RES-MOVE

Resources On The Move

WORK PACKAGE 2 – Research

T2.7 Data Collection and Reporting – Field research

LOCAL REPORT

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1. The context of the research

The field survey was conducted in Greece, primarily in Athens. Ten interviews with migrants were conducted in Athens, and one was conducted outside of Athens with a digital nomad who, at the time of the research, was working remotely. His contribution to the research was considered highly valuable, and we decided to include it in the report as he was the only digital nomad interviewed. Similarly, eight interviews with co-working spaces (CWSS) took place in Athens, while two were conducted outside the city. These two spaces were selected because they aligned perfectly with the objectives of the research, offering innovative ideas and approaches that enriched our findings.

Most of the interviews were held online. For these online interviews, the date and time were scheduled in advance by mutual agreement, and the Zoom link was sent to the participants via email. During the sessions, both camera and microphone were used to facilitate clear visual and audio communication. The remaining in-person interviews took place in the meeting areas of the respective organizations and in the interviewees' space, also at pre-arranged times. Most of the interviews were conducted in Greek, with a few in English, as some migrants felt more comfortable using it. The majority of interviews lasted between 30 and 40 minutes.

Athens is the major city of Attica, the capital of Greece, and is the eighth largest urban area in the European Union (Ot.Gr, 2024). Athens spans 2,928.717 km2 and has a population of 3,638,281 according to the 2021 census. Athens consists of 58 municipalities, with Athens and Piraeus serving as the two metropolitan centres. The city is divided into four regional units: North Athens, West Athens, Central Athens, and South Athens. (Athens metropolitan area, Wikipedia, 2024)

1.1 Migrants and migrant communities in the field and in the labour market

According to the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, in September 2023, 461,598 third-country nationals (TCNs) were residing in Greece, reflecting a slight 3% decrease from September 2022 (476,552) (Hellenic republic Ministry of Migration and Asylum, 2023). Including 50,113 beneficiaries of international protection, 226,101 EU citizens, and 20,204 co-ethnics, the total number of legally residing immigrants was 758,016, representing 7.2% of Greece's population of 10,482,487 (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2023)

Albanians make up the largest immigrant group, constituting 60.1% of the foreign population, followed by Chinese nationals (5.7%), Georgians (4.2%),

Pakistanis (4.0%), and Russians (3.2%). (Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum, 2023).

The influx of asylum seekers has risen significantly. In 2022, arrivals increased by 94.65% compared to 2021, with a further 63% increase in the first nine months of 2023 compared to the same period in 2022. In September 2023 alone, 3,971 asylum seekers were transferred from the Aegean islands to the mainland, a sharp rise from 751 in September 2022, marking a 429% year-over-year increase. From January to September 2023, 35,735 asylum applications were lodged, a slight 4.3% decrease compared to the same period in 2022 (37,342) (Ministry of Migration and Asylum, 2023).

Regarding the valid residence permits by purpose, as provided by the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum (September 2023), the highest concentration of migrants is found in the category "other" (218,049), followed by the category of those residing in Greece in the context of "family reunification" (150.139) and "employment". Residence permits issued for employment have shown a positive trend, with 8,614 permits reflecting a 9.4% increase. Over the past three years, the strategic investor permit scheme attracted approximately 36,200 investors, primarily from China (8,018), Turkey (997), and Lebanon (672) (Ministry of Migration and Asylum, 2023).

According to the latest data from the Greek Ministry of Education, 26,015 foreign students aged 5–17 are enrolled in Greek schools, accounting for about 2% of the student population. Most reside in Attica (10,220), with Albanians forming the largest group, followed by students from Afghanistan, Georgia, Iraq, and Syria. (AlfaVita, 2022).

In 2022, 13,259 foreign citizens were granted Greek citizenship, with 51.79% being second-generation immigrants. Albanian citizens accounted for the majority, with 9,807 acquiring citizenship through naturalisation.

Greece has made legislative strides in integrating migrants into the labour market, particularly through Law 4375/2016, which removed barriers to obtaining work permits for asylum seekers and refugees (Kapsalis et al., 2021b, as cited in Kapsalis, 2022). However, practical challenges persist. Measures such as language courses, training, and skills accreditation remain underdeveloped and fragmented, largely implemented through NGO projects supported by EU funds (Lodovici, 2017, as cited in Kapsalis, 2022). Administrative complexities also hinder integration. For example, obtaining a social security number requires employers to navigate burdensome processes, discouraging participation. Additionally, errors in registering the Temporary Foreigners' Insurance and Healthcare Number (PAAYPA) as a Social Security Number (AMKA) create further complications.

Educational attainment among recent migrants is relatively low, with only 12% holding university degrees. Most have completed primary (29%) or secondary (23%) education, while 17% lack any formal qualifications. Many migrants also

lack documentation to prove their education, further hindering their integration into the labour market or educational system.

Despite these barriers, In Greece in 2022, the foreign population recorded a labour force rate of 65.5%; the corresponding figure for the Greek population is 51.4%. (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2023). In the third quarter of 2023, the labour force rate for foreigners reached 69.4%, marking a significant increase compared to Greek nationals (51.2%), and at the same time marking a year-on-year increase of 5.6%, widening the gap between the Greek and foreign labour force rate by 24.7% (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2023).

Regarding refugees, only 20% are employed and 73% unemployed. Key obstacles include language barriers (54%), lack of necessary documents (22.4%), unequal treatment by employers (18%), and insufficient social networking (18%) (Koubou et al, 2022, as cited in Kapsalis, 2022).

