

VOICE OF THE VOICELESS

ANNUAL REPORT 2016



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear friends,

In 2016, after several discrepancies between national decisions for restriction of movement alongside the Balkan Route, legal measurements were taken in order to restrict the flow of refugees. As of November 2015 restrictive admission policies started to be implemented by the countries of the Balkan Route, including Macedonia.

The continuing of subsequent measures to securitize the borders and limit the flow of refugees led to numerous decisions further contributing to the final closure of the borders of all the countries alongside the Balkan Route. That has created stranded refugees to whom all the following laws on both national and international level were applied retroactively, depriving them of legal status and marking them as irregular. Our team was significantly devoted to lobbying with the government mainly through cooperation with the public prosecutor's office to address this issue. However, the Authorities have shown no political will whatsoever to solve it.

Bearing in mind the shift in the events, Legis had to adjust its activities to the present situation. Besides providing humanitarian help, we engaged in psychosocial support by organizing numerous activities for social inclusion including activities for women empowerment and health protection.

Apart from our commitment in Macedonia, we mobilized our team to provide humanitarian help to Eidomeni as well, by organizing transport of clothes on a daily basis. We also mobilized our teams and resources in response to the floods in Skopje in August.

The issue of closing the borders has contributed significantly to flourishing of the smugglers' business. For that purpose, in order to provide protection for refugees using irregular migration channels, we established a branch office with a team in Lojane, a village on the northern border with Serbia, where refugees cross the border predominantly with smugglers. Our team is actively engaged in not only providing humanitarian aid, but also referrals and tracking abuses and violations by state and non-state actors.

All the previously mentioned activities resulted in decreasing refugees' motivations to participate in activities organized in the camp. The inability for freedom of movement and access to basic human rights has significantly decreased their willingness. Thus they are more prone to depression, health issues and loss of self-esteem. Even though working with them is exceptionally challenging, our team is always devoted to addressing issues concerning the well-being of refugees and fight for their rights.

Throughout 2016, your support was crucial for our positive performance.

Beside all the setbacks in humanity, we keep going forward towards creating a better world.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,
Jasmin Redjepi



**WELCOME TO
OUR 2016 ANNUAL
REPORT**

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1. VISION, MISSION, VALUES



Our profound aim is providing all people in need with life with dignity and security, regardless of their race, gender, nationality, religion, political and sexual orientation.

We seek a world of tolerance, social justice and endless humanity, where wars, poverty and suffering have been overcome and all people live with dignity and security.

Our mission is to protect life, alleviate suffering and oppression and ensure dignity, respect for human rights and social justice.

Our **Values** are our guiding principles that set the foundation of our work.

- We are driven by **Humanity**, we address human suffering wherever it is found, protect life and ensure respect for human beings with **Impartiality**, making no distinctions on basis of nationality, race, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, class or political opinions. Our actions are carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to those in most serious and immediate danger.
- Our actions are autonomous and with disregard of any political, economic, military or other objectives and agendas. We adhere to the principles of **Independence** and **Neutrality**, we don't take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of political, racial, religious or ideological nature.
- We serve as **Voice to the Voiceless**, to bring to attention abuse of human rights, extreme need and unacceptable suffering, when access to lifesaving aid is obstruct, when crises are neglected and provision of aid is inadequate or abused.
- We believe that **Diversity** and **Participation** within and of the people we serve is pushing us to the highest levels of learning and performance, channeling the best of human spirit to create impact.
- We adhere to **Transparency** and **Accountability** to the people and partners we humbly serve, sharing our results, stories and lessons learnt.

2. MAINSTREAMING PROTECTION

Ensuring protection of populations is a core objective of our humanitarian action. In humanitarian crises, people need material assistance, such as food, water, shelter and medical assistance, as well as physical integrity, psychological wellbeing and dignity.

