

# Annual Report

## 2024

## About

Elpida Home is an innovative Greek non-profit organization based in Thessaloniki, Greece committed to providing a humane, dignified, and empowered living experience for refugees and other vulnerable groups. We look to better the world by providing sustainable solutions in order to ensure successful integration to society.

Since our inception in 2016, we have achieved our goals by looking beyond basic needs, sustaining hopes as well as life, while remaining cost-efficient and sustainable. Such an approach is essential in the refugee response in Greece, as the shift from emergency response to long-term solutions continues.

## Lily Pad Project

Building upon our efforts in 2021-2023, Elpida Home has remained dedicated to the Lily Pad Project throughout the past year. This initiative focuses on providing temporary resettlement to the 300+ evacuees we helped bring from Afghanistan to Greece in 2021. These vulnerable individuals were evacuated with the support of our founder, Amed Khan, who directly coordinated with the Greek government to ensure their safe entry into the country.

The Greek government established a secure pathway for evacuees from Afghanistan, particularly targeting former parliament members, judges, lawyers, and their families. These individuals were subsequently resettled to various countries, including Canada, through bilateral referrals facilitated by the US government. Leveraging Greece's status as an EU member state, Elpida Home served as a crucial local partner in streamlining relocation procedures.

Among the evacuees are 17 female Afghan MPs, 4 judges, as well as numerous activists, medical professionals, and their families, all of whom faced imminent threats upon the Taliban's takeover of Kabul. Elpida Home assumes full responsibility for their well-being and provides essential legal assistance for visa applications to Canada and/or the US.

The project's objective is to address all basic needs and provide comprehensive support services until evacuees reach their final destination. This includes housing, food aid, healthcare, informal

education, protection, and legal aid. Our primary aim is to ensure the dignified resettlement of the 300+ Afghan evacuees currently accommodated in Athens and Thessaloniki.

Each family receives high-quality services tailored to meet their basic needs throughout their stay in Greece and subsequent resettlement, empowering them to actively rebuild their lives.



## Case Management & Resettlement

In 2024, Elpida Home had successfully resettled 61 additional Afghan refugees to Netherlands, USA and Germany. Since 2021, we have resettled a total of 356 people under this project, with our first resettlement flight taking place in February - only 5 months after their arrival to Greece.



## Canada

Our legal team coordinated and submitted a total of 380 immigration visa applications to the government of Canada in total. Specifically, to the department of Immigration, Refugees and

Citizenship which is responsible for matters dealing with immigration to Canada, refugees, and Canadian citizenship.

This number includes:

- 196 applicants who were brought to Greece
- 184 extended family members of our applicants who still remain in other countries.

This process allows families to reunite in Canada once our applicants in Greece receive their visas and flight permissions.

Out of 196 beneficiaries with applications to Canada, 167 have resettled to Canada as of January 2023. In 2024 remaining people applied for U.S visa.

## USA

Alongside applications for Canada, we also assisted in evacuating 99 people with various active applications to the United States. The visa applications vary among the community including SIV, i130, P1, P2 & Humanitarian Parole visas.