From comparative econometric surveys conducted at a European level (Belegri-Roboli et al., 2019, as cited in Kapsalis, 2022) it arises that Greece's economy offers high potential to absorb migrant labour across various sectors, as in Greece, the professions with high employability potential are skilled rural workers, operators and assemblers of facilities, machines and gears, and unskilled professionals. Migrants of the first migration flow have fully integrated into the Greek society and labour market. However, as regards current employment of migrants in Greece, the rapidly increasing unemployment rates among recent migrants clearly show how far from successful integration into the labour market these groups are, considering that only a small rate (9%) of new migrants has some sort of employment (full time/part time, salaried/self-employed), whereas the vast majority are unemployed (59%) (Leontitis et al, 2020, as cited in Kapsalis, 2022).

1.2 CWCS in Greece

As Greece's startup ecosystem continues to expand, Athens is gaining recognition as an attractive destination for digital nomads. Beyond its numerous cafes with free WiFi, the city offers a variety of coworking spaces and professional hubs where digital nomads can connect and work productively (Blogler, 2024).

Through research and exploration, approximately 33 coworking spaces were identified across Greece, with 15 located outside Athens. The remaining 18 spaces are located in Athens, which served as the territory of our research. Most of these spaces in Athens operate as coworking hubs in the traditional sense, offering facilities such as offices, Wi-Fi, equipment, seminar and meeting rooms, kitchens, and outdoor areas, primarily through monthly or weekly membership fees, following a business model. As a result, the majority of coworking spaces cater to Greeks and migrants who can afford membership fees.

Occasionally, a few of these spaces offer free access to their facilities and services or organise free activities to specific vulnerable groups, under certain conditions, and usually within the framework of particular partnerships and projects for a limited period. Even though their philosophy encourages such an approach, financial constraints make it impossible for them to sustain free access indefinitely.

Our research identified a few spaces that, while not officially labelled as coworking, adopt many coworking practices. These spaces include a multilingual library with areas for reading, discussion, and studying, designed to support migrant children with their schoolwork. The library also features a children's corner with toys and serves as a community hub for migrants in the area. Additionally, there are multicultural centres and social dining spaces that function as co-living and co-sharing environments, offering support and assistance to those in need by providing essential resources and meeting their basic needs. Other spaces organise artistic workshops, events, and classes in various arts, such as painting, ceramics, and sculpture, as well as professional networking events, functioning as artistic hubs. While these spaces did not initially identify themselves as "co-working spaces," during our conversations, they recognized several shared characteristics and expressed interest in participating in the research. These spaces were more open and willing to collaborate with migrants and expand their activities and initiatives to include them.

2. Results from the Field Research

2.1 Migrant`s population and the CWCS

2.1.1 Characteristics and experiences of migrants interviewed

The total number of migrants who participated in the research was 11, slightly exceeding the initial target of 10. An additional interview was conducted with a digital nomad who, despite working outside Athens at the time of the interview, was included in our research. This decision was made as they provided valuable perspectives, ideas, and experiences that enriched the final synthesis of our study.

Among the respondents, five were aged 26–35, making this the largest age group. Three participants were between 18–25, while the remaining three were

aged 36–45. This age distribution reflects a predominantly young adult demographic among the migrants interviewed.

Among the 11 respondents, six are females and five are males. This indicates a relatively equal distribution of gender among the migrant participants, though slightly more females were represented in the survey.

The legal status of the respondents varied, with four participants identifying as labour migrants, three as second-generation migrants, one who came as a student and later transitioned to an expat due to a specific job offer, one as a digital nomad, and two respondents identified themselves simply as migrants.

The educational background of the respondents was generally high, with the majority holding at least a Bachelor's degree. Specifically, seven respondents had a Bachelor's degree, three had a Master's degree, and one respondent had a Doctorate (PhD). This demonstrates a well-educated group of migrants, with a significant proportion having advanced academic qualifications.

The length of stay among the migrant respondents varied widely, with some having lived in Greece for over 20 years. Six respondents have been in the country for more than 15 years, with one reporting 30 years of residence. The rest of them have been in Greece for a shorter period, reporting 15, 11, 8, 1.5 and 3 years. This reflects a mix of long-term migrants and more recent arrivals, indicating diverse integration experiences within the group.

The migrant respondents shared diverse experiences in the Greek labour market, highlighting both challenges and opportunities influenced by their identities. All participants reported some work experience, though the extent and nature of that experience varied widely.

Many respondents cited identity-related factors, such as ethnicity, nationality, and gender, as significant influences on their professional journeys. For instance, one respondent shared that their Afghan background often led to prejudiced assumptions, saying, "*The nationality plays a big role… they always consider my nationality.*" and ''*I often get asked, "Oh, you're from Afghanistan? How did you manage to study? How did you achieve this or that?*". Similarly, another noted that being from a Muslim background in a predominantly Orthodox Christian society sometimes posed barriers, though it also fostered personal resilience.

Subtle biases were frequently mentioned, particularly in hiring processes. The pronunciation of their names or their accents was highlighted as a key factor in determining employers' initial impressions, with one respondent explaining, "*The pronunciation in Greek always makes the first click for the employer.*" Others pointed to systemic challenges, such as limited opportunities for career progression for refugees, regardless of tenure or performance.

