

Racist Violence
Recording Network
Annual Report
2020



Racist
Violence
Recording
Network





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Introduction

In 2020, the Network recorded an increase in incidents of racist violence, particularly against refugees, migrants and human rights defenders who were targeted due to their affiliation with the above-mentioned groups.

This increase is linked to the political polarization at a European and global level regarding the reception of refugees and migrants, coupled with national and local factors shaping the situation in Greece. It is also inextricably linked to the institutional targeting of refugees and migrants through the official speech of political leadership representatives at a central and local level, as well through the media.

Portraying refugees and migrants as a threat to national sovereignty, although it does not seem to be an unique domestic trend, but a broader European rhetoric with political implications, as strongly reflected in public discourse, especially in early 2020, has been instrumental in exonerating racist violence and intensifying the sense of impunity.

The lack of a coherent and human-centred refugee and migration policy, at the level of reception and integration, has led to the intensification of xenophobia and intolerance. The non-recognition of the added value of the civil society and their contribution to supporting vulnerable groups and ultimately social cohesion, combined with the lack of an institutional framework for the protection of civil society actors, led to the demonisation of their activities and ultimately to increased incidents of violence against them.

2020 was also marked by a significant increase in reports and testimonies¹ about irregular forced returns (push-backs) occurring at Greece's sea and land borders. The Network stresses the negative impact of such practices, primarily on the life and safety of people seeking protection and, more broadly, on the norms and principles of human rights and the rule of law that can be irreparably harmed, creating space for racist trends and behaviours.

At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic overturned the perception of everyday life of societies on many levels. This is an unprecedented global challenge which has exacerbated inequalities and highlighted the lack of policies in ensuring equal access in the context of social protection. It also sparked a rise in discrimination and institutional racism against all targeted groups.

In 2020, the Network recorded incidents that either directly or indirectly relate to the pandemic. The Network found that the pandemic and the consequent restriction measures of individual freedoms have shaped a new context in which aspects of racism have taken a new dimension. Refugees and asylum seekers are perceived not only as a threat to national sovereignty but also

1. The said reports were not recorded by the Network in 2020.

to public health, while it is noted that discrimination against specific target groups in terms of their access to services, is on the rise. Racially motivated incidents of harassment, arbitrariness and violence by police representatives, during checks on movement restriction measures, affect almost all targeted groups. At the same time, incidents of racist violence where perpetrators are public officials, have decreased as expected, given the limited physical operation of public services, due to pandemic-related measures.

In addition, compared to 2019, incidents that could be part of an expression of daily racism against the targeted groups through violent, usually low-intensity, behaviours, seem to have decreased. The pandemic is considered to be a key factor. Further, mobility in public places, where the majority of such incidents occurred, has been drastically reduced. However, there is an increase in the participation of civilians in organised attacks against refugees, asylum-seekers, migrants and human rights defenders.

Moreover, organized racist violence seems to move to the Greek provinces, especially in areas where there are reception and accommodation centres for asylum-seekers. The surge in these incidents is inextricably linked to the institutional targeting of refugees, migrants and their supporters, while the restriction of movement for refugees in public spaces, in the context of measures adopted against the pandemic, combined with the reduced flows (e.g. on the islands), seems to contribute to the “invisibility” of the specific target group and to the reduction of recorded incidents against them. However, the causes of the problem, as mentioned above, but also the perpetrators’ motives, continue to exist. The involvement of the same perpetrators in more than one recorded incident constitutes an indication of the above. Thus, the reactions caused by the problem return with intensity on every occasion, re-fuelling the escalation of violence, but also continue to take place, to a lesser extent, unseen by the general public. Also, in the course of incidents recorded by RVRN, police representatives typically appear to refrain from rescuing or protecting the victims, or even contribute to their harassment.

Another trend seen in 2020 is the phenomenon of domestic violence against LGBTQI+ individuals, because of the pandemic and the consequent confinement in the home environment. For LGBTQI+ individuals, confinement in the home environment is associated with the expression of violent behaviours by family members who do not accept their sexual orientation or gender identity. Further, racist cyberbullying, a trend that has been steadily emerging in the Network’s recordings in recent years, constitutes a new dimension of school bullying in 2020. Online classes are the new condition in which LGBTQI+ individuals can be targeted and become victims of verbal attacks by their classmates, who cannot be identified by the victim or the teacher (e.g. due to closed cameras). The problematic and highly harassing behaviour against transgender individuals by employers and colleagues, public officials, but also people unknown to the victim, challenging the right to self-determination, is verified once again in 2020.

At the same time, after a long process of almost six years, the democratic and anti-racist movement welcomed in 2020 the court ruling finding Golden Dawn guilty of acting as a criminal organization - a landmark decision, which in practice shields the rule of law in Greece. The ruling comes as a reminder that the fight against racism and racist violence and the response to violent, xenophobic groups through legal means, is a matter of strengthening human rights and respect for the rule of law. The impact of the verdict against Golden Dawn expresses in practice the protection provided by law to each individual, as well as to each member of a community who is targeted by individuals or groups with racist, xenophobic, homophobic or transphobic motives. In the same context, and regarding the response to racist crime by the judicial authorities, the Network was pleased to be informed about the issuance of two court decisions concerning incidents that were recorded and supported by its members, in which racist motive was recognised as an aggravating circumstance in committed crimes. In addition, one decision applies the institutional framework for incitement to hatred and violence, while in the second, an important case law is recorded, as it is the first time a court introduces racist motives on the basis of the victim's gender identity.

However, as the Network pointed out in 2020 in a memorandum to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe about the case *Sakir v. Greece*, despite the very important developments in strengthening anti-racism legislation, as well as its implementation through court decisions, the real impact of Article 82A of the Penal Code regarding the recognition of racist motives in pending criminal cases, is still quite limited. There are also delays in investigating crimes committed because of prejudice, while the authorities do not always intervene to rescue victims and arrest perpetrators.

At the same time, despite the existing initiatives for recording and monitoring cases with racist motives, there are shortcomings in this field as well, specifically in the efforts of the Authorities to systematize monitoring of the entire course of cases, from complaint to court. It is understood that the smooth implementation of the said initiative, as well as the quantitative and qualitative analysis and finally the publication of the respective findings, would allow the emergence of trends and objective parameters which play an important role in effectively combating all aspects of racist crime.

It would also boost victims' trust in both the authorities and a unified and effective mechanism for recording cases of racist violence, thus reducing the under-reporting. In this context, the Network welcomes the inclusion of specific actions to address racist violence and under-reporting in the Action Plan against Racism which was introduced this year by the Ministry of Justice. However, despite the positive developments, there are still important steps to be taken to both upgrade the investigation procedures for racist motives from the earliest stages of the investigation, and to ensure victims' access to complaint procedures, protection and supportive services.

I. Working Methods of the Racist Violence Recording Network

There follows a thorough description of RVRN working methods, with a view to promoting awareness and transparency in relation to RVRN activities and raising public awareness about the results of such activities.

A. Institutional Observations

This report is the tenth published by RVRN. The initiative for the establishment of RVRN was taken in mid-2011 by the Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Greece (UNHCR) on the basis of two major findings: a) the identified absence of an official and effective data collection system on racist violence and b) the need to coordinate organisations which recorded, on their own initiative, incidents of racist violence against people who sought their services.

Over the last decade there have been many improvements in this direction, such as the creation of an official system for recording racist violence², however Network recordings of such incidents is necessary as the data are complementary to the official recording. It is also pointed out that RVRN's data are the "tip of the iceberg". Nevertheless, its data capture a clear picture of the quantitative and qualitative trends of racist violence in Greece.

At this point it is worth noting that, as mentioned above, the organizations participating in RVRN record incidents against individuals who sought their services. However, a consistent RVRN finding, is the reluctance of many victims to report. Based on the qualitative data highlighted by RVRN's reports, victims of racist violence often believe that the authorities cannot or do not want to investigate such incidents, while at the same time it is observed that the victims feel insecure about referring to the authorities, because that could lead in their re-exposure to racist behaviour. This perception seems to have a stifling effect on the decision of victims to report the incident, even to a civil society body. Essentially, the sense of fear that the already traumatic experience they went through could lead to new conditions of fear and insecurity, generally leads the victims to silence. For that, it is deemed important to assist the victim upon taking a decision to report and officially record an incident.

Another factor that significantly contributed to under-reporting in 2020 is the new condition with

2. For more information about authorities' response to state violence, see pages 56-61.

the COVID-19 pandemic. The restrictions on the operation of the Network members' services, as well as the movement restrictions (lockdown) due the pandemic, limited access of beneficiaries to those services and thus impacted the identification of victims and the Network's recordkeeping. For the reporting year in this report, the Network's data may, more than ever, be the tip of the iceberg in terms of cases of racist violence. In this regard, an additional factor is the fact that despite the restrictions on victims' access to recordings, the total number of the Network's record incidents for 2020 is slightly higher than the previous year (2019) and in general, it stands at the same levels as the Network's data in recent years, at least from 2016 to date.

B. RVRN Identity

The RVRN is comprised of actors offering medical, social, legal services or/and coming in direct contact with victims of racist violence or victims of other hate- or bias-motivated violent attacks as well as organizations established by the groups which are usually targeted by racist violence themselves. To join RVRN, a necessary precondition is the respect for human rights, diversity, multiculturalism, and freedom of religion as well as the action in tackling discrimination and intolerance. Apart from the coordinators, UNHCR and GNCHR, RVRN is comprised of 51 Non-Governmental Organisations and civil society bodies, as well as the Greek Ombudsman and the Migrant Integration Council of the Municipality of Athens, as observers³. The participating actors acknowledge and jointly combat racist violence as well as all racially motivated acts on the grounds of race, colour, religion, descent, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics and disability.

For RVRN, "cases of racist violence" include any criminal acts, or violent acts or behaviour against people targeted because of their national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics and disabilities. RVRN also records criminal acts or violent

3. Aitima, Solidarity Now, Antigone -Information and Documentation Centre, University of Aegean Anti-Racist Observatory, Arsis, Doctors of the World (Mdm), Amnesty International, Network for Children's Rights, Network for Social Support of Refugees and Immigrants, "Pleiades - Hellenic Action for Human Rights", Hellenic League for Human Rights, Hellenic Red Cross, Greek Council for Refugees, Greek Forum of Migrants, Greek Forum of Refugees, Human Rights Commission of the Bar Association of Rhodes, Positive Voice, Medical Intervention, Caritas Athens, Caritas Hellas, Centre for Research on Women's Issues "Diotima", Center for Life, "Babel" Day Centre, SYNYPARXIS (Coexistence) - ECUMENICAL REFUGEE PROGRAM, Network for the Support of Refugee and Migrant Rights (Patras), World Without War and Violence, LATHRA? - Solidarity Committee for Chios refugees, METAction, Rainbow Families, Group of Lawyers for the Rights of Refugees and Migrants, Group of Lawyers for the Support of Refugee and Migrant Rights (Thessaloniki), Homosexual and Lesbian Community of Greece, Association of Afghans United In Greece, Association of Social Workers of Greece, Greek Transgender Support Association, Faros tou Kosmou, Refugee Support Aegean, Act Up Hellas, ASANTE, Colour Youth - LGBTQ Youth Community of Athens, Generation 2.0 RED, HIAS in Greece, HumanRights360, Melissa Network, PRAKSIS, A21, Simeio for studying and fighting the far-right, Lesvos Solidarity, Steps, Legal Centre Lesvos, Aegean Migrant Solidarity | Christian Peacemaker Teams.

activities or behaviours against human rights defenders, namely against people who promote and protect human rights and are targeted because of that.

In pursuit of the common objective, RVRN: In pursuit of the common goal, RVRN: i) submits recommendations to the Greek authorities in compliance with Greek and international law on the protection of human rights, ii) promotes public information and awareness raising on combating racist violence, iii) consults with various actors on issues pertaining to racist violence, iv) strengthens collaboration with other actors in pursuit of combating racist violence, v) organizes and participates in training programs held by civil society and other competent institutional bodies in relation to issues that refer to the identification, recording, and combating of hate crimes.

Ever since October 2011, when RVRN began effective operation, its scope of activity has constantly grown. RVRN engages in institutional initiatives for the improvement of the response to racist crime and seeks to raise awareness about racist crime in every possible way. To this end, it responds to a variety of reporting requests from researchers, journalists, students. In addition, the Network contributes to the dissemination and awareness-raising of legislation against racism and racist crime through participation in seminars, trainings and public debates.

Acknowledgement of RVRN role in combating racist crime is reflected in the frequent invitations that is receiving by international and European organizations, as well as other bodies, in order to present its data but also to provide detailed information about its activities and to demonstrate its methodology. For 2020, the Network, having been recognized as a good practice for recording racist violence and for supporting victims, was invited by both national and European bodies to present its methodology as well as to participate in relevant trainings. It also participated in researches, to map out the aspects of racism as well as the institutional tools for addressing address them. In addition, at the initiative of its members, it submitted a memorandum to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the case of Sakir v. Greece, aiming at both identifying shortcomings in the implementation of racist crime legislation and making specific recommendations to enhance victims' access to complaint procedures, as well to protection and support.

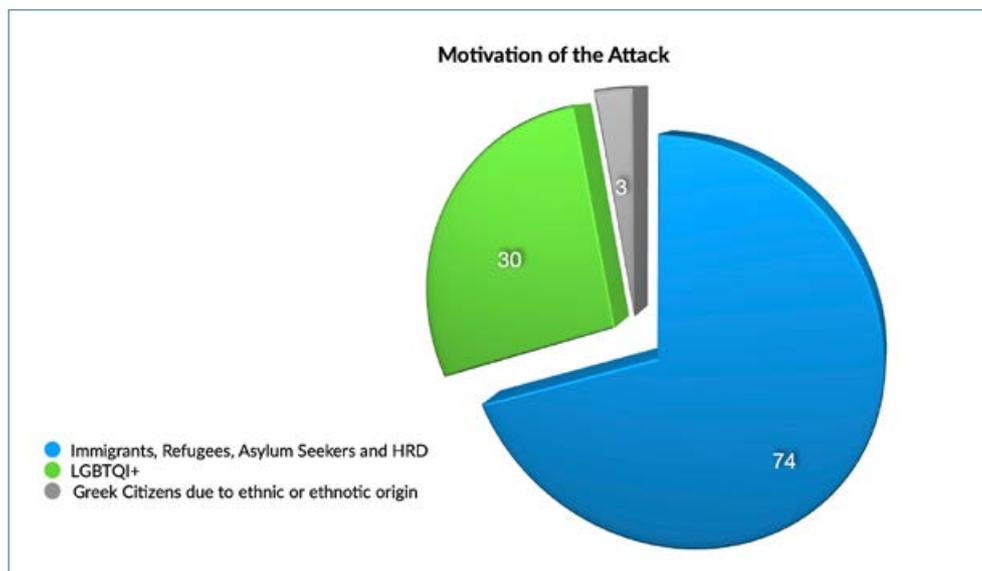
C. Methodology

RVRN has applied a strict methodology from the outset, recording cases exclusively on the basis of interviews conducted with the victims. Therefore, an important factor in the number of recorded cases is the willingness of the victim to record his or her experience. All members of RVRN agreed on a cooperation agreement which sets out the rights and obligations of participants, and they adopted the consolidated recording form of RVRN. Each RVRN organisation member appoints focal points to record the incidents, i.e. social workers, lawyers, or other professionals or volunteers,

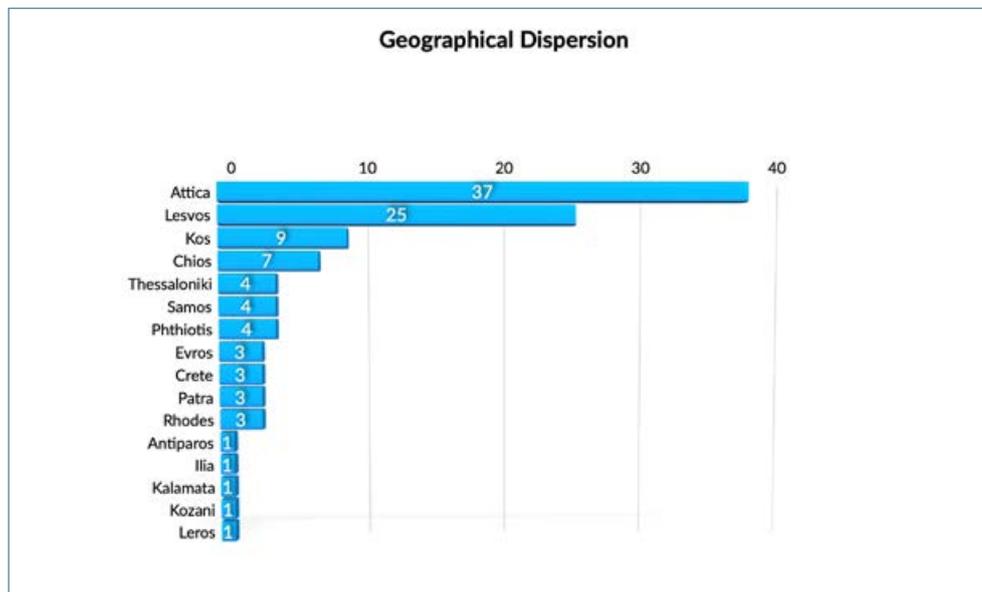
who are trained by RVRN. The appointed focal points are named and bear the responsibility of their recording. Recording forms are completed anonymously and used exclusively by RVRN for the purpose of combating racism and hate crimes.