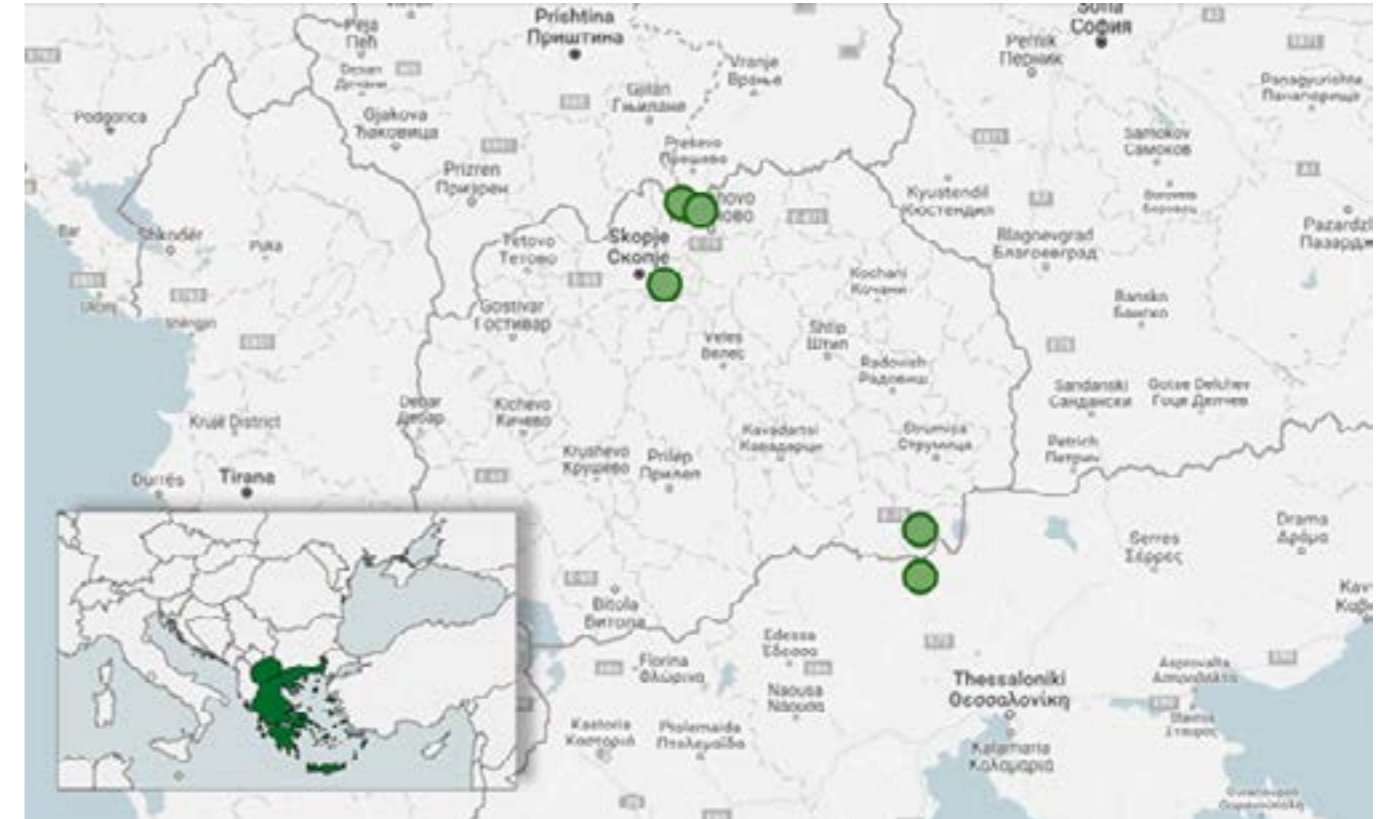
LEGIS tends to look beyond the mere material needs of our target population to the broader issues of personal safety and dignity, mainstreaming protection through our programs and projects. We adhere to the principles of “good programming” and promote meaningful access, safety and dignity in humanitarian aid.

In our programs, we take steps to avoid or minimize any adverse effects of our intervention and reduce risks, in particular the risk of exposing people to increased danger or abuse of their rights. We ensure that people in need can access our services and humanitarian assistance according to the need only and without adverse discrimination, with attention to their vulnerabilities and respect for their rights.

The fundamental purpose of our programs and activities is to enhance the physical and psychological security, or at least reduce insecurity of target population, to reduce the risk and extent of harm by minimizing threats of violence, coercion or deliberate deprivation and reduce vulnerability to such threats, strengthen the self-protection capacities and enhance the opportunities to ensure safety and dignity.



3. WHERE WE WORK



4. CONTEXT IN 2016

2016 was a year of human rights and refugee rights violations.

Restrictions, closed borders, irregular movement and deportations.

The restrictive admission policy on the basis on nationality profiling that started in November 2015, was further enforced with restrictions for admission of refugees from Afghanistan in February 2016, followed by complete restriction of onward movement of refugees through the Western Balkan countries in transit towards Europe in March 2016. With an agreement made between EU and Turkey, that was considered a violation of human rights by many international organizations, the humanitarian transit corridor for refugees, that was leading them from Turkey to Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary/Croatia, Slovenia to Austria and other western European countries, where asylum applications were submitted, was closed.

Even though expected, this change of policy towards denying admission and freedom of movement to refugees induced serious humanitarian emergencies in all of the countries along the route. Being unprepared for such a dramatic change of context, they struggled with provision of food, accommodation, safety and basic protection of the refugees that unwillingly remained on their territories.



Macedonia, being the front line in protection of the external European border from Europe itself, closed its borders on the 8th of March, straining approximately 1600 refugees, most of whom were sent to the north Transit Center Tabanovce, on the border with Serbia. Utterly unprepared and below capacity to receive, accommodate and provide livelihood for large number of refugees, the Transit Center was overflowed with people, desperate to continue their way towards Serbia. Being stopped at the borderline, 400 of these people remained in the muddy fields for a month, living without shelter, basic hygienic or humane conditions; not being able to enter Serbia or return to TC Tabanovce.

Both transit centers, TC Tabanovce and TC Vinojug Gevgelija, were turned into unofficial detention centers with strong presence of military and police forces in the beginning, and remain to be so up to date. Upon closure of the borders, in TC Tabanovce, the initial number of almost 1750 was lowered until June 2016 to 65 refugees, whereas Vinojug received around 140 refugees from Tabanovce. In the period of April, May and June 2016, large groups of refugees were disappearing overnight, and eventually found their way to Europe. There was no official statement of the authorities of how this occurrence became regular. In the same period, a restriction of working hours in the transit center was delivered to the CSOs, allowing only few to remain present 24/7. Stranded refugees were repeatedly denied access to asylum procedures, and in the rare cases when asylum applications were allowed to be submitted, the asylum seekers were not relocated to the open Asylum Seekers Center in Skopje, but were still kept in unofficial detention and without freedom of movement out of the premises of the transit centers. This practice changes in November 2016, upon continuous pressure of the CSOs and agencies working on human and refugee rights/protection issues. Yet, the rest of the population residing in the transit centers, that did not or was not allowed to submit asylum application, remains in the transit centers, without any official status and without freedom of movement.