For migrant women, the challenges often intersected gender and nationality, with one participant noting, *"There's often an assumption that I'm only suited for certain types of work, like cleaning or caregiving, regardless of my education."*

On the positive side, some respondents (about half of them) felt their unique identities contributed to workplace diversity and inclusivity efforts. One participant observed that companies aiming to promote equity and inclusion valued their background, describing it as *"something positive."* Additionally, digital nomads found Greece a favorable environment due to lower competition, with one stating, *"It's easy to find a job as a digital nomad in Greece because the salary is lower than in other European countries."*

While half of the participants faced discrimination or limited opportunities, the rest, who have been living in Greece for a longer period of time, experienced more neutral or positive dynamics. For example, a participant who grew up in Greece noted that cultural adaptation as a child helped them navigate the workforce more easily as an adult.

2.1.2 Migrants' interaction and expectations of CWCS

The respondents' knowledge and experience with CWCS varied, with most being familiar with the concept and a few having direct experience using such spaces. Out of 11 participants, eight had prior knowledge or experience with CWCS, while three were unfamiliar with the concept before the interview.

Several respondents had utilized CWCS for professional or academic purposes, appreciating the opportunity to network and engage with diverse professionals. One participant highlighted, *"They're a refreshing change from traditional office settings... great for networking and exchanging ideas."* Others emphasized the flexibility these spaces provide, allowing for both independent work and collaboration.

One of them had managed CWS, running a space for students in Sofia, Bulgaria. Another described their current office as resembling a CWCS, sharing that the social aspect of co-working spaces helps them maintain productivity, saying, *"At home, you are alone... but in a co-working space, small talks like 'How are you today?' help."*

While respondents noted the benefits, differences between CWCS in Greece and other countries were evident. A participant with experience in Sweden and Ukraine mentioned that co-working spaces abroad felt more professional, while in Greece, they often resembled cafés. Another shared difficulty in finding such spaces in Athens, despite searching extensively, while the one who used to run

a CWS in Bulgaria, stated that they have no experience with such spaces in Greece.

For those unfamiliar with CWCS, learning about them sparked interest. One respondent said, *"I first heard about it from you and then searched for it myself… now that I've heard about it, I'd consider going to one."* Others likened CWCS to libraries or academic spaces in which they have been, showing a partial understanding of the concept.

Overall, CWCS were perceived as valuable for fostering productivity, networking, and collaboration, though accessibility and awareness in Greece appear limited compared to other countries, demonstrating a close connection between CWS and libraries or cafes where people go to study or work.

Out of the 11 interviewees, 10 expressed interest in visiting coworking spaces, expressing varying levels of interest in joining these kinds of spaces, motivated by factors such as affordability, social interaction, professional networking, and access to resources. Most saw CWCS as an appealing alternative to working from home or in traditional offices.

Affordability and flexibility were significant drivers for many respondents, especially those constrained by high office rents. One participant noted, *"Office rents are very expensive, so co-working spaces are almost the only solution if you want to have a place to work."*

The sense of community and networking opportunities also stood out. A respondent shared, *"Being in a dynamic environment, surrounded by diverse professionals, inspires creativity and innovation."* Another highlighted the value of sharing knowledge and collaborating with others, saying, *"It's nice to discuss challenges, brainstorm ideas, and talk together."*

For some, CWCS offered a productive escape from the distractions of home. One participant explained, *"At home, I don't concentrate much… in a co-working space, I focus more and feel motivated"* while another one stated *"I don't have the comfort of home, like going to open the fridge, for example, to eat. I concentrate more in such places".* Social interaction was another appeal, as another respondent stated, *"Small talks, like 'How are you today?' make a big difference when working alone."*

Several respondents emphasized the importance of inclusivity and welcoming environments, with one expressing, *"To know we won't face any racist behaviors… if they write 'Migrants Welcome,' that's enough for me."* Amenities such as good lighting, internet, and a relaxed atmosphere were also highlighted as motivating factors. Additionally, some emphasized the importance of being in an environment that values diversity and makes connecting with others effortless, especially for someone who has moved here from abroad.

Only one respondent was hesitant in joining CWCS, citing concerns about potential criticism or exclusion. This individual felt that their profession does not align with the fields typically associated with coworking spaces, such as tech, design, or freelancing, which tend to dominate these environments.

2.1.3 Conditions of getting involved

Many respondents highlighted their interest in developing socially impactful initiatives, such as supporting vulnerable groups or addressing community challenges. One respondent noted, "I would like to see ideas that are aiming to smoother the life of vulnerable groups and target social or community issues." Similarly, interviewees who are themselves migrants working with refugees emphasized the need for spaces that cater to community-oriented activities, such as workshops, presentations, language lessons or discussions tailored to specific target groups. One of them proposed using CWCS for interpreting services to migrants and refugees to bridge language barriers, stating, "*I would like us to offer language support in all services so that they can be served effectively.*"

Others expressed interest in more entrepreneurial or innovative projects, such as creating platforms that connect businesses across regions, designing eco-friendly products, or engaging in urban planning and architectural research. For example, one participant shared, "*I'd love to work on a platform that connects businesses in Greece with emerging markets in South Asia, as my background gives me insight into both regions*".

The role of mentorship emerged as a significant theme, though perspectives varied. Most of the respondents saw mentors as essential for providing guidance, feedback, and connections. As one respondent noted, "*Having someone with industry knowledge and a fresh perspective would give me the confidence and clarity to take my projects further.*" Others emphasized the practical support mentors could offer, such as navigating resources within the workspace or addressing technical challenges. One interviewee mentioned the mentor's support with career guidance, while another emphasized the mentor's role in helping them regain their academic knowledge from their home country. This was particularly significant, as they are unable to utilize their degree skills in Greece, leading to a loss of connection with their expertise.