The documentation of racist violence in Greece by RVRN has led some institutions to fund special programmes, to promote recording practices. As a result, several RVRN members are now implementing a series of programmes to support the recording procedures, while offering various other supporting services to the victims of racist violence. Thus, while RVRN remains a collective initiative with common operational rules and common objectives, the individual activities of its members have a complementary and mutually empowering impact. Based on the experience gained through the implementation of these programmes, RVRN acknowledges the positive effects in terms of broadening the use of RVRN tools and enabling more victims to access the supporting services.

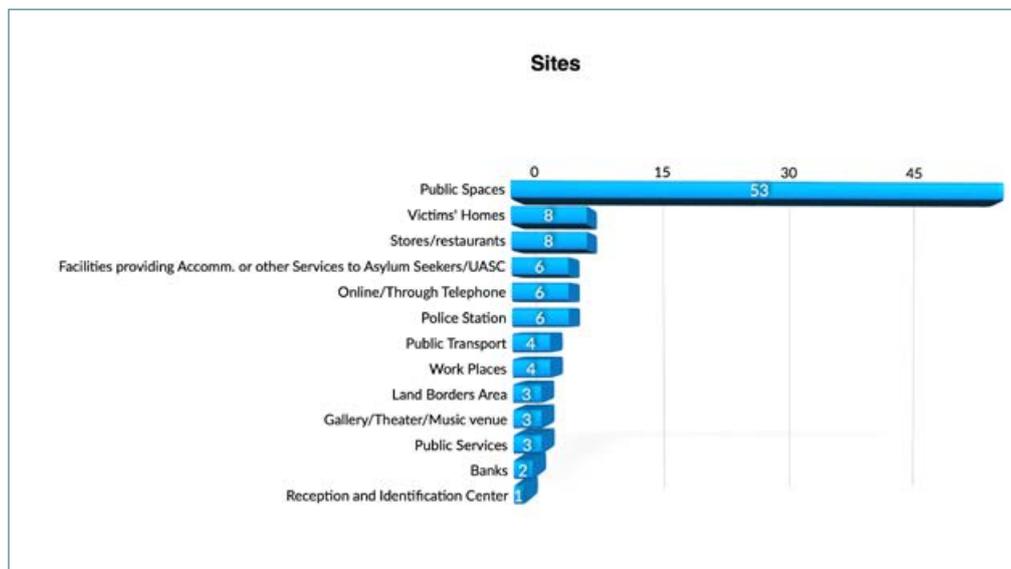
II. A. General findings of the recorded attacks



During January-December 2020, RVRN recorded, through interviews with victims, 107 cases of racist violence. In 74 incidents the targets were migrants, refugees or asylum-seekers due to their ethnic origin, religion or colour, human rights defenders due to their association with refugees and migrants, as well as shelters or other services for unaccompanied children or asylum-seekers. In 3 incidents the victims were Greek citizens who were targeted due to ethnic origin. In 30 incidents, the victims were LGBTQI+ individuals, while among LGBTQI+ victims there were also four third-country nationals, under the status of either asylum-seekers or recognized refugees. In 50 incidents the targets were more than one victim, whereas in 77 incidents the assault was committed by a group (of at least 2 persons).

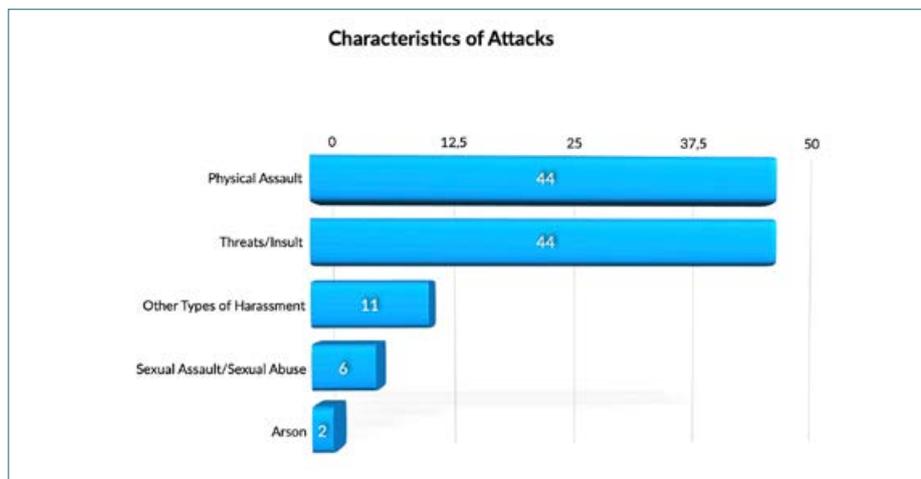


Geographical dispersion: 37 incidents took place in Athens, mainly close to the city centre, but some cases were also recorded in other areas such as in Piraeus. In the rest of the country, the incidents are quite widespread. Specifically, 25 incidents were recorded in Lesvos, 9 incidents in Kos, 7 incidents in Chios, 4 incidents in Samos, Fthiotida and Thessaloniki, 3 incidents in Crete, Rhodes, Patra and Evros as well as 1 incident in Antiparos, Kalamata, Kozani, Ilia and Leros.

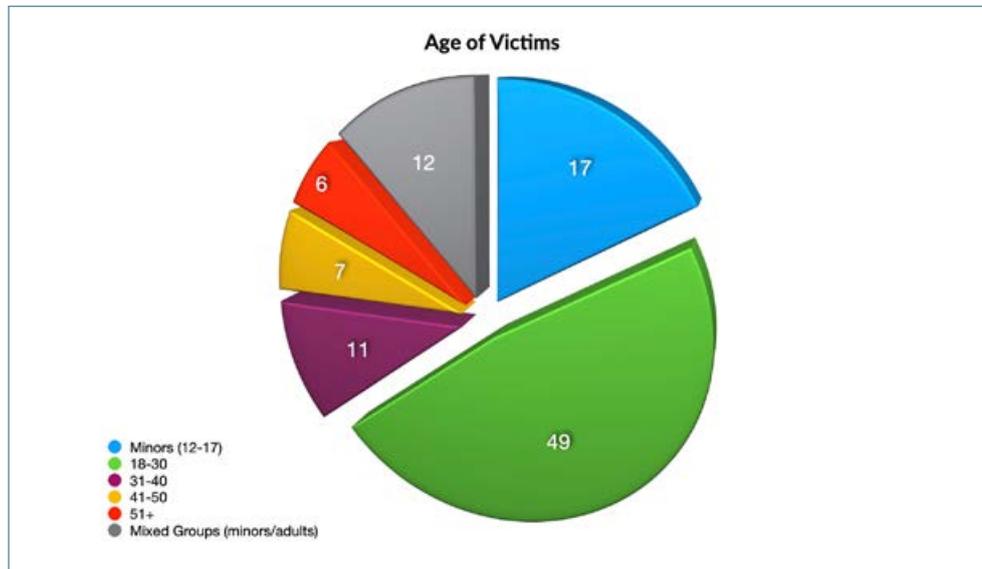


Locations: 53 incidents took place in public places (roads, squares, parks, beaches, ports, etc.), 8 incidents at the victim's home, the vast majority of which were related to domestic violence

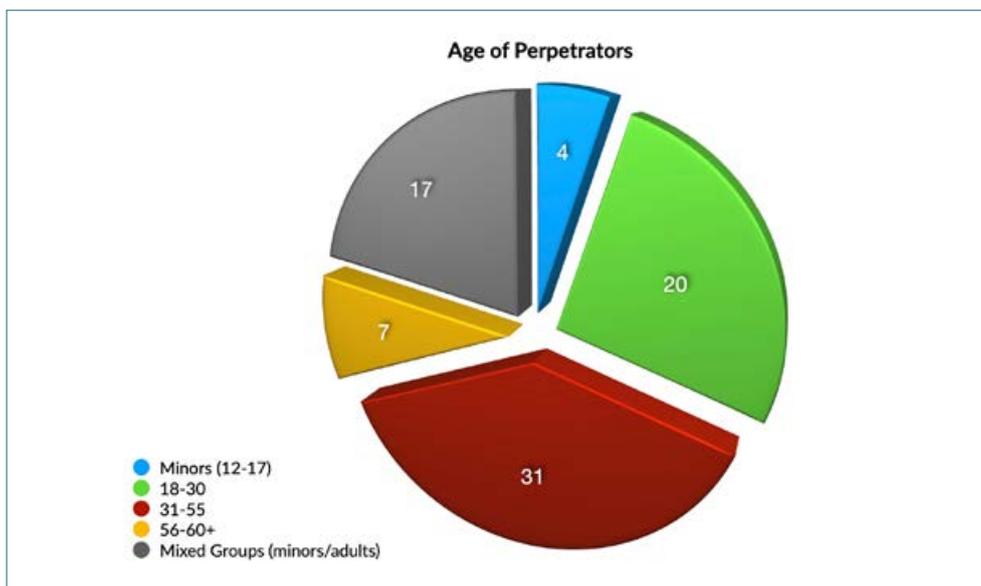
triggered by the victim's disclosure of his or her sexual orientation and / or gender identity, 4 incidents at in public transportation, stops and stations, 6 incidents at police stations, 4 incidents at the victims' workplaces, 6 incidents at shelters or other services for asylum seekers / unaccompanied minors, 1 incident at a Reception Centre and Identification on an Aegean island, 3 incidents at the land border in Evros, 8 in restaurants, retail and entertainment stores, 3 in theatre and music exhibition premises, 3 in public services (hospital, Tax Office, Regional service) 2 in banks as well as 6 cases that took place online and via telephone.



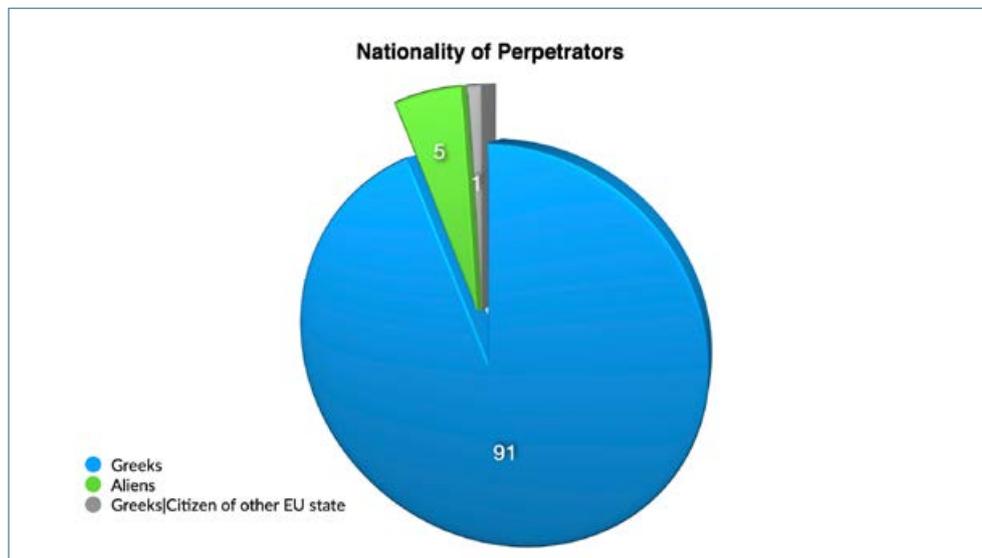
Characteristics of the attacks: A significant number of the attacks resulted in personal injuries and other serious offences. Among those, 2 incidents of arson were recorded, 6 incidents of sexual abuse and sexual assault, in their vast majority in combination with insults, threats and personal injuries, while in one of the above incidents in combination with theft, as well as in another case with disturbing domestic peace. 44 incidents are associated with personal injuries, without or in combination with threats and insults as well as disturbing domestic peace and other damages to third party property. In 44 incidents, threats and / or insults were identified in combination with disturbing domestic peace and other damages to third party property. In 11 incidents, verbal or other type of harassment, other damage to third party property and theft were identified.



Victims: Out of the incidents where the targets were individuals - not physical spaces, like accommodation sites for unaccompanied children - the victims in 70 incidents who reached out to RVRN were men, five of whom were transgender, while in 22 incidents they were women, 8 of whom were transgender. In 1 incident, the victim was self-identified as non-binary, while in 9 cases the victims were both men and women. In 17 incidents the targets were minors between 11-17 years old and were targeted due to their ethnic origin or sexual orientation. while in 49 incidents the victims were between 18-30 years old. In 11 incidents the targets were between 31-40 years old, in 6 incidents the targets were between 41-50 years old and in 6 incidents from 51 to 60 years old. In 5 incidents the group of victims was of mixed ages, including minors and adults (12-74 years old) who were targeted due to their different ethnic origin or their support to refugees and asylum-seekers.



Perpetrators: According to the victims' testimonies, in 79 cases the perpetrators of the recorded attacks were men, in 7 cases women and in 17 cases the attack came from mixed groups of both men and women, while in 4 cases the victims couldn't see the perpetrators. These were cases of online/telephone threats or attacks on property during night-time. In 4 cases the perpetrators either were or involved minors, while in 20 cases they were between 18-30 years old. In 31 cases the perpetrators were between 31-55 years old, in 7 cases the perpetrators were identified as over 56 years old, while in 17 recorded cases, the age of the perpetrators was ranging between 18 - 75 years old. These were mainly attacks by persons living in areas where there are Reception and Identification Centres or refugee-related accommodation sites, while the victims are asylum-seekers and / or human rights defenders.

