELSTAT and highlighting that 1 to 3 Greeks live under the poverty line. Being a member of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) the Network collaborates with the European campaign NO MORE POOR³⁹. The press conference was held in order to call the Greek candidates for the European elections to stand for issues of poverty. Through the European campaign they target in 4 issues yet not adaptive in the greek context: Macroeconomic policies which promote human rights, tackle poverty and inequality and guarantee wellbeing, a Europe that protects, actions with impact instead of only commitments, better implemented Democracy. They called for a guaranteed minimum income for all Greeks.

Conclusions

Greater progress on Goal #10 of the SDGs and in particular its targets 10.1, 10.2, 10.3, 10.4 is needed to tackle the causes of inequalities and to support populations already hit by the economic crisis, discrimination and inequalities. Civil society will need to be vigilant in monitoring which people are left behind. Even though Greece published its SDGs target report with its Voluntary National Review (VNR) in July 2018, a national Strategy and National Action Plan for the Agenda 2030 has yet to be agreed. Initiatives such as the welfare allowances of OPEKA may help the under protection categories but they need time to show their effects and they are not designed under the Agenda 2030 but they can perceived as an immediate pact of measures to relief the most affected by the crisis. We are looking at the impact on vulnerable groups of the various legislative initiatives described, always with a gender lens and considering what still needs to be done to make a difference. We have described some interesting examples of CSR, Academia and Civil society. But they must approach the SDGs and particularly Goal #10 in a more in-depth way, raising collaboration among themselves and with the Greek Government towards the formation, implementation and monitoring of an action plan. Some interesting initiatives like the Basic Income and the Hellenic EAPN have some interesting proposals but they also need to adapt them more to the Greek context.

General Recommendations

- Monitor the process of the Government to elaborate a national strategy on SDGs with particular actions for each goal. Make sure that civil society with enough representation will take place in the discussions. Urge that Universities and private sector will also be in the discussions.
- Ensure the right to adequate standard of living by introducing legally defined definitions and thresholds, taking into account the work being done within the European campaign to establish a minimum guaranteed income.
- Ensure the right to temporary or permanent accommodation for homeless.
- Restructure the taxation system in a way that can be re-distributive.
- Launch pilot implementations of Universal Basic Income across Europe, governed by principles of universality, unconditionality and efficacy. Assess at the same time the impact of Basic Income on both recipients and on the community in which they live.
- Continue to implement policies described in OPEKA in order to be able to monitor their effectiveness to women, families and people with disabilities.
- Overcome bureaucratic obstacles that don't provide the opportunity to the asylum seekers or even refugees
 to be able to work. Proceed smoothly with the implementation of the programs designed to relief and provide
 with skills this population in order to start a new life in Greece.
- Increase representation of women and other vulnerable groups in politics and higher positions among the labor pyramid of the public and the private sector.