However, not all respondents felt mentorship was always necessary. Two of them valued peer-to-peer collaboration or access to specialized resources over formal mentorship, stating that this could also happen with another colleague or a co-worker. One respondent remarked, "*Not necessarily a mentor. A constructive discussion itself helps in developing ideas and views*". Meanwhile, two other respondents expressed uncertainty about the importance of having a mentor. They emphasized that, if a mentor is available, they should specialize

precisely in the needs of the members. Additionally, they highlighted that the support provided should be ongoing rather than a one-time interaction.

All respondents expressed positive views about utilizing a co-working or collaborative space during their free time, emphasizing its potential to support personal growth, networking, and creative exploration.

Almost all of the respondents indicated they would spend free time in CWCS for activities such as networking, brainstorming on personal projects, or skill development. One participant highlighted the appeal of "*informal brainstorming sessions or workshops*", emphasizing their potential to expand knowledge and foster creativity. Similarly, other respondents mentioned using the space for "*teamwork or think tank projects*" and personal growth opportunities like exploring data analysis tools or studying business trends.

Several of these respondents also expressed interest in attending events or talks organized by CWCS, particularly those focused on professional development or cultural exchange. These activities were seen as a productive way to unwind while staying inspired and connected with like-minded individuals.

Most of them also valued the opportunity for networking and socializing in a CWS. As one participant noted, "*Maybe for some activity and to meet new people, for networking*." Another saw CWCS as a productive alternative to home environments, saying, "*My home is not sweet for work... now I am going to the co-working space here to work*."

While 10 of the respondents were enthusiastic, one indicated limitations based on personal priorities. This respondent expressed that free time as a parent was limited but would still consider attending workshops or utilizing resources like books or quiet areas for self-improvement.

The responses regarding working outside of urban areas varied, influenced by individual circumstances and priorities. Approximately half of the respondents expressed an openness to working in quieter settings, such as villages or seaside locations, highlighting reasons such as the peaceful environment, the lack of traffic and the ability to concentrate. Two of them appreciated the idea of occasional remote work in non-urban areas, especially for deep-focus projects or creative inspiration. A participant noted, "*A change of scenery can boost creativity and reduce stress, so having that option now and then would be refreshing*." However, barriers like travel time, lack of transportation options, and limited resources in rural areas were common concerns.

The other half emphasized the practical benefits of remaining in the city. For instance, one participant highlighted, "*I prefer the city because it provides better access to educational opportunities, extracurricular activities, and healthcare for my son*." Another shared, "*The city's energy keeps me motivated,*

and the convenience of meeting clients or attending events is a big plus". Three of them, although generally positive about working outside the city or having tried it in the past, expressed reluctance to do so at this stage of their lives due to their family situation and the needs of their children.

The concept of co-working spaces with integrated childcare facilities was widely praised by all respondents, highlighting their inclusivity and valuable support for working parents, particularly single parents. One respondent explained, "*New mothers might struggle to return to work because they have children and may not have family support. Such spaces offer significant help, allowing parents to focus on tasks without worrying about their children.*" Another pointed out the importance of engaging activities for children, suggesting, "*Activities like dance, gym, or workshops could be more meaningful and keep kids engaged rather than just having volunteers play with them.*" Childcare was also seen as a tool for fostering community among migrant families and enabling parents to maintain productivity while balancing their responsibilities.

Overall, childcare services were considered crucial for making CWCS more accessible and appealing to parents, particularly those in migrant and refugee communities who often lack alternative childcare options.

To create a truly welcoming and inclusive environment, CWCS should focus on fostering diversity, respect, and comfort, both physically and socially. Respondents highlighted a number of factors that could help achieve this.

According to the respondents, a key aspect is inclusivity. Spaces should actively promote diversity and respect for everyone's background. This can be achieved through visible symbols of acceptance, such as signs or stickers that signal openness to marginalized groups. As one participant mentioned, "*The simplest way for me to feel welcomed is those little stickers, like with a rainbow saying, 'Athens Home for All' It's a sign of goodwill*". Clear guidelines against discrimination are also vital, ensuring that everyone, including migrants and women, feels equally valued. Providing mentorship or networking opportunities can further support individuals who may feel like outsiders, helping them connect with others who understand their challenges.

Respondents stated that the physical environment should be clean, well-designed, and flexible. It should cater to both work and relaxation, offering amenities such as internet, quiet areas, and comfortable lounges. A respondent suggested: "*If this space included both quiet areas and break rooms, it would be really good!*" This balance between productive and restful spaces helps individuals feel comfortable, encouraging them to return and collaborate.

Friendly and respectful staff are essential in creating a welcoming atmosphere. First impressions matter—clear and polite communication. One participant emphasized: "*It's the first interaction... when they reply to us in a nice way. We feel welcomed when they respect us.*" One respondent spoke about the genuine kindness of these spaces towards migrants, noting that if they

perceived the openness and offerings towards migrants as a way to show to the community they were being kind to vulnerable groups, they would not continue going there.

