

Racist Violence
Recording Network

2021
Annual Report



Racist
Violence
Recording
Network



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

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Introduction

This is the tenth annual report of the Racist Violence Recording Network [hereinafter “the Network”] and includes quantitative and qualitative analysis of racist violence incidents recorded by members of the Network¹ in 2021. The Network was established 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), with the participation of 18 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and civil society actors. The Network was established to systematically record acts of violence with a racist motive and to verify the relevant quantitative and qualitative trends of this phenomenon. It currently has 52 members², who continue to record incidents of racist violence against persons who seek their services. The Network recorded a total of 1,330 incidents that took place from 2011 to 2021, while many of the victims found and continue to receive support through the services of its members. In addition, the Network has published 10 annual reports (and 1 report during the Network’s pilot operation in 2011) including specific recommendations to the competent authorities to prevent and combat this phenomenon.

During the reporting period, the Network participated in initiatives for the improvement of the response to racist crime as well as improvement of the support system for victims of racist crimes. To this end, the Network has been actively involved in relevant EStAR (Enhancing Stakeholder Awareness and Resources for Hate Crime Victim Support)³ projects of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)⁴ under the Organization for Security and Co-operation in

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1. For more information on the Network’s identity and the methodology in recording incidents of racist violence, see pages 49-51.
 2. 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”, “Babel” Day Centre, Centre for the Support of Repatriated and Migrants - 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, the Panhellenic Confederation of the Greek Roma “Ellan Passe”, International Rescue Committee (IRC).
 3. For more information see: <https://www.osce.org/odihr/hate-crime-victim-support>
 4. For more information on the Network’s identity and methodology in recording incidents of racist violence, see pages 49-51.

Europe (OSCE), in order to equip both state and non-state actors with the necessary tools to ensure the protection of victims of racist crimes, their access to justice and also to individualized and specialized support. The Network also participated in a series of events, meetings and hearings of actors, organized by both the coordinators and the members of the Network, in order to inform about the trends in racist violence and to raise awareness regarding racist crimes. Furthermore, the Network responded to requests for information from researchers, journalists, and students. In addition, the Network contributed to the dissemination of the legislation against racism and racist crime through participation in seminars, trainings and public debates. In 2021, the Network, having been recognized as a “good practice” by national, European and international actors and bodies, for recording racist violence and supporting victims, was invited by both national and European bodies to present its methodology and its findings. Finally, in 2021, the Network participated in the actions of the National Council against Racism and Intolerance, promoting its recommendations aimed at mapping and strengthening the institutional tools for tackling racist crime and creating an effective national support system for victims of racist crimes⁵.

In 2021, RVRN recorded, through interviews with victims, 72 incidents of racist violence. In 28 incidents migrants, refugees or asylum-seekers were targeted, due to their national origin, religion or colour, while human rights defenders were targeted due to their association with refugees and/or migrants. In one of the incidents, refugees as well as a minor Greek citizen were targeted at the same time due to their nationality and ethnic origin respectively. In five incidents, the targets were Greek citizens who were targeted due to their ethnic origin. In 2 incidents, the target was a Jewish sacred site (cemetery). In 36 incidents, the targets were LGBTQI+ individuals as well as human rights defenders, due to their connection with the LGBTQI+ community. In one case, the victim was targeted on the ground of the disability.

The reduction of the total number of recorded incidents compared to the previous years concerns the number of recorded incidents against refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers. Based on the Network’s recordings for 2021, it is the first time since its establishment that there were no recordings of incidents of organized violence against refugees and migrants by far-right groups. The recording and analysis of racist violence incidents by organized groups, or their members, was one of the Network’s core activities. The decision of civil society organizations and the communities of victims affected by the organized action of Golden Dawn was a significant factor in the establishment of the Network in 2011. The aim was to respond immediately and in a coordinated manner, in order to verify the increase in racist attacks and organized violence, while pursuing changes that would put an end to the continuing climate of impunity. At the end of 2020, the democratic and anti-racist movement welcomed the court ruling convicting Golden Dawn as a criminal organization. This landmark ruling served as a reminder that the fight against violent,

5. For more information on the Network’s involvement in the National Council against Racism and Intolerance, see page 37.

racist groups and their modus operandi through legal means is a matter of strengthening human rights and respect for the rule of law. The ruling had a definite impact on the reduction of organized racist violence. However, the specific pattern of attacks that the Network has long recorded in the context of the targeting of refugees, migrants and human rights defenders, appears to be applied in other contexts in 2021, such as within the school environment. This highlights the need for constant vigilance on the part of the competent authorities, in order to focus on policies to effectively prevent and combat any relevant trend of organized violence.

The Network also observes that the while statistically, the reduction in the number of recordings of organized racist violence contributes to a smaller number of incidents against refugees and migrants, is not indicative of the broader picture during the reporting period, given that this trend is observed in a period of intense racist rhetoric and institutional targeting of refugees and migrants. Possible causes of this decrease in recorded incidents are the reduction in new arrivals and a reduction of the refugee population residing on the islands as well as on the mainland. Another factor which affected the recorded incidents is the restriction of movement in public spaces, in the context of COVID-19 related measures, either for the general population or for this specific group. In fact, such measures seem to have resulted in less visibility of refugees in local communities and consequently to the reduction of the quantitative trends of racist violence incidents. However, the causes of the problem and the perpetrator's motives remain. The Network recalls that the acceptance and normalization of extreme xenophobic positions along with the exculpation of phobic perceptions towards the "other", the different, contributes to violence and attracts supporters.

In 2021, the increased trend of violence against refugees and migrants by law enforcement officials speaks volumes. In most of the incidents recorded by the Network and involving refugees and migrants, the victims identify law enforcement officials among the perpetrators. According to the Network's recordings, racially motivated police violence sees a growing trend in recent years (2018-2021), especially during the pandemic. It is recalled that the ineffective response to police violence contributes significantly to the under-reporting of crimes, because the victims reasonably do not trust the authorities, as representatives of the latter are the perpetrators. Based on the qualitative data highlighted by the Network'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 they also feel insecure around the authorities, as it could lead to their re-exposure to racist behaviour. This perception seems to have a catalytic effect on victim's decisions to report an incident not only to the authorities, but even to a civil society organization. Essentially, they fear that reporting the traumatic experience which they already experienced could contribute to a re-exposure leading to fear and to silence.

Another factor that is considered to have contributed significantly to under-reporting phenomenon in 2021, as in the previous year, is the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent movement

restrictions in public spaces (lockdowns). Given that racist violence may be expressed in public spaces without any provocation, just by the presence of a member of a target group, when the perpetrators identify a trait that they associate or think that the victim shares with the target group, it appears that movement restrictions in public spaces affected the frequency of racist violence. Furthermore, the restrictions on the operation of the Network's services, combined with lockdowns due to the pandemic, led to a limited number of beneficiaries accessing those services, impacting the identification of victims and the Network's recordings. Consequently, in the reporting period, the Network's recordings seem to be, more than ever, the "tip of the iceberg" in terms of incidents of racist violence.

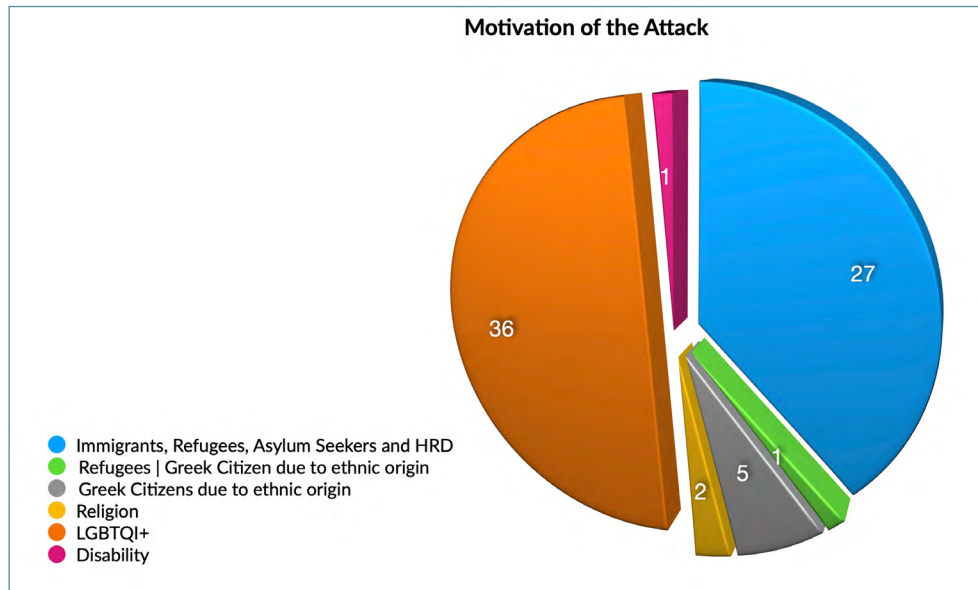
In 2021, there has been an increase in reports and testimonies about informal forced returns at the country's sea and land borders. There were also incidents of irregular arrests and forced removal of people from the mainland, far from the borders. The Network does not record all reports of informal forced returns but only those incidents which, in addition to other significant violations of fundamental human rights and access to asylum, are also combined with specific characteristics showing racist motives (i.e. indicators of prejudice such as comments, extreme use of force, differences between perpetrator and victim in terms of nationality/ ethnic origin, religion, color, etc.). In this context, the Network recorded incidents in which the victims, upon their arrival on Greek soil, experienced intense verbal and physical violence. The Network highlights the negative consequences of such practices firstly on the lives and safety of people seeking protection, but also more broadly on the standards and values of human rights and the rule of law that can be irreparably damaged, giving space to racist trends and behaviors.

The aversion to diversity was also recorded in incidents against individuals considered "less" Greek citizens, targeted because of their ethnic origin. In a flagship case in 2021 where the perpetrators were law enforcement officials, the police violence led to homicide. As the Network has highlighted previously, the perpetrators in these incidents manifest nationalist beliefs based on an over-simplified perception about blood ties amongst the citizens of a State. In the same context, incidents of vandalism of a Jewish cemetery were also recorded. The Network is aware of the many faces of anti-Semitism in Greece, which, as in other countries, is not limited to desecration and vandalism, but also penetrates large parts of the population and is reflected in the everyday speech. The imprint of these attacks is broader and goes beyond the Jewish community, as it concerns any community with different features which is part of the society. The Network highlights an incident that took place in January 2022, involving the explosion of an improvised device in another place of worship, specifically in a mosque. The manner in which this attack was carried out causes concern and reminds of a pattern of attacks on places of worship that has been observed in other European countries (use of an explosive device). It is also recalled that similar attacks were recorded during the years of intense Golden Dawn activity. These incidents highlight the nature of racist crimes, which aim at sending a message of violence and intimidation to the entire targeted community.

