

# Thank you

to all who supported our  
#RentToRestart campaign!

## Velos Youth Annual Report 2021

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# Directors Report

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Another challenging year for Velos Youth, but another year of progress, opportunity and success. In total four new services were added to the holistic methodology that the organisation prides itself on, benefiting a total of 378 young people. These were legal aid, psychological care, supported accommodation and job counselling. These were made possible through a diversification of the funding portfolio, and through top-up grants from existing supporters. For this support we are sincerely grateful.

Of these, the Housing Integration Project, launched in June, probably represents the most significant change for the organisation. The project provides assisted-living style accommodation and integration support for six young people at a time. The core objective is to help young people find work and subsequently their own stable accommodation. Remarkably, five out of six young people had secured full time employment by the end of the year, of which four moved into their own secure accommodation. A key focus in primary 2022 will be to create more spaces in this successful initiative.

The organisation continued to adapt in the face of the challenges posed by both COVID-19 restrictions and migration related government policy, but the most significant challenge arrived at end of the year when we received news that our longest standing donor would not be able to consider a grant renewal. This represents around one third of the current budget and so further and significant adaptations will need to be made in the early part of 2022.

Finally, we were delighted to receive news that we had won the Ockenden International Prize for refugee projects. To be recognised, as the judging panel stated, as an “exceptional example of constructive ways to support young people in making self-reliant lives” provides motivation for the challenges that lie ahead in 2022.



Mustafa Mohammad

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# Key Contextual Changes

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Throughout the year there were a number of key legal, social and political changes affecting the lives of refugees and asylum seekers in Greece, which are laid out here to give context to the subsequent section on the progress of the organisation.

## Health Care

In 2021 it was introduced that asylum seekers would now have to obtain a specific health insurance number called a PAAYPA (Provisional Social Security and Health Care Number) which is added to their asylum card and provides access at Hospitals, Primary Medical Care (P.E.D.Y.) and Local Health Units (T.O.M.Y.). Once an asylum seeker has been officially recognized as a refugee or granted subsidiary protection, he/she is able to acquire a permanent Social Security Number (A.M.K.A.), that give him/her continued access to the same above mentioned medical provisions. Unfortunately there were many instances where recognised refugees found themselves in the gap between PAAYPA and AMKA, while they were waiting for the Asylum document to be issued. These left them without healthcare, as well as access to the labour market as an employment contract cannot be issued without it. Moreover, they could not book appointments for vaccination against COVID-19.

To make matters more complicated, for people that do not have any legal documentation (because they are unable to access the Asylum Service), there is a provision of a Temporary Social Security Number called a PAMKA. The issuing of PAMKA is also rarely straightforward, and in some cases public services were not informed of its existence for several months after its launch. For many there were great delays in the activation of the number, again leaving refugees without access to health care and vaccinations against COVID-19.

## Housing

At the beginning of September the Greek government opened a new helpline mechanism to support UAM, living in insecure and high-risk housing conditions, to directly access shelter (fast track). This mechanism has worked well and has been used by the Velos Youth to find accommodation for seventeen homeless children and young people. It has to be noted, however, that those children referred there by Velos Youth did not choose to stay due to issues with the accommodation and safety of the structures. Moreover, all spaces for children in the region were eventually filled and therefore homeless children were offered places away from Athens, which many reject as it means leaving whatever support structure they have worked hard to build. Nonetheless the new helpline is a step in the right direction.

## **Changes in the Asylum Process**

In January, the Ministry of Migration announced Pakistan and Bangladesh as safe countries of origin, and therefore individuals from these countries are now at a much higher risk of deportation. Later in the year a new ministerial decision declared Turkey as a safe country for all nationals from Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Bangladesh and Pakistan, and resulted in the last minute giving of appointments to asylum seekers, with interviews scheduled in some cases just 48 hours in advance. The lack of preparation time given then for interview preparation of course reduces the likelihood of being granted asylum, whilst at the same time has negative consequences on young people's already fragile mental health. We continue to use our collaboration with Equal Rights Beyond Borders, under our EEA funded *MyRights!* project, to support young people through their asylum claims.