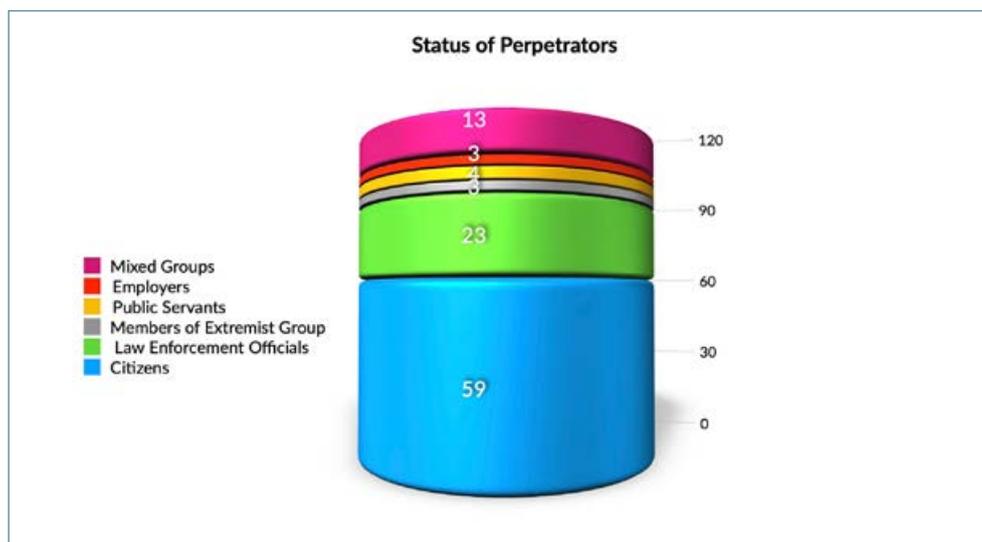


According to victims, most of the perpetrators are Greek citizens (91 cases). There was also one recorded incident where the perpetrators were Greeks and another European citizen. It was an attack against refugees and human rights defenders in Lesbos, in March 2020. RVRN recalls that at the time, members of far-right / fascist groups from other European countries appeared both in the Aegean islands and in Evros, participating in groups of locals acting as informal “militia” against asylum-seekers, refugees and human rights defenders⁴. In 5 cases in which the perpetrators were foreigners, who mainly target their compatriots due to their sexual orientation or religious identity. In 77 attacks the reported perpetrators were many, while in 30 attacks only one. It is worth noting that there is a significant increase in group attacks, i.e. by more than one perpetrator, compared to the data of 2019, given that last year the respective cases were fifty-two.

There is also a decentralization trend of such cases. Specifically, group attacks are mostly observed in incidents of racist violence, where the victims are targeted because of their ethnic origin, mainly by civilians and / or members of extremist groups, in areas where there are Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) or accommodation facilities for asylum-seekers (e.g. Lesbos, Samos, Rhodes, Evros, Fthiotida etc.). At the same time, there is an increase in incidents where the perpetrators are participating also in other attacks. Specifically, while in 2019 there were only 7 such incidents, based on the 2020 recordings, in 21 cases the victim states that the perpetrator or perpetrators participated in other attacks as well. Out of the 21 incidents, 17 took place in areas where there are Reception and Identification Centres or accommodation sites for asylum-

4. Those these events resulted to the intervention of the Public Prosecutor of the Supreme Court, who ordered his local colleagues to establish the merits of these allegations and to immediately take any action necessary for their in-depth investigation.

seekers. This reinforces the pattern of intensified and repeated violence in these areas and especially the Aegean islands.



In 23 incidents the perpetrators were law enforcement officials, while in cases the perpetrators were public officials. In 59 incidents there were civilians involved. Out of these, in one incident the perpetrator was an off-duty public official who threatened minor children seeking asylum, while in another case the perpetrator was a doctor who, as the victim testified, verbally abused the victim during his hospitalization, using transphobic vocabulary. In 3 cases the perpetrators were employers.

At this point, the Network would like to point out an incident against a farm worker, with an undeclared working status, involving his employer, which happened when the farm worker complained about the working conditions. The attack resulted in verbal abuse and personal injury of the victim. The specific conditions of this case show and contribute to the conclusion that the attack would not have been committed against someone who does not have the same characteristics (in this case a farm worker, a foreigner, without a legal status), but even if it had, it would not have been done so blatantly.

For the attacks committed by employers against foreign workers with or without documents, it is worth noting that foreignness combined with employment dependency seems to reinforce employers' decision to commit criminal acts, which they would probably not have committed if the employee had not been a foreigner. In addition, the insecurity caused by the lack of legal status, can affect the victim in terms of access to the complaint procedures, but also to a supportive framework. Despite the positive developments regarding the legal provision for the issuance of residence permits for humanitarian reasons to victims of racist crime, the combination of not

knowing about the legislation and the delays in the implementation of this protection status, contributes to the victim's uncertainty over access to the complaint procedures.

In this context, the Network looks forward to the publication of the competent Authorities' information Guide for victims of racist violence, over their rights as well as access to complaints procedures and support services. It stresses, however, the need for a broader assessment of the protection and support framework for victims, with a view to its proper functioning. It is worth noting that similarly, the recent European Strategy for Victim Support emphasizes that the main action of the European Commission for 2020-2022 will be the evaluation of tools at EU level, which will allow migrant victims to be able to report crimes regardless of residence status.

Finally, in incidents the victims believe that the perpetrators are associated with extremist groups, while in 13 incidents the victims identified the perpetrators as mixed groups of civilians and members of extremist groups, in 2 of them the victims reported that they were harassed by law enforcement officials, who were called by the perpetrators.

This trend shows the reversal of the current reality in relation to the recordings of previous years. Up until recently, the relationship between organized attacks by members of extremist groups and attacks by civilians with members of extremist groups has usually been inversely proportional. This reversal shows that the number of cases by purely extremist groups may decrease, however elements and characteristics of this modus operandi⁵ seem to be adopted in organized attacks by civilians, sometimes with the participation of members of extremist groups.

5. In these cases, perpetrators act in organized groups, moving either on motorcycles or on foot. They are dressed in black and sometimes in military trousers, wearing helmets or having their faces covered. The most common practice is "patrolling" by black-clad men, either pedestrians or motorcyclists, as self-appointed "militia", attacking refugees and migrants on the street, squares and other public places.

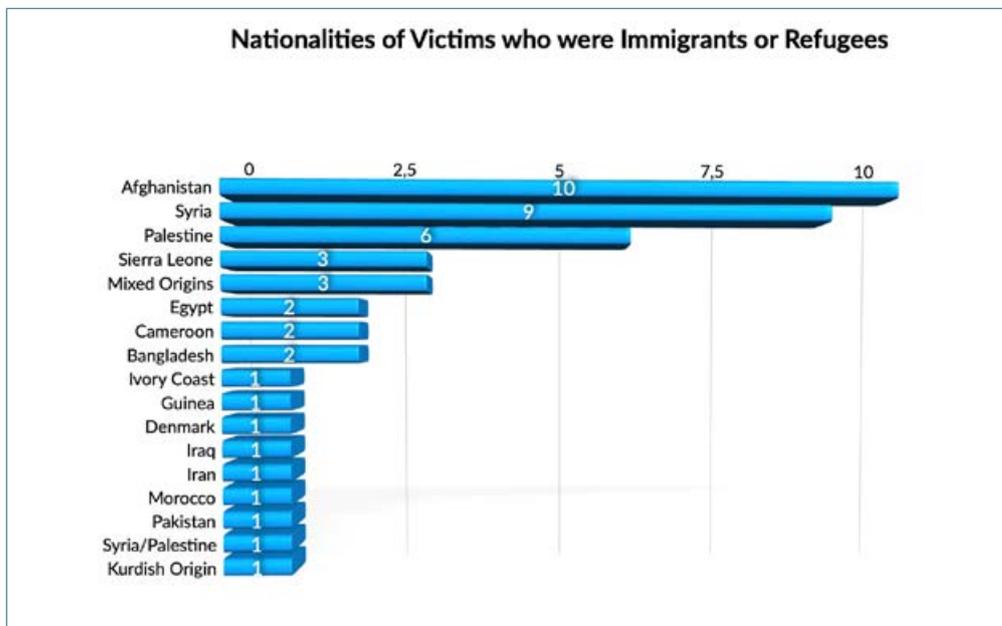
III. Analysis of the findings

This section analyses the attacks against refugees and migrants (A), against Greeks on grounds of national or ethnic origin or religion (B), against LGBTQI individuals (C). As in previous reports, special reference is made to cases where law enforcement officials and public officials are involved (D).

A. Attacks against refugees and migrants as well as human rights defenders

1. Quantitative data

In the recordings of attacks against asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants due to ethnic origin, religion and / or colour, civil society facilities providing accommodation or other services to the targeted groups, as well as on human rights defenders targeted for their support to these groups, we observe the following elements:



Victims: 40 cases against men (11-48 years old), 1 against a woman (24 years old), 5 against mixed groups of men and women (age range 9-60 years). The victims were from Afghanistan

(10), Syria (9), Palestine (6), Sierra Leone (3), Egypt (2), Cameroon (2), Ivory Coast (1), Guinea (1), Iraq (1), Iran (1), Morocco (1), Bangladesh (2), Pakistan (1), Syria / Palestine (1), three (3) of mixed nationalities, one (1) victim had Danish citizenship and was of Afghan ethnic origin, and one (1) victim was of Kurdish ethnic origin. Also, 6 incidents against civil society facilities that provide accommodation or other services to the said group, were recorded. Most of the attacks took place while employees and asylum-seekers or unaccompanied minors were in the facilities. In addition, there were 2 incidents against civil society organisations' property (e.g. cars) and 20 incidents against human rights defenders, i.e. persons who were targeted because they support or supposedly supported refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants, were recorded. In some of these incidents, based on the testimonies of human rights defenders who were victims to the attacks, refugees / asylum-seekers were also victimized.

Legal status of the victims targeted because of their ethnic origin, religion and / or colour: 28 cases against asylum seekers, 4 against refugees, 6 against migrants holding a residence permit, 4 cases against persons without a residence permit, as well as 3 cases with victims under different types of legal status (refugees, asylum-seekers, etc.). In one incident the victim was a European citizen (Danish nationality, Afghan origin).

Perpetrators: According to victims, the perpetrators were mainly Greeks (73 incidents). In one incident, a citizen of another EU country was identified among the perpetrators, while in another incident, the perpetrator was an Egyptian who targeted his compatriot. Also, the perpetrators were, in their vast majority, men (57 incidents). In 2 incidents the perpetrators were women, while in 15 incidents the group of perpetrators had both men and women. It should be noted that three (3) incidents involved minors, while the age of the perpetrators was up to 75 years old. In the vast majority of incidents (58 out of 74 against migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers and supporters), more than one perpetrator reportedly took part in the attacks, 43 of which took place on Aegean islands (Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Kos, Rhodes) and Evros, where there are formal or informal reception sites. As mentioned above, in 21 incidents, the victims identify individuals among the perpetrators who had participated again in incidents of racist violence, when in 2019 there only 7 such incidents. Out of those, 17 took place mainly in Aegean islands, where there are Reception and Identification Centres but also in the mainland where there are accommodation sites for asylum-seekers. The victims identify the perpetrators both for their general action on the far right at the local level and for their involvement in other incidents of racist violence.

2. The COVID-19 pandemic as a redefining factor of the discrimination and racist violence context

In 2020, the Network recorded incidents that are either directly or indirectly related to the pandemic. As mentioned above, the new reality brought about by the pandemic, has strongly affected the recordings of incidents of racist violence. Network's recordings, although they

constitute 10 percent of the total recorded incidents, are an indication of the key parameters of the new context brought by the coronavirus, in which the manifestations of racism have taken a new dimension. In short, the pandemic becomes the framework for the development and intensification of xenophobic behaviours, discrimination, and incidents of violence with racist motive.

In particular, the Network recorded incidents in the context of police checks on movement restriction measures, in which, harassing behaviours and expression of violence with a racist motive were identified. Based on the victims' testimonies, in some cases, police officers, during checks on movement restriction measures, locate the victims and check only them, despite the fact that they are amongst a wider crowd (eg queues in supermarkets, streets, etc.). Victims believe that they are not picked randomly, but based on their characteristics, such as ethnic origin or colour (profiling). As the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) points out in its recent General Recommendation no. 36 on the prevention and treatment of racial profiling, the identification or selection of a person on the basis of racial profiling in the field of police checks, is the process by which law enforcement is based on generalizations due to race, colour, ethnic or national origin, instead of objective evidence or individual behaviour, when subjecting individuals to identity checks and detailed investigations or when concluding about someone's involvement in criminal activity. It is also pointed out that whether it stems from the attitude and practices of individual officers or is a broader culture of law enforcement services, racial profiling is a long-standing practice in many services. That reality, according to the UN Committee, is associated with stereotypes and prejudices, which can be conscious or unconscious institutional and structural. Stereotypes are the basis for violations of international human rights law when applied to undermine the enjoyment of human rights⁶. In this context we find incidents against Greek citizens who differ due to ethnic origin, both within the framework of checks to the movement restriction measures for the pandemic and in other circumstances⁷.

In the course of the aforementioned controls, there are in some cases violent behaviours of different intensity, such as verbal and physical violence. Some of the victims are prosecuted and detained in police stations, without being informed about the reason for their detention or justified in the slightest by the type of violation. For example, during a check to movement restriction measures, the victim held his legal documents but had forgotten his mobile phone at home. He was then taken to a police station, detained and subjected to severe physical violence. The pattern of physical violence during the checks and / or detention of victims is repeated in other similar incidents. A typical case is that of an asylum-seeker on an Aegean island, who, along

6. UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), General recommendation No. 36: Preventing and Combating Racial Profiling by Law Enforcement Officials, σελ. 4-5, 24 November 2020. Available at: CERD_C_GC_36_9291_E.pdf (ohchr.org)

7. For more information on attacks against Greek citizens because of their ethnic origin or religion, see pages 34-35.

with his friend, were fined because they went out for a walk while they were not allowed to do so, due to the restrictive measures. The police officer who checked them also used physical violence when the victims reacted, as they were not aware of the restrictive measures: “I admit we made a mistake, but we did not know we were not allowed to go for a walk. I agree to pay the fine because of my mistake, but I do not know why he slapped me and behaved like that. I think it is because we are not Greeks”.

It should be stipulated, that the movement restriction measures due to coronavirus both in the accommodation sites for asylum-seekers and in the Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) are stricter than the respective measures for the general population. As the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) of the Council of Europe points out in its 2020 report, some government measures that have been introduced in response to the COVID-19 crisis, are targeting groups such as refugees and asylum-seekers, without evidence of any public health risks coming from these groups, have led to further discrimination against marginalized groups, causing a setback in their human rights, that could prove long-term⁸. They pose serious obstacles to asylum-seekers’ access to core services, such as access to education, legal aid and medical care. The new situation that refugee children living in reception / accommodation sites are facing, is a typical example. Due to the movement restriction of the said population outside the sites, children didn’t have access to schools outside the sites, even when distance learning hadn’t been introduced yet. The Network monitors these developments given their particular contribution to strengthening institutional racism, but also the consequences for the refugee population, especially children, who try to regain their deprived normality and integrate into society, under adverse conditions.

As the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance characteristically states in its Annual Report for 2020, racist and xenophobic incidents associated with the outbreak of the pandemic are widespread. They include verbal and physical attacks, social exclusion, denial of access to essential goods and services, restrictions on free movement and quarantine policies, as well as intolerant rhetoric by public figures, especially politicians and media professionals⁹.

In the same context, the Network expresses its concern about other incidents of discrimination against refugees and migrants. The Network monitors these incidents, even when they are not in the context of racist violence, due to their qualitative characteristics, which give more complete picture of the manifestations of racism and how they are evolving within the unprecedented

8. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), Annual Report on ECRI’s Activities covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2020, p. 8, March 2021. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/annual-report-on-ecri-s-activities-for-2020/1680a1cd59>

9. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), Annual Report on ECRI’s Activities covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2020., p. 6.

context of the pandemic. Specifically, the Network was briefed by its members, migrant and refugee communities, on issues of access to health care as well as specific cases of discrimination regarding the access of asylum-seekers and refugees to hospitals across the country. Although issues of access to healthcare for asylum-seekers were observed even before the pandemic -e.g. delays in granting PAAYPE (Provisional Social Security and Health Care Number)-, in the current period, in order for public hospitals to allow access to asylum-seekers residing in accommodation sites, they ask for a negative COVID-19 test, which refugees are required to pay themselves.

The below incident, although not directly related to the context of the pandemic, is an indication of the tragic consequences of discrimination in access to healthcare. An asylum-seeker, who lives in a Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) on an Aegean island, said that he did not have access to the medication he needed because, according to his brother, due to the pandemic, access to pharmaceutical care providers for RIC residents was limited to impossible in the recording period. Following another seizure he had, his brother took him to the hospital. However, during the recording period, the hospital had set a specific protocol in accepting patients from the RIC, according to which they had to bring a referral document from the medical unit in the RIC. Consequently, the hospital's security guard did not allow the two asylum-seekers enter the hospital. The brother who accompanied the victim there in critical condition, said: "The security guard told us it was too late, and we would have to return to the camp for the doctor to refer us. I explained to him that the doctor at the centre was closed and I begged him to let us in, but he would not let us, so I brought him back (to the RIC)". The patient was left helpless and died a few hours later.