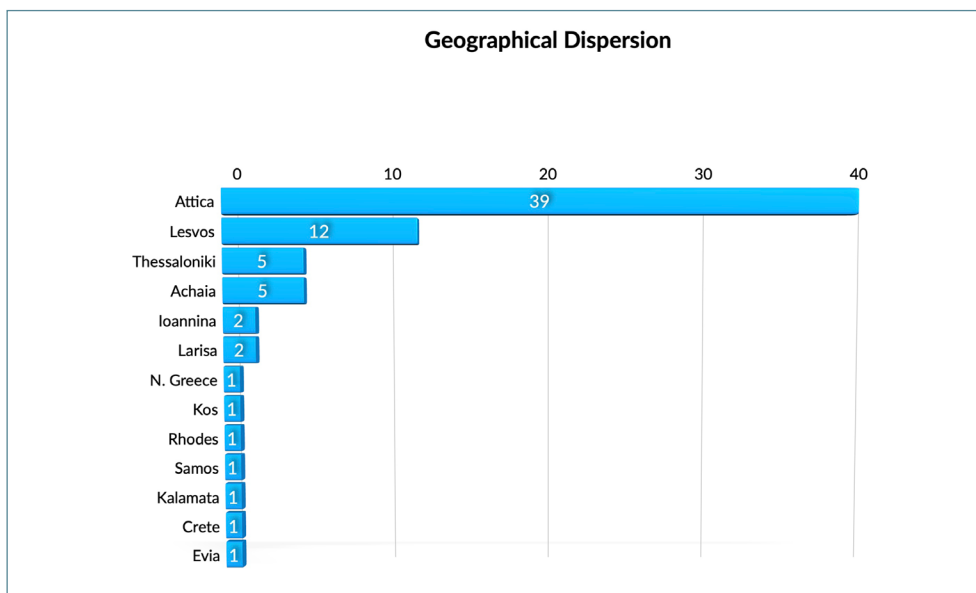
The Network finds once again that LGBTQI+ individuals are being targeted by a wide range of perpetrators, including ordinary citizens, public officials, law enforcement officials, and even family members. Attacks against LGBTQI + individuals intensified amidst the pandemic, with domestic violence and harassment during control measures to contain the pandemic taking a predominant position. The above incidents highlight the need to take measures to address the manifestations of racism that LGBTQI+ individuals experience, in particular racist violence, in combination with combating the impact of the pandemic on the enjoyment of their rights. Competent authorities are encouraged to work systematically and in a timely manner to integrate the special needs and challenges that LGBTQI+ individuals face, both in planning policies and in the implementation and evaluation of measures to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Finally, the Network highlights the need for the immediate prioritization, by the competent authorities, of an effective system in promoting the support and protection of victims of crime in general, but also of victims with special vulnerabilities such as in incidents of racist or gender-based violence, regardless of whether the incident of violence was reported or not. The know-how of RVRN members in supporting victims of racist violence, as well as the recent developments regarding complaints of gender-based violence, as part of a broader context of social dialogue and mobilization for the empowerment of victims, highlight - more than ever - the need for the immediate and effective promotion of the implementation of the relevant regulatory framework, by the competent authorities.

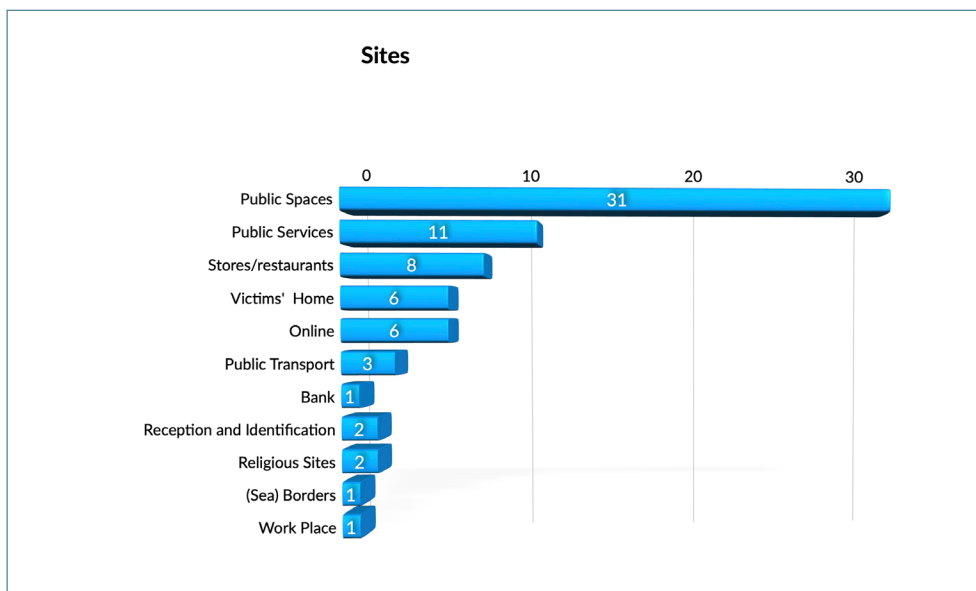
I. General findings of the recorded attacks



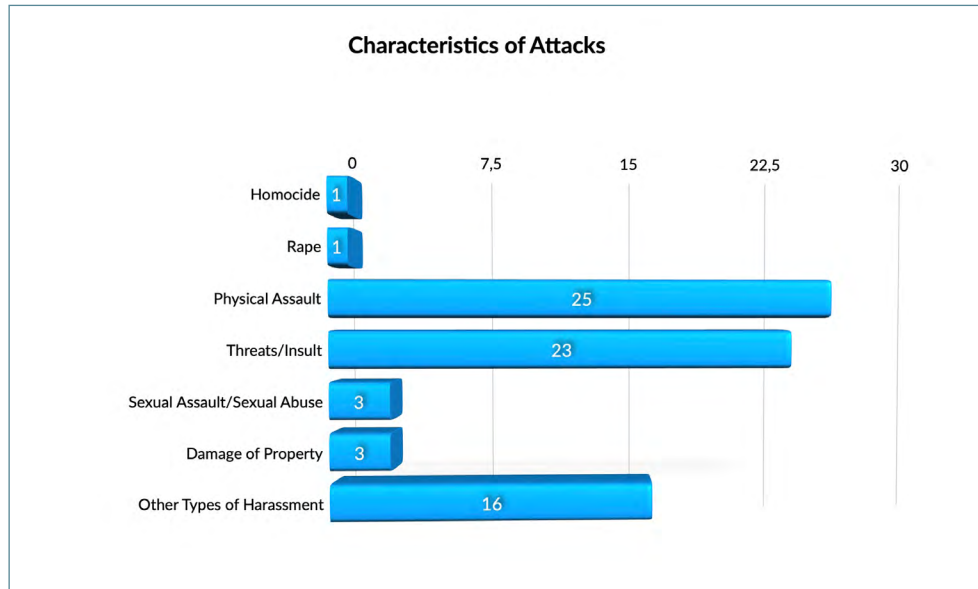
During January-December 2021, the Network recorded 72 incidents of racist violence through interviews with victims. In 28 incidents those targeted were migrants, refugees or asylum-seekers due to their national origin, religion or colour as well as human rights defenders due to their association with refugees and migrants. In one of the incidents, refugees as well as a minor Greek citizen were targeted at the same time, due to their nationality and ethnic origin respectively. In five incidents, the targets were Greek citizens due to their ethnic origin, while in two incidents, the targets were Jewish sacred sites (cemetery). In 36 incidents, the targets were LGBTQI+ individuals as well as human rights defenders, due to their connection with the LGBTQI+ community. In three of these incidents, refugees were targeted due to their sexual orientation and gender identity. In addition, in one case, the victim was targeted due to their disability. In this case, the victim was verbally targeted by another person, online. In 19 incidents the victims stated that they have experienced racist violence before, while in 39 incidents the attack was carried out by a group (at least two people).



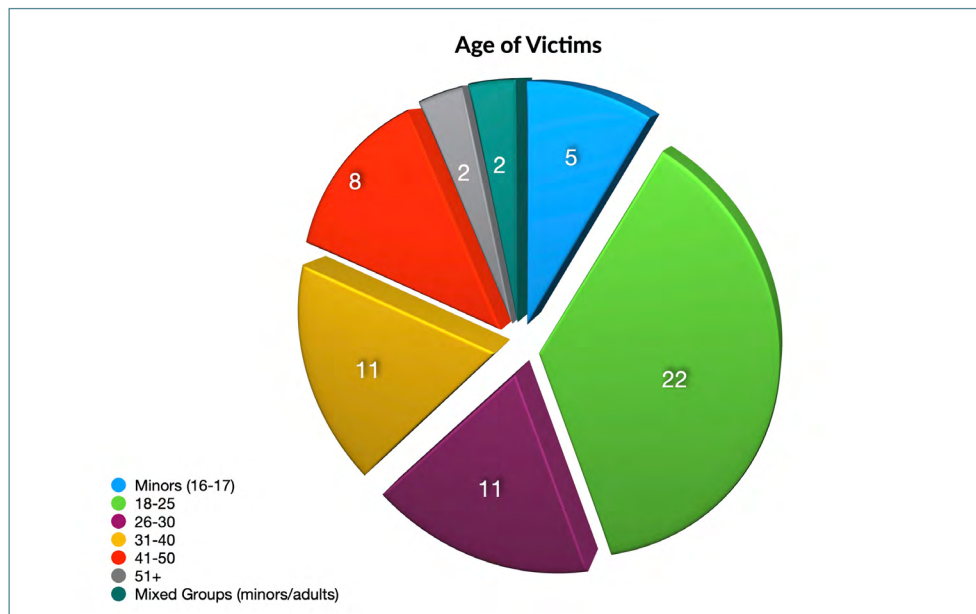
Geographical dispersion: 39 incidents took place in Athens, mainly close to the city centre, but some incidents were also recorded in other areas such as in Piraeus and Perama. In the rest of the country, the incidents are quite widespread. Specifically, 12 incidents were recorded on Lesvos, five incidents in Thessaloniki as well as one incident in Northern Greece, five incidents in Achaia, two incidents in Ioannina and two in Larissa as well as one incident in Rhodes, Samos, Kalamata, Crete and Evia.