Upon enacting the complete restriction of admission of refugees entering from Greece, and with respect of the freedom of movement of refugees and migrants in Greece, huge pressure was created at the Macedonian southern border, with 15.000 refugees residing in the fields near the village of Eidomeni, which became a makeshift camp and the core of human tragedy. The camp remained active until the end of May 2016, when Greek authorities relocated the residents to army-run camps all over northern Greece. During those months of activity, hundreds of refugees were constantly trying to cross the border and enter Macedonia in order to continue towards Western Europe. Many violent clashes and tragedies occurred, often ending with mass deportations and serious human rights violations by the Macedonian Authorities. Macedonian special police forces used stun grenades and rubber bullets on several occasions to disperse the mass of people trying to break the fence and enter Macedonia. Vulnerable population suffered physical traumas beside the psychological one, out of the rubber bullets, tear gas and violence used by the Macedonian police forces. The daily attempts to enter Macedonia at various locations ended tragically for two men and a pregnant woman from Afghanistan near the village of Moin, as they drowned while trying to cross the river. Mass expulsions were an everyday occurrence: hundreds of refugees were deported back to Greece without regular procedure and to a "green" border as they were caught to enter the country irregularly.

The protection risks dramatically rose with closure of the so-called Western Balkan Route. Irregular migration and the smuggling and trafficking channels that go through Macedonia started to flourish once again after the closure of the Balkan Route. Hundreds of people using the costly services of smugglers were guided in hiding through Macedonia, with vehicles and on foot, many of whom ended up in the Lipkovo area in the north of the country, in the villages of Vaksince and Lojane, and continued towards Serbia. Mass expulsions were occurring in the north of Macedonia as well – refugees and migrants were often escorted by Serbian authorities to the "green" border and pushed back to the Macedonia.

Serious human and refugee rights violations by state and non-state actors portrayed the whole year of 2016. Some of those violations were "legalized" with amendment in the Macedonian Legislation. The Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection was amended in April 2016. According to this amendment, the institute 3rd safe country – country of entrance is clearly defined as member of EU, NATO and EFTA, which are all of the neighboring countries of Macedonia. This allows the Sector of Asylum to dismiss asylum claims on the ground of this 3rd safe country principle, considering such claims clearly unsubstantial and officially deporting the asylum seeker back to the 3rd safe country of entrance. With the same amendment, application for family reunification from a refugee with determined status or a person under subsidiary protection can be submitted 3 years after the status was determined.

5. ACTIVITIES IN 2016

5.1. Awareness Raising and Advocacy



Out raising awareness activities diversified in 2016. Beside the social and traditional media, we were actively raising awareness of the local population regarding the changes in context and the situation of the refugees and migrants in Macedonia through art and photography. Using art and photography as a tool and medium, we organized interactive exhibitions and events that were presenting the challenges refugees face in the process of migration as well as in the camps they stay in the country. We organized exhibitions in Bitola, Ohrid, Skopje, Kumanovo, as well as in Prague, the Czech Republic.

World Refugee Day was commemorated with an exhibition, human libraries and a public debate about the rights of refugees, organized in Skopje together with our partners **Open Society Foundation and Helsinki Committee**. Small fundraising through public auction of drawings made by children living in the Transit Camps in Gevgelija and Tabanovce was part of the event, as well as a concert of Melek Taus band.

For **Human Rights Day and Abolition of Slavery Day**, we raised awareness through social media about the challenges and risks faced by migrants and refugees in the process of seeking international protection.

In April 2016, the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection was amended, restricting the access to asylum procedure of refugees entering from the neighboring countries as they are defined as 3rd safe country of entrance by this Law. Also, the access to family reunification for people that received refugee status or subsidiary protection was made possible only after 3 years after their status was determined. Together with our partners, the Ombudsman's office, UNHCR, MYLA and Open Gate: La Strada, LEGIS filed an initiative to amend this Law in July 2016. So far, there is no response from the relevant institutions for the status of this initiative. Macedonian Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection is remaining restrictive for refugees entering from EU, NATO and EFTA countries.



5.2. Capacity Building

During 2016 LEGIS staff and volunteers had many opportunities to expand their knowledge and capacity in the humanitarian sector.

Our staff participated in training sessions provided by experts in various fields such as: 1) **Protection Training** provided by UNHCR; 2) **Methodology in Hygiene Promotion (PHAST and CHAST)** provided by Solidarites International; 3) **First Aid Trainings** provided by Red Cross; 4) **Empowering Refugees with Resilient skills** provided by Faces of Change.

LEGIS also worked on development of In-house training modules in 1) **Humanitarian Response**, 2) **Protection Principles**, 3) **Stress of a Refugee** and 4) **Challenges to Integration** for internal usage for the staff and volunteers.

Through these activities, we ensure that our staff and volunteers are prepared to respond to the needs and the various challenges they face on field level, through the services they provide to the population in need. We will continue to develop our capacity building programme and expand our expertise in the humanitarian sector.



5.3 Humanitarian Aid and Assistance

5.3.1 Food Aid Distribution



Food Aid Distribution

Food aid is one of the biggest programs of LEGIS. Ensuring access to food and water to refugees and migrants, asylum seekers, irregular and detained migrants has been our goal since 2014.