The incidents of issuing fines arbitrarily, that were brought to the attention of the Network raise serious concern. Although not always combined with racist violence¹⁰ they are key elements in the synthesis of the new reality of the manifestations of racism and especially institutional racism, within the context of the pandemic. After all, as the Network has pointed out in the past, racist violence is one of the most significant expressions of racism and it is based on the existence and development of phobic attitudes towards diversity by society as a whole, but it is also fuelled by institutional racism and discrimination by the Authorities.

In a typical example, an unaccompanied minor was at a square waiting for an employee of the accommodation site where the minor was staying to accompany him to a medical appointment. The police checked the boy in the context of the movement restriction measures. The minor showed all the necessary documents. However, the police officers fined him 300 euros. Following insistence of an employee working at the site to speak with the senior officer who was in charge

10. The incidents brought to the attention of the Network that include expressions of discrimination, but not racist violence, are not included in the Network's quantitative data. However, the Network monitors and highlights them due to their qualitative characteristics, which give a more complete picture of the aspects of racism, and in particular institutional racism, and how they are evolving within the unprecedented context of the pandemic.

of the police squad and not present at the incident, the latter, after talking to the employee, cancelled the fine and apologized for the act of his subordinates.

Similarly, there seems to be a pattern of abuse in issuing fines also in the Aegean islands, where Reception and Identification Centres are located. More specifically, the Network was informed about cases where asylum-seekers left the Reception and Identification Centre for some appointments they had in the island's city, having already taken the "green light" from the police representatives inside the RIC, i.e. the police officers in the RIC had already checked the text message that the asylum-seekers need to send out. However, inside the city centre, other police officers fined them during a check to movement restriction measures, even though the asylum-seekers carried all the supporting documents.

In 2020, there are also cases which show that the pandemic and protection measures are an opportunity for the expression of stereotypical xenophobic behaviours that reach racist violence. In the reporting period, asylum-seekers and refugees were not allowed to wait in the same queue with locals at a supermarket on an Aegean island with a Reception and Identification Centre. In this case, colour and ethnic origin were the characteristics of segregation and prioritization of customers for their access to the store. Any reaction that highlighted and criticised the racist background of such a practice, caused the reaction of the Greeks who were waiting in the queue: "This is my country, I can go to the supermarket whenever I want" was the aggressive response of a Greek citizen, while others threatened that they would call the police.

Based on information provided to the Network, there were similar practices on another Aegean island as well. The following incident is another typical example. Two asylum-seekers who had ordered and paid at a restaurant (fastfood), they were heading outside to sit at one of the restaurant's tables. The owner prevented them from doing so and forced them to leave. An employee of a humanitarian organization who witnessed the scene asked for explanations and the owner said that due to the pandemic he does not allow anyone to sit at the tables. It should be specified that this is the period when the restaurants were open and were allowed to have customers at their open-air space. An hour later, the witness returned and saw Greek citizens sitting at the restaurant tables, and were not driven away, as happened to the asylum-seekers. The witness asked the owner for explanations and ended up becoming a victim of verbal abuse due to his support for the asylum-seekers.

In August 2020, in a ticket inspection by train inspectors, the latter, after checking the ticket of a recognized refugee who was on the train and had not disembarked at the station of his destination because he had fallen asleep, they also proceeded to check his other documents and found a medical document from a hospital. That document indicated that in May 2020, three months prior to the incident, the refugee had contracted COVID-19. The victim expressed his willingness to pay the difference in the ticket resulting from the fact that he lost his stop. However, the inspectors refused to serve him and return his documents, without giving any explanation to

his constant questions both about the unjustified withholding of his documents and about the extremely offensive behaviour against him.

According to the victim, the inspectors called the police, without explaining the reason. Police officers were waiting for him at the next train stop, held him there for two hours and told him to sit on the street. The refugee said that he begged the police to release him, but they refused. An ambulance arrived two hours later and took him to the hospital. The refugee did not understand why he is taken to the hospital, while the doctors who examined him did not understand either why he was referred there, since it is common understanding that the victim could not be a COVID-19 carrier any longer. The said incident, however, shows clearly that the xenophobic responses of both the inspectors and the police officers gave the victim a characterisation as being a “public health risk” that had to be immediately removed from the place where other people were, to be held on the street against his will for two hours, and finally to be taken to the hospital to confirm that as a COVID-19 patient three months ago, he couldn't be a carrier of the illness any longer. On the contrary, the inspectors and especially the police, on the occasion of the pandemic, became perpetrators of institutional racism, targeting the victim with their xenophobic behaviour. The victim was received, treated and helped to travel by a representative of the local municipal authority who was informed of the unacceptable incident.

3. Organised attacks against refugees, migrants and human rights defenders

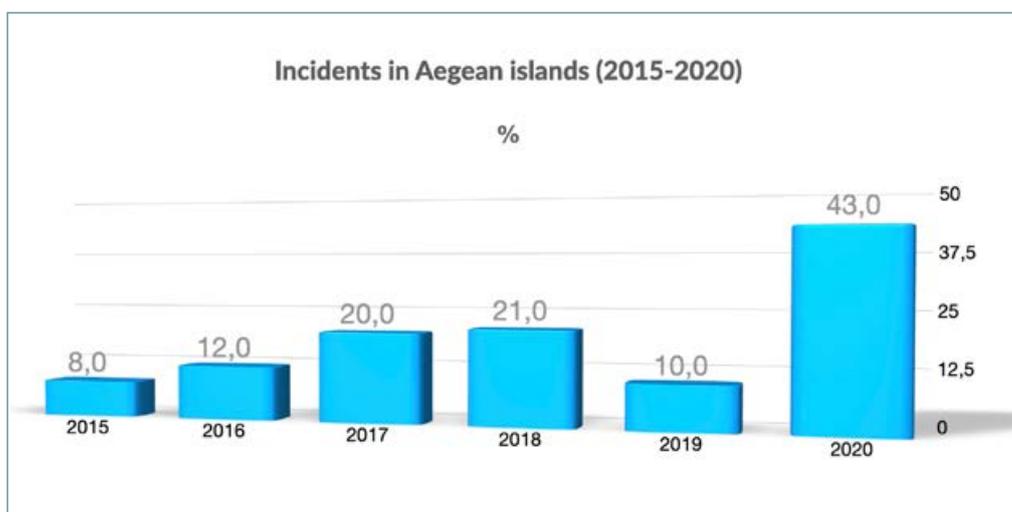
Based on the Network's data in 2020, there is a wider and more intense targeting of refugees and migrants, accommodation sites or other services for asylum-seekers and unaccompanied children, as well as people who were targeted as human rights defenders¹¹. In its 2019 report, the Network had already expressed its serious concern about the tension manifested against these groups. The incidents in 2020 as well as last year's events and mainly the developments in the Aegean islands and Evros, especially in the first quarter of 2020, show the increase in the frequency of organized attacks against these groups.

The qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the attacks, as described above, highlight a periodically increasing intensity in areas where there are Reception and Identification Centres or accommodation sites for asylum-seekers as well as unaccompanied minors, caused by organised, informal (or not) xenophobic groups, acting as law enforcement services against refugees and human rights defenders, with repeated attacks until their goal is achieved. During the incidents, these groups state that they are imbued by xenophobic ideologies, adopt the respective vocabulary and practices, in some cases carry weapons, mostly improvised, and behave as if they are on a mission. They do not hesitate to resort to extreme violence such as arson of facilities,

11. As analysed in Chapter II-General characteristics of recorded attacks, the attacks on the specific target groups account for 70% of the Network's records for 2020.

obstruction of movement (roadblocks) or prevention of disembarkation of newly arrived refugees, while making racist comments, attacking and damaging property and equipment of organizations providing services to refugees, bullying but also physically harming refugees and supporters. Within this framework of action, a supportive framework is being developed by some of the local communities where the incidents take place. This support is expressed either by participating in the above organized actions, or by reproducing xenophobic behaviours and racist violence in other aspects of their daily lives, or through social media posts. Essentially, due to the tensions created in the respective local communities on the management of refugee and migration flows, there seems to be an increase in the attraction of members from the local communities by extremist groups, and in harassing behaviours, verbal and physical attacks, as well as occupations of public spaces to identify, intimidate and attack refugees and human rights defenders.

The above-mentioned manifestations of violence with a racist motive are predominant in the public space of local communities, with strong elements of structured organizations, in any circumstance that allows the resurgence of such action (eg announcement of installation of reception or accommodation sites). However, they do not disappear when the effect of each incident fades out. On the contrary, they continue, usually at a lower intensity and spread, thus giving strong indications of a universal trend with different levels of intensity and scope. The increase in incidents of racist violence recorded by the Network, compared to previous years, is an indication of the above-mentioned circumstances. From 2015 to 2019 the attacks on the Aegean islands with the most refugee flows (Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Kos, Rhodes) range from eight percent to 20 percent of the total recorded incidents, while in 2020 they exceeded 40 percent. From February to March 2020, especially in these areas, those practises seem to become generalized, aiming at the intimidation of refugees and human rights defenders.



The Network has highlighted many times in the past the link between the rise of xenophobia and racist incidents with the lack of a coherent and people-centred refugee and migration policy, based on international standards and guarantees, as well as the overcrowding situation in the reception centres of the islands and mainland accommodation facilities, in extremely precarious conditions, without realistic integration policies and acceptance of diversity, which impedes the harmonious coexistence and burdens both the refugee and migrant population and the local communities.

The escalation of such incidents is inextricably linked to the institutional targeting of refugees and migrants through the official speech of political leadership representatives at a central and local level, as well through the media. In early 2020, in the context of the tension that had arisen in those days on the Greek-Turkish border, in public discourse refugees and migrants were called “invaders”, a term that clearly refers to war, encouraging the dangerous assumption that possible attacks against refugees and migrants, as well as those who support them could be considered as legitimate defence.

The sense of impunity is confirmed to some extent by the increase in reports where victims identify among the perpetrators individuals who have participated again in incidents of racist violence. In 2019 these incidents reached only seven percent of the recordings, while in 2020 they reach almost 20 percent of the incidents¹². Police attitude, as highlighted by the incidents recorded by the Network and analysed in more detail below, appears extremely problematic in terms of its role in the escalation of violence. The Network recorded incidents where police officers, instead of intervening to the rescue and protection of the victims, contribute to the harassment against them or show tolerance for the illegal behaviour of citizens targeting refugees and supporters¹³. In the same context, in a joint memorandum to the Greek authorities, in May 2020, the UN Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights defenders, on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, on the human rights of migrants as well as on human trafficking, expressed their particular concern about the reaction of members of local authorities to the events that took place in Lesbos and Chios in early 2020, stressing that not all alleged acts of intimidation and harassment may have been processed, which could have facilitated their continuation¹⁴.

12. For more information see Chapter II, General characteristics of the recorded attacks, page 12-19.

13. For more information on incidents involving public servants, see page 39-46.

14. Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants; and the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children (REFERENCE: AL GRC 2/2020), 1 May 2020, page 5, available at: <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=25189>

The events that took place in the port of Thermi in Lesvos at the beginning of March 2020 and as depicted through the testimonies recorded by the Network, are a typical example of the above analysis. A crowd of locals (the victims described it as an “angry mob”) gathered at the port to stop the disembarkation of refugees. Based on the testimony of a victim and an eyewitness, the coast guard, instead of trying to help the boat reach the port, approaches it at high speed, creating strong waves. This was happening for at least 40 minutes to an hour, while a lot of people had started gathering at the port, watching the incident. Eventually, the coast guard towed the boat to port and left. As the boat was approaching the port, people started to gather at the pier to prevent the boat from mooring.

“They had built a human wall to prevent people from getting off the boat, while there were children and a pregnant woman aboard”.

The refugees were panicking because they didn’t understand what was happening and the babies were crying. The locals were cursing them shouting, among other things, “Go back to Turkey”, “Islamic monkeys”. Someone from the crowd snatches a large piece of wood and tries to push the boat back into the open sea. At the same time, the crowd targets human rights defenders and journalists who are there. In addition to verbal attacks, some were seriously, physically beaten. A journalist, in addition to the destruction of his equipment, experienced intense physical violence. The phrase “NGOs, catch them” that is heard by the crowd, re-ignites blind and savage attacks. There were also groups of people riding motorcycles, holding crowbars.

The roadblock had started, as early as February 2020, in the context of the local community’s protest against the installation of the new, closed type, reception centre. Strong police forces had already been deployed from the mainland, and their presence and actions sparked widespread reactions. The withdrawal of police forces is linked, at least in time, to the coordinated turn of part of the local community against refugee population and human rights defenders. Perhaps this is the first time that the latter are experiencing such intense targeting. The following testimony of a victim is indicative. During the incident there is a roadblock by 40-50 people, men and women, of various ages. They had blocked the road, stopping cars asking if the passengers were locals or NGO employees. At the slightest indication that they are supporters, the attack began (verbal, physical, car damages), while they did not allow passage beyond the roadblock.

A few days later and while the roadblocks continued, a crowd that had set up a roadblock cut the course of a rented vehicle driven by a citizen of another European country who participated in refugee support actions and had refugees aboard. They drag the passengers out of the car using violence, threatened and hit them. At the same time, they attacked the vehicle and broke the windows, tore the tires, and forcibly removed the equipment that the victim was carrying. The supporter ran in a neighbouring area with a flat tire, while he did not see his passengers again that

day. After the incident, he went to the police to report the incident. He filed a complaint against unknown persons, for damage and theft. However, as he later found out, the details of the attacks were not mentioned in the report, which was drafted by the police. In addition, he received a copy of the report after going six times to the police. A few days later, one of the beaten refugees recognized one of the perpetrators who had stolen his mobile phone, as member of an extreme right / fascist group, from another European country, who had arrived on the island. He went to the Police and the Authorities, allegedly, denied the testimony and the latest evidence provided by the refugee on the incident. It is recalled that similar incidents, including the presence of members of far-right / fascist groups from other EU countries in the Aegean islands and Evros, resulted to the intervention of the Public Prosecutor of the Supreme Court, who ordered his local colleagues to establish the merits of these allegations and to immediately take any action necessary for their in depth investigation.

However, this type of incidents is not limited to Lesvos. In the first quarter of 2020, the tension is generalized and concerns the all entry points of the country that are linked to refugee and migration flows. At the end of January 2020, two asylum-seekers walking in the city of Chios on a day when there is a general strike on the island and a protest against the installation of a closed-type reception center for asylum-seekers in Chios, were attacked with a knife by people riding on motorcycles. The perpetrators, while riding their motorcycles, stabbed one of the victims. All perpetrators wore helmets and the asylum-seekers could not see their faces. The injured asylum-seekers asked from local resident to call the police. The police arrived, but their attitude, according to the victims, was aggressive. The police frisked the injured asylum-seekers, checked their mobile phones and took them without the asylum-seekers' consent. The police car drove around the square twice, in order for the two asylum-seekers to show the exact place where the incident took place and then went to the police station. At the police station, the behaviour of police officers was said to have been odd. They did not record what happened nor did they record the testimonies. One police officer, however, gave the two asylum-seekers some antiseptic and cotton and patted them on the shoulder, saying: "Everything will be fine". Both asylum-seekers believe this was a racist attack because of their nationality.