It has to also be noted that we observed difficulty in accessing the Asylum Service, even for an initial request and even when it came to unaccompanied children. Even with the assistance of a lawyer several children were initially denied access to the Asylum Service, with different reasons given each time, such as the lack of interpreters and the restrictions because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The same situation occurs when it comes to adult undocumented refugees. In most instances, only people with severe physical or mental health issues could be given priority for their basic right of applying for asylum.

## **COVID-19**

After careful consideration and preparation, we started the year re-expanding our operations and accepting frequent appointments at the Velos Youth Centre for young people who wanted to speak to a social worker, take a shower and wash their laundry, or for young people with urgent material needs. Items such as winter clothes, hygiene items, sleeping bags and blankets were distributed. Unfortunately stricter national measures against COVID-19 were re-imposed in February, forcing us to adapt once again. The Velos Youth team primarily resumed work from home and therefore virtual operations became once more the key method of operating. The remainder of the year followed in much of the same fashion, with the greatest return to normalcy taking place between May and October when the youth centre had peak attendances of 18 to 20 young people per day. This differs significantly to pre-COVID times when the organisation could support up to 80 young people directly on-site, in a single day. The year ended with a return of an appointment only system, and the ceasing of all in-person group activities, with the exception of language classes 3 days per week for groups of 4 young people.

## **Access to Public Services**

The pandemic played a significant role in the way people could access essential public services like Tax Offices, Unemployment Services, and Social Security Services. Due to the safety measures, all public services operated on an appointment-only basis, with the procedure of booking an appointment both time and energy-consuming. Moreover, Velos Youth professionals frequently had to escort young people due to the absence of interpreters in the public domain.

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# Major Achievements in 2021

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Velos Youth experienced another year full of progress, innovation and resilience. Despite the multitude of challenges faced, we successfully achieved all of the objectives set for the year. Information about these, and other significant achievements are detailed below and on the following pages.

## **Launch of the EEA funded *MyRights!* Project**

We were excited to start the “My Rights!” project funded by EEA grants on the 1st of February, granting young people direct access to legal support, through Velos Youth, for the first time. After signing an MoU with the project partner, Equal Rights Beyond Borders, a press release marking the beginning of the project was published on our website and social media platforms.

We then implemented the two key areas of the project, firstly bi-weekly legal information workshops were prepared and announced, covering topics such as access to asylum, interview preparation and asylum seekers rights. Secondly, the project’s lawyer selected the first cases to be supported with direct legal aid. As the monitoring and evaluation reports for the project show, the success rate of those cases was exceptionally high, demonstrating the opportunity for more children and young people’s lives to be changed through these interventions. However, with the Asylum Service being closed for a long periods of time, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the capacity of the legal support provided in terms of the number of cases, was quickly reduced and exceeded. In total 109 young people were supported by this initiative throughout the year.

To support the legal casework, the Velos Youth social workers began conducting Best Interests Assessments. These are formal documents produced to further support the case of a child who has applied for Family Reunification in the Dublin Unit of the Asylum Service. This is a very time consuming process and so in total four were completed through the year. Of these, one led to a child receiving a positive answer, whilst the other three are awaiting a decision.

## **Progress towards joining the Ministry of Asylum and Migration NGO Register**

We were happy to become certified with the ISO 9001:2015, a certificate ensuring the quality of our management systems, taking us a step closer to joining the official NGO register of the Ministry of Asylum and Migration. Another requirement for the registration is to prove GDPR compliance and assign to an individual or company the role of Data Protection Officer. We subsequently instructed a specialist external organisation, Define Solutions, to review and update our data management practices and assume the role. This was completed in July 2021 and included a data mapping analysis, required data management improvement, and the creation of a comprehensive and bespoke Data Protection Policy.

## **Launch of Housing Integration Project**

In the Spring we secured funding from Choose Love to launch the Velos Youth Housing Integration project. The project is an expansion of the current Velos Youth holistic model, providing assisted-living style accommodation and integration support for six young people. As the project was to be integration-focused, as opposed to emergency provision, the following participant profile was chosen; be at least 18 years of age and in Greece without family; be motivated to stay in Greece and be actively working towards this; be actively looking for employment; speak some basic English to communicate with house members of different nationalities.