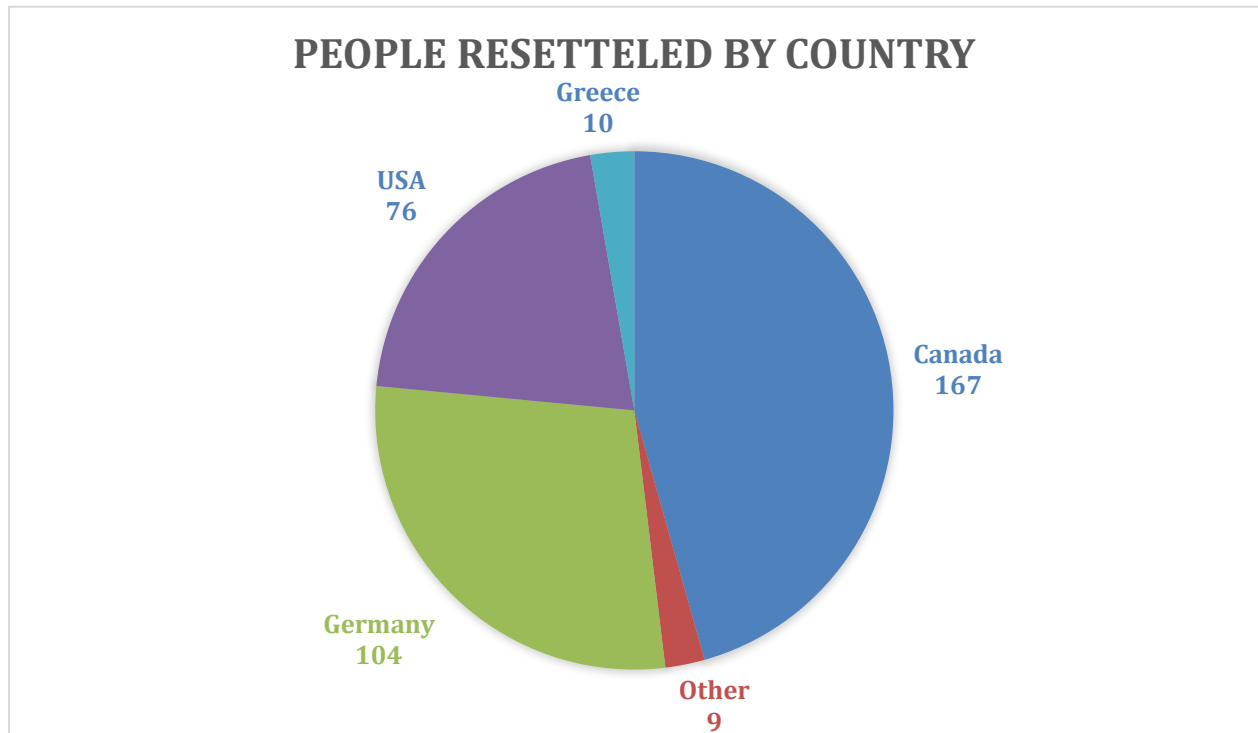
To date, we have helped resettle 76 people to the U.S., including 40 in 2024, other people left on their own to other countries. Compared to Canada, the U.S. process has been notoriously complex and lengthy.

## Germany

Some of our beneficiaries, initially destined for the U.S., opted for family reunification within Europe while awaiting U.S. visas. Thus, we assisted 104 individuals, including 18 in 2024, in reuniting with their families in Germany.

## Conclusion

Since the project began, we have successfully resettled 356 people to various countries, while 10 decided to remain in Greece.



## Medical & PSS Department

### *Achievements 2024*

- 252 medical appointments booked in public hospitals for both adults & children
- 35 individuals assisted with embassy- and visa-related medical exams

We are grateful for our collaboration with Medecins du Monde Greece (MDM), through their polyclinic in Thessaloniki along with Medical Volunteers International (MVI), who have generously donated supplies to our health department.

Additionally, many members of our Afghan community are medical professionals, including doctors and dentists. MDM & MVI have provided them opportunities to volunteer their time as healthcare professionals.

For our psychosocial support (PSS) collaborations, we are proud to partner with Diotima, MDM, Blue Refugee Center, Irida Women's Center & Metadrasi.

### Other Services

- Housing in urban accommodation - Studio Apartments
- Food Support - LIDL Cards & Sklavenitis Vouchers
- NFIs - Diapers, Hygiene Products, Clothes & Shoes
- School Supplies for children
- WiFi
- Additional winterization items - carpets, duvets, blankets



## Lily Pad Partners & Supporters





## Volunteer Partners

To further support our families with integration and psycho-social wellbeing, we partnered with the University of South New Hampshire's Sociology Department and the Greek America Corps to provide activities over the summer for the youngest members of our community. This initiative also included children from Ukraine through our cooperation with the "Ukrainian-Greek Initiative" Community of Thessaloniki.



## Volunteer Testimonies

*Volunteering with Elpida Home was an eye-opening and meaningful experience. Teaching English was more than just lessons—it was about connection and mutual learning. The residents welcomed us warmly, eager to share their stories and culture, and the children's energy made every moment memorable.*

*The staff's dedication was truly inspiring, treating everyone with dignity and care. Despite the challenges they've faced, the people at Elpida Home continue to move forward with resilience and hope. I'm grateful for the time I spent there and the perspective it gave me - Zoe D.*

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*I've had the honour of working with Elpida Home for the last three summers, primarily conducting English language classes for their beneficiaries and leading cultural excursions around the city of Thessaloniki. Last summer, in addition to our usual classes, we visited sites such as the Archeological Museum of Thessaloniki, in an attempt to provide them with a more enriching experience.*

*The level of professionalism and care demonstrated by Elpida Home staff is exemplary. They so beautifully manage to create an environment that feels human. An organic environment is not one that is full of forced positivity or of artificial interest, but rather one where people feel comfortable to express their full range of emotions and needs without fear of judgement. Above all else, it is the humanity and connection on display at Elpida Home that keeps me coming back. - Yanni T.*



Alkis Kampanos" Football tournament

Elpida Home has played a key role in its collaboration with Aristotle University of Thessaloniki for the "Alkis Kampanos" tournament. This annual event brings together children from migrant backgrounds and local Greek children. It is organized by the Interdisciplinary Laboratory of Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean and includes the participation of major football club academies.