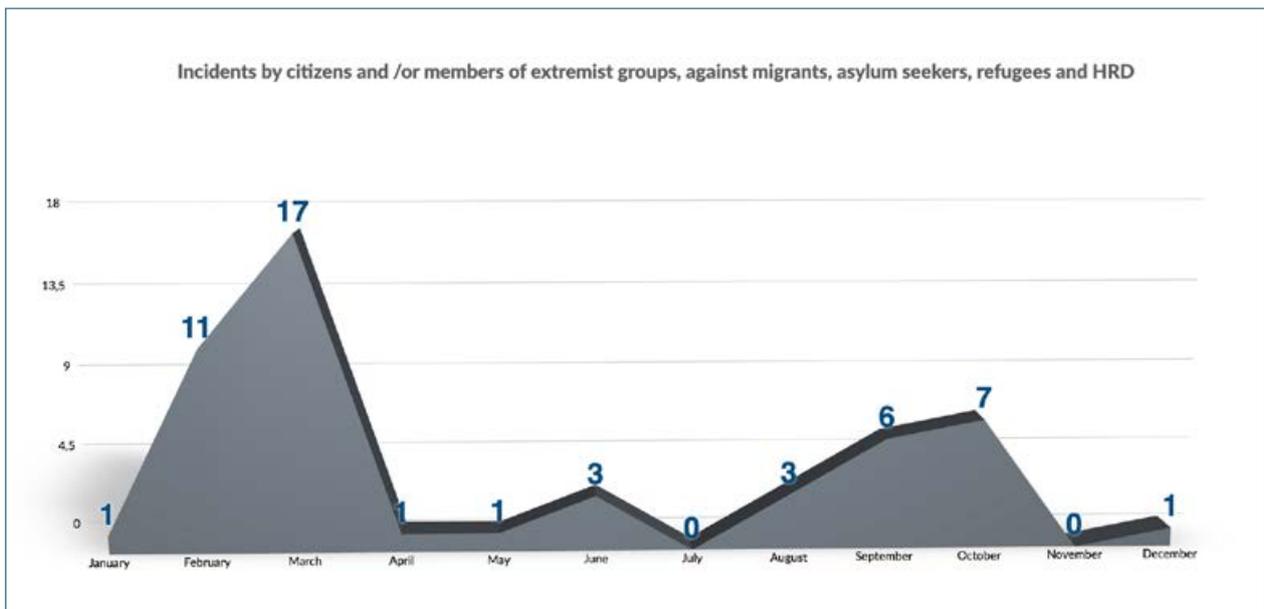
Also, in early March 2020, two asylum-seekers encountered a roadblock from locals while they were walking. Six Greeks approached them holding wooden bats and flashlights. They started beating the victims as soon as they said they were refugees from Syria. The victim said:

“I figured out they were Greeks, because they used some Greek words, such as “malaka”. After hitting me with the bats on the head and the right hand, I fell on the ground and lost consciousness. They probably thought I was dead and they left only then. When the incident happened, a police bus was just a few meters away. I shouted very loudly, but no one came to help me. My voice was heard as far as Aleppo in Syria. The police did nothing. They wanted to kill me because I am a refugee.”

At the same time, on Chios island, a fire broke out in a space where human rights defenders were stockpiling core relief items for refugees. The information given to the owner of the space by the competent authorities, indicate arson. Some residents of the island went on social media applauding the arson, given that the space belonged to an NGO. According to the members of the organization, that was a targeted attack because of their support to refugees. Besides, a few days after the arson, a man riding a motorcycle, passed by another warehouse which is used to store core relief items for refugees. The man warned that the warehouse should close, otherwise they would set it on fire. Also, a few weeks earlier, two women had verbally assaulted a local group of musicians who had met for their rehearsals at a building near the Reception and Identification Centre. By listening to the music, the perpetrators believed that refugees were participating. A member of the group tried to explain to the two women that it is a group of musicians rehearsing, and that they are Greeks. They kept on making threats and insults with racist content, in the same intensity and threatening fashion. Later on, one of the two women was identified by the members of the group and a request for recommendations to the incident was submitted to the Chios Prosecutor's Office. However, the Network has not been informed to date about any further developments.

The organized attacks by groups of locals against refugees, migrants and human rights defenders, more widely in areas where these groups are concentrated, at least according to the Network's records, have a disruptive effect in the social cohesion, but seem to be declining. The main factors of such a finding are the reduction of flows and refugee population on the islands, in combination with the restriction of the movement of refugees in public spaces, in the context of measures adopted against the pandemic. In fact, the above conditions seem to have contributed to the reduction of the population's visibility in the local communities. The intensity of the attacks might have reduced in comparison with the period February - March 2020, however, this does not necessarily mean the elimination of the phenomenon or its limitation to the Aegean islands exclusively. After all, the causes of the problem and the perpetrators' motives continue to exist. Thus, the reactions caused by the problem can only return with intensity on every occasion, fuelling the intensification of violence, but they also continue to take place, to a lesser extent,

unseen by the general public. The following diagram shows the incidents where the perpetrators are citizens and / or members of extremist groups, against migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees and unaccompanied children as well as human rights defenders, based on the month in which each incident took place. Almost every month of the year, incidents of racist violence take place in areas where refugees and migrants gather, mainly in areas with accommodation and reception facilities, while in certain periods there is an intensification of incidents. This includes the reactivation of roadblocks in Lesvos, after the fires at the Reception and Identification Centre in Moria in September-October 2020¹⁵, but also incidents recorded by the Network in Evros in the same period, where the perpetrators are armed civilians who are targeting refugees in an organised fashion.



In the aftermath of the incidents in early 2020 in Evros, the Network documented three testimonies linked to attacks by groups of citizens, armed with shotguns, against refugees and unaccompanied minors who had crossed the Evros border. These testimonies show that the pattern of organized violence by self-appointed citizens under the distorted view of defending national sovereignty, continues to exist beyond the period in question. In these cases, the motive of the attack appears mixed, combining racist attack with stealing money and items that the victims are carrying. In one of these incidents, after the attack, the victim who was seriously wounded by bullets, arrived along with other injured refugees in a village close to the place the attack and the police were called. The victim was initially taken to hospital, given his serious injury. The other five refugees

15. For more information on that incident, see p. 42.

were given first aid on the spot, as they suffered minor injuries. The victim was hospitalized for six days, under guard. Next to him, there was an Afghan citizen who had suffered multiple stab wounds and explained to the victim (they both spoke little Turkish) that he had been attacked in the same area by a group of 10-15 people armed with knives. During his hospitalization, a man in plain clothes visited the victim and took his statement without the presence of an interpreter. Following discharge from the hospital, the victim was arrested and administratively detained for entering the country illegally. He was taken to the detention centre in a hospital gown and his coat, filled with bullet holes and blood. They removed the eye-drops that the hospital had given him and kept his medical records. He was sleeping on the floor without a blanket and hot water. He was in pain and asked for a doctor, but the police did nothing. A few days later, he was released with a decision to postpone his removal.

In 2020, incidents related to practices of organized attacks and incitement to violence were also identified in Crete. The Network recorded an incident that occurred in August 2020 in a city of the prefecture of Heraklion that hosts a significant number of migrant workers in the agricultural sector, including some without a legal status in Greece. During a conflict between workers, a Greek worker attacked a Pakistani worker with a knife, seriously injuring him. According to the recording, the attack seems to have had a racist motive, given the previous racist expression of the perpetrator, in the presence of other people, against people of Pakistani origin. The incident caused the escalation of the conflict between workers. This incident was followed by organized actions, similar to pogroms, against Pakistani workers, attacks on informal places of worship, while demonstrations with extreme far-right rhetoric were also organized. At a rally organized in the area in those days, hate speech and incitement to violence seemed to dominate public discourse.

Based on the relevant material brought to the attention of the Network, a participant in the rally, who was a candidate in the previous elections with the Golden Dawn, said about Pakistani workers:

“Beat them, shoot them, bury them, so they can say nothing. If they say that I cause violence, yes, I do cause violence, of course I do, we stomp and bury him and they can never find the dead man”.

At the same time, a xenophobic brochure was distributed in the areas of Heraklion, calling on citizens to react “to the Islamisation of Crete”. Similar practices and attitudes were also identified in the field of social media. The fact that the Public Prosecutor for Racist Violence dealt with the attack on the employee, is a positive step. However, at least to this day, gaps continue to be identified in the investigation and prosecution process over all the incidents in that period.

More broadly, in a comparison of the quantitative and qualitative trends of racist violence, through

the recordings of the Network, in relation to the previous year, the findings of the comparison are the following: In 2019, the Network continued the recordings of attacks that had elements of structured organizations or were carried out by organized groups, while there was an increasing trend in incidents where the perpetrator was an individual engaging in an activity or arrangement of a victim's issue in the context of managing everyday life matters (neighbours, property owners in the houses where refugees live, public transport employees, etc.). In 2020, the incidents that could be part of an expression of daily racism against the targeted groups through violent, usually low-intensity, behaviours, seem to have decreased. The pandemic is considered to be a key factor. In addition, traffic within public places, where the majority of such incidents occurred, has been drastically reduced. However, there is an increase in the participation of citizens in organized attacks against refugees, asylum-seekers and human rights defenders, as well as an increase in targeting the latter. Also, in comparison to previous years, there is decentralization of organized racist violence in the Greek region, and especially in areas where there are reception and accommodation sites for asylum-seekers. The escalation of such incidents at periods, is inextricably linked to the institutional targeting of refugees, migrants and defenders through the official speech of political leadership representatives at a central and local level, as well through the media.

B. Attacks against Greek citizens due to ethnic origin and colour

In 2020, the Network recorded three incidents against Greek citizens, who were targeted, due to different ethnic origin, as “less” Greeks. In the two incidents the targets were Roma Greek citizens, while in the third incident, the target was a Greek citizen of Egyptian origin. It should be noted, that in one incident against Roma Greek citizens as well as against the Greek citizen of Egyptian origin, the victims were targeted by law enforcement officials. In the latter case, the targeting took place during a check to the movement restriction measures for the pandemic, with the victim stating during the recording that he was called to a check, while he was in a queue to enter a supermarket, due to his colour. This eloquently reflects the range of stereotypes against the new generation of people of different ethnic origins. The key feature in this case, is the fact that the policeman spoke in English when asked for the documents of the Greek citizen.

In the case of the attack on Roma Greek citizens by law enforcement officials, the victims were in their vehicle heading to work when for the second time in a few minutes they were asked by police to stop for a check. The second time, they stop and prepare their documents once more, until the police officers approach them for the check. As one of the victims stated during the recording, “this is a daily routine to us. I had my documents ready, ID card, driving license, registration and insurance”. However, the police officer asks the victims to get out of the car and attacks them verbally and physically, accusing them of robbery with the proof, as the victims report, that one of them had a tattoo.

*“He sees the tattoo I have on my left leg and begins shouting
“You f*** c*** I will f*** you... You broke into the house”.*

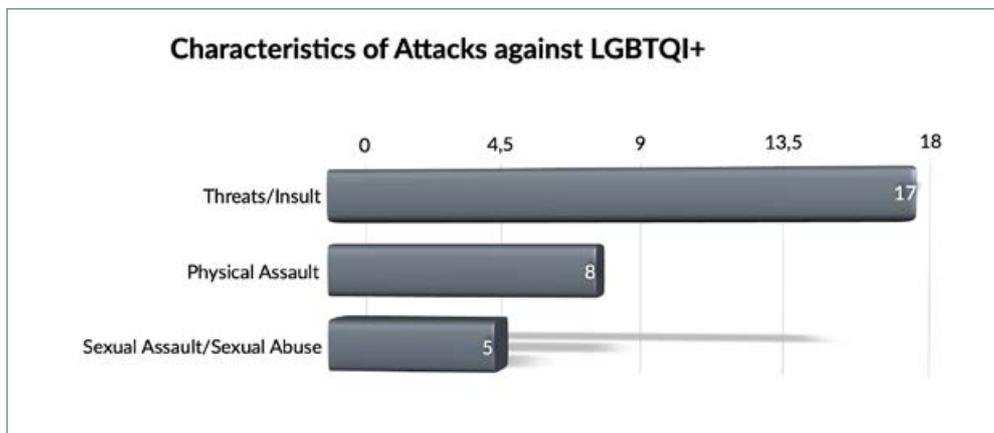
Other police officers also started participating in the attack. When one of the victims, amidst multiple blows, stresses out that he has not been involved in any robbery but he works in that area as a junk dealer to support his family and his sick father, one of the police answers: “Kill the gipsy” One of the victims who experienced that impasse and violent incident said: “The police officer drags my brother down and they start punching him. At some point my brother reacted, “why are you beating us?” he said.

“I begged for police car to arrive so that they would stop beating us. Although we did not refuse to go to the police station, they handcuffed us. They brought us in, we gave our IDs and they took photos of us to check us”.

The victims were released a few hour later, after the police officers checked their details and without being charged.

C. Assaults against LGBTQI+ individuals

In 2020, RVRN documented 30 cases of attacks on LGBTQI+ individuals (12 due to gender identity, 14 due to sexual orientation and 4 cases due to sexual orientation / gender identity). Recorded attacks on LGBTQI+ individuals include verbal assaults, physical violence, and sexual assaults, in some cases in combination with theft and disturbance of domestic peace. A common trait in the vast majority of cases is the combination of different types of violence and criminal acts with every possible intensity.



1. Assaults on grounds of sexual orientation

In 14 out of the 30 cases against LGBTQI+ individuals, the victims were targeted due to their sexual orientation.

Victims: 12 incidents against men, 1 against a woman, and 1 against a non-binary individual.

Age of the victims: In 3 incidents the victims were minors, in 8 incidents the victims were between 18 and 25 years old, in 2 incidents among the victims were between 26-30 years old and in 1 incident the victim was 59 years old. The attacks mainly include verbal violence (threats / insults). Specifically, in 6 incidents the victims were verbally abused, in some cases in combination with disturbance of domestic peace, in 4 incidents the attacks included physical and verbal violence, while in 4 incidents the victims suffered sexual assault, in some cases in combination with physical and verbal violence.

In two incidents, the victims stated that they had been subjected to racist violence again in the past. The specific incidents highlight the repeated victimization factor, as well as the need for special support for people who have been victims of racist violence repeatedly. Unprovoked victimization is the use of violence, without any necessary prior interaction between the victim and the perpetrator, but only because of the victim's characteristics, or those that the perpetrator thinks that the victim has, for which the victim is targeted. This is one of the main elements of racist violence and an extremely aggravating factor for the sense of security and justice that the individual should enjoy within society. Essentially, as stressed out in a recent publication of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) for the support of victims of racist crimes, the perpetrator's actions are considered an attack to the core identity of a person who is underestimated, discredited and ridiculed. In addition to the physical harm and shock that victims suffer immediately after an attack, one of the most important impacts of hate crime victimizations is the socio-emotional and psychological distress¹⁶. And when this type of racist violence is repeated, the burden of vulnerability can become overwhelming for the individual. As pointed out in the EU Strategy for Victim Support, all victims are vulnerable, but their individual characteristics, the nature of the crime they have suffered or the individual circumstances, render some victims are even more vulnerable than others. Particular attention should be paid to victims with specific protection needs against secondary risks, repeated victimization, intimidation and retaliation¹⁷.

Perpetrators: In 10 incidents the perpetrators were men with 1 minor among them, while in 4 incidents the perpetrators were both men and women. Also, the perpetrators' ages varied,

16. ODIHR, Understanding the Needs of Hate Crime Victims, 2020, p 11, available at: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/5/463011.pdf>

17. EU strategy on victims' rights (2020-2025), 24 June 2020, p.9, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EL/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0258&from=EL>

ranging from 17 to 65 years old. Regarding the status of the perpetrators, most of them are citizens, however, in 1 incident the perpetrator was the victim's employer, and in 4 incidents the perpetrators were from the victim's family environment.

A qualitative element related to the new circumstances brought with the pandemic, is that the spread of incidents is observed in very specific public spaces (e.g. squares, streets) compared to previous years, when the incidents were spread in many different areas of the public space. An additional element of the new circumstances is that half of the incidents take place inside the victims' residence or online.