Some respondents also highlighted the importance of the people who frequent these spaces, emphasizing that they would feel more welcomed if the space were frequented by people from diverse backgrounds. One individual placed particular emphasis on how exhausting it can be to constantly hear the question 'Where are you from?' which, though simple, makes them feel uncomfortable. Another respondent remarked, "*when people learn where I'm from they feel the need to share their opinion. For example, if I say I'm from Ukraine, they will tell me their opinion about the war, regardless of whether they asked me first how my people are*", emphasizing that they would not go again to a place where people have this attitude.

Community-building activities can also enhance the welcoming feeling. Regular social events or informal spaces, like kitchens or lounges, provide opportunities for casual interactions, which can help break the ice. A respondent noted: "*Having communal areas designed for casual conversations encourages informal interactions and builds a supportive community.*"

Finally, offering activities beyond work—such as board games, concerts, or sports events—can make the space more dynamic and enjoyable, helping members to bond outside of their professional roles.

2.2 CWCS and migrant population

2.2.1 Characteristics and experiences with migrant users

The first CWS is located in Athens urban area. It is characterized as a Coworking space in a percentage of approximately 25-30%, from the point of view that some people pay in order to do their labs, a Collaborative space also in this context, a Makerspace and a Fab-lab. In the "Other" category, the respondent added that it's essentially a makerspace where art learning workshops take place. There are 4-5 members who do their own workshops and the students are about 12, from whom maybe women are more. The average age of the members is 30-40 years old. They're mainly self-employed artists who have finished university. The CWS t's not exactly private, but it's also not public in the sense that anyone can simply walk in. It's a more controlled environment and it's definitely not informal. The benefits that members can gain is workspace in the sense that they can rent the space to be there and create their own art, collaborative community, workshops/classes, technical advice, professional

support through seminars for professionals such as ecological resin and private session with sculptors.

The second CWS is located in Athens urban area and it is characterized as a makerspace. There are four members, around two and a half staff, and approximately some volunteers, from whom 3 out of 4 are men. The average age of the members is around 30, they are self-employed and have graduated from university. The CWS is Informal and private and the benefits they offer is workspace, collaborative community, internships, workshops/classes with payment, technical advice and professional support.

The third CWS is located in an urban area outside Athens and it is characterized as a coworking space and a collaborative space. There are 30 members, half of them men half women. Their average age is 25-50, they are unemployed, full time, self-employed, and volunteers and they come from all kind of education backgrounds. The CWS is private and the benefits they offer is workspace, collaborative community, internships workshops/classes, legal advice, technical advice and professional support.

The fourth CWS is located in Athens urban area and it is characterized as a coworking space. There are 170 members, 55% of them female, 44% men and 1% non-binary. Most of their members are 26-35 years old and some members are 36-45 years old. They are full time, part time and self-employed and most of them are of higher education. The CWS is private entity and the benefits they offer is workspace, collaborative community and professional support.

The fifth CWS is located in Athens urban area and it is characterized as a coworking space and incubator. There are 50 members, 60% of them female and 40% male and their average age is 35. Most of them are self-employed and business owners, having masters' degrees and PHD, while some of them don't have a degree and on to start businesses. The CWS is private and formal and the benefits they offer is workspace, collaborative community, professional support, space to host events and space for self-promotion.

The sixth CWS is located in an urban area outside Athens, whereas the new community centre which is going to be created, will be located in a village. It is characterized as co-workings space, collaborative space, non-formal educational centre, community centre and volunteering house. There are about 20 members, most of whom are women and their average age is 28 years old. Half of them is full time employed and half of them volunteers. Most of them have a bachelor degree and some people have master's degree. The CWS is a private NGO and the benefits they offer is workspace, collaborative community, internships, workshops/classes, professional support and soon there is going to be also a community centre.

The seventh CWS is located in Athens urban area. The respondent wanted to be mentioned that the space is called "at 6", because it is at 6 Charissis Street, in the centre of Athens, in a rather degraded area where there are vulnerable groups. It is characterized as a collaborative space, social kitchen without criteria, space for people to coexist, open and inclusive community. Every day there are about 180-190 people who visit the place, most of them men, as it is a big challenge for women, especially Muslim women to feel safe and come. Their average age is 40 years old, some of them are working illegally without security and some are not working as they are homeless. According to what members themselves are saying, many of them have graduated from university in their country, but their degrees from their countries are not recognized in Greece, while some of them have not finished secondary education. The space is informal, human-centred, open and inclusive. It is a space to which there is free access, without asking for papers or documents. The benefits they offer is collaborative community, space which covers basic needs like food, warmth, space for coexistence and socialization and sometimes medical care.

The eighth CWS is located in Athens urban area and it is characterized as coworking space, collaborative space and makerspace. There are 8 gender-balanced members. The space doesn't collect data nor inform about the age, the employment type and the educational background of their members. The space is private and the benefits they offer is workspace, collaborative community, internships and workshops/classes.

The ninth CWS is located in Athens urban area and it is characterized as a collaborative space, multilingual library and multicultural centre. Every day 50-70 members are visiting the place. Half of the children and teenagers are men and half of them are women, while among adults there are slightly more women. Most of the members are 12-17 years old, but the space is also visited from adults. Most of them are students, while among adults, most are full-time employed. Some children recently arrived in Greece don't have a strong educational background, but there also students with PhDs. The space is generally public to the audience, but it's an NGO. The benefits they offer is workspace, collaborative community, a few internships, workshops/classes, professional support, social interactions and homework.