The tournament was initiated by Elpida Home staff members and has been actively supported by the organization. This event helped engage and mobilize Thessaloniki's migrant community. Since its inception, more than 500 children have participated.

The most recent tournament took place in June 2024.



## Gaza Support

In response to the recent conflict in the Middle East, our team worked tirelessly to provide essential aid to the suffering population in Gaza. Navigating through complex bureaucratic procedures, securing the necessary documentation, and coordinating with various international entities and NGOs, made this mission exceptionally challenging. Despite these obstacles, we successfully delivered 61 pallets of critically needed medical equipment—including defibrillators, nebulizers, and blood monitoring systems—as well as essential medicines, with a total donation weight of 18 tons. Notably, we were the only small organization to send aid through the Amaltheia Plan in Cyprus, utilizing the Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore (JLOTS) system and the Cyprus Maritime Corridor to ensure these life-saving supplies reached those in desperate need.



## Community Center

Beyond the Lily Pad Project, Elpida Home continues to operate its community center in downtown Thessaloniki, catering to the needs of the city's most vulnerable populations. The center functions as a sustainable integration hub, providing a wide range of services to marginalized communities in Thessaloniki. Our objective is to access to essential services and opportunities for self-empowerment.

With an open-door policy, our team offers comprehensive support to the local community, enabling individuals and families to access crucial services that facilitate their daily lives and integration into Greek society.



Our daily efforts at the center focus on four key areas:

- legal assistance
- health support
- mental health support
- social integration support

Elpida Home collaborates closely with asylum-seekers residing in refugee camps in Northern Greece, individuals in transit, and the six detention centers we visit monthly.

## Legal Department

In 2024, Elpida Home's legal department, expanded and enhanced its services for vulnerable populations. We strengthened our interventions in three key areas:

- community center legal support
- interventions in detention centers

- ongoing participation in the Lily Pad Project.

Additionally, our legal team played an active role in planning and implementing initiatives beyond the conventional framework of humanitarian organizations. One such initiative was our collaboration with the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki to implement an interdepartmental postgraduate program on mass migration issues.

Amid significant changes in Greece's legal landscape on refugee migration, new challenges emerged. In response, we expanded our outreach efforts by visiting new sites while maintaining existing services.

## Community Center

Throughout 2024, our legal open-door project at the community center provided assistance to 124 beneficiaries, primarily from Palestine, Afghanistan, Syria, Algeria, Morocco, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Sri Lankan, and Sudan.

The cases handled included:

- legal Counselling for asylum procedures
- representation before the asylum office (appeals, case status communication)
- legal representation in court
- legal representation before police and administrative authorities
- communication with foreign embassies.

Most of our beneficiaries required multiple services.

## Detention Centers

Our legal team focused efforts on Paranesti PROKEKA and police stations in the Thessaloniki area, assisting a total of 1,249 detainees. We also conducted visits to police stations, including Metagogon, Agios Athanasios, Kordelio and Thermi.

A significant number of detainees had previous convictions on penal law grounds, and their detention period ranged from three to eight months, with some exceptions.

Key challenges:

- Delays in asylum interviews, due to a lack of official interpreters
- Harsh weather conditions (cold in winter, extreme heat in summer)

- No access to free legal aid.
- Communication barriers - police relied on detainees who spoke Greek as there were no official interpreters.

Our legal assistance included:

- Preparation for asylum interview
- identification of potential minors,
- representation before administrative authorities,
- Legal support for detainees facing unlawful detention.

The primary nationalities of detainees included Afghans, Palestinians, Pakistanis, Indians, Algerians, Moroccans, Iraqis, Bangladeshis, Turks, Georgians and Albanians.

## Lily Pad Project

As part of the Lily Pad Project, we continued to provide comprehensive legal services to all beneficiaries, assisting with facilitating access to Greek asylum service, maintaining communication with Greek authorities, and providing legal representation whenever required.

Thessaloniki, 31/12/2024

Elpida Home Director

Evangelos Xafinis