Regarding incidents where the perpetrators come from the victim's family environment, domestic incidents of racist violence usually take place when a child discloses his/her sexual orientation or gender identity to the parents. In these cases, the family, instead of maintaining its supportive trait, becomes a condition of rejection and violence. In 2020, the Network found that due to the pandemic, the restriction imposed to stay at home is combined, in some cases, with the exercise of domestic violence with a racist motive. According to the independent UN expert on the protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, the instructions for staying at home, the isolation, the increased stress and exposure to family members increase the risk of violence, while the particular data for Europe show an increase in domestic violence in most of the countries surveyed¹⁸. This finding is also confirmed by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance in its relevant report for 2020, which specifically states that LGBTQI+ youth have been exposed many times to domestic rejection and domestic violence during the Covid-19¹⁹ pandemic.

Special mention should be made of an intra-university attack, by the victim's fellow students, during distance learning. The perpetrators switched off their web cameras and verbally attacked the victim, without giving the teacher the opportunity to identify which students were behind the attack. Human Rights Watch established that due to the closure of schools, which is linked to the Covid-19 pandemic, harassment against LGBTQI+ people has been transferred from the classroom, as a physical space, to online spaces²⁰ (cyberbullying). The latest findings increase

18. United Nations Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, Report to the UN General Assembly: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Human Rights of LGBT Persons, June 2020, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/SexualOrientation/ImpactCOVID19LGBTpersons.pdf>

19. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), Annual Report on ECRI's Activities covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2020, p. 11, March 2021. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/annual-report-on-ecri-s-activities-for-2020/1680a1cd59>

20. Human Rights Watch, Bullying, Violence Common in Schools Worldwide: Governments Should Urgently Tackle Education-Related Abuse, 5 November 2020 available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/11/05/bullying-violence-common-schools-worldwide>

RVRN concerns, given that families and schools, especially during times of crisis, are social structures within which any individual should enjoy acceptance and safety, and not experiencing rejection and persecution.

2. Attacks due to gender identity

In 2020, 12 incidents of attacks due to gender identity were recorded.

Victims: In 7 incidents the victims were women 18-60 years old and in 5 incidents the victims were men 21-40 years old.

In 2020, 9 incidents of verbal violence were recorded, as well as 3 incidents of physical violence, in combination with insults and / or threats, disturbance of domestic peace and other types of harassment.

Perpetrators: In 8 incidents, the perpetrators were men, mainly 20-50 years old. In 3 incidents they were women 40 to 53 years old, while in 1 incident the perpetrators were both women and men, 25-30 years old.

As pointed out in previous reports, victims of violence due to gender identity, often suffer multiple assaults inside their homes, while they are also targeted by people in their family environment, people in their workplace, or unknown individuals. In 2020, a trend of behaviours was recorded, which involve problematic and highly harassing behaviour against transgender individuals by family, employers and colleagues, public servants, but also citizens, challenging the self-determination of the individual. A case in point is the testimony of a trans man who suffered intense physical violence multiple times, from members of his family, while he was kept locked up in his house against his will and he was finally thrown out from it, by his own family.

Apart from the harassing behaviour that transgender people are experiencing by public servants, which will be elaborated in the relevant sections, the RVRN wishes to focus on the repeated verbal attacks against transgender people at the time of their transition²¹. Those recorded incidents show that transgender people suffer verbal abuse which intensifies as their transitioning progresses and becomes more visible. Cases in point are the incidents recorded by the Network regarding this type of abusive behaviour, expressed specifically by bank employees. A bank employee who is responsible for serving citizens, started addressing to a transgender woman in the wrong gender, in front of a large crowd. When the trans woman told him to talk to her in a better way and to be more careful, he looked at her ironically and shouted loudly in front of everyone:

“I will talk to you as I want and I’m treating you very well. If it was someone else, he wouldn’t even have served you”.

21. For more information on the attacks involving public servants, see pages 45-46.

Another trans person who works in the public sector had experienced a similar attack by colleagues, who were public servants.

At the same time, RVRN finds that in a significant number of cases of attacks due to gender identity, the victims experience racist violence in their workplace. Cases in point are the incidents involving trans women, sex workers, who are constantly subjected to extreme verbal and physical violence during work, usually by unknown perpetrators. A case in point is that of a 60-year-old trans woman, sex worker, who suffered a transphobic attack by an unknown man with a knife. The perpetrator approached the victim and stabbed her in the chest, causing a serious injury, which resulted to her long-term hospitalization. Attacks against trans women, sex workers, is a constant finding in the Network's recordings. However, in 2020, with the new circumstances brought by the COVID-19 pandemic contributing to their further marginalization and the intensification of discrimination in access to health services and protection, the transphobic violence that these people are experiencing, may deteriorate insecurity, even increase risks for their lives.

The above incidents highlight the need for enhanced protection for people experiencing extreme forms of marginalization. Victims who are targeted on two levels, i.e. both because of their gender or sexual orientation and because of their ethnic origin, religion or colour, may also be included in this category. In some cases, the perpetrators are individuals who share a common national, religious or cultural identity with the victims and are part of their extended social environment. Given the multiple vulnerabilities of the victims and the risk of extreme marginalization, the Network recognizes the need for an accessible, coordinated and operational system for the support of victims of racist violence, to ensure a safe and secure status for them.

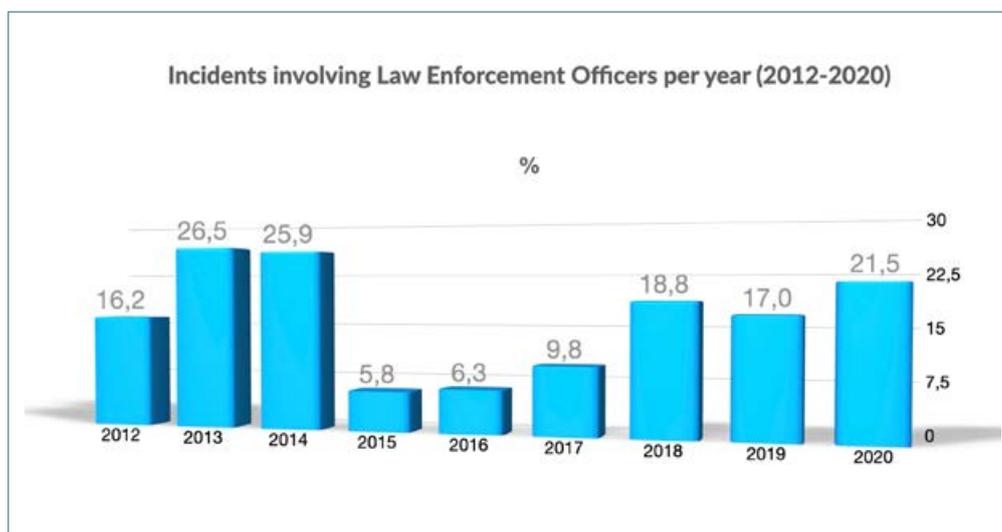
D. Incidents involving law enforcement officials and public servants

RVRN analyses the cases involving law enforcement officials and public servants in a different section, because of their discrediting nature.

1. Police violence

RVRN has documented cases in which alleged police violence is linked to racist violence, namely where there are specific qualitative characteristics (insults, threats, circumstances e.tc.) showing racist motives during violent cases, where the perpetrators were law enforcement officials. In 2020, 25 incidents involving law enforcement officials were recorded, when the corresponding number of recordings in 2019 was 17 incidents and in 2018 was 22 incidents. Out of all the incidents, in 23 the victims reported that the perpetrators were law enforcement officials, while

in two incidents the victims stated that following an attack by mixed groups of citizens and members of extremist groups, they were harassed by law enforcement officials, who were called by the perpetrators. The Network sees an increase in this trend compared to the 10 incidents recorded in 2017. It is worth noting that there is an increasing trend of such incidents in the recordings from 2012 to 2014, where the incidents involving law enforcement officials reached up to 26 percent of all reports, while there was a decrease in relevant incidents from 2015 to 2017 (up to 9.8 percent).



According to the 2020 recordings, the victims of these attacks were mainly asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants, either with a residence permit or without legal documents (17 incidents) but also human rights defenders targeted for their action in supporting refugees and asylum-seekers (four cases), as well as Greek citizens, who suffered violence due to ethnic origin (two cases) and gender identity (two cases). Out of the 25 incidents, 10 took place in Athens, five in Lesbos, three in Samos and Patras, 2 in Chios, one in Leros and in Fthiotida.

Regarding the qualitative data of those incidents, five are linked to police arbitrariness and even police violence with racist motives during the implementation and checks on movement restriction measures due to the pandemic. In most of these incidents, the victims, who are targeted because of their nationality, ethnic origin and colour, reported to the Network that they experienced physical violence in a public space, threats and damages to third party property. In two incidents, the victims were targeted by law enforcement officials because of their gender identity.

A case in point is that of a trans person, who was going to a police station in the centre of Athens to declare loss of ID card. She ended up being chased out by the police officers (three men and a woman), shouting:

*“F****t *, f**tr**y, don’t you dare coming here ever again”.*

This incident shows the lack of tolerance and acceptance towards diversity, the refusal to serve as well as the harassing and violent behaviour of police officers. Also, in eight (8) incidents the victims were minors and were targeted due to their ethnic origin.

The testimonies of minors (mostly unaccompanied minors) show a pattern of stereotypical and intense violence against minors 13-17 years old, mainly in areas where there are reception areas for asylum-seekers or shelters for unaccompanied minors. In one incident, a minor left the Reception Centre in Chios to draw money at the city of the island. Following GPS, along with three other refugees, he accidentally found himself in a garden without fencing. The owner threatened that we would call the police because they were refugees. The police brought them in and detained only him as an interpreter because he was the only one who could speak English, so according to the victim, with his help the police could check the messages on their mobile phones. A police officer started beating him for about 10 minutes. When the victim asked again why he was there, he was beaten again. They took him to a cell, where he was kept for two days, without food. He was then released and he returned to the Reception and Identification Centre.

Another pattern that is repeated in the Network’s reports for 2020 is based on the stereotypical behaviour of police officers towards human rights defenders. They show a highly harassing and intimidating behaviour against them, in some cases while they have already suffered violence from citizens who target them because of their support towards refugees. As shown by the victims’ testimonies, police officers, instead of intervening to the rescue and protection of the victims, contribute to the harassment against them, tolerating, however, the illegal behaviour of citizens targeting refugees and defenders.

In an incident that took place in Lesbos, at the beginning of March 2020, based on the testimony of the victims, human rights proponents, while they had already been threatened by citizens, the perpetrators themselves called the police. The citizens pointed out the victims to the police, the police stopped the victims and asked them to empty their bags. When the victims asked what they have done and why they are being checked, the police started answering with new questions, asking the victims to let them know why they are on the island and if they are working with refugees.

The attitude of police towards the human rights advocates continues to be striking not only at the scene of the incident, but also later at the police station, where they were taken without being provided with any further justification.

“Lesvos is over for you. You need to leave tomorrow. We will be dragging you to the police station every day, until you leave the island.”

The police officers have reportedly said the above to the victims. The latter also said that the below took place at the police station while they were there:

“They took us to the police station by bus and asked us to fill out a form, asking us to give information such as our name, the source of our salary, etc. Then they asked what we are doing here and one of us answered that he is a volunteer for the support of refugees, they told us that we welcome refugees and if we want, we could go back to our country and take them with us. They said, ‘If you go back now (s.s. where the previous incident took place) they will destroy you. If we do not take you to the police station, Greeks will deal you.’”

Based on the information the victims provided during the recordings, the above-mentioned document refers to a “questionnaire for prosecuted NGOs” in which personal data, VAT number, financial resources, number of members of the organization on the island, scope etc. are requested. The incident has been reported to the Greek Ombudsman.

In another incident that took place in the same period of widespread riots on the island²², a human rights defender was attacked by police officers while she was at the port where asylum-seekers had gathered, following rumours that a ship would arrive to transfer the latter to the mainland. In an atmosphere of general tension, a member of the police teams allegedly attacked the victim when she said that their actions were against the law. In fact, he reportedly replied “There is no law anymore”. According to the testimony, she had already been pushed against a wall and injured her leg, shouting “Go back to your country²³”.

During the same period, a human rights defender reported harassing behaviour by a group of police officers (according to his statement they were members of the riot police that was on the island) who had parked in Sappho Square in Mytilene. According to the testimony, he was accompanying refugee children who were returning from activities in which they participated. He said:

“Some of the police officers approached us. They specifically asked me ‘Who are you? Where are you from? Why did you bring them

22. For more information on the organised attacks against refugees, migrants and human rights defenders, see pages 26-34.

23. The victim is a citizen of an EU Member State.

here? Why don't you take them to your country?' They asked for my ID and started checking my details. Two police officers came very close to my face repeating the same questions. The children got scared. When I had to accompany the children again, I asked a Greek teacher to join me, to explain what we do in a language that the policemen could understand. When we met the police officers again, I said 'Look, I just want to safely take these kids back'. They replied, 'Do what you want, but we cannot guarantee for your safety'."

The pattern by which police officers, instead of intervening to the rescue and protection of the victims, contribute to the harassment against them, as described above in the testimony of the first victim, was repeated in September 2020, following the fire at the Reception and Identification Centre in Moria, through another incident that the Network recorded. Based on the testimony of the victims, who were human rights defenders, while returning from work, they were stopped by citizens who had set up a roadblock. They surrounded them and asked to show them their legal documents. They refused to answer to the defenders on whether they were police officers or not and insisted on asking them if they were working for NGOs. At the same time, part of the group of citizens that had blocked the road stopped a group of young refugees. The latter were forced to kneel on the ground, with their hands raised above their, under the threat of improvised weapons (bats). At this point the Network points out that some of the qualitative data of this incident resemble those of incidents associated with extremist groups.

In extremist groups, the perpetrators act in organized groups, with improvised weapons such as sticks, batons and / or iron bars, acting as if on a mission and using xenophobic vocabulary during the attack, while holding fascist symbols. Although in this case there are no obvious fascist symbols, organized action against refugees and migrants as well as human rights defenders, using improvised weapons such as bats, are sufficient evidence to highlight the evolution and spread of organized xenophobic racism. Following the incident and after one of the victims responded that he did not carry his passport, the perpetrators called the police. When the police arrived, they passed by the refugees who were still on their knees. According to the victims' testimony, they did not do anything about it, but after talking to the perpetrators, the latter let the refugees go. They then allegedly approached the victims, asking for their identities. Some of the human rights defenders had their documents in the car, so they went there along with the police officers. The police checked the identification documents, the car documents as well as its rental documents. Given that the victims had car rental documents which had expired one day previously (they had agreed to a rental extension by phone) the police asked them to follow them to the police station,

to verify the car rental status. On the way to the police station, the police officers approached the victims' car, returned the documents to them and left without saying anything else.

Also, as analysed above, the Network recorded incidents in the context of police checks on movement restriction measures, in which, arbitrary fining, harassing behaviours and expression of violence with a racist motive were identified. Based on the victims' testimonies, in some cases, police officers, while checking the documents on movement restriction measures, expressed violent behaviour of different intensity, such as verbal and physical violence. Some of the victims were prosecuted and detained in police stations, without being informed about the reason for their detention or justified by the type of violation²⁴.

At this point, RVRN would like to recall that, as the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination highlighted, individuals who have been discriminated by law enforcement officials tend to show less confidence in the authorities and, therefore, are less willing to cooperate with the police, thus possibly limiting the effectiveness of the latter. That sense of injustice, humiliation and loss of confidence in the police and other authorities may lead, among others, to reduced crime reporting. The sense of injustice, humiliation, loss of confidence in law enforcement bodies, secondary victimization, fear of retaliation, and limited access to information on legal rights or support, may lead to reduced crime reporting²⁵.

It is also found again²⁶ by the Network's recordings, that border control as well as migrant and refugee flow management, intensify the stereotypes about law enforcement officials, who under certain conditions consider the exercise of violence to be part of their operational mission. In addition to the Network records, 2020 was also marked by a significant increase in reports and testimonies about irregular forced returns (push-backs) occurring at Greece's sea and land borders. The Network stresses the negative impact of such practices, primarily on the life and safety of people seeking protection and, more broadly, on the norms and principles of human rights and the rule of law that can be irreparably harmed, creating space for racist trends and behaviours.