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- ¹ https://www.oecd.org/eco/surveys/Greece-2018-OECD-economic-survey-overview.pdf
- ² 2018 figures. OECD. Youth unemployment rate. https://data.oecd.org/unemp/youth-unemployment-rate.htm#indicator-chart The youth unemployment rate is the number of unemployed 15-24 year-olds expressed as a percentage of the youth labour force. Unemployed people are those who report that they are without work, that they are available for work and that they have taken active steps to find work in the last four weeks.
- ³ 2017 figures. Eurostat. In-work poverty in the EU. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20180316-1
- ⁴ 2017 figurs. Eurostat. People at risk of poverty or social exclusion (people with an income below 60% of the national median income). https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/People_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion
- ⁵ 2016 figures. Eurostat. Income inequality in the EU. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/EDN-20180426-1
- ⁶ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272095361 The Brain Drain Phenomenon in Greece Young Greek scientists on their Way to Immigration in an era of crisis Attitudes Opinions and Beliefs towards the Prospect of Migration
- ⁷ The average unemployment rate in the euro area is 8.5%, while in the EU28 it is 7.1%.
- ⁸ 2018 figures, Eurostat. Employment rate by sex.
- https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=tesem010&language=enderset.etm. TableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=tesem010&language=enderset.etm. TableAction.do.table&plugin=1&pcode=tesem010&language=enderset.etm. TableAction.do.table&plugin=1&pcode=tesem010&language=enderset.etm. TableAction.do.table&plugin=1&pcode=tesem010&language=enderset.etm. TableAction.do.table&plugin=1&pcode=tesem010&language=enderset.etm. TableAction.do.table&plugin=1&pcode=tesem010&language=enderset.etm. TableAction.do.table&plugin=1&pcode=tesem010&language=enderset.etm. TableAction.do.table&plugin=1&pcode=tesem010&language=enderset.etm. TableAction.do.table&plugin=1&pcode=tesem010&language=enderset.etm. TableAction.do.table&plugin=1&pcode=tesem010&language=enderset.etm. TableAction.do.table&pcode=tesem010&language=enderset.etm. TableActi
- ⁹ 2017 figures. Eurostat. Gender pay gap statistics.
- https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender_pay_gap_statistics
- $^{\rm 10}$ 2016 figures. Eurostat. Childcare and housework.
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- ¹¹ This decision came into effect on 1st February 2019. https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/kat-ergasia-koinonike-asphalise/upourgike-apophase-oik-4241-127-2019.html
- 12 https://opeka.gr/
- ¹³ https://www.lawspot.gr/nomikes-plirofories/nomothesia/n-4375-2016/arthro-71-nomos-4375-2016-ergasia-kai-apasholisi
- ¹⁴ http://www.ministryofjustice.gr/site/Portals/0/4356-2015.pdf
- ¹⁵ https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/kat-nomothesia-genikou-endiapherontos/nomos-4491-2017-fek-152a-13-10-2017.html
- ¹⁶ https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/law-news/demosieutheke-phek-nomos-4531-2018.html
- 17 http://www.moh.gov.gr/articles/health/anaptyksh-monadwn-ygeias/3999-prosbash-twn-anasfalistwn-sto-dhmosio-systh-ma-ygeias
- ¹⁸ https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/kat-ygeia/farmakeia/upourgike-apophase-d3a-46628-2018.html
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- ²⁰ Panhellenic Official Center for the Support of Social and Solidarity Economy
- ²¹ http://www.ggk.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/VNR-Greece-2018.pdf
- ²² http://socialpolicy.gr/2012/03/%cf%80%cf%81%ce%bf%cf%84%ce%ac%cf%83%ce%b5%ce%b9%cf%82-%cf%84%ce%bf%cf%85-%ce%bb%ce%bb%ce%b7%ce%bd%ce%b9%ce%ba%ce%bf%cf%8d-%ce%b4%ce%b9%ce%ba%cf%84%cf%8d%ce%bf%cf%85-%ce%ba%ce%b1%cf%84%ce%b1.html
- ²³ https://www.basicincome.gr/portal/question/%cf%80%cf%89%cf%82-%ce%bf%cf%81%ce%af%ce%b6%ce%b5%c f%84%ce%b1%ce%b9-%cf%84%ce%bf-%ce%b2%ce%b1%cf%83%ce%b9%ce%ba%cf%8c-%ce%b5%ce%b9%cf%83-%cf%8c%ce%b4%ce%b7%ce%bc%ce%b1/
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- ²⁸ http://www.moh.gov.gr/articles/health/anaptyksh-monadwn-ygeias/3999-prosbash-twn-anasfalistwn-sto-dhmosio- systhma-ygeias
- ²⁹ https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/kat-ygeia/farmakeia/upourgike-apophase-d3a-46628-2018.html
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- ³³ https://www.naftemporiki.gr/afieromata/story/1430367/stin-proti-grammi-gia-tis-stratigikes-biosimis-anaptuksis-ton-epix-eiriseon
- ³⁴ https://auebvolunteers.gr/sdgs/stoxos-10/
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- ³⁷ https://faretra.info/2018/10/02/stochos-paidion-anoixis-koinonikes-anisotites/
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The European-wide project **Make Europe Sustainable for All (MESA)** is coordinated by the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) and implemented in 15 European countries by 25 partners. It aims to raise citizens', CSOs', and policy-makers' awareness on the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the 193 Member states of the United Nations in 2015. At the core of the project are campaigns and advocacy on inequalities, sustainable agriculture, gender equality, climate change, migration and sustainable consumption and production. This report was produced as part of the **Fighting Inequalities** in Europe campaign of the project, and contributes as well as the global **Faces of Inequality** campaign, which gives social exclusion, poverty and discrimination a face.

#SDGS4All https://makeeuropesustainableforall.org https://makeeuropesustainableforall.org/fight-inequalitieshttps://gcap.global/faces-of-inequality

The Hellenic Platform for Development, an umbrella-organization that operates as a "national platform", leads a network of Greek Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) active in the fields of sustainable development education, humanitarian aid, global citizenship action and developmental social support. Its current members are supported by a large segment of Greek society and offer their programs nationwide as well as in many developing countries.

Find out more: http://hellenicplatform.org

World without wars and violence is an international organization promoting the ends of wars, violence and discrimination around the globe. Behind the aims of our actions stands the golden principle of «treating others as we like to be treated» and in order to achieve our aims we use the methodology of active nonviolence. World without wars and violence was founded in 1995 by members of the Humanist Movement. In 2012 received the status of advisory body at the ECOSOC of the UN. Apart from numerous activities in all continents, World without wars and violence has organizes the 1st World March for Peace and NonViolence in 2010 and is about to relaunch the 2nd World March in October 2019.

Marianella Kloka is a member of the greet promoting team of World without wars and violence. She currently works as advocacy officer in PRAKSIS (greek ngo) and she is an editor of the greek office of the international press agency for peace, nonviolence, human rights and spirituality, PRESSENZA.