To aid in the design and launch of the project we hired a consultant, the founder of Planetta de Todos, who has extensive experience in the set-up and coordination of housing projects in Athens. He supported us with viewing apartments, negotiating with landlords, and preparing young persons participation agreements and related paperwork. Finally, he supported with the first inductions of young people into the program.

Throughout the first 6-months of the project we developed the weekly program, which now includes Greek language classes, Learning Support Sessions, and life-skills activities such as cooking, cleaning and maintaining the apartment. The Greek language classes are a core component, recognised as essential for young people looking to find work in Greece. This was made possible by a grant from the Fonthill Foundation, which covers the cost of education provision for 6 hours per day, three days per week. The spaces in the classes are prioritised for young people in the Housing Integration Project, whilst any vacant places are offered to participants of Velos Youth's other services. It has been common for young people to stop attending the classes as their employment commitments take precedent.

Remarkably, five out of six young people secured full time employment throughout the year. Each participant is also supported to build their financial reserves and plan for the next stage on the program; securing and moving into private accommodation. Subsequently four left the apartment for other opportunities and into their own secure accommodation. The HIP 6-month report contains full information about the challenges and successes of the project, whilst a full case-study can be found at the end of this report.

## **Launch of Livelihoods and Job Counselling Services**

Considering the extra staff capacity needed to run the Housing Integration project, we recruited a Livelihoods Officer whose role consists of case work, access to employability and training support, and support with the livelihoods aspects of the Housing Integration Project. Having this additional position in the Velos Youth team has enhanced the organisations understanding and awareness of the vocational trainings and recruitment services available to refugees and asylum seekers, as well as of Greek employment law and what it means for the young people. The Livelihoods Officer had a full caseload almost immediately, with cases from both the Housing Integration Project, and the

organisations other services. A “Livelihoods Plan” tool was created to use during job consultancy sessions, as well as a “Guidance to Job Interviews” manual.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation Level-up**

Velos Youth secured a grant from the Dutch Council for Refugees for a capacity building project centred around monitoring and evaluation. The project has two modules, the first to create an up to date Theory of Change, and the second to create a more comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework. Consulting group *Change to Impact* have been onboarded to lead the project, and held consultations with Velos Youth team members at end of the year. The project has two core aims: firstly to create a system that ensures Velos Youth is engaged in continuous learning and implementation of this learning, and secondly to make Velos Youth better positioned to receive larger funding from new sources through the combination of stronger program rationales and improved collection and presentation of impact data.

### **Launch of In-house Psychological Support Services**

To increase the capacity of our holistic care provision we applied for and were successful in securing a top-up grant from Comic Relief. The grant has enabled us to add a full time psychologist and Pashto/Dari cultural mediator to the Velos Youth team of professionals. This increased capacity was proposed in order to prepare for the greater numbers of young people expected to arrive from Afghanistan, as a result of well-known recent political changes and their associated security and socio-economic impacts. This was a critical time to internalise psychological services, as the EPIM funded Transitioning to Adulthood program drew to an end and so with it our referral pathway for psychological support.

### **LEAP**

We updated our LEAP (Learning Education Action Plan) tool and started once more conducting 1-1 LEAP sessions in the Velos Youth centre via appointments. The updated version of the tool, developed initially as part of the Monopati Education Engagement Pilot Project, maintains its original purpose of helping children and young people review their educational goals and aspirations and take steps towards these. The tool has been updated to make it simpler to use and more visually engaging. Linked to this are Learning Support Sessions, which are used to provide informal education to young people and feature topics of the young people’s choosing. Homework support is often provided during these sessions.

### **Winning the Ockenden International Prize**

We were delighted to win an Ockenden International Prize in March and be one of the four 2021 Refugee Project Prize Winners. Since founding the organisation we have tried to develop an approach that values autonomy over dependency, that values the voice of the individual and above all believes in the ability of people to move towards self-reliance. To be recognised, as the judging panel stated, as an “exceptional example of constructive ways to support young people in

making self-reliant lives” for a moment gives a new perspective to the struggles of the past five years that have enabled this to happen, and goes a long way in developing new motivations and enthusiasm for the years to come.