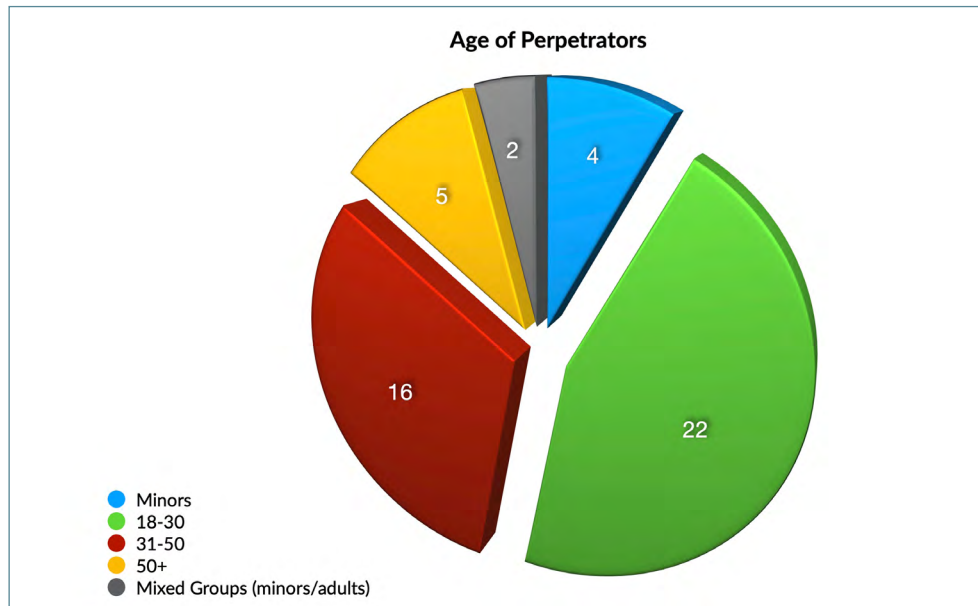
Locations: 31 incidents took place in a public space (road, park, port, etc.), eight incidents in restaurants and stores, 11 incidents at locations providing public services (hospital, police stations, Asylum Service, municipal services, etc.), six incidents at the victim's home, six incidents online, three incidents on public transport, stops and stations, two in Reception and Identification Centers and two in sacred sites (Jewish cemetery), one incident in a bank, one incident at the victim's workplace as well as one incident at the country's borders.



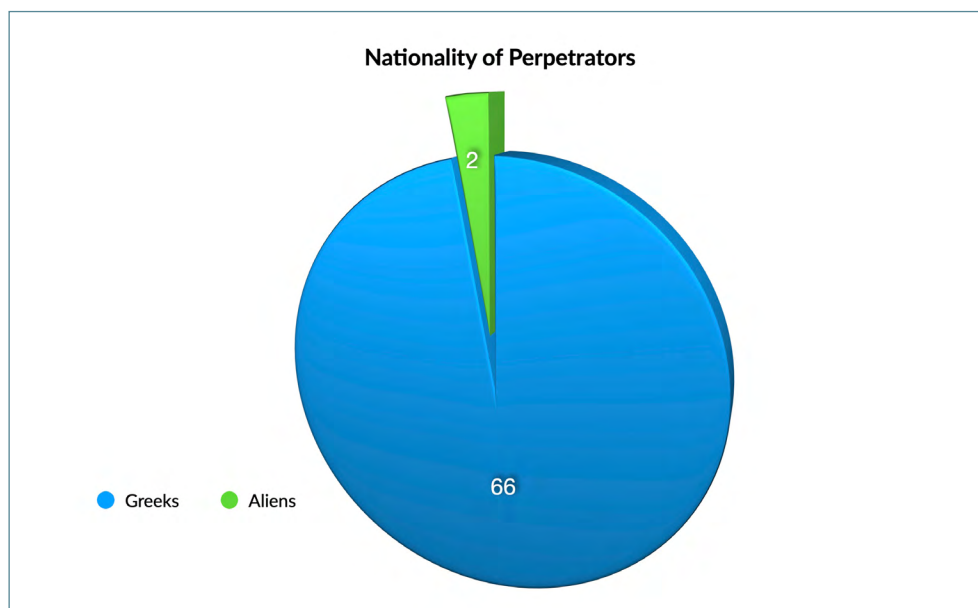
Characteristics of the attacks: A significant number of the attacks resulted in physical injuries and other serious offences, and in one case the victim died. One homicide, one rape, six incidents of indecency-insult of sexual dignity were recorded, combined with insults, threats, physical injuries and damage to third party property. In addition, 25 incidents involved physical injuries, in some incidents combined with threats and insults and other damages to third party property. In 23 incidents, threats and / or insults were also reported, along with damage to third party property. In three incidents, damage to third party property was reported, while in two, the damage was linked to the vandalism of a Jewish cemetery. Finally, in 16 incidents verbal harassment or other types of harassment were reported.



Victims: In incidents where the targets were individuals - not properties e.g. civil society organizations, the victims of 39 incidents who reached out to RVRN were men, five of whom were transgender, while in 24 incidents they were women, 10 of whom were transgender. In one incident, the victim self-identified as non-binary, while in another incident the victim self-identified as genderless. In five incidents the targets were minors between 16-17 years old, and were targeted due to their nationality, colour, sexual orientation or gender identity. In 22 incidents the victims were between 18 and 25 years old. In 11 incidents the targets were between 26 and 30 years old, in 11 they were between 31 and 40, in eight they were between 41 and 50 and in 2 they were between 51 and 60. In two incidents the group of victims was of mixed ages, including one minor. They were targeted on the grounds of national origin, colour and/or ethnic origin.



Perpetrators: According to the victim testimonies, in 61 incidents the perpetrators of the recorded attacks were men, in three incidents women, in four incidents the attack came from mixed groups of both men and women, while in four incidents the victims couldn't see the perpetrators. These were incidents of online/telephone threats or attacks on property at night. In four incidents the perpetrators were, or involved, minors, while in 22 incidents the perpetrators were between 18 and 30 years old. In 16 incidents the perpetrators were between 30 and 50 years old, in five incidents the perpetrators were identified as over 50 years old, while in two incidents the age of the perpetrators was between 18 to 60 years old.



According to victims, the vast majority of the perpetrators were Greek citizens (66 incidents). In two incidents in which the perpetrators were foreigners, they mainly targeted their compatriots due to their sexual orientation or religious identity. In 39 attacks the reported perpetrators were numerous, while in 28 attacks there was just one perpetrator.

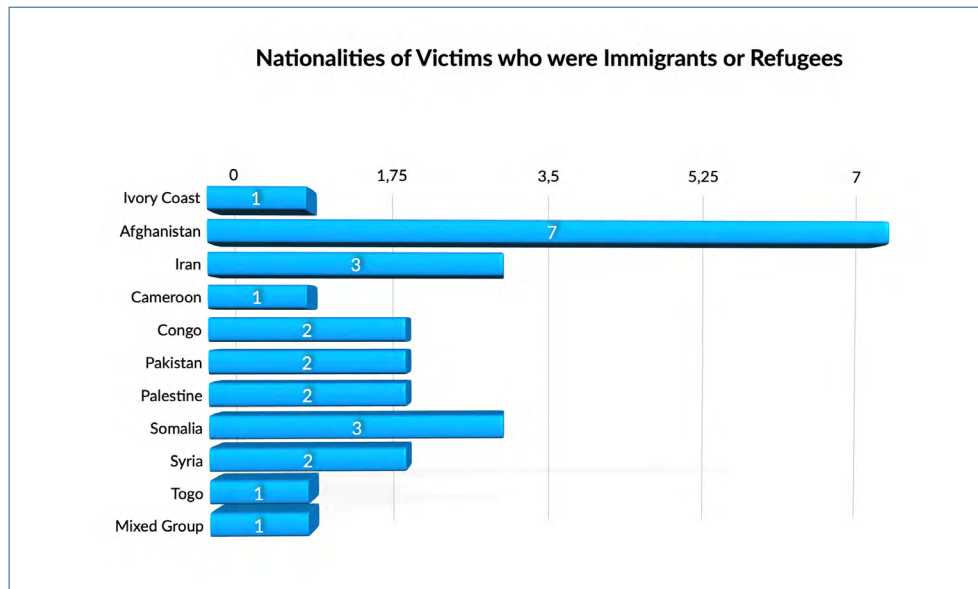
In 43 incidents there were civilians involved. In seven incidents the perpetrators were public officials. In 20 incidents the perpetrators were law enforcement officials. In one incident the perpetrator was an employer in agricultural works and based on the victim's testimony, he was a police officer by profession. In one incident that appears to have resulted in the informal forced return at the country's sea border, when the victims arrived on land, they were attacked by a group of hooded men in cars and on motorbikes. The hooded men, holding torches, started firing in the air. The incident appears to have resulted in an informal forced return. The victim of the attack who provided the testimony was injured while trying to escape.

II. Analysis of the findings

This section analyzes the attacks against refugees and migrants as well as human rights defenders (A), against Greeks due their ethnic origin (B), against LGBTQI+ individuals (C). As in previous reports, special reference is made to incidents where law enforcement officials and public officials are involved (D).

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

In the recordings of attacks against asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants due to their ethnic origin, religion and / or color, as well as against human rights defenders who were targeted for their support to these groups, we observe the following:



Victims: In 20 incidents the victims were men 16-55 years old and in five incidents the victims were women 20-35 years old. The victims were from Afghanistan (7), Iran (3), Somalia (3), Syria (2), Palestine (2), Pakistan (2), Democratic Republic of the Congo (2), Cote d'Ivoire (1), Cameroon (1), Togo (1) and (1) was of mixed nationalities (Mali, Cote d'Ivoire). Legal status of the victims targeted because of their ethnic origin, religion and / or colour: 13 incidents against asylum-seekers, nine against refugees, two against migrants with a residence permit. Finally, in three incidents, human rights defenders were targeted.

Perpetrators: According to the victims, the perpetrators were Greek (28 incidents). Also, the vast majority of the perpetrators were men (27 incidents). In one incident the perpetrator was a woman. It should be noted that minors were involved in one incident, while the age of the other perpetrators was between 18 and 50 years old. In the vast majority of incidents (19 out of 28), more than one perpetrator reportedly took part in the attacks, 12 of which took place on the Aegean islands and on the mainland, where there are formal or informal reception sites. Regarding the status of the perpetrators, in five incidents the perpetrators were civilians, in three the perpetrators were civil servants, while in the majority of incidents (18 incidents out of 28) the perpetrators were law enforcement officials⁶. In one incident, the perpetrator was the employer of the victim in agricultural works and at the same time a police officer of the Hellenic Police. In one incident that appears to have resulted in the informal forced return at the country's sea border, when the victims arrived on land, they were attacked by a group of people wearing hoods and riding in cars and on motorbikes.

Concerning the qualitative analysis of the RVRN recordings for 2021, it is the first time since its establishment that incidents of organized violence by far-right groups against refugees and migrants have not been recorded. Initially, the recording and analysis of racist violence incidents by organized groups, or their members, which include racist actions, was not just one of RVRN's main action points, but the identity of the network itself. A decisive factor for the establishment of the RVRN in 2011 was largely the decision of civil society organizations and the communities of victims affected by the organized action of Golden Dawn. The Network was established in order to respond immediately and in a coordinated manner, in order to verify the increase in racist attacks and organized violence as well as to pursue changes that would put an end to the climate of impunity for such crimes. The members of RVRN, in addition to the above, were called upon to contribute to the support of the victims of the specific attacks that came to their knowledge. This was at a time when the competent Authorities didn't have a system for recording incidents of racist violence or the provision of support for the victims and their communities. This lack of a system resulted in the intensification of insecurity for the targeted groups and in the sense of impunity for the perpetrators. From mid-2011, the start-up period of RVRN, until 2020, the Network recorded more than 250 incidents, which based on the victims' testimonies, show elements of organized violence by racist groups or their members. Many victims' testimonies identified Golden Dawn members or highlighted the modus operandi⁷ that the criminal organization was following. At the end of 2020, the democratic and anti-racist movement welcomed the court

6. For more information see Chapter III (D1) Incidents involving law enforcement officials and public officials p. 30-32.

