

Laudatio:

Anerkennungspreis der Paul Grüninger Stiftung für das Mosaik Support Center auf Lesbos

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This year, the Paul Grueninger Foundation has been focusing particularly on “individuals and organizations that enable vulnerable persons to reach safety and/or to live in humane and dignified conditions.” We think Mosaik Support Center unreservedly meets especially the second part of this requirement.

Having to flee is terrible. The ways and conditions of the journey to a safer place to live in are dangerous and full of hardship, they are being described tonight in alarming detail.

But since the EU-Turkey deal in 2016 the ordeal of the refugees is not over when people have been able to reach a safe coast, for example in Lesbos, Greece. They are gathered in a facility where they are registered and can apply for asylum, and where they then sit and – wait. And wait. And wait. For weeks, for months. Mostly interned in an overcrowded camp like Moria or in makeshift shelters under shocking conditions, as media reports sometime inform us. For weeks and months they must stay there, mostly men, but also women, children with or without family. Uncertain of their future, the refugees begin to despair. They are trapped on an island in precarious living conditions. The Greek state is unable to provide to even the most basic needs of the new immigrants. Europe looks another way. Humanitarian aid has focused its efforts by catering to the most elementary requirements: food, clothes etc. — provisions necessary for people to survive, but not, in the words of some refugees, “to remain human”.

The daily dreariness and unbearable boredom of those refugees left in suspense indefinitely is maddening, and their confinement on the outskirts of the city of Mytilene gives them little opportunity to interact with the local community or to entertain the prospect of integration.

This is where Mosaik Support Center comes in. It provides a space in which people can gather and, for a few hours, no longer feel like refugees forced into states of entrapment and dependence, but like people empowered through mutual solidarity and support.

The situation at the border of the fortress Europe is a scandal for human rights, as we all are aware of. In its famous first paragraph, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948 mentions human dignity as a foundational concept which implies respect for the life and integrity of individuals.

Migrants must not only be fed and clothed, they also need a space to meet, to communicate with others, to learn, teach and be creative, to tell their story. This is what Mosaik provides for in Lesvos. But Mosaik is also an opportunity for residents of Lesvos to get to know their visitors, to interact with them and for some also to earn a living. It is beneficial for the refugees as well as for the inhabitants of the island. Mosaik is an example of how human dignity could be conceived of in every day life in a state of crisis. It may be a drop in an ocean of needs, but it makes a difference to those who use and operate it.

Now I'm very pleased to introduce to you the two members of the Mosaik-Team who came here to pick up the recognition award and tell you more first-hand about the Mosaik Support Center, Fotini Mitsou and Kostas Korotzis, both teachers at Mosaik.

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