## **EPIM**

Velos Youth received a four-month extension/top-up grant from the European Program for Integration and Migration the *Transitioning to Adulthood* project. The project subsequently ran for the entirety of 2021 and has now concluded. The project has been a huge success, with many young people benefitting from the services of all partners involved; many have found jobs, education and training opportunities, and secure housing. The four-month extension also allow us to test the impact of the addition of the Housing Integration Project to the project methodology, which proved to be significant. The end of project report contains a comprehensive analysis of the outputs and impact of the project.

At the 18-month stage of the project, the partners involved produced a [Practitioner's Guide](#), to be shared amongst partners and the NGO community nationally and further afield. The document offered a number of lessons learnt and recommendations, which were arranged into two core headings, “What we have learnt about the needs and resilience of young people”, and “What we have learnt about the methodology, it’s effectiveness and shortcomings”.

As much as possible the points selected we generalised in order that they could be considered within other contexts, as we found that the profiles of young people on the move in different contexts overlap, whilst as a number of common challenges exist; many find themselves within inefficient systems, with limited access to the services and support they need to re-start their lives, to become autonomous, and to integrate into their new society. Young person’s feedback was collected via focus groups as part of this evaluation and reflection.

## **Velos Youth Advisory Board**

As part of the capacity building component of the European Economic Area Grant, we launched an open call for a local Advisory Board to support us in developing our work. This is part of our strategy for becoming further embedded in the Greek community, in order to benefit from stronger local connections, experience and expertise. Three spaces were filled, with two more to be filled in the early part of 2021.

## **Winter Crowdfunding and Awareness Campaign**

In the lead up to Christmas Velos Youth Launched an eight day crowdfunding and awareness campaign, titled Rent to Restart. The campaign followed a fictional young person living in a state shelter who turns eighteen, is made homeless and is then supported by Velos Youth to restart and rebuild their life in Athens. Through the campaign 4015 were reached and €4152 was raised. The

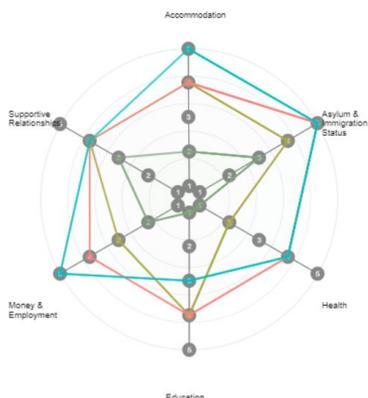
#RentToRestart monthly sponsorship programme is now ongoing, under which people can become monthly sponsors and provide access to secure housing for a young person.

### Quantitative Data Overview

Throughout the year the total number of visits made to the youth center was **1.520**, with 308 **new young people** being supported by the organisation. The total unique service base was **378 young** people, an increase of 89, which reflects the expansion in the number of services offered.. Children and young adults continued to be directed to specialist services through direct referrals and sign-postings, either through attendance at the Velos Youth Centre, or through virtual interactions with the casework team. The table below shows the number of each of these under 9 key areas of support.

	<b>Housing</b>	<b>Legal/Asylum</b>	<b>Medical</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Drug/Alcohol</b>	<b>PSS</b>
<b>Direct</b>	166	306	283	77	0	163
<b>Sign Posting</b>	146	107	159	107	0	14
<b>Information</b>	421	591	457	315	11	476
	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Money/Material</b>	<b>Guardian</b>	<b>Relationships</b>	<b>Protection</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Direct</b>	158	52	10	1	86	1302
<b>Sign Posting</b>	40	190	0	0	0	763
<b>Information</b>	317	198	26	67	116	2995

These referrals and interactions continued to be tracked and monitored via the Lamplight, an online casework tool and database that also allows us to follow and record young people’s progress. The tool fosters a sense of empowerment and motivation as each young person received a visual representation of their progress in the form of a star, which grows over the time. The star has six points, each with a 1-5 scale. The young person and their casework decide together which stage they believe that are at on each point, with 1 being in a place of needing as much support as available and 5 being fully autonomous. From this a star is drawn, and re-drawn, each time the young person and their casework decide it is time to do so. The image below shows an example of a star, whilst the table next to it shows the aggregate scores for the full cohort throughout 2022. With the help of Velos Youth, young people moved along the scale by an average of 1 position.