7. In these incidents, 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.

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. In addition, this landmark court decision came served 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. However, the specific pattern of attacks that the Network has long recorded in the context of the targeting of refugees, migrants and human rights defenders, appears to be applied in other contexts as well in 2021, such as within the school environment⁸. This highlights the need for constant vigilance on the part of the competent authorities, in order to focus on policies to effectively prevent and combat any relevant trend of organized violence. Following the court ruling, the Net called upon the authorities to immediately develop an effective protection network that the law provides for, for each individual and each member of a community targeted by individuals and groups with a racist motive. No crime, either solely or cumulatively motivated by prejudice, should go unpunished. It is also recalled that in 2020, RVRN continued recording attacks that had the characteristics of an organization or were carried out by organized groups infused with far-right ideas. - Although less than in 2013, still extremely worrying -. There has been an increase in incidents where the victims identify the perpetrators as mixed groups of civilians and members of extremist groups, while in some of those incidents, the victims reported that they were harassed by law enforcement officials, who the perpetrators had called⁹. This trend shows the reversal of the current reality. In previous years, the number of reported incidents involving solely members of extremist groups was higher than the number of attacks carried out by civilians along with members of extremist groups. However, more recently, while the number of incidents by purely extremist groups has decreased, elements and characteristics of this *modus operandi*¹⁰ seem to be adopted in organized attacks by civilians, sometimes with the participation of members of racist groups.

The qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the attacks, as described in the RVRN 2020 Annual Report¹¹, highlight a periodically increasing intensity of incidents in areas where there are Reception and Identification Centres or accommodation sites for asylum-seekers as well as unaccompanied minors. These are carried out by organized, informal (or formal) xenophobic groups,

8. Press release: One year after the Golden Dawn condemnation, no complacency against racist violence, Racist Violence Recording Network, October 11, 2021 available at: <http://rvrn.org/2021/10/enas-hronos-meta-tin-katadiki-hrysis-avgis/>

9. 2020 Annual Report, Organized Attacks on Refugees, Migrants and Supporters, Racist Violence Recording Network, available at: https://www.unhcr.org/gr/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2021/05/ENG_ETHSIA_EKTHESH.pdf, p. 26-34.

10. In these incidents, 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.

11. 2020 Annual Report, Organized Attacks on Refugees, Migrants and Supporters, Racist Violence Recording Network, available at: https://www.unhcr.org/gr/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2021/05/ENG_ETHSIA_EKTHESH.pdf, p. 26-34.

against refugees and human rights defenders, with repeated attacks. Within this context, some local communities at these locations, developed a supportive network. In this context, the Network recorded attacks that confirm similar patterns in 2021. These are incidents of verbal violence by groups of citizens, infused with racist motives and attacks on human rights defenders. For example, in the city of Larissa, where attacks were carried out against the participants in the awareness raising event for refugee children “The Walk”¹².

*“Wh*r*s from Larrisa, you brought your children to watch a Muslim”*

It is recalled that in another area, in the Municipality of Meteora, the local (municipal) authorities decided not to allow the event to take place in the city for “religious reasons”.

Based on the 2021 recordings, the pattern of attacks did not appear to intensify, as opposed to in 2020. The factors leading to these findings are the reduction of new arrivals and the reduced refugee population on the islands, and also on the mainland, combined with the wider restriction of movement in public spaces in the framework of measures adopted because of the pandemic. In fact, the above conditions seem to have contributed to the reduction of the refugee and migrant population’s visibility in the local communities, thus affecting the quantitative trends of racist violence incidents. However, the reduction in the number of incidents does not mean the elimination of the phenomenon, considering that its causes and the perpetrators’ motives still exist. The Network stresses that even if the incidents in question that were recorded in 2021 are limited compared to the intensification observed in 2020, comprehensive interventions by the State to deal with racist violence are not observed, and the causes of the problem are not effectively addressed. Only the systematic promotion of measures for the protection and support of the victims for safe access to justice, as well as prevention measures for the host society to accept diversity, can contribute to effectively addressing the causes, behaviors and conditions that lead to organized violent behavior against refugees, migrants and human rights advocates. Otherwise, these trends may recur and (re) feed the intensification of violence and will continue happening, hidden from the general public.

In 2021, there has been an increase in reports and testimonies about informal forced returns at the country’s borders, upon arrival on Greek territory. It should be specified that the Network does not record all reports of informal forced returns but only the specific incidents when, in addition to other significant fundamental human rights violations committed during forced returns, they are combined with specific characteristics that show racist motives (i.e. indicators of prejudice, such as comments, extreme use of force, differences between perpetrator and victim in terms of nationality/ ethnic origin, religion, color, etc.). The Network recorded two incidents in which the victims, upon arrival on Greek territory in September-October 2021, experienced

12. This is an awareness-raising event in which the three-and-a-half-meter-tall Amal doll walks from country to country, representing the journey of a refugee child. <https://www.walkwithamal.org/>

intense verbal and physical violence. In one incident, the victim identified the perpetrators as representatives of the Greek authorities, while in another, the perpetrators were described as a group of hooded men, riding in cars and on motorbikes¹³. According to the victims' testimonies, both the incident in which law enforcement officials were involved and the other with the hooded perpetrators resulted in the forced return of new arrivals to Turkey. Based on the testimony of a victim in one of those incidents –an unaccompanied minor– he tried to enter the country twice in 2021 through Evros and on one occasion he was brutally beaten by the Greek authorities and ended up with two broken wrists. He finally crossed the sea border landing on Rhodes island and arrived by taxi to an abandoned, former military camp at the island's port.

“When everyone jumped out of the building (in the port), the police and the coast guard came from behind to surround us... I was walking with another unaccompanied minor and two others, when a police officer asked for our ID. I gave my card, as did the others, and then they started beating and insulting us. I felt that when they realized that we were Palestinians, they started beating us even harder. They handcuffed us... They told us to lie down and they broke all the cell phones they found on us. I showed my card so that they would understand that I was a Palestinian refugee and a minor and the policeman who was there and saw it said “I hate you, I do not want to see you again” and kept my card from UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees). There were coast guard officers, wearing uniforms with the Greek flag on the arm. Secret police officers, dressed in civilian clothes were also present. There was a car also. It was silver with a blue stripe that read “police”. I still remember their faces. After they handcuffed us and broke our phones, the coast guard and the secret services police officers put us in a van. If someone did not want to get in, they beat him. The police did not harm the women and children, they handcuffed them but did not beat them, the men were beaten a lot instead. They [the police officers] talked to us horribly, both in English and in Greek. They were cursing at us and took us to a military port by van. There is a place surrounded by a large wall, where there are “boats with armory on them”... There, we were beaten again, brutally, four members of the team were severely hurt. On one person, we could see the rib bone having pierced the skin. I was also beaten, but I did not need special care, after three days the bruises were gone. But those four people should have been taken to a hospital, but the police did not care. They put us all in a boat, even the people who were brutally beaten, even though we begged for them to be taken to the hospital. It was the same boat in which we arrived in Greece, but they had taken out the engine. They dragged us in their gray boat, which also had two blue stripes, in the open sea and left us there until the Turkish police found us.”

13. For more information see Chapter III (A1) Attacks against refugees and migrants as well as human rights defenders p. 16-24.

This incident highlights the framework of informal forced returns -pushbacks- by the Greek authorities at the country's sea and land borders, which have been reported by the media, international and regional organisations, civil society actors and confirmed by non-governmental organizations and direct testimonies¹⁴. The Network highlights the negative consequences of such practices, in principle on the lives and safety of people seeking protection and more broadly on the standards and values of human rights and the rule of law that can be irreparably damaged. In this context, the Network welcomes the initiative of the National Commission for Human Rights, as well as civil society organizations for the systematic recording of informal forced returns through the establishment of the Informal Forced Returns Recording Mechanism. This mechanism's objective is, *inter alia*, to monitor, record and highlight the use of these practices, through the adoption of a common, strict recording methodology, as well as the promotion and establishment of respect for the principle of non-refoulement.

An indication of broader targeting due to ethnic origin, color or religion that this group is experiencing by public officials, is the fact that out of the 28 incidents recorded by RVRN in 2021, in 21 cases the victims identify law enforcement officials and other public officials as the perpetrators, who engage in a wide range of violent acts (physical and / or verbal) and other harassment of different intensity. Some of these incidents are directly or indirectly related to the pandemic.

The Networks recordings are an indication of the key parameters of the new context brought by COVID-19, in which the manifestations of racism have taken on a new dimension. In short, the pandemic becomes the framework for the development and intensification of xenophobic

14. GNCHR, Statement on reported pushback practices, 9 July 2020, GNCHR, Statement on complaints of informal pushbacks to Evros, 29 November 2018, GNCHR, Notice on allegations of illegal pushbacks to Evros, 5 July 2017; Press Release, UNHCR calls on Greece to investigate informal forced returns at sea and land border with Turkey, 12 June 2020; Greek Ombudsman, Interim Report: Alleged pushbacks to Turkey of foreign nationals who had arrived in Greece seeking international protection, 28 April 2021; Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Letter: Greek authorities should investigate allegations of pushbacks and ill-treatment of migrants, ensure an enabling environment for NGOs and improve reception conditions, 3 May 2021; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Briefing Note: UNCHR calls on Greece to investigate pushbacks at sea and land borders with Turkey, 12 June 2020; CPT, Report to the Greek Government on the visit to Greece carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 13 to 17 March 2020, 19 November 2020, CPT/Inf (2020) 35, par. 53 et seq.; Human Rights Council, Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Report following its Visit to Greece, 29 July 2020, A/HRC/45/16/Add.1, par. 87; CAT, Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Greece, 3 September 2019, CAT/C/GRC/CO/7, par. 16-17; Human Rights Committee, Report on follow-up to the concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee, 6 November 2018, CCPR/C/124/2, p. 9-10; CERD, Concluding observations on the twentieth to twenty-second periodic reports of Greece, 3 October 2016, CERD/C/GRC/CO/20-22, par. 22-23; Human Rights Committee, Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Greece, 3 December 2015, CCPR/C/GRC/CO/2, par. 33-34; Reports, information and complaints submitted by the Hellenic League for Human Rights, the Greek Council for Refugees and Amnesty International which are GNCHR's Members but also from Refugee Support Aegean, Human Rights 360, HIAS and ARSIS. Information also received during an online hearing of relevant stakeholders convened by the GNCHR on 18 June 2020. GNCHR, Press Release: Hearing of public authorities and persons on refugee and migrant issues during the meeting of the Third Sub-Commission of the GNCHR, 19 June 2020.

behaviors, discrimination and incidents of violence with racist motives by representatives of the Greek Authorities. In particular, the Network recorded incidents in the context of police checks on movement restriction measures, in which, harassment and violence with a racist motive were identified. In one of the recorded incidents, an employee of a civil society organization, originally from Iran, was targeted by of a local hospital staff who refused to provide services and access to medical care, while the man was suffering with COVID-19.