The tenth CWS is located in Athens urban area and it is characterized as coworking space and collaborative space. They don't have active members yet, as the place opened 2 weeks before the interview. Their primary expectation is that the majority of the members will be women and parents, as the space has been created by an organization focused on women's empowerment and gender equality, while nothing is excluded, as they welcome anyone who supports gender equality. Their potential members' average age will be around

35-40, while the owners are not able to know their employment type. The organization has a fairly large percentage of women who have completed higher education, but one of the space's goals is to serve vulnerable women and to include a greater proportion of vulnerable groups from all educational backgrounds. The space as an entity is private, belonging to a non-profit organization, but generally, it is informal, public and open to the community. The benefits they offer is workspace, collaborative community, internships, workshops/classes, professional support, the mini-hub service which is a creative activity service for infants and children aged 0-12 years, breastfeeding room, podcast studio and event space.

From the 10 CWSS, only one provided a negative response regarding having working experience with migrants. The other spaces have worked with migrants, more or less, for a shorter or longer period of time.

Migrant members hailed from various regions, including Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Somalia, Nigeria, Kenya, Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, and Georgia. Some respondents also mentioned migrants from Turkey, Pakistan, Iraq, Tunisia, and the Balkans. A significant proportion of second-generation immigrants and children born in Greece were also included. One respondent noted: "*On a day when we have 70 people, if we consider children born here as immigrants, then 60 out of 70 people would be immigrants*". One space stated that their members are from Australia, America, and France.

Regarding language proficiency, many migrants communicated in English, which was often essential for their participation. One respondent shared: "*Nil* (the space's owner) *speaks English; that's the only language he speaks. Most who come speak English because they can't go to another workshop where they only speak Greek.*"

The number of migrant members varied across spaces. Some reported limited engagement, such as 15-20 individuals involved in mentoring or counseling projects for a specific period of time, while others reached larger groups, with some of them stating that the ⅓ of their members are migrants, with one organization having worked with approximately 1,500 individuals through free seminars and refugee camps. Some places did not report a specific number of migrants, stating only that they have occasionally worked with a few migrants.

To enhance migrant inclusion within CWCS, respondents proposed diverse strategies and measures. Language was emphasized as an essential factor. One respondent highlighted the importance of communication in English for inclusivity, while suggesting hands-on skills training like carpentry to engage migrant members effectively. Utilizing migrant community networks and hosting collaborative events were suggested as ways to foster a sense of belonging. Additionally, hiring staff with migrant backgrounds was proposed to ensure representation and build trust. Several respondents proposed creating accessible physical spaces, including free co-working spaces or scholarships for marginalized groups, hybrid models combining paid and sponsored use of

facilities to support women from vulnerable groups. One respondent mentioned: "*We want to offer sponsored spots to women who need the space for employment search or empowerment programs, with creative childcare options.*", as well as offering classes (e.g. CV creation) and holding parent-teacher meetings to bridge gaps in education and integration. Respondents emphasized conducting need assessments to understand and respond to community preferences. Limited financial resources were a recurring concern. Respondents identified the need for funding to hire additional staff and sustain free or low-cost programs: "*The big thing we need is money so we can have more people working here.*" Another highlighted the importance of sponsorships or EU-funded projects to make programs viable. Maintaining open and inclusive spaces where migrants feel welcome was also a priority. One respondent noted that operating in migrant-rich neighborhoods naturally fostered inclusivity: "*The space is open and located in an immigrant-dense neighborhood where many speak English.*" Some respondents envisioned creative strategies, such as crowdfunded initiatives, collaborative exchanges of services, and establishing the space as a hub for empowerment and community-building among migrant groups.

The CWCS respondents highlighted a range of capacities and approaches to provide mentorship for migrant members. Many CWCS can provide mentorship opportunities in specialized areas, including technical and artistic skills such as sculpture, mold-making, graphic design, filmmaking, DJing, and podcasting. Others focus on IT and digital skills, including project management, circular economy, and social media. Some spaces also emphasize entrepreneurship and business support, with one CWCS featuring a mentoring platform of 720 volunteer mentors, some of them trained. These mentors, drawn from various sectors, offer guidance through experience-sharing rather than formal advice: *"A female entrepreneur shares her journey with someone aspiring to start their own business."*

Different approaches to mentorship were noted. Informal mentoring relationships often develop in some CWCS, particularly between volunteers and migrant children or teenagers, fostering trust and personal growth. Peer-to-peer mentorship, where migrants with more experience assist newcomers, was highlighted as a valuable and community-strengthening method, which are trying to follow.

Language barriers were frequently mentioned as a significant challenge, with some CWCS only able to provide mentorship to migrants who speak English. Expanding these efforts to include non-English-speaking migrants would require additional funding for interpretation services. Traditional mentorship models were also questioned by some respondents, suggesting that mentoring should be done among migrants, with those who have been in Greece for longer periods of time advising and helping those with less experience.

2.2.2 Perceptions and perspectives for a future engagement

The CWCS respondents provided valuable insights into the benefits, opportunities, and challenges associated with collaborating with migrants. Many emphasized the enriching effect of diversity, highlighting how migrants bring fresh perspectives, cultural exchange, and a more inclusive and multicultural environment. For example, one respondent noted that integrating migrants creates "*a multicultural environment, very open, very democratic*", fostering mutual learning and understanding. Similarly, another emphasized the value of cultural exchange through activities like sharing personal stories, music, and food, which build trust and deepen relationships within the community.