Outcome	Average change	Average initial score	Average final score
<b>Accommodation</b>	1.15	2.57	3.72
<b>Asylum &amp; Immigration</b>	0.93	2.93	3.85
<b>Health</b>	0.88	2.33	3.21
<b>Education</b>	0.9	2.21	3.1
<b>Money &amp; Employment</b>	1.22	2.15	3.37
<b>Supportive Relationships</b>	1.33	2.7	4.03

# Mission Development Review

Towards the end of the year we conducted an analysis and review of our mission statement. It is widely agreed that mission statements should be reviewed infrequently, however Velos Youth has been running for four years and operates within a highly evolved context to the one in which it was founded, also impacted heavily by COVID-19. For these reasons it was felt that a review of the mission statement was justified and necessary.

An external consultant was selected to lead this initiative as the Velos Youth directors were both involved in founding and establishing the organisation, and therefore saw challenges in drawing objective conclusions and recommendations. The consultant was granted access to all non-confidential areas of the organisation, including historical documents, impact data, demographic data and team member and beneficiary insight and opinion.

The process was designed to answer the following two questions:

1. Does the current work of Velos Youth match its official mission statement
2. Does the mission statement of Velos Youth represent the needs of young people

Whilst flexibility was given to update or change the mission statement if needed, the following criteria was fixed:

1. The mission must remain focused on children and/or young people
2. The mission must include displaced people of some kind, in Athens

The following methodology was used to ensure a comprehensive and thorough review:

1. A breakdown of the different elements of the current mission statement, to understand exactly what they mean and how they play out in the context of the organisation
2. Consultations with the directors of the organisations, to establish their view of these elements and their relevance to the current work of Velos Youth and the context in which it operates
3. Consultations with key team members, including a social worker, an educator and a cultural mediator, to establish their view of these elements and their relevance to the current work of Velos Youth and the context in which it operates
4. Consultations with beneficiaries, to understand which areas of the work of Velos Youth are most useful to and needed by them
5. A thematic grouping of the data and insights collected
6. An analysis of these groupings, to establish any key findings that could induce an updating of the mission
7. A list of recommendations for the directors, including if appropriate an updated mission statement itself

# Mission Development Review

## Findings Overview

Generally there was a real consensus through the interviews conducted about the positive impact Velos Youth was having in challenging circumstances. Staff generally seemed happy with the direction of the organisation and the leadership. Opportunities for the future and needs were consistent and it was clear all staff had a real commitment to the organisation and the cause. The young people were engaged and very positive about the support they received from the organisation with all three struggling to think of anything they would change or improve about the service and support they had received.

A number of key themes emerged, which are detailed on the next pages, with some explicit recommendations also noted.

## Findings: Integration

Integration was the most common theme through the interviews, with both staff and young people highlighting it as a priority. A number of staff noted the challenges associated with integration but also rated it as the most important element that was missing in the current work being done. Some mentioned community outreach opportunities such as working with schools or providing more information to those around the youth centre and young person's apartment.

Linked to this, a core element of successful integration was recognised as access to high quality Greek lessons, and both staff and young people noted this as being one of the most important service currently on offer from Velos. However it was also noted that there was a disparity in the offer between those in the young person's apartment and those who were not. While this difference hadn't been a problem so far there was anticipation that it would become one. The young people also noted the barriers to access that arose once they had found employment, due to their changing schedules. Requests for evening learning or online learning to be available for those who couldn't attend the current classes were made.

## Findings: The *old Velos*

Another common theme was the challenges in dealing with the COVID-19 outbreak and how much this had changed both the opportunities offered by Velos but also the needs of the young people being supported. A number noted the changing support offered to young people from the state and safe zones meaning less young people were in need of some of the supports offered by Velos, including things such as showers and laundry.

# Mission Development Review

The open door policy was listed as a key strength of Velos Youth but it was also recognised that under the current COVID restrictions it wasn't possible to be true to this. It was recognised that this had fundamentally changed the space and while that was challenging, it opened Velos up to new opportunities for the future.