LEGIS Food Aid program in 2016 was designed according to the context and the current need. It included hot meals and dry food packages that are distributed through our mobile teams as well as on distribution points in Macedonia and northern Greece.

LEGIS is providing food aid in the two temporary (transit) centers for refugees in Macedonia, TC Tabanovce, and TC Vinojug, Gevgelija. In 2016, after the closure of the Balkan Route in March, the Food Aid programme in the transit centers, that were turned into temporary accommodation centers, was specifically taken over by the Ministry of Labor and Social policy of Macedonia and the Macedonian Red Cross, but LEGIS continues to supply food items for extremely vulnerable population and fruits and vegetables as per need and when allowed.

In 2016, we also provided food packages, hot meals and food items to the population living in the Asylum Seekers Center "Vizbegovo" in Skopje, and the Detention Center for Foreigners "Gazi Baba" in Skopje.

Starting from August 2016, LEGIS provides Food Aid to irregular and undocumented refugees and migrants still transit, through our distribution point and office in Lipkovo Municipality.

Our Food Aid programme in 2016 was supported by private donations as well as through various projects:

"Legal and Humanitarian Help to Refugees" – Open Society Foundation, Macedonia

"Hot Meal for Refugees in Transit in Macedonia" – Caritas Austira

"Emergency Assistance of Refugees Transiting through Macedonia" – Fons Katala, Spain

"Clothes and Food to the Refugees in Transit" – Medecins Sans Frontieres

A total of 300.000 food items were distributed to refugees in transit and in camps through these projects and private donations in 2016.



5.3 Humanitarian Aid and Assistance

5.3.2 Non-food Items Distribution

One of our services is to provide our target population with the items they need to ensure dignity and protection. We do our best to ensure access to the needed items that will reduce the risks of atmospheric exposure and ensure safety and well-being, as well as dignity to the population in need. Blankets, clothing and shoes, hygiene items are some of the items we distribute in the two transit centers TC Tabanovce and TC Vinojug, Gevgelija, as well as to the asylum seekers residing in the ASC Vizbegovo in Skopje, and to the population in irregular transit through our office and distribution point in Lipkovo area. We were also active in Eidomeni, distributing needed items to the population residing in the make-shift camp from March 2016 to the dismantling of the camp in the end of May 2016.



Our partners and donors ensured that the population we serve will have access to the needed items, supporting us through the following projects:

“Legal and Humanitarian Help to Refugees” – Open Society Foundation, Macedonia

“Winter Clothes for Refugees in Transit through Macedonia” – Secour Islamique France

“Emergency Assistance of Refugees Transiting through Macedonia” – Fons Katala, Spain

“Clothes and Food to the Refugees in Transit” – Medecins Sans Frontieres

“Hygienic and NFI Support for Refugees in Transit” – Solidarites International

In 2016, total of 16.217 non-food items were distributed to the refugee population in need through this programme.



5.3 Humanitarian Aid and Assistance

5.3.3 Psychosocial Support

Psychosocial support is an integral part of LEGIS' response to the refugee crisis. It helps individuals and families to heal the psychological wounds and rebuild social structures after an emergency or a critical event. It can help change people into active survivors rather than passive victims.

- Our psychosocial support program focuses on:
- Artistic, Cultural and Educational activities
- Sports and Recreational activities
- Coffee Corner



With this programme, we target men, women and children residents in the TC Tabanovce and TC Vinojug, Gevgelija, with a common goal to minimize their stress level, reactivate them and make them regain their lost interest in life.



5.3.3 Psychosocial Support

5.3.3.1 Artistic, Cultural and Educational Workshops



In 2016, after the closure of the Balkan Route, when refugees got stranded in the transit and temporary accommodation camps in Tabanovce and Gevgelija, Legis activists placed emphasis on ameliorating the psycho-social well-being of refugees by engaging them in cultural and artistic activities, which created space for them to express their innermost dreams, fears and hopes while residing in a closed camp.

The **painting workshops** were predominantly children and women-focused, as the most most vulnerable categories in the camp. These art workshop were surprisingly successful and enjoyed by the target group, as art methods were employed that are used in **art therapy**. The Legis team facilitated women's expression also by introducing **culture-sensitive and gender-sensitive mechanisms** with 2 Legis female facilitators and having a refugee female Arabic translator. Engaging women refugees as volunteer translators was also a technique used for empowering refugees as active agents in their current restricted environment where they are mostly dependent on organisations. Descriptive feedback was always obtained from participants so as to analyse the art created. It was observed that refugees often drew houses. When asked about their paintings, to cite one example, Salma from Iraq explained: "I drew a house with flowers and trees, because I had that back home. I have been living in a transit camp for months now and even though I am very grateful for the generosity here, I hope to be able to live in a normal way in the future. In a house, reunited with my family. It was supposed to be a transit camp, but we have been here for 3 months almost".

As part of our art workshops, we also organised art creation out of recycled items on our **Recycling Art Workshops**, such as children's purses out of used plates, candles out of discarded jars, children's face masks out of discarded cardboard, Christmas ornaments out of empty plastic bottles and glasses etc. The refugee children on one occasion even created a house, again a recurring theme in their expression, out of cardboard, plastic flowers and dry leaves. Christmas was also celebrated by creating a recycled paper Christmas tree and cardboard gifts.