“The doctor on duty asked him about his nationality and refused to treat him, referring him to the IKA, even after the immediate intervention of the patient’s colleague, who clarified that the patient was not living at the Reception and Identification Center of the island”

The incidents of issuing fines arbitrarily, that were brought to the attention of the Network, raise serious concern. Although not always combined with racist violence¹⁵ they are key elements in the new reality of the manifestations of racism and especially institutional racism, in the context of the pandemic. 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 fueled by institutional racism and discrimination by the Authorities. In another incident, an asylum-seeker from Afghanistan said that he was forced to pay a fine, while he had already shown the documents proving his justified exit from the Reception and Identification Center where he was staying.

It should be recalled that in 2020, the movement restriction measures due to COVID-19, both in the accommodation sites for asylum-seekers and in the Reception and Identification Centres (RICs), were stricter than the respective measures for the general population. As the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) of the Council of Europe pointed out in its 2020 report, some government measures that were 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, and have led to further discrimination against marginalized groups, causing a setback in their human rights, that could prove long-term¹⁶. This reality was observed also for 2021, given the extension of the movement restriction measures, posing serious obstacles to asylum-seekers’ access to core services, such as access to protection, education, legal aid and medical care.

15. The incidents brought to the attention of RVRN that include expressions of discrimination, but not racist violence, are not included in RVRN’s quantitative data. However, RVRN 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.

16. 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>

In this context, the Network was informed about the systematic imposition of fines on newly arrived asylum-seekers and refugees by the coast guard of an Aegean island, where there is a Reception and Identification Center. The amount of the said fine reaches 5,000 euros and is based on the provisions for the conditions of entry into the country, in the context of limiting the spread of the COVID-19. Based on the information available to the Network, asylum-seekers who were fined also received international protection status, so the competent authorities had acknowledged that they had entered the country to protect their basic rights. Therefore, such persecutory practices can only contribute to the development of unequal and discriminatory treatment against persons who may be in need of international protection. Furthermore, children with a refugee profile living in the country's accommodation sites, could not access school outside the site due to the bureaucratic obstacles impeding their access. This was a widespread phenomenon in 2020 due to the COVID-19 measures, but it is still observed in specific structures during 2021. The Network monitors these developments given their particular contribution to strengthening institutional racism, but also due to the consequences for the refugee population, especially children. Children who, under adverse conditions, try to obtain access to protection, regain the normality they have been deprived of, and integrate into the host society.

Finally, the Network highlights an incident against an asylum-seeker who was working in the agricultural sector, when along with the other workers, (everyone of African origin), asked to be paid their agreed wage. The perpetrator was his employer (who appears to be a law enforcement official). According to the victim's testimony,

"The employer... with the help-presence of his colleagues from the Hellenic Police and at gunpoint, rejected any monetary claim on the part of the employees. The victim fled, until he managed to reach a central location and find a way to leave the area"

Prior to the incident, the victim was living with other employees of African origin in a farmhouse, owned by the employer. They were able to leave the house in the morning to go to work, but at night, after their return, their employer used to lock them in the farmhouse. The specific conditions of this case show and contribute to the conclusion that the attack would not have been committed against a person who does not have the same characteristics (in this case a field worker, a foreigner), and even if it had been committed, it would not have been done so blatantly. Regarding 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' decisions to commit criminal acts, which they would probably not have committed if the employee had not been a foreigner. This specific incident is of particular significance, considering that the employer appears to be a law enforcement official. According to the victim, other law enforcement officials participated in the attack as well. The Network emphasizes the need to intensify cooperation and coordination of the competent authorities for comprehensive and effective interventions to protect victims of racist violence by their employers-perpetrators, but also for the thorough control of the working conditions in similar cases.

B. Attacks against Greek citizens due to ethnic origin and against sacred sites due to religion

In 2021, the Network recorded three incidents against Greek citizens, who were targeted due to different ethnic origin, and seen as “less” Greek, and two incidents against a sacred site, specifically a Jewish cemetery. In the incidents against individuals, the targets were Roma Greek citizens. Regarding the profile of the perpetrators, the victims seem to have been targeted both by law enforcement officials and by other civil servants, as well as by citizens. In most cases, incidents take place either during an activity or at the times the victim arranges everyday activities (e.g. shop owners) or during interactions with civil or municipal employees when the victim exercises their rights as a Greek citizen. Attacks involve verbal violence against the victims or denial / obstruction of their access to public goods and services, due to their ethnic origin.

In addition, in 2021 the Network recorded a particularly serious incident of police violence against Roma Greek citizens, during which one of the victims was murdered. The incident took place in October 2021 in Perama of Piraeus, during a car chase. Based on the information provided by the victim's¹⁷ environment, it appears that the law enforcement officials knew from the beginning that the passengers were Roma. One of the passengers was killed by gunshots, while 36 bullets were found at the crime scene.

This is a well-known case, it was all over the media at the time and is being investigated by the authorities. The Network stresses the need to investigate the incident in light of the possible existence of racist motives. Given the existence of indicators of prejudice in this incident (excessive use of force, the perpetrators seem to have known the different ethnic origin of the victims-possible racial / ethnic profiling etc.), it is important to investigate the possible racist motives at the first stages of the process, in order to ensure its thorough and comprehensive examination.

In 2021, the Network recorded two anti-Semitic attacks. Specifically, in August and September 2021, unknown individuals vandalized graves in the Jewish cemetery of Ioannina. It is recalled that this area had been attacked previously in 2009, while the recorded incidents of 2021 took place during a major Jewish holiday. The Network is aware of the many faces of anti-Semitism in Greece, which, as in other countries, is not limited to desecrations and vandalisms by groups, but also penetrates large parts of the population and is reflected in everyday speech. Through desecrations, a message of violence is addressed to the whole community. The imprint of the attacks is broader and goes beyond the Jewish community, as it concerns any community with different characteristics that is part of the society.

17. Since its establishment, RVRN has been implementing a strict methodology, by recording incidents exclusively on the basis of interviews conducted with the victims. In the event of homicide, members of RVRN may receive the recording either from witnesses or from the victim's environment.

Finally, the incident in which a recognized refugee and a minor Greek citizen were both targeted at the same time due to their nationality and ethnic origin respectively, should also be highlighted. The incident took place in June 2021, when the victim, along with his son and a friend, sat on a slope near Ritsona, outside an abandoned factory, in order to enjoy the view and have something to eat. However, they were attacked by a man in the factory yard who started shouting at them to leave, saying also:

*“I know what kind of sh*t you are. Leave or I am pulling the guns out and I’ll kill you.”*

Despite the fact that one of the victims said they would leave, the perpetrator opened the back door of his car, pulled out a gun... and shot at him, shouting:

“Leave or I’ll take care of you”

This incident is a typical case of unprovoked violence, considering that according to the victims’ testimony, they were targeted without any prior interaction with the perpetrator. Targeting seems to be based on their refugee profile, while it should also be taken into consideration that they were in an area where there is a refugee accommodation site. One of the main elements of racist violence, the unprovoked victimization due to the victim’s characteristics, or those that the perpetrator thinks that the victim has, is an extremely aggravating factor against the sense of security and justice that the individual should be enjoying within society. Essentially, as stressed in a recent publication of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/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 injuries and shock that the victims suffer immediately after an attack, one of the most important consequences of hate crimes is the socio-emotional and psychological distress¹⁸. The incident has been counted in the recordings of attacks on refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers, given that the victim who gave their testimony to a member of the Network is a refugee. However, it is important to highlight the importance of targeting a minor of Greek citizenship, due to having a different ethnic origin than the perpetrator. As the Network has stressed in the past¹⁹, racial discrimination in the context of citizenship has been highlighted by the UN Special Rapporteur on modern forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance, concluding that nationalism, in its broad sense, perceives nation in terms of blood ties and origin²⁰. Targeting a person - let alone a child - for their ethnic characteristics, which they should never be asked

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

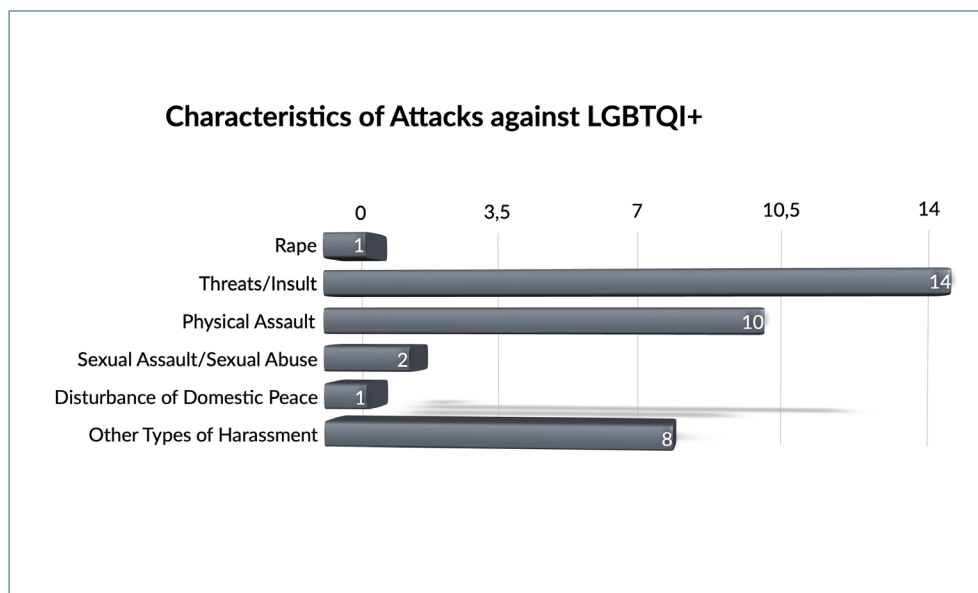
19. Racist Violence recording Network, 2018 Annual Report, available at: https://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/RVRN_report_2018en.pdf

20. A/HRC/38/52 (2018), Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, par. 39.

to change or hide, exacerbates the trauma of violence itself and thus increases insecurity, fear and the victim's sense of injustice. And when targeting takes place on the basis of ethnic origin, it contributes to the rupture of the person's connection with their identity as citizens, violently imposing on the victim the perpetrator's perception of them as a "second class" citizen and as "less" Greek.