The incidents recorded by the Network highlight a broader trend of violence in preventing people, in this case minors, who tried to informally board trucks and cross on ships to Italy. Specifically, since the beginning of 2020, there has been a relative increase in incidents of violence by the coast guard and employees at the port of Patras. The severity and frequency of the incidents depends on the number of people who experienced such violence as well as the severity of the injuries.

24. For more information on the COVID-19 pandemic as a factor in redefining the context of discrimination and racist violence, see pages 21-26.

25. UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), General recommendation No. 36: Preventing and Combating Racial Profiling by Law Enforcement Officials, page. 6, 24 November 2020. Available at: CERD_C_GC_36_9291_E.pdf (ohchr.org)

26. Annual report 2019, p. 21.

There have been reports about use of dogs and dog bites, strikes to the upper and lower limbs and in some cases strikes to the head and face (as also found from the Network's recordings). There has been a decrease in the reporting of such incidents during the implementation period of the COVID-19 restrictive measures, while from the beginning of June there has been an increasing trend (in terms of general reports). In several incidents, coast guard officials reportedly appeared near factories, in plain clothes, threatening and insulting the residents. The Network holds this information thanks to the observation and qualitative analysis of its members working on the ground. The Network also found that the reported incidents are even more than the actual recordings. However, the other victims did not want to proceed with the recording of the incidents, as most did not hold legal documents and thought that there would be a bigger problem in their attempt to continue their path.

2. Incidents involving public servants

In four cases the perpetrators were public servants. The distribution of incidents by targeting reason, shows that for one more year, the target groups both due to ethnic origin (two asylum-seekers) and Greek citizens (two incidents due to gender identity) are facing problems when dealing with the public sector.

The cases recorded by the Network, show the lack of tolerance for diversity, as well as the development of a culture of harassment for refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as for LGBTQI+ individuals. In one incident where the victim was an asylum-seeker, a public official, specifically an emergency rescuer, allegedly refused to take the necessary support action for a patient who was seriously injured. Specifically, he did not check the patient's vital signs and stated his reluctance to take him to the hospital. The patient's lethargic condition had to be highlighted by a witness, who also demanded the patient's transport to the hospital, so that the rescuers would transport him there. This incident shows an act of breach of duty -that of non-provision of services- with a racist motive, which could further aggravate the victim's condition.

In the context of racist behaviour by medical staff, there is also the case of a doctor in a private hospital. Although it is not included in the incidents where perpetrators are public servants, since the doctor works in a private institution, it is worth highlighting it as one of the incidents that confirm the lack of acceptance of diversity by members of the medical staff. In particular, the doctor, in an interaction he had with a trans man who was to undergo surgery, according to the testimony, he repeatedly showed a particularly abusive and aggressive attitude towards the patient, including the intentional and constant use of the wrong gender. The Network has highlighted on several occasions the need to train medical staff in order to refrain from racist behaviour when performing their duties.

Another incident of abusive behaviour, this time by an employee of the Tax Office, against a LGBTQI+ person confirms the pattern of non-acceptance of diversity by public servants.

Specifically, when the victim, a trans boy, went with his father to a tax office in order for the boy to change his personal details in his tax documents, the employee allegedly refused to serve them, despite the fact that the boy brought the new registration act, where his details had already been changed. Also, according to the testimony, the employee insisted on reading the court decision on the change of personal details, in which according to law, the updating of details in all services is done only with the new registration act. The Network recalls that it had welcomed the initiative for the legal recognition of gender identity on the basis of Law 4491/2017 (G.G. A' 152)²⁷. However, the process of legal recognition of gender identity entails risks because the need of privacy and non-exposure to further targeting has not yet been well established. Another issue was the employee's alleged response when the boy's father pointed out the need to apply the law:

“You will not teach me the laws, in here the law is what I tell you.”

This is the second time in 2020 that the Network records an incident where the limits of the law are clearly elaborated and adapted to the arbitrary, stereotypical perception of a public official who is called to apply it. The Network recalls a 2020 recording, where a police officer stated during the development of the recorded incident “There is no law anymore”²⁸.

27. Law 4491/2017 (Government Gazette Series A, Issue No. 152) “Legal Recognition of Gender Identity – National Mechanism for Preparation, Monitoring and Evaluation of Action Plans on the Rights of Children and other Provisions” 13 October 2017, available at: ΦΕΚ Α' 152/13.10.2017 - εθνικό τυπογραφείο

28. For more information on the incident, see page 42.

IV. Complaints and authorities' response

RVRN monitors closely the implementation of the legislation for combating racist crimes as well as the relevant practice of all actors involved. The Network aims to identify and point out the legal and practical obstacles in the victims' access to justice. This section analyses the Network's data on complaints (A) and on other information related to the police and judicial response to racist violence, including measures adopted by the Ministry of Justice (B).

A. Analysis of RVRN data

Out of the 107 documented incidents, 35 had been reported to the police during recording by the Network's organizations, while one (1) incident has been reported to the Greek Ombudsman. The Network knows that criminal proceedings have been initiated for 14 of the above-mentioned incidents. In 14 incidents, the victims said that they had not reported the incident to the police but intended to do so. In 46 incidents, the victims said that they would not take further actions due to fear, lack of trust in the authorities, as well as due to bureaucracy. A significant part of these testimonies is about incidents in which either the victims experienced violence from the police officers, or the police officers were present and did not intervene to the victims' rescue and protection.

A case in point is the below incident: As the attack progressed, the victim stated that although the police was close to the scene of the attack, despite the victim's cries for help, the police did not intervene to its rescue. The next day the victim asked for the support of the police officers in the Reception and Identification Centre where he was staying, the latter refused to support him and referred him to the local police station. The police officer at the local police station allegedly told him that he had to return to Syria (the victim's country of origin) to file a complaint. Two days after the incident, the police officer at the local police station accepted the victim. He took the photo of the asylum seeker's card and told him that he would inform him in case he had any information on the perpetrators. He never asked the victim to sign any documents. In addition, although the victim went to the hospital to get first aid, the hospital did not provide any medical report related to the violent incident against him.

In previous reports, the Network stressed the need to educate and train all police officers on their obligation to assist the victims, intervene to their rescue and to make sure that they are referred to the competent services. It has also found that while the EU Directive on the support of victims of crime has been incorporated into Greek law since 2017 (Law 4478/2017), an initiative that has

been welcomed by the Network²⁹, the implementation of the relevant framework is still lacking. This incident constitutes an example of the medical staff's unilateral provision of treatment to the victim, in terms of health issues. In other words, the lack of other kind of provision or support (psychosocial support), as well as the lack of linking the hospital staff and other medical services providers with the criminal procedure (such as informing the victims about the possibility of filing a complaint or presenting reports on the medical findings from the attack on the victim).

Based on the above quality data, the Network stresses the need to inform the bodies, involved in the support of the victims, about their obligations in terms of rescuing the victims, protecting them, especially from re-victimization, but also strengthening their cooperation within a framework of an operating referral system to protection and support services. In this context, the Network welcomes the initiative of the Ministry of Justice to develop a guide for informing victims of racist violence about their rights³⁰, but stresses that such action, although it is in the right direction, will have an increased impact on victims' communities when it will become a precursor to a unified and effective support and protection system for victims.

In three more incidents, specifically against unaccompanied minors, the Network recorded the public prosecutor's intervention to end the ongoing attacks to the shelter, as well as the victims' testimony, that the police had been very supportive and cooperative with the victims, during the incidents. In another similar incident of attack against unaccompanied minors, following the incident's recording, the Network was informed that the public prosecutor had instituted criminal proceedings and included the racist motive. These incidents highlight the importance of a timely and comprehensive intervention of the Authorities for the protection of victims, but also for ensuring their access to justice, showing that the treatment of victims by the Authorities can be institutionally consistent.

Another trend observed for one more year, is the victims' fear in filing a complaint due to the lack of legal status. The Network notes that although in recent years there has been a relevant legal provision in the issuance of residence permits for humanitarian reasons to victims and witnesses of racist crime, in fact there have been delays in the implementation of this protection status, which eventually leads victims and witnesses in risking detention. At this point, the Network stresses the need for speeding up the identification procedure of undocumented third-country nationals who are victims or key witnesses of racist violence, to minimize restrictions to their freedom. The recent European Strategy for Victim Support, notes that victimized migrants without a legal

29. Annual report 2017, p. 24-25.

30. For more information see page 48.

status, are often vulnerable and may have difficulty accessing justice. If they report a crime to the police, they may be returned to their country of origin. According to European directive on victims' rights, these rights apply to all victims without discrimination, regardless of their residence status. In fact, it is pointed out that the European Commission is going to explore legal and practical tools at EU level to facilitate migrant victims in reporting crimes and accessing support services, regardless of their residence status. The Commission will promote the exchange of good practices between Member States, with a view to disconnecting the reporting of crimes from the return procedure, without compromising the effectiveness of these procedures³¹. The Network has pointed out, inter alia and on the occasion of the publication of the recent National Action Plan against Racism and Intolerance by the Ministry of Justice, that it is of particular importance for the Authorities to take initiatives in upgrading the procedures, so that the victims and witnesses can have unhindered access to protection and security.

B. State response to racist violence

RVRN constantly pursues the best possible cooperation with the police and prosecuting authorities. As previously stated, cooperation between civil society and the police against racist crime has been deemed successful, since, besides supporting the victim, it also allows for some police shortcomings to be rectified.

1. Recording and response by the Authorities

According to statistics on cases of racist violence reported to RVRN by the Hellenic Police, in 2020 the competent Services recorded:

31. EU Strategy on victims rights (2020-2025), 24 June 2020, p. 17-18, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EL/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0258&from=EL>

TYPE OF COMPETENT SERVICE	
POLICE DEPARTMENTS COMBATING RACIST VIOLENCE	118
POLICE DEPARTMENTS AND SECURITY DEPARTMENTS	52
CYBER CRIME DIVISION	4
DIVISION OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS	6
GENERAL POLICE DIRECTORATES	5
SECURITY SUB-DIRECTORATE OF ATTICA	37
SECURITY SUB-DIRECTORATE OF ATTICA	222

ΠΕΡΙΣΤΑΤΙΚΑ ΑΝΑ ΚΑΤΗΓΟΡΙΑ ΔΡΑΣΤΩΝ	
CITIZENS	105
CITIZENS AND POLICE OFFICERS	4
CITIZENS AND UNKNOWN PERPETRATORS	13
POLICE OFFICERS	39
ORGANISED GROUPS	2
ORGANISED GROUPS	54
UNKNOWN PERPETRATORS AND POLICE OFFICERS	5
TOTAL OF RECORDED CASES	222

POSSIBLE RACIST MOTIVE	
NATIONAL OR ETHNIC ORIGIN	140
DESCENT	5
COLOUR	6
RACE	10
RELIGION	31
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	24
GENDER IDENTITY	8
DISABILITIES	11
UNIDENTIFIED/OTHER	1

VICTIMS PER GENDER	%
MEN	80
WOMEN	20

OFFENCE	
INCITEMENT TO COMMIT CRIME	1
TORTURE	3
THEFT	2
UNLAWFUL VIOLENCE	2
SUDDEN DEATH*	1
ABUSE OF AUTHORITY	2
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	2
VIGITALISM	1
L. ON EQUAL TREATMENT	3
L. ON GUNS	1
VIOLATION OF DOMESTIC ASYLUM	1
THEFT	3
DISSEMINATION OF FAKE NEWS	10
FALSE ACCUSATIONS	1
DEFAMATION	4
ELECTION FRAUD	1
THREATS	20
BREACH OF DUTY	13
INJURIES	41
DANGEROUS BODILY INJURIES	9
DAMAGE TO THIRD-PARTY PROPERTY	14
INSULT	34
ARSON	1
MALICIOUS REFUSAL TO ACKNOWLEDGE CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY	2
HATE SPEECH	51
L. ON EQUAL TREATMENT	3
TOTAL	222

* D.C.P. FOR THE SUDDEN DEATH OF A DETAINEE

VICTIMS PER CITIZENSHIP	
GREECE	63
CAMEROON	2
UNKNOWN	8
PAKISTAN	20
NEW GUINEA	1
SYRIA	18
AFGHANISTAN	11
MOROCCO	4
MYANMAR	1
TURKEY	2
IRAQ	6
PALESTINE	2
IRAN	5
KUWAIT	1
ROMANIA	3
BANGLADESH	2
KURDS	1
ALBANIA	12
RUSSIA	1
EGYPT	1
POLAND	1
LEBANON	1
ICELAND	1
SOMALIA	7
NETHERLANDS	1
UNITED KINGDOM	1
CANADA	1
BULGARIA	1
YEMEN	1

RVRN cites the above data in order to provide better understanding of racist crimes in Greece, through the comparative analysis of the data collected by the Hellenic Police and those collected by the civil society. However, it should get across that this process will be greatly facilitated if the State discloses the qualitative analysis of the above data, in order to clarify the trends and match the type of crime with the targeted groups.

Regarding the treatment of racist crime by the judicial authorities, the Network welcomed the information about the issuance of two court decisions concerning incidents recorded by members

of the Network in previous years. In both decisions, the Article 82^A of the Penal Code (hereinafter 82^A P.C.) on recognising the racist motive as an aggravating circumstance in the committed crime, has been implemented.

Specifically, in July 2020, the trial of the “Crypteia” case was concluded in the Mixed Jury Court of Athens. The Mixed Jury Court of Athens found the defendant guilty of the offences of attempted arson which could result in endangering someone, and in particular the Community of Afghan Migrants and Refugees, with the aggravating circumstance of art. 82^A P.C. (racist motive), public incitement to violence and hatred (Law 927/1979) as well as for criminal possession of a weapon and threat to commit crime. The Network followed with particular interest the progress of the trial, inter alia, as members of the Network had recorded incidents of racist violence included in the indictment, and were also called as witnesses based on the fact that, as it emerged from the hearing, the defendant had threatened these organizations because they were supporting migrant and refugee communities. The accused was convicted as the sole perpetrator of the attacks. However, the qualitative characteristics of the Network recordings in relation with the “Crypteia” case indicated elements of organisation and participation of more than one person. The RVRN anticipates the publication of the court decision to be able to express a more detailed opinion on the law provisions applied.

The case was also supported by lawyers of organizations, members of the Network, who had taken over the victims’ representation. At the same time, the Network welcomes the decision of the Three-Member Lower Criminal Court of Chalkida for the conviction of a perpetrator of an incident recorded by a member of the Network in 20215. The court also recognized the racist motive (Article 82^A P.C.) in the perpetrator’s actions as an aggravating circumstance because the victim was attacked due to her gender identity.

The Network welcomes the fact that in both cases the indictment included Article 82^A P.C., i.e. the relevant criminal act was introduced as a racist crime, and the court examined from the beginning of the pre-trial the motives that led to those attacks. Regarding the first case, this court decision confirms that the implementation of the institutional framework for incitement to hatred and violence against a person or group of persons identified on the basis of race, colour, religion, descent, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability (Law 927/1979), is a measure to protect the principles of democracy and social cohesion. For the second case, it is worth noting the importance of this court decision, as the recognition of an aggravating circumstance - the victim was chosen due to gender identity- establishes an important case law and judicial precedent, as it is the first time that a court applies the 82^A P.C. on the basis of the victim’s gender identity. In any case, the Network stresses that the fight against racism and racist violence and the legal treatment of racist acts of violence is a matter of strengthening democracy and respecting the rule of law.