Clay workshops were also quite popular with children, especially. A recurring motif in the clay workshops was the boat. The kids often created boat clay figures, as they are still dealing with a great deal of post-traumatic stress especially in relation to the sea crossing during their journey.



In addition, the culture and art-related activities included exciting movie nights for children and youth twice a week. The movie night was quite popular and well-visited among refugee children and youth, but also children's parents that accompanied their kids to watch cartoons and youth films together. Movie nights were particularly enhanced with popcorns and carbonated juices as refreshment served by the Legis team. The movie night usually started off with Legis volunteers dressing up in funny outfits as cartoon characters to entertain and gather up the children from the camp. Enthusing over the thrilling prospect of the upcoming film, the children and youth usually gathered around the funny cartoon characters and followed them to the designated film area.

Moreover, the art and culture activities involved a lot of **women-focused workshops**, such as **jewelry-creation, henna hand drawing, knitting, creation of hair decorations** (hair pins, hair flower wreaths etc), as well as beauty workshops. The Legis team facilitated the participation of more women by creating a women-friendly and child-friendly atmosphere in the Legis container. The Legis activists were also taking care of the kids during the workshops so that the women can be more involved. Sometimes, there was a female Legis member professionally trained in crafting jewelry who came to hold the jewelry workshops and share her knowledge and skills with them. Beautiful earrings, rings and necklaces were created by the refugee women. Striving to empower refugee women, **the women-focused workshops were frequently held by the refugee women themselves**, who got the opportunity to share their skills with the local volunteers. The **henna hand drawing** was, for instance, almost exclusively held by women refugees. **Arabic dance nights** were also organised on several occasions, where women refugees could teach local Legis volunteers how to belly dance. Before the Arabic dance nights, female refugee together with Legis volunteers, **created their own belly dancing outfit by sewing coins to scarves for belly dancing**. Two Legis volunteers were involved as English teachers providing English lessons to small groups of refugee youth, with focus on learning about each other's cultures, for example, learning about henna practices in Syria while also learning English (English lessons via "cultural exchanges").

5.3.3 Psychosocial Support

5.3.3.2 Sports and Recreational Activities

Sports-wise, **ping pong** remained the most visited and most enjoyable activity. Men, but also women, played in turns during the day. As an interactive game, ping pong led to bonding among our staff and refugees, but also among refugees themselves, especially since the national/cultural background of the refugees in the camp was quite diverse. Thus, simple interactive games worked wonders to build bridges within the different refugee groups themselves. Even two ping-pong tournaments were organised in which participants were granted medals and Legis certificates.

The refugees also rejoiced in participating in **chess, darts, cards, domino, badminton** etc. **Fitness sessions** were also organised, targeting women. The fitness sessions were primarily organised by Legis volunteers, but women refugees were slowly encouraged by our team to take leadership and hold the sessions eventually. The **women-focused fitness corner** thus became part of our women refugee empowerment program. **Gym classes** with children were also held in the mornings, as well as **volleyball with water balloons** during the hot summer days, predominantly with children being the target group.





5.3.3 Psychosocial Support

5.3.3.3 Coffee Corner



The coffee corner became the meeting place for socialisation of the ethnically diverse refugee community in the camp, but also a space for increased interaction among refugees and local volunteers. Chess, cards, domino and other games were being organised in the coffee corner while cold beverages were being distributed during the summer, such as refreshing blueberry juice, Cevitana, tea, coffee etc, and hot beverages during the autumn and winter days, as hot sahlelep, hot chocolate, tea, coffee etc. Legis volunteers marked the **World Refugee Day, Ramadan** and other holidays by organising celebrations. For example, a seesaw was brought for the kids for the **World Refugee Day** and cartoon character show was organised, while candy packages were being distributed to the refugee children and youth. **Ramadan** was marked by organising iftar soirees, where food was being distributed by Legis volunteers who after the distribution, always sat to have dinner together with the refugees.

5.3.4 WATER, SANITATION and HYGIENE PROMOTION

LEGIS' WASH project, supported by Solidarites International continued in 2016. Within this project, beside the installation and maintenance of water and sanitation facilities, distribution of hygiene items in the transit camps and in the closed reception center for foreigners "Gazi Baba", we also did infrastructural reconstruction to part of the closed Detention Center for Foreigners, "Gazi Baba" as well as an Hygiene Promotion Campaign with the population of the transit centers.

5.3.4.1 Infrastructural reconstruction of the closed Detention Center for Foreigners "Gazi Baba"

In 2016, in partnership with Solidarites International, LEGIS finished the renovation of the WASH facilities in the closed RC for foreigners "Gazi Baba" in Skopje. The reconstructions were focused on the bathroom areas and reconstruction of the toilets, drainage and walls, with regards of the cultural habits and easier maintenance of the sanitation facilities, as well as installation of proper equipment for maintaining privacy and hygiene.

The common room was also renovated, with installing of new floor, doors, reparation and painting of the walls, making the space more suitable for daily usage of the detained population.



5.3.4 WATER, SANITATION and HYGIENE PROMOTION

5.3.4.2 Hygiene Promotion Campaign



After closure of the so-called Balkan Route in March 2016, around 1500 refugees got stranded in the two borderline transit centers in Macedonia, we observed arising of new needs to the population in camp situation. The need to maintain proper hygiene was critical for the health and well-being of the people staying in the transit centers.