From a practical standpoint, respondents mentioned several tangible benefits. Migrants contribute to the operational dynamics of CWCS through skills like multilingualism and knowledge of different cultures, which are particularly valuable in contexts like book curation or organizing multilingual collections. Additionally, migrant inclusion aligns with many CWCS missions, such as promoting social innovation, sustainable development, and women's empowerment. For instance, one respondent highlighted their vision of empowering women from diverse backgrounds as central to their mission, stating, "*the opportunity for different groups to come into contact with each other adds value to the entire community*." The spaces recognized that fostering migrant inclusion not only supports community building and cohesion but also enhances the CWCS mission by creating opportunities for collaboration, innovation, and social progress.

However, respondents also acknowledged challenges. Language barriers frequently emerged as a significant obstacle, alongside issues like cultural sensitivity, resource constraints, and biases. Some noted logistical challenges, such as the need for additional funding, staff time, and infrastructure to support inclusive practices. One respondent described a unique challenge: landlord biases, where the presence of migrants in their rented space led to discriminatory restrictions.

The responses reveal varied levels of networking among CWCS respondents with stakeholders in the field of migrant inclusion. While some respondents have established some connections, others lack any formal or informal networks for support.

Half of the respondents (5/10) mentioned having no collaborative network or partnerships in place. For instance, one stated, "*Neither have we been helped by anyone, nor have we approached anyone.*" Similarly, another noted, "*We don't have a supportive network, to tell you the truth. Any help we receive is through individuals, friends, or acquaintances supporting us practically or financially.*" These responses highlight a gap in external collaboration for some CWCS, relying instead on personal connections or community support.

Conversely, the other half of the respondents have developed networks with NGOs and organizations. Examples include collaborations with prominent entities like Amnesty International, the Greek Council for Refugees, Karpos NGO, ACCMR, Girls in Film and ReFocus Media Labs, which foster collaborations in event promotion and migrant inclusion. One respondent highlighted their work with *"Genderhood, Diotima, and the Afghan community,"* while another mentioned collaborating with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and SISTEC, which provides refugee women with tech skills and employment opportunities.

European Union-funded projects also facilitate networking across municipalities and organizations, enhancing opportunities for cross-border cooperation. However, even among those with existing networks, some respondents expressed a desire for stronger collaboration, particularly in practical, day-to-day support for migrants.

The CWCS respondents offered diverse perspectives on how the RES-MOVE project could support their efforts toward inclusivity, highlighting specific needs and practical suggestions.

Many respondents emphasized the importance of funding to enhance their capacity to include migrants in their operations. For instance, one respondent noted, *"We have people who could work here, but we need funding to make them staff members,"* while another highlighted the need for resources to purchase materials and specialized equipment for workshops.

Others underscored the potential role of RES-MOVE in networking and knowledge exchange. One respondent shared, *"Connecting with other organizations working in this field, learning good practices from other countries, and seeing what other coworking spaces are doing in this area"* would help them improve their inclusivity practices. Another emphasized the value of strengthening community ties by integrating migrants into local professional networks.

Several respondents focused on programmatic support, such as facilitating workshops, providing skill development opportunities, and fostering cross-cultural exchanges. As one participant explained, *"We would like to implement classes here—like CV building, language certification, and work integration—and also support other organizations to run workshops for migrants."* Additionally, activities related to crafts, entertainment, or mental health support were seen as feasible and impactful for fostering inclusion.

There were also calls for practical infrastructure and outreach support. Some respondents hoped RES-MOVE could help create a structured environment tailored to migrants' needs or assist in reaching socially vulnerable groups, which they often struggle to engage in their activities.

In summary, CWCS respondents view the RES-MOVE project as a valuable partner for promoting inclusivity through funding, networking, workshops, and resource-sharing. They also hope to learn from the project's insights into migrants' needs and best practices from other coworking spaces, fostering a broader, sustainable impact.

3. Reflection and strategic considerations

Most of the spaces shared future ideas and aspirations regarding the inclusion of migrants in their activities, expressing a positive attitude and a strong willingness to evolve into more inclusive centres in the future. The inclusion initiatives that have already been implemented and mentioned by some spaces include inviting migrants to participate as attendees in their events, offering free workshops and seminars through specific programs and collaborations, providing non-formal education classes for migrants, assisting with CV writing and raising awareness about their rights. One space provides food to those in need and opens its facilities as a meeting place where people can gather, share a meal, listen to music, and play board games. This space welcomes all migrants with free access, without checking their legal status or documentation. Another space serves as a community hub for migrants in the area, offering free tutoring for migrant children, access to books in their native languages, and a welcoming environment where families can spend time together, play, and network. Additionally, two spaces provide designated play areas for young children to support migrant mothers who may lack access to childcare, allowing them to participate more actively in other activities or simply take time for themselves.

These practices can clearly be transferred to CWCS in other countries, provided they are adapted to the social and economic conditions and needs of each specific country where deemed necessary.

All these initiatives could be strengthened and improved by adopting a more permanent structure, transforming them into core services offered daily to migrants rather than sporadic activities linked to specific programs or collaborations. Additionally, it would be beneficial to raise awareness about these actions within the local community, encouraging more migrants to participate and expanding the reach and impact of these efforts. These initiatives could also be further enhanced by involving more people in their planning and implementation, bringing diverse ideas and perspectives to the table. This, however, highlights the need for additional staff in co-working spaces, which in turn requires financial resources and adequate support to sustain such efforts

At the local level, co-working spaces face several challenges, including limited funding and resources, as well as a lack of trained staff to address the specific

needs of marginalized groups effectively, especially in critical intermediary stages of the inclusive process, such as translation and interpretation, mediation by intercultural mediators, and psychological support provided by psychologists. From the respondents' answers, it becomes evident that many CWCS and the individuals working within them are unaware of the deeper or lesser-known needs of migrants, preventing them from considering these needs in the process of developing an inclusive plan. This is further reflected in the strong desire of certain co-workers to be informed about the findings of the project's research concerning the desires and needs of migrants.