As the Network pointed out in 2020 through a memorandum to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe about the case *Sakir v. Greece*³², it welcomes the strengthening of anti-racism legislation through the amendment of Article 82^A P.C., by abolishing the concept of hatred and replacing it with the concept of targeting the victim based on his or her characteristics, in order to facilitate the application of the provision both during investigation and at court level. In addition, the aggravating circumstance for prejudice-motivated crime from the early stages of the investigation is, according to the aforementioned article, a clear message to the perpetrators. However, the Network notes that despite the positive changes in the legal framework, based on findings from monitoring the implementation of the relevant legal provisions, the actual impact of article 82^A P.C. in pending criminal cases is quite limited. There are delays in the investigation of prejudice-motivated crimes, which may contribute to a climate of impunity. This also includes the attacks recorded by the Network in the context of the events of April 2018 in Sappho Square in Mytilene. Based on the recordings, these attacks had elements of structured organization. According to victims of that night, there were dozens of men and women among the perpetrators who had covered their features and they were throwing rocks, bottles and objects ablaze. Extremist groups infiltrated and took advantage of that gathering of refugees and residents of Lesbos and they brutally attacked refugees, including several young children³³. The Network, given that the case was recorded and supported by members of the Network, knows that the case file was forwarded by the Police to the Public Prosecutor in November 2018, and 26 people were identified as possible perpetrators of the attacks. The Public Prosecutor filed charges in February 2019, also citing Article 81^A ("racist motive" / now 82^A) and requested that a main investigation be conducted. The case is still pending before the Prosecutor's Office³⁴. Also, the Authorities involved, do not always prosecute *ex officio* any offence in which prejudice is identified. Many racist crimes can only be prosecuted on the basis of a criminal complaint lodged by the victim within 3 months. The racist motive is not always taken into account in the early stages of the investigation, while the authorities do not intervene to the rescue of the victims and to arrest the perpetrators, even when the incident had taken place before police officers.

Regarding the efforts of the Authorities to systematize monitoring of these cases throughout the course of their development from the complaint to the judicial process, the full systematization of the data on racist crimes from all services, in order to be able to fully monitor their treatment

32. Racist Violence Recording Network, Submission of a Memorandum from the Racist Violence Recording Network to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe about the case *Sakir v. Greece*, 15 December 2020, available at: http://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Rule-9.2_Sakir-v.-Greece_RVRN-Submission_rev_fn.pdf

33. Annual report 2018, p. 14.

34. Racist Violence Recording Network, Submission of a Memorandum from the Racist Violence Recording Network to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe about the case *Sakir v. Greece*, 15 December 2020, p. 10-11 available at: http://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Rule-9.2_Sakir-v.-Greece_RVRN-Submission_rev_fn.pdf

in the Greek legislation, has not been implemented to date. The Network also encounters many obstacles in identifying court decisions in cases of racist crimes, especially in cases where the lawyer involved is not a member of the Network. In a broader context, it is understood that data monitoring systematization, their quantitative and qualitative analysis as well as the publication of the respective findings by the State, would not only allow the emergence of trends and objective parameters that should be taken into account to effectively combat all aspects of racist crime, but they would also enhance the transparency of the procedures, as well as trust in both the Authorities and a unified and effective mechanism for recording incidents of racist violence. As noted above, the parameter of trust in a unified and effective system for recording cases of racist violence, as well as the protection and provision of assistance to the victims, remains a key aim, despite the already positive developments in this area.

In 2020, the democratic and anti-racist movement welcomed the court ruling condemning Golden Dawn as a criminal organization. This court decision highlighted the contribution of Justice to the protection of the rule of law and human rights in Greece. This milestone, court decision comes as a reminder that the fight against racism and racist violence and the legal response to violent, xenophobic groups, is a matter of respect for the rule of law. The impact of the Golden Dawn conviction in practice expresses the protection provided by law to everyone as well as each member of a community targeted by individuals and groups with racist, xenophobic, homophobic or transphobic motives.

2. National Council Against Racism and Intolerance (NCRI) - National Action Plan Against Racism

In 2020, the RVRN participated in NCRI meetings with two representatives (and their deputies). During the eight meetings of the NCRI, the Network consistently a) supported the work of the National Action Plan against Racism on the basis of consultation of the members of the Council and other special bodies or experts on specific issues, b) submitted recommendations to the competent authorities and proposals for specific actions and c) participated in the consultation on the development of the Guide for Victims of Racist Violence.

The Network welcomes the inclusive and lengthy procedures that were followed during the consultation, which enabled the members of the Council to significantly contribute to the formulation of the Action Plan. The context of the effective co-operation is largely reflected in both the development of the Guide for Victims of Racist Violence and in the draft of the Action Plan against Racism and Intolerance. For the Action Plan, the Network welcomes the commitment to a more comprehensive evaluation system that enables the progressive, cross-sectoral and multifactorial monitoring of the implementation of actions as well as their impact on target groups. The explicit reference to the supervision of the Action Plan by the NCRI, within the scope of its responsibilities, in order to supervise the implementation of the Plan and to update

it in accordance with the current and changing conditions and needs, as well as to check the evaluation reports in order to submit recommendations for improvements, is moving in the right direction.

However, the Network stresses that there are still key issues to be addressed, especially regarding specific policies and proposed actions. On addressing under-reporting, i.e. the lack / limited reporting to the Authorities, while there is a satisfactory analysis of the phenomenon and the need to address it through increasing trust towards the Authorities, but also forecasting relevant actions both in terms of information as well as at the level of training the Authorities, the actions foreseen are considered insufficient, not in substance, but in terms of their scope and frequency, while structural issues pertaining to access to the complaint procedures, are not resolved. At the same time, the approach regarding the disclosure of the qualitative and quantitative trends of the reported incidents of racist violence, as well as their progression at the prosecuting authorities' and courts' level, has not been followed. This would have contributed significantly in increasing trust towards the authorities.

Regarding the access of victims of racist crimes to services, but also to the protection status, it should be stressed that although the Action Plan recognizes the importance of the information drawn through actions such as the preparation of the Guide for the Victims, there is, however, no action by the bodies and ministries that are involved in the support of victims of racist violence, either directly or indirectly, as well as no coordination actions for the operational protection and support of victims of racist violence. It must be recalled that the above-mentioned deficiency could be interpreted as insufficient compliance with the recommendations of ECHR for the case *Sakir v. Greece*. Finally, although the Plan includes actions to combat discrimination, the Network expresses its concern that these interventions are not comprehensive and do not address discrimination effectively, nor do they promote equal and unhindered access to education, healthcare and accommodation services for all. In addition, the new reality brought by the pandemic and measures against COVID-19, with regard to the restriction in accessing those services, has not been taken into account.

V. Recommendations to the State

The Network addresses the following recommendations to the State to combat racist crimes.

Recommendations to the Ministry of Citizen Protection

A. Combating racist crime

1. Reinforcement and proper staffing of the Hellenic Police Services to address racist violence.
2. Continuous training, with the assistance of international and European organizations with expertise and experience in training law enforcement officials and judicial bodies, for the entire personnel of the Hellenic Police.
3. Continuous guidance to all police officers regarding their obligation to assist the victims, to intervene for their rescue and to make sure that the victims are referred to the competent services.
4. Provision of specialised information on the existing victim support structures in each region, on a case-by-case basis (removal from the victimising environment, upon victim's consent).
5. Training of a special task force in each region on how to inform victims of racist crimes of their rights and how to handle their initial contact with the victims, ensuring that the provision of information by specialised staff is not replaced by the brochures in a language that the victim understands.
6. Constant communication and cooperation between police departments nationwide, government or non-governmental organisations and migrant communities, for the provision of medical, social and legal assistance, as well as interpretation services to facilitate the victims' access to the police (Law. 4478/2017).
7. Continuous evaluation of police response to ensure compliance with the circular entitled "Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination in Policing" (8.11.2014).
8. Effective and comprehensive dissemination of the knowledge on the prohibition of expulsion or return of third country nationals who are either victims or key witnesses of racist crimes or hate speech (Law 927/1979) and express their intention of filing a complaint or reporting an incident to the competent police authorities (Article 41 Law 3907/2011).
9. Speeding up the identification procedure of undocumented third-country nationals who are victims of racist violence or key witnesses, to minimize restrictions to their freedom.

10. Adoption of a special circular on the appropriate treatment of LGBTQI individuals to provide police officers with clear guidance and avoid secondary victimisation.
11. Protection of human rights defenders and ensure the safety of humanitarian workers and members of civil society.
12. Exploring the possibility of evaluating the data on racist crimes together with civil society, while respecting the protection of personal data.
13. Disclosure of the qualitative analysis pertaining to the data collected and processed by the Hellenic Police over racist crimes.

B. Combating racially motivated police violence

1. Introduction of a specific procedure in the framework of disciplinary control within the Hellenic Police Force for faster processing of racially motivated arbitrary acts.
2. Implementation of special training programmes and disclosure of relevant data, in particular about the course of complaints, in order to further enhance transparency and confidence of victims in the Hellenic Police.

Recommendations to the Ministry of Justice and the Prosecution and Judicial Authorities

1. Disclosure of the qualitative and quantitative trends regarding incidents of racist violence, based on the findings of the national mechanism for recording and addressing incidents of racist violence, as well as the progression of such incidents at the level of prosecution authorities and courts.
2. Restarting the Working Group set up following the agreement with ODIHR (OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) to coordinate actions to address racist crimes.
3. Establishment of an operational plan and protocol for the coordination of support services for victims of racist violence according to Law 4478/2017, and especially for minors, as well as for their protection from secondary victimization.
4. Provision of information on the actions of support services for victims of racist violence according to Law 4478/2017.
5. Strengthening of the National Action Plan against Racism with actions that promote the fight against discrimination effectively, as well the equal and unhindered access (regardless of race,

colour, national or ethnic origin, descent, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender traits) to education, healthcare and accommodation services for all.

6. Inclusion of the pandemic factor in the National Action Plan as well as actions to address discrimination and racist violence that develop in the context of the pandemic.
7. Adoption of a legislative provision for the protection of human rights defenders.
8. Ensuring the prompt referral of juvenile victims to the Juvenile Support and Social Care Services of the Ministry of Justice considering the serious risk involved in terms of secondary or repeated victimisation.
9. Ensure the appointment of an interpreter, preferably selected among the persons who are used to communicating with deaf or mute victims.
10. Adoption of measures to protect interpreters and prevent their victimisation.
11. Special training programme for the individuals called to examine victims of sexual assault, victims of violence due to gender identity and victims of domestic violence.
12. Appointment of a specific individual to keep the victim informed throughout the penal procedure.
13. Prevention of abusive withdrawals of the information requests by a victim (Article 59 (3) L. 4478/2017).
14. In cooperation with the judicial authorities, adoption of special measures to ensure the victim's safety (entry/exit from courts and prosecution offices, keeping victims at a safe distance from defendants, etc.)
15. In-depth study and discussion among scientific and professional bodies on how to adapt restorative justice to racist crimes (Article 63 of Law 4478/2017).
16. Strengthen and expand the appointment of Special Public Prosecutors for Racist Crime to deal with racist crimes more effectively.
17. Provision of information regarding the implementation of the Circular of the Supreme Court for data collection and racist crime management by the Prosecutors.
18. Ensure the effective implementation of Article 82 P.C. for crimes with racist characteristics as a general aggravating circumstance not only during the hearings but also at the pre-trial stage.

Recommendations to the Ministry of Health and Medical Associations

1. Ensure equal and non-discriminatory access to public health system.
2. Cooperation with the Ministry of Justice on the implementation of Law 4478/2017, particularly in terms of performing medical tests as per Article 66 (c) of 4478/2017.
3. Provision of information and training of the medical staff on the cultural aspects of their interaction with victims of racist violence and on the special conditions pertaining to LGBTQI victims +.
4. Training and sensitization of mental health specialists on issues of gender identity and sexual orientation due to ongoing reports of abusive behaviour against LGBTQI persons in violation of the World Health Organization (WHO) International Statistical Classification of Illnesses and Related Health Problems (ICD) and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, DSM) of the American Psychiatric Association, APA.
5. Compliance with the principle that medical tests should be performed by individuals who share the same sex as the victim, while the burden of choice should be shifted to the victim only in exceptional cases of limited capacity in medical staff, in accordance with Article 69 (1) (d) of Law 4478/2017.

Recommendations to the Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Additional initiatives and measures which can contribute to reducing tensions among refugees, relieving pressure from local communities (especially on islands-entry points), and preventing or limiting social tensions, which in turn become a breeding ground for xenophobic reactions and racist behaviours. Such measures may include the following:

1. Significant improvement of reception conditions, especially for vulnerable persons, as well as creation of the conditions for greater security in all reception sites, Reception and Identification Centres and reception facilities in the mainland.
2. Ensure the unhindered exercise of fundamental rights for refugees and migrants, without any discrimination (education, healthcare and accommodation).
3. Effective registration and fair management of asylum applications for all nationalities, complying with international protection guarantees.
4. Standardization and acceleration of the registration and reception procedures for unaccompanied minors, under the appropriate care and referral procedures

5. Reassessment of the geographic restrictions on the islands.
6. A holistic approach to issues related to migrants and refugees, with long-term planning across the country, aiming at the smooth integration of refugees and migrants into the Greek society.
7. Adoption of preventive measures to avoid victimization of refugees leaving the supportive network of the reception facilities (e.g. ESTIA programme) without being able to join another supportive framework.
8. Adoption of legislation for granting residence permits for humanitarian reasons to unaccompanied minors whose application for international protection is finally rejected, in order to protect minors.

Recommendations to the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs

1. Ensure equal access for children to public education, without any discrimination.
2. Strengthen the regulatory framework for combating racist, homophobic and transphobic violence in schools, with the active participation of teachers, students and parent associations.
3. Promotion of an intercultural and inter-religion dialogue to address stereotypes and prejudice.
4. Development of a comprehensive handbook for school communities on understanding and addressing racial, homophobic, transphobic-motivated cases of violence, and interconnection with experienced civil society actors implementing specific programmes.
5. Introduction of a sexual education course in the primary and secondary education, to address stereotypes and prejudices about gender identity and sexual orientation and to create an inclusive and safe school environment.

Recommendations to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

1. Intensify cooperation and coordination for comprehensive and effective intervention for the protection of victims of racist violence, where the perpetrators are the employers.
2. Inform the services involved to provide immediate assistance, support and protection to victims as well as thorough control of the working conditions in similar cases.

3. Strengthen the actions that promote equality in areas such as education, employment, healthcare, and welfare. Combat gender-based violence based on the fact that gender-based discrimination and gender-based violence are often combined with racist motives.

Recommendations to the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transports

1. Development of guidelines for the staff working in public transportation (including buses), for understanding the obligations to respect all passengers regardless of race, colour, ethnic or ethnic origin, descent, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender traits.
2. Provision of special clauses related to the above obligations in contracts of concession.
3. Investigation of the cases involving employees.
4. Provision of proportional sanctions for non-compliance with the obligation to respect all passengers regardless of race, colour, national or ethnic origin, descent, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender traits.

Recommendations to the General Secretariat of Information and Communication

1. Training and awareness raising of the management boards and journalists, editors and newscasters in the electronic media, press and TV, regarding the coverage of racist crimes, the protection of human rights and the termination of (re)production of negative stereotypes against certain groups, by organising special training seminars and drafting guidelines.
2. Regarding the operation of the National Council for Radio and Television (NCRTV), effective strengthening of the mechanisms that detect cases of production or reproduction of racist discourse by the media, which may lead to the occurrence of racist incidents, as well as imposition of the relevant sanctions.

RVRN points out that the above recommendations to effectively address racist violence must be combined with a thorough evaluation on the expressions of racism in Greece, as well as with policies that improve security, protect human rights and combat human trafficking, drug trafficking, and criminal networks, and, finally, with targeted measures to sensitise the general population.

The Network also emphasizes the need to strengthen actions that promote efforts to thwart discrimination effectively, as well as the equal and unhindered access to education, healthcare and accommodation services for all, regardless of race, colour, national or ethnic origin, descent, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender traits. In addition, the current factor of COVID-19 should also be taken into consideration when promoting actions to promote equal access of the general population to core services and prevent discrimination. RVRN calls on State and local government representatives, as well as media representatives, to refrain from the racist rhetoric that normalizes and encourages xenophobic reactions and affects social peace and cohesion.

Racist Violence Recording Network

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