In order to enhance the situation concerning hygiene in camps and promote and reinforce positive hygiene behavior within the population, thus mitigate health risks and risky behavior, LEGIS conducted a hygiene promotion campaign in the Transit Centers in Macedonia, TC Tabanovce and TC Vinojug, Gevgelija.

Various activities and interventions are part of the HP Campaign, mainly targeting the children living in the camp, but also the adult population. The educational and awareness raising activities were complemented by enhancing the access to facilities and high quality hygiene items.



Inclusion of the target population in planning, creation and implementation of the activities and program was our core guiding principle and our asset for successful campaign and positive results. With our activities designed according to age and gender of our target groups, we provided hygiene education in an informal manner, as well as space for sharing knowledge and experience and socialization to the refugees residing in the transit centers. Our activities for children varied from **various games** and **drawing workshops**, to **board game design** by the children, **drama workshops** and **hygiene education classes held by children**, we allowed them to express themselves and learn positive practices in a fun and creative environment. We used the ongoing **Movie Nights** to present videos that educate about the dangerous hygienic habits, and promote positive hygiene behavior.

With the adult population we discussed the possibilities and the needs they have for improvement of the hygienic situation in their households and the common areas in the camps. By providing materials and items to satisfy those needs, together with tips and guidance to maintain proper hygiene, we managed to have successful results and improvements of the situation concerning hygiene, noticed by the population itself as well as the staff that works on hygienic maintenance in the camps.

Through this programme, **27.576 hygienic items** were distributed in the borderline Transit Centers, Asylum Seekers Center of Vizbegovo and Detention Center of Gazi Baba in Skopje.

5.3.5 Emergency Response to Irregular Migration

After closure of the Balkan Humanitarian Corridor, the so-called Balkan Route in March 2016, we have observed boosting of the irregular migration channels in Macedonia.

Starting August 2016, LEGIS is running operations in the Lipkovo area, with a field office and teams in the Lojane village. The teams are providing lifesaving aid in food, water, clothes, blankets and other needed items, medical and legal referrals, while monitoring Human Rights abuses and violations to the refugees and migrants using this well-known smuggling channel to transit towards Serbia with a goal to reach Western Europe.

During the last few months, starting 25th of August 2016 to end of December 2016, we are reaching 750 people per month on average with our services in the Lipkovo area, many of whom are women and children, coming from the Middle East and South Asia. We are observing and regularly documenting the push-back practices of the Serbian authorities, as well as the mass expulsion practices that are happening in the last few months. By December 31st 2016, we documented 1256 push-backs and expulsions from Serbia to Macedonia, 22% of which are women and children. Beside the violations by the authorities, we map and document violations by non-state actors, such as the trip facilitators (smugglers), out of which violent money extortions and kidnappings are regular occurrence.



5.3.6 EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO SKOPJE FLOODS



In August 2016, several rainstorms hit the western and northwestern parts of Macedonia. On 6 August 2016, a storm with strong winds and flooding hit Skopje and the western parts of the country, leaving at least 21 people dead and dozens injured or missing.

LEGIS teams actively participated in the clearing of the debris and drainage of the affected houses and buildings, and we provided humanitarian aid to the population affected. Our response staff and volunteers coordinated fundraising campaign, human resources and donations towards the needs of the population, serving as helping hands to the people that lost much of the little they had.

The affected families received donations in domestic appliances such as refrigerators, washing machines, stove, and hygienic items such as shampoo, diapers, dish detergents, and clothes detergents. Thus, a total of 584 items were distributed as part of this programme.

5.3.7 Integration Support to Asylum Seekers

Macedonian Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection with its latest amendments in April 2016 has limited the possibility to access asylum procedure to refugees entering from the surrounding countries. Moreover, in the first half of the year, there was no access to asylum procedures for refugees that entered the country before these amendments were made, and those who were allowed to start the procedure were kept in the same transit centers as the refugees without status, without freedom of movement and access to services entitled by law.

In November 2016, after the pressure of the CSOs and UN Agencies on the ground, the asylum seekers were relocated to the Reception Center for Asylum Seekers in Skopje. Finally obtaining freedom of movement and being able to be involved in the Macedonian society, we supported their integration process with organizing outings and visits to cultural and historical places. We became friends while facilitating their integration process and providing them with access to their rights.



5.4 Ombudsman and the National Preventive Mechanism

In September 2016, Legis signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Preventive Mechanism functioning within the Ombudsman's Office (NPM).

Through this official cooperation, experts from LEGIS are incorporated in order to accompany the NPM during announced and unannounced visits to reception and detention facilities for refugees and migrants. With this cooperation, LEGIS staff is monitoring access to rights in the reception center and reporting human rights abuses and violations to the NPM.

The goal of the National Prevention Mechanism is to provide recommendations to the relevant institutions regarding access to rights and torture prevention of refugees and migrants in detention and reception centers.

5.5 Cooperation, Networking and Representation

"Balkan Refugee Trail" project

The project wants to follow the Balkans trail of spontaneous civic engagement and explore, if the lessons learned on a grass-roots level can be taken to a European policy level and help shape a European solidarity based on joint values and legal norms (such as the European Convention on Human Rights). Furthermore, it tries to support the momentum of civic engagement by assessing the support needs of civic initiatives and volunteers in order to enable their continued contribution to society. In particular recommendations shall be elaborated to better tackle these needs through various EU programmes and strategies (such as Erasmus+, Europe for Citizens, EUDSR,...). Interkulturelles Zentrum from Austria coordinates the project, and it is implemented in cooperation with CSOs from Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Greece and Hungary.



