

Case Studies in Bioeconomy Education, Training and Skills Development

Case study sample: Ecumenical
Workshops for Refugees

Thessaloniki, Central
Macedonia

Q-PLAN



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Ecumenical Workshops for Refugees

1 Abstract

The Ecumenical Refugee Workshop NAOMI is an urban non-profit organization based in Thessaloniki. It aims to provide humanitarian aid to refugees and activities for their integration into society. In the professionally configured workshop, refugees are taught tailoring skills.

The goal is to be able to sew for their family and friends and, by finding employment in the textile industry, to be independent and take care of the family. Art and fashion have always been inspired by different cultural influences. Tailoring for and with people from different cultures and with different fashion styles is in the spirit of NAOMI. In this way, NAOMI promotes the integration of refugees and their career independence. In the workshops, the participants learn reuse clothes and incorporate art, creativity and design to create quality products of artistic design.

2 Target Groups

Naomi represents all women and single mothers, who are the most unprotected who have to leave their country and build a new life abroad. Professionals become trained and prepared for a new labour market of the booming Greek textile industry, which is in need of skilled workers. Non-professionals learn to work for their own needs and could generate an income by sewing for others. The Textile Academy, part of the NAOMI Ecumenical Workshop for marginalized groups such as refugees, has a closely connection between its emergency aid and NAOMI textile production with refugee employees.

3 Case Study Category

Art to address different learning styles and facilitate inclusion of marginalized people

4 Training Provider

NAOMI Team: Elke Wollschläger (full-time textile engineer), Mieke Sellin (teacher for textile and fashion design, trainee), Sonia Savoulidou (cut) and Zoi Keskinidou (art and design)

5 Region

Thessaloniki, Central Macedonia

6 Language

Greek and English

7 Objectives of the Educational Format

Improve the employability of disadvantaged groups

8 Final Objective of the Educational Format

Professional refugees become trained and prepared for a new labour market in the booming Greek textile industry, which is in need of skilled workers. Non-professional refugees learn to work for their own needs and can potential generate an income by sewing for others.

9 Scope and Context of the Educational Format

In the context of the ongoing weaknesses in socioeconomic integration measures for asylum seekers and refugees in Greece, NAOMI's projects specifically address the significant lack of access to training, counselling, fair jobs and income for professional and non-professional sewers who belong in the above social groups. The holistic academy program combined with training of sewing skills provides career counselling, Greek language, soft skills and environmental awareness. It thus empowers the attendants to participate in social and economic life and be creative by using art in their activities.

10 Specific Skills and Competencies Addressed

Technical competencies

Valorisation competencies

The training providers typically require a degree to enter the occupation or become creative candidates who have technical knowledge of the production processes for clothing, accessories or footwear. No specific skills are needed for the participants.

11 European Qualification Framework level(s)

Level 5 and Level 6

12 Main Benefit to the Participants

The participants acquire sewing skills and receive career counselling. They also improve their Greek language, soft skills and environmental awareness and thus can become empowered to participate in the local social and economic life. Attendees can also earn skills by using art in his/her professional activities (design and create fashionable clothes).

13 Main Cost Categories Considered

The NAOMI program is financed by the diaconal organizations in Baden and Württemberg, the evangelical regional churches in the Rhineland and Hesse and the diaconate of the Remonstrants in Holland and Bread for the World. This finances five positions, expenses for volunteers, costs for the premises, translations, administration and insurance. A team of 12 professional trainers work on a voluntary basis at the workshop, which currently has ten workstations with sewing machines, a linking machine and a large cutting table. An electric cutting machine has also been purchased. Elke Wollschläger leads the courses and is supported by volunteers.

14 Importance and Impact

The team in the ecumenical workshop NAOMI has set up an emergency aid program for families with children and for vulnerable people. They work via donations so that they can provide medicine and food. Moreover, the sewing and tailoring workshops employ refugees, especially women, in a safe and friendly space. Refugees are valued and welcomed, and they can develop their own skills and learn. Meeting people of different backgrounds and mindsets is good training for their integration into a new environment. The conflicts that arise from time to time are effectively dealt with. Both volunteers and refugee workers see themselves as learners in this partnership, and they exchange experiences and learn together.

15 Relevance (of the Format)

The format corresponds to local needs and current situation in the region as it has a particular focus on engaging marginalised groups (refugees). Efforts are being made by the Naomi team to support the refugees in creating their own small production company under normal working conditions. A company that markets household products is envisioned, where sales and advertising should be professionally designed.

16 How can it Inspire BioGov.net? (Why was it designed in this specific way / what are the success factors?)

Because the number of refugees in Greece is high, the NAOMI educational format is special in our region. NAOMI's main goal is to highlight multiculturalism. It creates fair jobs through the Universal Refugee Workshops to offer refugees and migrants the opportunity to socialize and smoothly integrate into Greek society by finding a job in the local textile company, while feeling safe and productive. Thus, they are trained to manufacture or process garments and other textile products.

In principle, many NGOs that work with refugees can replicate this strategy to offer training to refugees as an integral part of a bioeconomy or other course programme. In the short run and in the context of BioGov.net, the potential for replication will be limited.

17 Data Sources

- **Online resources:** <https://naomi.gr>
- **Resource persons:** Zoi Keskinidou, E: zoikeskinidou@naomi.gr
- **Other sources, if any:** Refugee Day Center Alkyone,
<https://www.ottopermillevaldese.org/>

Consortium

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