## Findings: Responding to needs

Almost all of the staff noted the need for both increased psychological and legal support, as the current funded partnerships are at capacity.

The workshops were valued by both staff and young people, with it being clear there is a demand for more opportunities but also recognising the need for them to be both useful and engaging for the young people. There was a concern expressed about workshops that expected young people to explore their journeys or share their experiences. One young person requested more workshops about Greek Culture and History as part of the opportunity for better integration.

## Findings: Housing project

The housing project was recognised by all as being a huge step forward in addressing the needs of young people, and that it had been a huge success so far. While there were questions raised about how it would fit within the current mission, there was a real sense of agreement that it was a part of the future for Velos. There was less clarity however around what that might look like.

The young people recognised the huge impact having accommodation had had on them. Two noted that they used the outside space to clear their minds when they 'felt all their thoughts being mixed up'. They wanted more young people to have access to similar support and when asked what further support Velos could provide, one commented that "It seems they know what we need before we do, there is nothing more they can do, they help with everything".

## Suggestion for new Mission Statement

Velos Youth supports unaccompanied young people on the move [to access their rights](#), in order to restart and rebuild their lives in Greece or further afield. We achieve this through a holistic approach, [providing access to legal, social and psychological support through an open safe space and supported accommodation](#). We focus on young people building lives [integrated within Greek society](#), to ensure long term stability and opportunities.

# Mission Development Review

## Analysis & Recommendations

1. Integration is a clear focus area for the work Velos does and the direction it is/should be moving in.
2. Velos should explore ways to create better and more open access for young people to access Greek lessons, both those inside and outside of the Young Person's Apartment.
3. Increased legal and a psychological support is needed and should be priority for future funding.
4. Velos Youth needs to answer the question as to whether it really is or can still be a day centre and understanding where the *new* Velos sits in relation to the *old* VELOS.
5. New ways to make the current space at Velos more suitable for an increased number of professional services needs to be explored, such as dividing rooms to create more private 1:1 spaces.
6. Velos should explore opportunities for opening an additional Young Person's Apartment given its use as a powerful integration tool.



LEGO Serious Play™ was used as a tool for aiding staff and young people to share their opinions and answer questions. The pictures shared here were taken from these sessions.

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# 2022 Objectives

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## **Provide consistent psychological care throughout 2022 and beyond**

As this service only began to be delivered in-house in December 2021, there remains work to be done to in promoting it to partners and filling the the available spaces. Throughout 2022 our objective is to provide 40-50 young people with consistent psychological support, whilst sourcing funding to continue this service into 2023.

## **Remain adaptable to, and relevant in spite of, the limitations of COVID-19**

We aim to continue adapting our operations to ensure the safety and security of young people and staff, the relevance of activities, and the maximisation of outputs from inputs. Two years into the pandemic, with no end in sight, and in face of significant funding cuts, Velos Youth will undergo a comprehensive review of the services and program it offers to ensure this.

## **Increase the number of spaces in the Housing Integration Program**

Following the success of the Housing Integration Project, Velos Youth aims to open a second Young Person's Apartment, with a further 6-8 spaces. A new funder will be sought for this, with interest received from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation at the end of 2021. To support this objective, Velos Youth will launch a new, continuous, crowdfunding program via its website, through which members of the public can directly fund a place in the program.

## **Rebuild our fundraising portfolio**

With three funding partnerships ending in 2022, Velos Youth will continue searching for new opportunities, in order to maintain a diverse and secure portfolio. Four new opportunities have already been identified, and two applications are pending. Velos Youth will also discuss securing further core funding from its remaining donors.

## **Implement a new, comprehensive, MEL Framework**

As highlighted in the report, Velos Youth began a new partnership with Change to Impact at the end of 2021. By the Spring of 2022 Velos Youth will be implementing the new Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning framework produced. Through this Velos Youth will use the learnings generated to make incremental improvements to its programing, whilst using the data create to attract new funders and investors.