C. Assaults against LGBTQI+ individuals

RVRN recorded 36 incidents of attacks against LGBTQI+ individuals in 2021 (13 due to gender identity, 15 due to sexual orientation, five due to sexual orientation / gender identity, one due to gender characteristics / sexual orientation and two against a civil society actor for supporting the LGBTQI+ community). Recorded attacks on LGBTQI+ individuals include verbal assaults, physical violence, and sexual assaults, in some incidents in combination with theft and disturbance of domestic peace. A common trait in the vast majority of incidents is the combination of different types of violence and criminal acts. In addition, in 2021, online attacks against Colour Youth organization continued. The Network highlights that the attacks on human rights defenders show that perpetrators associate them with the people they are defending, thus expanding the use of violence to them. Although the defenders of LGBTQI+ people are not always part of that social group, the targeted organisations do consist of members of the LGBTQI+ community, which is why the assaults have a high impact both on them and the community. Finally, the Network recorded four incidents that took place during the Athens Pride Festival in 2021, where citizens verbally and physically attacked the festival participants and members of the LGBTQI+ community..



1. Assaults on grounds of sexual orientation

In 15 out of the 36 incidents against LGBTQI+ individuals, the victims were targeted due to their sexual orientation.

Victims: Eight incidents against men, six against a woman, and one against a non-binary individual.

Age of the victims: In one incident the victim was a minor, while in the rest, the age of the victims ranged between 18 - 28 years old. The attacks include both verbal (in six incidents threats and / or insults were recorded) and physical violence. Specifically, in eight incidents, the recorded attacks included physical injuries, and / or sexual assault and even rape. In some incidents, physical violence happens along with verbal violence.

In two incidents, the victims stated that they had been subjected to racist violence in the past. These incidents highlight the context of repeated victimization, as a factor both for the preventive protection of the victim of racist violence, and for the provision of special support to those who have been victimized more than once. In one of the two incidents, a woman from Afghanistan was initially threatened and later raped by her compatriots, due to her sexual orientation. The victim, as she stated, after the first incident (threats), hid in her house. However, a few days later, when she went out to buy the groceries, she was attacked and raped by two men wearing hoods. After the incident, she was asked if she wanted to report it and she refused because she feared that her family community and her children would find out. This incident highlights the urgent need for immediate action to ensure that targeted groups have access to both timely information on the protection and support framework in the event of violence and an effective national system for the support of victims of crimes (especially in incidents of cross-sectoral targeting) in order to prevent their re-victimization²¹. 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 retaliation²². In cross-sectoral targeting, it is necessary to take this parameter into account not only during the collection of the data which constitutes the criminal act, but also during the evaluation and coverage of the victims' needs.

Perpetrators: In 14 incidents the perpetrators were men with one minor among them, while in one incident the perpetrators were both men and women. In addition, the perpetrators' ages show small dispersion, highlighting the young age of all perpetrators. Specifically, the ages range

21. For more information see Chapter IV (B1) State response to racist violence, p. 33-41.

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

from 16 to 28 years old. Regarding the status of the perpetrators, most of them are civilians, however in one incident the perpetrators were law enforcement officials.

A recognized refugee on an Aegean Island experienced violence by law enforcement officials when he tried to enter the Reception and Identification Center. The victim tried to enter the RIC, but he was not allowed to because he was a recognized refugee. However, in the course of the incident, the victim reported that the police officers threw him off of his bike, told him to get into a container and when they saw that he had membership documents in LGBTQI+ groups, they started mocking and laughing at him, especially over some medical documents he was carrying. According to the victim, he was attacked both because of his sexual orientation and his refugee status. This incident showcases the potential for racist violence in the context of multiple grounds for targeting of the victim t, including protection characteristics (national origin / sexual orientation), as well as victimization by representatives of the Authorities whose duty it is to protect victims.

As in 2020, a qualitative element related to the circumstances brought by the pandemic is the fact that previously, many incidents had taken place in very specific public spaces (e.g. squares, streets), while in 2021, the incidents had taken place in many and different areas of the public space. An additional element of the new circumstances is that once again the Network continues recording incidents that take place inside the victims' residence, essentially incidents of domestic violence with a racist motive.

2. Attacks due to gender identity

In 2021, 13 attacks due to gender identity were recorded.

Victims: In nine incidents the victims were women from 30-58 years old and in four incidents the victims were men from 17-31 years old. In the case of the minor victim, it was an incident of domestic and verbal violence by the victim's parents due to gender identity.

In 2021, two incidents of verbal violence were recorded, two incidents of physical violence combined with insults and / or threats, one incident of disturbance of domestic peace, as well as eight incidents of verbal violence and/or other types of harassment. In two of those incidents, the perpetrators were civil servants, while five were linked to the control measures for the pandemic.

Perpetrators: In 12 incidents the perpetrators were men, while in one incident it was a woman. The ages of the perpetrators were between 18 and 55 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 2021, a trend of behaviours was recorded which involve problematic and highly harassing behaviours against transgender individuals by family, public officials, but also civilians, challenging the self-determination of the individual.

Apart from the harassing behaviour that transgender people experience from public officials, which will be elaborated in the relevant sections, the Network wishes to focus on the repeated verbal attacks against transgender people at the time of their transition²³. Those recorded incidents show that transgender people suffer verbal abuse which intensifies as their transitioning progresses and becomes more visible. The Network recorded such abusive behaviors, specifically by bank employees but also by employees in stores, and during ID controls for entering in stores, as part of the protection measures against the pandemic.

In November 2021, a 37-year-old trans woman was verbally abused and ridiculed by a security guard at a clothing store in Patras, because of her gender identity. When the security guard saw her documents (vaccination certificate, ID) he asked for explanations over the discrepancy between the documents and her appearance. She explained that she is a trans woman, and that her details had not been changed yet. The security guard laughed at her and let her in. After a while she saw the security guard talking to another colleague, pointing at her and laughing. At first the trans woman did not bother and continued doing her shopping, but after a while she saw the security guard go to every employee of the store individually and talk about her and her personal details and laugh. When the victim asked for an explanation about his behavior, the security guard said:

*“What, aren’t you a proud tr*nn*?”*

The victim immediately left the store in a very bad emotional condition.

The above incident highlights the need to take measures to address the manifestations of racism that trans individuals experience, and in particular racist violence, in combination with combating the impact of the pandemic on the enjoyment of their rights. Competent Authorities are encouraged to work systematically and in a timely manner to integrate the special needs and challenges that LGBTQI+ individuals face, both in planning policies and in the implementation and evaluation of measures to limit the spread of COVID-19.

The Network finds that in a significant number of incidents of attacks due to gender identity, the victims experience racist violence in their workplace, involving trans women, sex workers, who are constantly subjected to extreme verbal and physical violence during work, usually by unknown perpetrators. However, in 2021, the new circumstances brought by the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to further marginalization and the intensification of discrimination in accessing supporting services. The transphobic violence that these individuals are experiencing may deteriorate into insecurity, or even increase risks to 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 gen-

23. For more information see Chapter III (D1) Incidents involving law enforcement officials and public officials p. 30-32.

der or sexual orientation and because of their ethnic origin, religion or colour, may be included in this category. In some incidents, 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 officials

RVRN analyses the incidents involving law enforcement officials and public officials in a different section, because of their specific nature.

1. Police violence

RVRN has recorded incidents in which police violence is linked to racist violence, namely where there are specific qualitative characteristics showing racist motives during violent incidents, where the perpetrators were law enforcement officials. In 2021, 20 incidents were recorded in which law enforcement officials were involved. The corresponding number of recordings in 2020 was 25, in 2019 was 17 and in 2018 was 22. The Network notes that from 2017 these incidents show an increasing tendency compared to the others recorded during the year. It is worth noting that there is an increasing trend in such incidents in the recordings from 2012 to 2014, where the incidents involving law enforcement officials reached up to 26% of all recordings, while there was a decrease in the relevant recordings from 2015 to 2017 (9.8%).



Out of the 20 incidents recorded in 2021, 10 took place on Lesbos, four in Attica, two in Thessaloniki and one each on Samos, Rhodes, Kos and in broader region of Northern Greece. It is noteworthy that most of the incidents took place on Lesbos, i.e. more than in Athens.

According to 2021 recordings, the victims of these attacks were mainly asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants due to ethnic origin, religion and color (17 incidents), and in one incident the victim was targeted for both their ethnic origin and sexual orientation. Two incidents were linked to the control measures for the pandemic. By observing both the corresponding data of 2020²⁴ and the recordings for 2021, it is found that there is a strengthening of xenophobic attitudes, discrimination and incidents of violence with racist motives by representatives of the Greek authorities. In particular, the Network recorded incidents in the context of police controls in which, harassment and expression of violence with a racist motive were identified.

One incident was about the informal forced return of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. As mentioned above, in another incident the targets were Roma Greek citizens who experienced violence due to ethnic origin, which resulted in the murder of one of the victims. The Network stresses the need to investigate the incident in light of the possible existence of racist motives. Given the existence of indicators of prejudice in this incident (excessive use of force, the perpetrators seem to have known the different ethnic origin of the victims-possible racial / ethnic profiling etc.), it is important to investigate the racist motives at the first stages of the process, in order to ensure its thorough and comprehensive examination.

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. This happens when subjecting individuals to identity checks and detailed investigations or when making conclusions about someone's involvement in criminal activity. It is also pointed out that whether it comes from the attitude and practices of individual officers or it is part of a broader culture of the law enforcement bodies, 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. When stereotypes are applied to undermine the enjoyment of human rights, they become the basis for violations of international human rights law²⁵.

24. 2020 Annual Report, Organized Attacks on Refugees, Migrants and Supporters, Racist Violence Recording Network, available at: https://www.unhcr.org/gr/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2021/05/ENG_ETHSIA_EKTHESH.pdf, p. 26-34.

25. UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), General recommendation No. 36: Preventing and Combating Racial Profiling by Law Enforcement Officials, p. 4-5, 24 November 2020. Available at: [CERD_C_GC_36_9291_E.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/CERD_C_GC_36_9291_E.pdf) (ohchr.org).

2. Incidents involving public officials

In seven incidents, the perpetrators were public officials. They show that both incidents target groups, including 3 asylum-seekers targeted due to ethnic origin and four Greek citizens, two targeted due to ethnic origin and two due to gender identity, re facing problems when dealing with the public sector. The incidents recorded by the Network show the lack of tolerance for diversity, as well as the development of a culture of harassment against refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as Greek citizens (Roma, LGBTQI+ individuals).

Harassment often leads to the denial of service and therefore access to public goods and services. Although these incidents are strong indicators of discriminations on the basis of ethnic origin, religion, ethnic origin, gender identity, it is recalled that when a civil servant intentionally breaches their duties in order to, inter alia, harm the state or another person, their act may be considered a breach of duty (Article 259 of the Penal Code).