"Optimizing Volunteer Services in Times of Refugee Crisis" project

The overall objective of the project is to contribute to further strengthening of the role of volunteers in times of crisis in Europe. Specific objective is to provide evidence-based recommendations for the improvement of the voluntary services on EU level. For this purpose, research was conducted through questionnaires and observations to examine the needs, opinion, level of satisfaction, problems faced and suggestions for improvement of the services offered in times of crises, targeting both volunteers as service providers and refugees as the beneficiaries of those services.

The project is coordinated by Association MI-Split from Croatia and implemented with the partner organizations Legis (Macedonia), Novi Sad Humanitarian Center (Serbia) Volunteer Centre of Hungary-ÖKA (Hungary), Voluntary Action Sheffield (UK), CEV-European Volunteer Centre (Belgium). The project will continue in 2017, with various dissemination events in the partner countries.

Cooperation with Center for Intercultural Dialogue

In 2016, we established official cooperation with Center For Intercultural Dialogue from Kumanovo, exchanging skills and expertise in the youth field as well as support in international cooperation. In the framework of the "Civil Society for European Integration" coordinated by CID, LEGIS representatives visited NGOs and Networks in Brussels for the purpose of establishing contact and setting the ground for future communication and cooperation. In the framework of this visit, together with representatives of other CSOs from Macedonia, LEGIS visited the European Commission and The European Parliament, where we had discussions with the MEPs responsible for the admission of Macedonia within the EU.



Through this cooperation, CID volunteers were included in LEGIS' psychosocial support program in the TC Tabanovce, facilitating various workshops with children in the camp and sharing their knowledge and experience with LEGIS' staff and volunteers.

Cooperation with TAKT

For the purpose of spicing up our Hygiene Promotion campaign by bringing in real experts in street animation and arts, we established cooperation with the NGO TAKT from Skopje that contributed with their expertise towards greater hygiene awareness among the children in the transit centers.



Networkin' Europe

LEGIS took part in the initiative Networkin' Europe, created in order to improve cooperation and coordination between activists, volunteers and CSOs in Europe, the Western Balkan Route and in Greece. The objective is to create a common space to improve communication between volunteers, activists and CSOs, empower civil society initiatives and centralize information in order to be stringer on field level as well as on political level.

In order to build this network, two meetings were organized in 2016. The first, initial meeting was held in February in Berlin, and another one in Brussels in May. At the second one, the activists, volunteers, and CSOs prepared a Joint Statement to the European Parliament where they requested decriminalization of humanitarian aid, unimpeded access to detention centers for volunteers and CSOs, opening of the borders on the Western Balkan Route, and solving the status of refugees stranded in non-EU countries in the aftermath of closure of the Balkan Route.

5.5.1 Conferences, Forums, Workshops and Networking Events in 2016



12-14.02.2016

"Unifying Refugee Aid Conference" in Budapest, Hungary at the Central European University, on the topic of: **"Asylum, Activism and Academia: Perspectives on the European refugee crisis"** by School of Public Policy and Central European University.

"International workshop on asylum reception system" in Trieste Italy, organized by **Central European Initiative and ICS Consorzio Italiano di Solidarietà – Ufficio Rifugiati, Onlus.**

20-25.03.2016

15.02.2016

"Sara Workshop" by **Erste Bank and SOS Children Village International** in Vienna, Austria.

Balkan Route Volunteer Meeting organized by SCI International in Novi Sad, Serbia.

15-17.04.2016

25-28.02.2016

1st Cross-Borders Forum **"Solidarity With/By the Refugees"** organized by The Dome production in Athens, Greece; Jasmin Redjepi (LEGIS) speaker on the topic: **"Macedonia's Place on the Balkan route"**.

"Politics of Friendship" international conference as a part of the **9th Subversive Festival** in Zagreb, Croatia. Jasmin Redjepi (LEGIS) speaker on the topic: **"The Emergency Response on the Refugee Balkan Route – Macedonia"**

02-05.2016

05-06.05.2016

"4th Mediterranean University on Youth and Global Citizenship: Connecting Identities" organized by NSC of the Council of Europe in Hammamet, Tunisia. Aleksandra Davidovska (LEGIS) speaker on the topic: **"The Identity Challenge of Refugees"**

09-10.05.2016

"The Muslim Family – Rights and Duties" organized by the Islamic Community of BiH, Sarajevo, BiH. Mersiha Smailovic (LEGIS) speaker on the topic: **"The Response to the Refugee Crisis in Macedonia"**.

15.05.2016

"Global Classroom: Intractable Human Rights Situations and Failed International Responses to Crisis" Conference organized by the European Inter-University Center for Human Rights and Democratization (EIUC) in Venice, Italy. Tara Petkovska (LEGIS) speaker on the topic: **"Challenges of Solidarity in Macedonia"**.

"Women on the Move" a regional workshop organized by UN Women and Oxfam.

16-18.05.2016

32nd **"Regional Stability in South East Europe"** Workshop. The frame topic **"South East Europe's Consolidation in Light of the EU Crisis, Refugee Influx and Religious Extremism"** by National Defence Academy of Austria. Jasmin Redjepi (LEGIS) speaker on the topic **"NGOs in Dealing with the Refugee Crisis in Macedonia"**.