# Housing Integration Project Case Study

## Dauda, Sierra Leone , 20-years-old

**Length of stay:**  
5 months

**Salary secured:**  
€1,350 p/month

**Money saved:**  
€1,600

**32 support hours received**

Dauda first contacted Velos Youth on June 18, 2021. He had gotten our contact details through his friend, who came to the youth center a few months before. Dauda was in need of a safe place to stay, as he had no supportive network in Athens at the time. He looked troubled by his everyday life, having no safe place to stay and no job. After conducting three meetings with the social worker and livelihoods officer at the youth center, the Velos Youth team decided that he would be a good fit for the new housing integration project. We explained to him the terms of the project, his rights and duties and he decided to participate, joining the project with a lot of enthusiasm and motivation. After he completed the necessary medical tests, he was given a place in the flat on July 6, 2021.

At the same time, a friend of his informed Dauda about a job opportunity to work as a dishwasher in a restaurant. Therefore, the first appointment with the Livelihoods Officer was focused on discussing the process of, and preparing for, a job interview. This would be Dauda's first ever job interview and he was anxious and excited at the same time. The interview went well and after two days he got a positive answer and was ready to start. Before signing, he brought a copy of the contract to the Velos Youth Livelihoods Officer, so that she could explain to him exactly the terms.

The contract was not representing the real job conditions as two working days per week was declared instead of six days, which was the spoken agreement. Dauda spoke about this issue with his employer but he wasn't willing to change it. After a lot of discussion with the Livelihoods Officer about the importance of having the correct contract and subsequent labour rights in Greece, Dauda decided to take the job anyway, as he was in great need of money and at the same time could continue searching for other job opportunities.

He started working on a daily basis but continued to meet with the Social Worker and Livelihoods Officer in his free time, to discuss how the job was going. Dauda also participated in multiple workshops that were organised at the Velos Youth Centre. In the beginning, it was challenging for him to keep up with all these commitments and



# Housing Integration Project

Dauda, Sierra Leone, 20 years old

be punctual to his appointments, but it was important to make him understand the need of being on time and also to respect the time of the others. Therefore, many discussions took place between him, the social worker and the Livelihoods Officer and gradually he started to arrive on time or inform us if he was going to be late or not be able to show up at all.

Dauda faced an issue with his tax number, and therefore he couldn't open a bank account in which to receive his salary. This bureaucratic obstacle took three visits to the tax office and a number of phone calls to the Asylum Service to solve. Dauda was anxious and disappointed during this time and felt unwelcome and uncomfortable during visits to the public services. After about a month, this was finally resolved, and the account was opened. Upon receiving his bank card and the codes of his e-banking, we held a short informative session so he could learn how to use both.

**"I see you as my family. I know you will be here to support me, thank you for this."**

During the ongoing job counselling sessions with the Livelihoods Officer, he was supported to create a CV and learn how he could search for a job in Greece, to aid him in finding new opportunities. Moreover, Dauda identified the need to create a plan for the next steps, as he found the work to be boring and unfulfilling. He had started thinking that maybe moving to the position of chef assistant would be better, as he could also learn how to cook and possibly could become a chef himself in the future. Therefore he worked with his Social Worker to create an initial action plan, setting a number of objectives and targets to work towards. Through their conversations Dauda also came to realise that he would benefit from speaking with a psychologist, and so was referred to a local partner organisation who could provide this immediately. His cooperation with the psychologist continued until November when he left the flat.

After four months in the Housing Integration Project, a friend of Dauda informed him of a job position as a chef assistant in a restaurant in Ioannina. Dauda shared this idea with the Livelihoods Officer and together they reviewed the possible advantages and disadvantages that may come along with this new job opportunity. They concluded that taking the job would be a step towards his goals, with a better salary, less working hours and a contract that accurately reflected the work being done. Dauda had previously lived in Ioannina for a year and had a friend who could host him. He wasn't sure about living there again as it is a small city, and quite isolated during the winter months. However, after two days of consideration he eventually accepted it.

Now, he is in Ioannina and shares an apartment with a friend; an option that allows them both to save a portion of their income. He is learning his new job and trying to get used to the new environment. The Livelihoods Officer and Social Worker at Velos Youth continue to support him from afar, remaining available to discuss any issues that may arise.

**The full cost of supporting Dauda over the course of 5 months was €2,371. For every €1 spent supporting him, Dauda has earned over €2.8 to move forward on his journey to autonomy.**