III. Complaints and authorities' response

RVRN closely monitors 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 to the victims' access to justice. This section analyses the Networks 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 72 recorded incidents, one was reported to the police at the time it was recorded by RVRN, while one incident has been reported to the Greek Ombudsman. Criminal procedure has been initiated for five incidents. In eight incidents, the victims said that they had not reported the incident to the police but intended to do so. In 45 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.

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.

B. State response to racist violence

The Network always seeks the best possible cooperation with the competent authorities for combating racist violence and supporting the victims. Cooperation between civil society and the competent authorities has been considered successful in combating racist crime.

1. Recording and response by the Authorities

According to statistics on cases of racist violence reported to RVRN by the Hellenic Police, in 2021, the competent services recorded the following:

INCIDENTS PER CATEGORY OF PERPETRATORS	
CITIZENS	68
CITIZENS AND POLICE OFFICERS	1
CITIZENS AND UNKNOWN PERPETRATORS	0
POLICE OFFICERS	31
ORGANISED GROUPS	0
UNKNOWN PERPETRATORS	35
UNKNOWN PERPETRATORS AND POLICE OFFICERS	0
TOTAL RECORDED INCIDENTS	135

PUBLIC PROSECUTOR'S ORDERS	22
POLICE PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATIONS	113
TOTAL INCIDENTS	135

TYPE OF COMPETENT SERVICE	
POLICE DEPARTMENTS COMBATING RACIST VIOLENCE	44
POLICE DEPARTMENTS AND SECURITY DEPARTMENTS	57
CYBER CRIME DIVISION	10
DIVISION OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS	6
GENERAL REGIONAL POLICE DIRECTORATE	8
SECURITY SUB-DIRECTORATE OF ATTICA	10

POSSIBLE RACIST MOTIVE	
NATIONAL OR ETHNIC ORIGIN	83
DESCENT	7
COLOUR	7
RACE	7
RELIGION	18
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	20
GENDER IDENTITY	3
DISABILITIES	4
UNIDENTIFIED / OTHER	0

VICTIMS PER GENDER	
	%
MEN	76
WOMEN	24

COMPLAINTS	TOTAL	INVESTIGATED
11414	218	46
OFFENCE		
INSULT		58
THREAT		24
DEFAMATION		3
SLANDER		7
INJURIES		33
EXPOSURE (TO DANGER)		1
TORTURE		2.
FALSE ACCUSATION		1
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE		3
DATA PROTECTION		1
THE USE OF GUNS		4
EQUAL TREATMENT		1
UNLAWFUL VIOLENCE		1
ABUSE OF MINORS		1
THEFT		1
PREPARATION AND POSESSION OF EXPLOSIVES		1
EXPLOSION		1
ARSON		1
SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE		2.
ROBBERY		4
BREACH OF DUTY		7
ABUSE OF AUTHORITY		2
DISTURBANCE OF DOMESTIC PEACE		1
DAMAGE TO THIRD-PARTY PROPERTY		10
HATE SPEECH		25
TOTAL		195

VICTIMS PER CITIZENSHIP	
GREEK NATIONALS	45
ALBANIA	20
BULGARIA	2
IRAN	5
MOROCCO	3
SERBIA	1
SOMALIA	2
PAKISTAN	19
AFGHANISTAN	7
BANGLADESH	3
EGYPT	3
ROMANIA	1
ALGERIA	2
UKRAINE	1
CAMEROON	1
SYRIA	1
IRAQ	1
LIBYA	1
NEW GUINEA	1
RUSSIA	1
COLOMBIA	1
SIERRA LEONE	1
FRANCE	2
NIGERIA	1
SPAIN	1
CONGO	1
POLAND	1
KYRGYZSTAN	1

RVRN cites the above data in order to provide a 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, this process would 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.

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

In 2021, the RVRN participated in NCRI sittings with two representatives (and their deputies). The Network welcomes the actions for addressing racist violence which are included in the National Action Plan Against Racism. The National Action Plan was put to consultation within the National Council Against Racism and Intolerance. The actions that took place in 2021, are a step in the right direction, whether they were part of the Action Plan against Racism or were carried out in the context of other relevant initiatives. Such actions include trainings of the competent authorities for identifying racist crime, awareness raising and information of protection actors amongst others. However, the Network stresses the need for further commitment of the authorities for systematizing the existing actions, for the authorities involved to understand the institutional framework and be able to identify and respond to racist crime (e.g. regular information and training of all police officers on the obligation to assist the victims, intervene to their rescue and to ensure their information and referral to the appropriate services). In addition, the Network underlines the need to extend the authorities' commitment to policies which need to be promoted, as shown by the respective analysis of qualitative and quantitative trends about underreporting of racist violence cases (e.g. introduction of a special procedure in the framework of disciplinary controls within the Hellenic Police, and faster examination of racially-motivated arbitrary acts.).

A relevant incident recorded by the Network in 2021 involved two consecutive attacks against asylum-seekers, performed by the same law enforcement officials. When asked at the recording, the victim stated that they did not want to take further action because they were afraid that they would be found again and harmed again. This incident, combined with the significant number of recorded incidents in recent years where the perpetrators were law enforcement officials, shows that addressing underreporting of racist crime is linked with the promotion of effective interventions for addressing police violence. It is recalled that in the reporting period, the Network recorded an incident of homicide where the perpetrators were police officers, and the victim was a Greek Roma citizen²⁶.

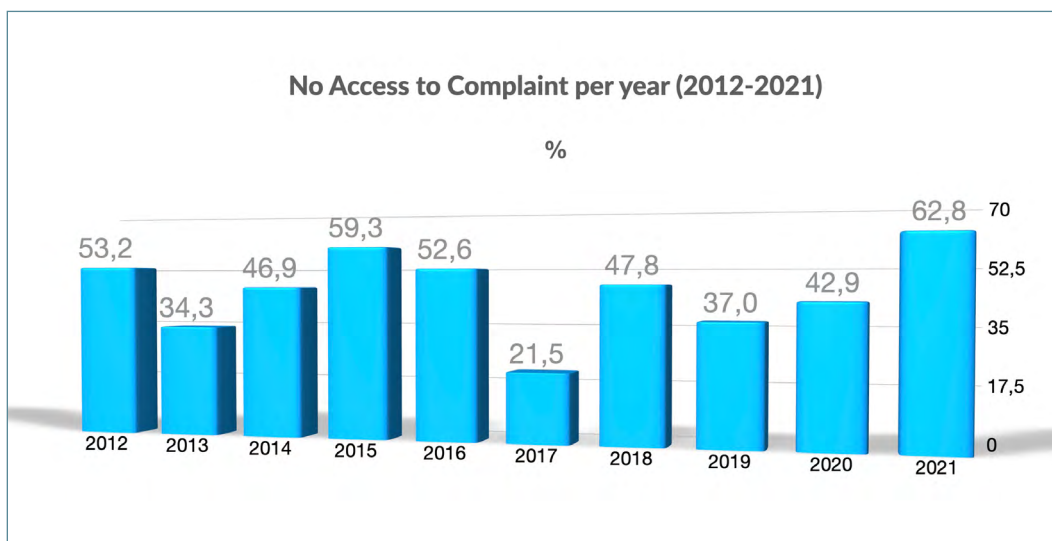
At this point, RVRN would like to recall that, as the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination highlighted, individuals who have been discriminated against by law enforcement officials, tend to show less confidence in the authorities and, therefore, are less willing to cooperate with the police, thus limiting the effectiveness of the latter. That sense of injustice, humiliation and loss of confidence in the police and other authorities may lead to reduced crime reporting²⁷.

26. For more information see Chapter III (B2) Attacks against Greek citizens due to ethnic origin and against sacred sites due to religion p. 24-26.

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

At this point, the Network recalls a recorded incident that took place in December 2020 in Lesvos regarding the unprovoked attack by law enforcement officials, of recognized refugees from Afghanistan. The incident gained much publicity at the time because there was also audiovisual material of the attack. Based on RVRN's information, the case has been referred to a trial in which the racist motive is expected to be investigated. The Network highlights that this was one of the first cases of police violence to be investigated in the light of Article 82A of the Penal Code (racist motive). The Network is eagerly awaiting developments.

The following graph shows that a significant number of victims do not file a complaint, mainly due to fear of secondary victimization or re-victimization, but also due to lack of trust in the competent authorities for the provision of adequate protection to victims (e.g. from re-victimization).



In addition, the Network was informed about the inclusion of the investigation for racist motive in previously recorded cases, specifically the attacks in Sapphous Square in Mytilene in 2018²⁸ and the attacks that took place in Lesvos in 2021, during a period when racist violence and violence against human rights defenders on the Aegean islands and in Evros escalated²⁹. In addition, in 2021, a case recorded by the Network was heard before court, while a member of the Network was summoned to support the said case. In December 2018, the victim, originally from Bangladesh, was attacked by a young man after indicating to the latter that he had parked his car in a spot designated for the disabled at a car park outside a supermarket. The sentence (total of seven

28. Racist Violence recording Network, 2018 Annual Report, available at: https://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/RVRN_report_2018en.pdf

29. Racist Violence recording Network, 2018 Annual Report, available at: https://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/RVRN_report_2018en.pdf

years imprisonment and a fine) sends a message of justification for the victim, but also of the authorities' intolerance for such incidents. It is recalled that as a result of the attack, the victim was seriously injured in the arm and had to undergo complex surgeries and treatments. Following this case, the Network emphasizes the importance of including possible racist motives as well as possible indicators of prejudice from the early stages of the investigation procedure.

Finally, the Network followed with particular interest the trial for the murder of Zak Kostopoulos in 2018, the activist of the LGBTQI+ community that concluded in 2021. This specific tragic incident is a typical case of unprovoked targeting that led to homicide, in a context of violence, where the perpetrators thought that the victim had certain stereotypical qualities for which they attacked him. In this context, the Network commends the decisive persistence and determination shown by the family of Zak Kostopoulos and his advocates, as well as the LGBTQI+ community, not to allow this case to remain in the obscurity of impunity. They also contributed decisively to the establishment of a wider and particularly dynamic movement for supporting the case and for the delivery of justice. This particular case contributes decisively to the understanding, from society's point of view as a whole, that the stereotypical perception of the "other", and the exercise of violence against it because it is perceived as "undesirable", cannot go unpunished. At the same time, it was and will remain a pivotal point of reference for the fundamental right of every citizen, regardless of the characteristics they have or the conditions they experience, to have access at any time and under any circumstances, to protection and security. The Network highlights that the enjoyment of these rights is non-negotiable and cannot be compromised. On the contrary, the competent authorities are called to align their practices with the mandates of the rule of law for the protection and safety of the state's citizens. It is recalled that the main responsibility of the security bodies is to rescue citizens who are in danger and not to further victimize them, contributing to the intensification of violence against them, with tragically irreversible consequences in some cases.

