



March 2020

NAOMI faces new challenges of solidarity

Dear friends,

We hope and wish you are all well. In this situation, which is under development and full of challenges, the question of the Corona 19 virus dominates almost in everything. Much has changed in Greece, including our work at NAOMI. We have to respond to challenges that we weren't prepared for. With this newsletter we would like to take you into our everyday life and tell you which decisions we have made and where our focus and operations and our visions are now.

we need each other 



“**We need each other**”, this conjures the motto written on one of our white organic t-shirts, that our friend Silvester produced with the team of NAOMI. Today we particularly notice how important this exclamation should become. Washing our hands is not enough! How can we be there for each other and especially for our people, in spatial distance, but also not separate from each other? We are happy to speak also to you by phone or via Skype, to answer questions or respond to offers of support. And we still need you so that the refugees in Greece won't be completely forgotten.

What has happened at NAOMI in the past few weeks?

Shortly before the major difficulties created by the Corona Virus spread, the Executive Board of NAOMI managed to fill in 2 vacancies that became free after psychologist Konstantina Chatzoudi and the manager Manolis Dabarakis had left. Angeliki Gabriella Sampsonidou, sociologist specialized on vulnerable social groups, was won over to coordinate the Social Department with the Academy. She is also responsible for communication between Social Department and Textile Production. Zoi Keskinidou took over the management of the textile production. At her side is Marina Chatzikyriakou, an assistant and administrative expert. Elke Wollschläger continues to lead the textile training and Eva-Maria Kiorpelidou is responsible for finances. So we were very lucky to be well staffed in this difficult situation.

On Wednesday, March 12th, the Board decided together with the employees to close NAOMI venues to the public following the directives of the Ministries of Health and Education. This means that the classes of the Textil-Akademie led by ElkeWollschläger, the Greek lessons and the office hours were also closed. The employees worked behind closed doors. The 2 interns of the University of Thessaloniki and our volunteer Georgios had to end their service at NAOMI on Thursday, March 19th. Now from Monday 25th all employees are now working in their home office. Our tailor Taoufik has to stay at home also.

What should everyone abroad know about the Greek situation?

- According to UNHCR statistics, there are currently more than 115.000 refugees in Greece. More than 40.000 are in deadly situation on the islands.
- In the area of Thessaloniki, more than 2000 people live on the streets or in ruins.
- All organizations providing food were closed; most organizations only work via telephone.
- Organizations no longer have access to the reception camps, so to Diavata Camp.
- The asylum offices are closed for at least one month, which means that all undocumented people cannot register for the ESTIA program and the money cards and thus remain homeless and without funds.
- All those of our clients who could previously maintain themselves through undeclared work or daily wages are now without any income after the closure of almost all small businesses and without street sales. Regulations of financial aid for small businesses and unemployed are not in sight in Greece.
- Even in this exceptional situation, some recognized refugees from the ESTIA Residential program were released into homelessness without being able to be included in the ILIOS follow-up program because the tax office is currently not issuing the necessary tax number.

We agree with Pro Asyl's and many others` call:

“Take them out of Hell!”

Solutions for protection and relocation of refugees to European Union - firstly Germany- must be found urgently!

The NAOMI strategy in these times:

The NAOMI employees are busy working on a new administration and a development plan for the two departments. Unfortunately, the strategy workshop with our consultant Ulrich Gensch from GESA in Wuppertal had to be canceled at the end of March. But everyone is committed to evaluating the work done so far and making new plans. We look forward to the time when we will be able to bring new life and spirit into NAOMI with all our strength and vision and together with our students, volunteers, friends and customers. We will soon report on our plans in a new newsletter.

Emergency aid first. With the private donations, we have the freedom to turn hardship quickly and without red tape. We only can do this in cooperation with our Greek networks. In this situation, networking of partners is the best and only way to achieve our goals. Solidarity beyond borders is a future model. Some examples:

- The homeless Omar had been accommodated in a hotel for 4 weeks after a very serious surgery. He received psychological help and was fed in a social cooperative. The good cooperation with the Doctors of the World and the organizations Oikopolis and Alkyoni enabled a good care until he finally was registered and taken over by a housing program.
- An Afghan family with 3 small children was taken off the street and had been housed and cared in a hotel until a private citizens' initiative took them up. They had been released from the ESTIA program after refugee status had been recognized but without being informed and accompanied in the integration into the subsequent ILIOS program. Now they are waiting for the tax office to open and issue them the necessary papers.
- A homeless African women who volunteered for many months in a partner organization can now live safe in a house at NAOMI's expense. The friendly owner has been looking after NAOMI clients for months.
- A young man from Irak who has found a job after being recognized but suffers from PTSD and receives mother tongue therapy.
- Naomi maintains contacts with the other organizations like "Quick Response Team", who are still doing a very supportive and valuable service for the 2000 people at Camp Diavata. NAOMI tries to provide them with medication and medical aid for the refugees.
- 400 blankets sent to the InterEuropean Human Aid Association for homeless people.

We are in contact with most of our long-term clients. And support those who depend on support after loss of earnings and income. We have set up a hotline via FB messenger, through which NAOMI can be reached. We try to find ways of communication by internet.



foto: www.quickresponseteam.gr

It is touching that there are friends who do not give up and continue to work for the well-being of people on the street and in need. I am sending you the encouraging words from our Italian friend Maurizio, who is there for the people in the camp Diavata and also sent us the above photo with the heart designed by children:

"I am here, surrounded by people who have escaped from wars, devastation, persecution, which lasted for years, not weeks, not months. I am surrounded by people who have lost everything, friends, relatives, home, work and money, but not dignity, ever. And from here I send you a big hug and all the positive energy of this heart designed by children's hands. Children who have not been broken by wars and terror, because they will make it, we will make it, and this too will become history. The story of those who don't break down, don't get depressed, don't panic. The story of those who find the strength for big gestures, to continue, to insist.

Warm greetings from Thessaloniki

Stay safe, stay at home and in solidarity. Waiting for your response

Dorothee Vakalis and the NAOMI staff

All donations will go directly to refugees and migrants in need:

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