19-22.05.2016

"Solidarity in Action" conference at MSF HQ, Brussels. Jasmin Redjepi (LEGIS) speaker on topic: **"Violation of the Refugee Rights in Macedonia"**.

31.05.-01.06.2016





01.06.2016

Speech at EU Parliament for the Violation of the Refugee Rights in Macedonia by Jasmin Redjepi (LEGIS)

20-21.06.2016

Conference on Cooperation in migration management in the Western Balkans and Central European Countries attended by Mersiha Smailovikj.

06.06.2016

"The Cooperation of the NGOs with the Ombudsman" conference in Pogradec, Albania; Jasmin Redjepi (LEGIS) speaker on the topic: **"The cooperation of NGO Legis and the Ombudsman on the Refugee Rights"**.

"The Cooperation of the NGOs with the Ombudsman" conference in Pogradec, Albania; Jasmin Redjepi (LEGIS) speaker on the topic: **"The cooperation of NGO Legis and the Ombudsman on the Refugee Rights"**.

06.06.2016

"Migration management and enhancement of local resilience" organized by UNDP in Belgrade, Serbia. Mersiha Smailovic (LEGIS) speaker on the topic: **"Social inclusion of refugees in the host communities"**

04-05.09.2016

"Political Discourse on the Migrants Crisis in the EU and the Western Balkans" organized by Centre for Research on Democracy and the Western Balkan studies on Andrassy University, in Budapest, Hungary. Aleksandra Davidovska (LEGIS) speaker on the topic: **"Current Developments in the Refugee Response in Macedonia"**.

07.09.2016

10-12.10.2016

Lobby visit of Belgium Parliament, EU Parliament and EU Commission, with topic "Resolving the 8-month Limbo Status of the Refugees in Macedonia".

15-23.10.2016

"Europe One – Refugees' Mission to Survive" workshop in Kiev, Ukraine, for Refugee Emergency Aid, Transit and Permanent refugee center activities of NGOs.

11-12.11.2016

"Access to Rights of Asylum and Formal/Informal Return of Refugees/Migrants" organized by the Office of the Ombudsman and the UNHCR in Ohrid, Macedonia. Mersiha Smailovic (LEGIS) speaker on the topic: "Role of CSOs in Dealing with the Refugee Crisis."



15-16.11.2016

"Living Together: Transform a Divided Past into our Common Future" Conference organized by United for Intercultural Action Network in Ohrid, Macedonia. Gabriela Andreevska (LEGIS) presented the Solidarity Movement in Macedonia and the work of LEGIS.

18-19.11.2016

"Migration of the Population – The Phenomenon of Fleeing" organized by The Bosnian National Community of Zagreb in Zagreb, Croatia. Mersiha Smailovic (LEGIS) speaker on the topic "Reality and Concerns of the Refugees in Macedonia".

24-25.11.2016

LISBON FORUM on Migration and Human Rights organized by NSC of the Council of Europe in Lisbon Portugal; Aleksandra Davidovska (LEGIS) speaker on the topic: "Reality of the Women on the Move: Protection Risks, Concerns and Challenges in Response to the Needs of Women in Transit".





28-30.11.2016

URGENT – Urban Regeneration: European Network of Towns -Workshop on Intercultural Dialogue and Migrants' Integration in Strasbourg, France. Mersiha Smailovic (LEGIS) presented the situation of migrants in Macedonia.

29.11-02.12.2016

Aktionstage: Refugees, Migration and Democracy Conference organized by Interkulturelles Zentrum in Vienna Austria. Driton Maliqi (LEGIS) speaker on the topic: **"Solidarity in Times of Crisis"**.

06-07.12.2016

Social Affairs Forum and Education Experts Network organized by SOLIDAR in Brussels, Belgium.

International conference: Refugees Migration Democracy. The Faces of solidarity, Civil Society and Activism. Panel 2: Civil Society - International comparison attended by Driton Maliqi.

09.12.2016

Conference on the Developments in Irregular Migration organized by SGGD ASAM in Izmir Turkey; Aleksandra Davidovska (LEGIS) and Driton Maliqi (LEGIS) speakers on the topic: **"Risks, Challenges and Violations in Irregular Migration in Macedonia"**.

15- 16.12.2016





6. VISIBILITY AND COMMUNICATION

LEGIS is ensuring visibility of its activities and projects through various channels, both online and offline. At the moment one active web page and two Facebook pages are being updated daily. Many news articles and photo galleries were published throughout the year. Additionally, LEGIS cooperated with the local and national media outlets (TV channels and newspapers), which produced over 30 press-releases and videos, finding in LEGIS a trustworthy and credible partner in the coverage of the refugee crisis on the Western Balkan Route and in Macedonia.

This year, LEGIS has been managing the following pages:



7. Partners in 2016

 Crisis Management Center	 Ministry of Labor and Social Policy	 Embassy of Republic of Macedonia	 Municipality of Ohrid	 Fondation Open Society Macedonia	 Caritas Austria
 Secours International France	 Solidarites International	 Medicine Sans Frontieres	 Fons Caritas	 European Programme for Integration and Migration	 Ukrainian Universal Service Committee
 People in need	 Arbeiter-Samariter Bund	 Human Appeal	 Al-Khair Foundation	 Muslim Aid	 Red Children's Bobrow in the World Refugee
 Asylum Protection Center	 SOS Children's Villages Macedonia	 Ministry of Health of the Republic of Macedonia	 Help Refugees		



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