Regarding the access of victims of racist crimes to services and to protection status, it has been 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 Network³⁰, the implementation of the relevant framework is still lacking. The Network also highlights that although there is a relevant legal provision regarding the issuance of residence permits for humanitarian reasons to victims and witnesses of racist crime, in practice there are delays in the implementation of this protection status. Consequently, victims and witnesses find themselves at risk of detention. At this point, the Network stresses the need for speeding up the identification procedure of undocumented third-country nationals who are victims of racist violence, to minimize restrictions to their freedom. The European Strategy for Victim Support notes that

30. Racist Violence recording Network, 2017 Annual Report, available at: https://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Report_2017eng.pdf

victimized migrants without a legal status are often vulnerable and may be facing difficulties in accessing justice. If they report a crime to the police, they may be returned to their country of origin. The European Directive on victims' rights stresses that these rights apply to all victims indiscriminately, regardless of their residence status. The Network has pointed out 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. Based on the above 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 a referral network to protection and support services.

The Network highlights the special value of the above provisions and their application, given that they introduce the victim-centered approach in the relevant institutional framework, promoting the support and protection of the victim, regardless of whether the incident was reported. However, the implementation of this framework requires the existence of an effective national system for the support of victims of crime in general, but also for victims with special vulnerabilities such as in cases of racist or gender-based violence. The recent developments regarding complaints of gender-based violence, highlight - more than ever before - the need for the competent authorities to promote the implementation of the relevant regulatory framework immediately and effectively. This is part of a broader context of social dialogue and mobilization for the empowerment of victims. This implementation requires the establishment of a national support and protection system for victims. For the establishment of such a system, the Network emphasizes the need for coordination of the involved authorities for the rescue, information, protection and support of the victims. The main pillars of this system are the provision of information on the victim's rights but also the training of the authorities on their obligations towards the victims. As specified by law, the starting point of a victim-centered system is the needs assessment performed by the competent authorities and, considering the findings, the referral of victims to the appropriate services. For this step to be implemented, in addition to the training of the actors, it is necessary to integrate them into a unified system of referrals to support services and to strengthen them.

This approach, which constitutes the basis of the Directive on the support of crime victims as well as of the relevant national framework (Law 4478/2017) requires the establishment of an effective referral mechanism by the competent authorities, for the coordination of the support system for victims of racist crimes, the mapping of services and actors at central, regional and local level as well as their inclusion in that mechanism. Also, it is necessary to define the operating framework of the competent authorities within the mechanism as well as their commitment to the evaluation of the needs of the victims and their connection with the supporting services. For the enhancement of the support system, the systematization of monitoring and the evaluation are deemed necessary, to provide integrated support services and a protection framework to the victims. Therefore, it is deemed necessary to restart the work of the Working Group estab-

lished following the agreement of the competent authorities with the ODIHR, for drawing up an operational plan. As stressed by the Network, the above-mentioned determining parameters for the establishment of an effective national support system for victims of racist crime are not, at this stage, part of the current actions of the Action Plan against Racism. The Network reiterates the need for the existing Plan to be reevaluated and for the above parameters to be prioritized, through the inclusion of specific actions. Finally, it also reiterates the need for progressive and cross-sector monitoring of the implementation of the actions in question, as well as of their impact on the target groups.

Efforts of the authorities to systematize monitoring of these incidents, from the complaint to the judicial process, and the full systematization of the data on racist crimes from all services in order to fully monitor their treatment under Greek legislation, have not been implemented to date. RVRN also encounters many obstacles in identifying court decisions in incidents of racist crimes, especially in incidents where the lawyer involved is not a member of the Network. In a broader context, data monitoring systematization, quantitative and qualitative analysis, as well as the publication of the respective findings by the State, would enhance objective parameters that should be taken into account to effectively combat all aspects of racist crime. This would also enhance the transparency of the procedures, as well as trust in both the authorities and in a unified and effective mechanism for recording incidents of racist violence. As noted above, trust in a unified and effective system for recording incidents of racist violence, as well as the protection and provision of assistance to the victims, remains a principal aim, despite some positive developments in this area.

IV. Recommendations to the State

In the fight against racist crimes, RVRN addresses the following recommendations to the Greek State. While many consistently remain there since the beginning of the Network's operation, several others are added with the increasing involvement of the Network in the prevention and fight against racist crimes.

Recommendations to the Ministry of Citizen Protection

A. Combating racist crime

1. Reinforcement and proper staffing of the Hellenic Police Services against Racist Violence.
2. Continuous training, for the entire personnel of the Hellenic Police, with the assistance of international and European organizations with expertise and experience in training law enforcement officials and judicial bodies.
3. Continuous guidance to all police officers regarding their obligation to assist victims, to intervene for their rescue and to make sure that the victims are referred to the competent support services.
4. Provision of special information on the existing structures for victim support in each region and on a case-by-case basis .
5. Training of a special task force per region, on how to inform victims of racist crimes of their rights and how to handle their initial contact with the victims, ensuring the provision of information by specialized staff.
6. Constant communication and cooperation between police departments nationwide, government or non-governmental organizations 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 the police response to ensure compliance with the circular entitled "Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination in Policing" (8.11.2014).
8. Proper and broad information on the obligation to prohibit the return of third country nationals who are either victims or key witnesses of racist crimes or hate speech (Law 927/1979) and have expressed their intention to file a complaint or to report 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 victimization.
11. Protection of human rights defenders and ensuring the safety of humanitarian workers and members of civil society.
12. Explore 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 of the data collected and processed by the Hellenic Police with regard to 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. Recommencement of the Working Group, which was set up following the agreement with ODIHR (OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights), to coordinate the actions for addressing 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. Ensure the prompt referral of juvenile victims to the Juvenile Support and Social Care Services of the Ministry of Justice in light of the serious risk involved in terms of secondary or repeated victimization.
9. Ensure the appointment of an interpreter, preferably selected among the persons who are familiar with communicating with deaf or mute victims.
10. Adoption of measures to protect interpreters and prevent their victimization.
11. Special training programmed 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 the Medical Associations

1. Ensure equal and non-discriminatory access to the 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 for 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 incidents 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 on 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. Promotion of actions for addressing discrimination and institutional racism against refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers, that develop in the context of the pandemic.
2. Effective registration and fair management of asylum applications for all nationalities, complying with international protection guarantees.
3. Significant improvement of reception conditions, especially for vulnerable persons, as well as creation of security conditions with respect for human dignity, in all reception sites such as the Reception and Identification Centers and the mainland sites.
4. Ensure the unhindered access to fundamental rights for refugees and migrants, free of any type of discrimination (including education, healthcare and accommodation).

5. Standardization and acceleration of the registration and reception procedures for unaccompanied minors, under the appropriate care and referral procedures.
6. Reassessment of the geographic restrictions on the islands.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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 preventing and 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 incidents of violence, and training of the educational community in these areas. Connection of the school community with experienced civil society actors who are implementing such special programmes.
5. Introduction of a sexual education course in 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.
3. Strengthen the actions that promote equality in areas such as education, employment, health-care 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 incidents 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 organizing 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 incidents 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 and protect human rights. In addition, RVRN stresses the need for strengthening 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. It is also important to take COVID-19 into consideration when promoting actions against discrimination and the access of all to key services. 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.

V. 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 is the eleventh RVRN report. 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 UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Greece (UNHCR) on the basis of two major findings in that period: a) the identified absence of an official and effective data collection system on racist violence and b) the need to coordinate a network to record, on their own initiative, incidents of racist violence against people who sought their services. There have been many improvements since then, such as the creation of a state system for recording racist violence³¹, however RVRN recordings of such incidents is still necessary, as the data are complementary to the official recording. It is important to highlight that RVRN's data are the "tip of the iceberg". Nevertheless, its data captures a clear picture of the quantitative and qualitative trends of racist violence in Greece.

As mentioned previously, the organizations participating in the RVRN record incidents against individuals who sought their services. However, the reluctance of many victims to report is a consistent RVRN finding. 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 the victims feel insecure about referring to the authorities, because that could lead to their re-exposure to racist behaviour. This perception seems to have a catalytic 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 revictimization generally leads the victims remain silent. It is important to assist the victims upon their decision to report and record the incident. Another factor that is considered to have contributed significantly to under-reporting in 2021, as in the previous year, is the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent movement restrictions in public spaces (lockdowns). Given that racist violence may be expressed in public spaces without any provocation, just by the presence of a member of a target group, it is understood that movement restrictions in public spaces affect the frequency

31. For more information on the State's response to racist violence, see pages 33-41.

of racist violence. Furthermore, the restrictions on the operation of RVRN members' services, combined with the movement restrictions (lockdown) due to the pandemic, led to the limited arrival of beneficiaries to those services, and thus impacted the identification of victims and RVRN recordings. Consequently, for the reporting period RVRN recordings seem to be, more than ever, the tip of the iceberg in terms of incidents of racist violence.

B. Network Identity

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 action in tackling discrimination and intolerance. Apart from the coordinators, UNHCR and GNCHR, RVRN is comprised of 52 non-governmental organizations and civil society bodies, as well as the Greek Ombudsman and the Migrant Integration Council of the Municipality of Athens, as observers. The participating actors acknowledge and jointly pursue combating 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, "incidents 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 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 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 bodies in relation to issues that refer to the identification, recording, and combating of hate crimes.

Ever since October 2011, when RVRN first started the recordings, its activity has been constantly expanding. Between 2011 and 2020, RVRN has recorded, through interviews with victims, 1,258 incidents of racist violence and has supported many victims through the services of its members. In addition, it has published ten annual reports on the quantitative and qualitative trends of racist violence, with specific recommendations to the competent authorities. RVRN engages in institu-

tional initiatives for the improvement of the response to racist crime and seeks to raise awareness of racist crime in every possible way. To this end, it responds to a variety of reporting requests from researchers, journalists, students. In addition, RVRN contributes to the dissemination of the legislation against racism and racist crime through participation in seminars, trainings and public debates. Acknowledgement of the RVRN role in combating racist crime is reflected in the frequent invitations that it receives from international and European organizations, as well as other bodies, in order to present its data and to provide detailed information about its activities and methodology. In 2021, RVRN was recognized as a “good practice” for recording racist violence and for supporting victims. It also participated in research to map the various aspects of racism as well as the institutional tools for addressing them.

C. Methodology

Since its establishment, RVRN remains a collective initiative with common operational rules and common objectives, while the individual activities of its members have a complementary and mutually empowering impact. From the outset, RVRN has been implementing a strict methodology, recording incidents exclusively on the basis of interviews conducted with the victims. Therefore, an important factor in the number of recorded incidents is the willingness of the victim to record their experience. All members of RVRN agreed on a cooperation agreement which sets out the rights and obligations of participants and adopted the common RVRN recording form. Each RVRN 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 provide their full name and are responsible of the recording they perform. Recording forms are completed anonymously and used exclusively by RVRN for combating racism and hate crimes.



Racist Violence Recording Network

 www.rvrn.org

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