At the EU level, the absence of the exchange of good practices among CWCS and the absence of a unified framework for migrant inclusion hinder the development of cohesive and impactful initiatives. Bureaucratic hurdles in accessing EU funds and implementing large-scale projects add another layer of complexity to addressing these challenges.

Based on the fieldwork conducted with CWCS and migrants, there is a clear need to enhance the recognition of migrants' skills and knowledge within the coworking spaces to align with inclusivity goals. Many migrants possess valuable skills—ranging from professional expertise to cultural knowledge—that are often underutilized due to language barriers, lack of formal documentation, or limited visibility in the local job market. RES-MOVE can play a pivotal role by providing funding, fostering networks, and advocating for policies that ensure migrants' skills are recognized and utilized effectively, enhancing both their employability and integration into local economies.

Based on responses from some migrants, sudden involvement in specific activities or programs often results in low participation and limited outcomes. Migrants require more time to adapt to new situations, as they face challenges that locals may not fully understand, such as language barriers, lack of trust in structures and people, fear of rejection, and lack of motivation. To foster effective inclusion within CWCS, the process should be gradual, starting with language assessments and addressing emotional or practical challenges. This could be followed by language support, meetings between co-workers and migrants to build trust, and then program activities, potentially with the involvement of intercultural mediators if needed.

Many migrants have significant professional expertise and informal knowledge gained from their countries of origin, which are unrecognized. CWCS can improve recognition by offering skill assessment workshops, language proficiency assessments, and CV-building support to help migrants translate their skills into formal qualifications. Structured partnerships with local labour market actors (employment services, NGOs, educational institutions) could help bridge the gap between informal knowledge and formal qualifications. CWCS could implement targeted training programs designed to fill knowledge gaps, such as language courses, digital skills development, and industry-specific training. For example, workshops on entrepreneurship, tech skills, or vocational

training tailored to the needs of the local labour market could empower migrants to adapt their skills to new contexts. Additionally, workshops in the arts such as sculpture, painting, as well as seminars and training sessions in various art forms, could be provided for migrants who have artistic talent but have not had the opportunity to develop or apply their skills. Recognizing and integrating migrants' cultural and social capital (e.g., knowledge of diverse languages, traditions, or local community needs) can foster deeper engagement. CWCS could create cultural exchange events, mentorship programs, and community-led projects that highlight these contributions, increasing migrants' visibility and value in the workplace. Interviews revealed that many migrants hold professional qualifications or degrees from their home countries, which are not recognized in the host country. This, combined with prevalent stereotypes associating migrants only with manual labour, often forces them to lose connection with their field of expertise. CWCS could address this by organizing upskilling courses to help migrants refresh their knowledge or by facilitating specific projects through which they can earn certifications that validate their expertise.

The RES-MOVE project could facilitate partnerships with organizations offering vocational training, certifications, and job placements, ensuring migrants are not only equipped with skills but also recognized and validated in the local job market. The project could also play a key role by providing financial support for skill validation initiatives, professional development programs including mentorship, coaching, or apprenticeship schemes that help migrants turn their potential into actionable outcomes. RES-MOVE could strengthen networks between CWCS, employers, and migrant-led organizations to facilitate greater access to job markets and employment opportunities. RES-MOVE could also advocate at EU level about the recognition of non-formal and informal skills, better funding for skills development, and improved access to job markets for marginalized groups.

EU policies like the European Skills Agenda could be leveraged to enhance initiatives for migrants' skill recognition. The initiatives like Recognition of Prior Learning which aim to recognize informal and non-formal skills, have to be improved, so that CWCS and other stakeholders have access to streamlined recognition systems that allow migrants to quickly and efficiently validate their skills. Also, more targeted EU funding from programs like Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, and AMIF could be directed toward CWCS to support skill development initiatives.

Based on the responses gathered, existing mentorship programs and training opportunities offered by CWCS provide a foundation for inclusivity, but they fall short of fully addressing the specific needs of migrants and marginalized groups.

Many CWCS lack structured mentorship initiatives tailored to migrants' needs. Migrants often express a desire for guidance on navigating professional environments, building networks, and adapting their skills to the local labour

market. Existing mentorship opportunities in the participating CWCS tend to focus on general topics and may not address cultural, linguistic, and professional barriers faced by migrants. Spaces that offer mentoring programs highlighted that they can only provide mentoring to migrants who speak Greek or English. This excludes a significant portion of migrants whose proficiency in the local or English language is insufficient to participate in such initiatives. Migrants' skills and knowledge are often undervalued due to insufficient support in translating their prior experience into qualifications recognized locally. The absence of tailored training programs further prevents them from fully leveraging their expertise. Networking events and collaborations between CWCS and organizations that support marginalized groups are sporadic. Migrants highlighted the need for more consistent efforts to connect them with local employers, NGOs, and professionals who can help them integrate socially and economically. While some CWCS offer workshops, these are often generic and not specifically designed for marginalized groups. Migrants expressed interest in practical and vocational skills, such as language certification, CV-building workshops, retraining programs to help them reconnect with their field of study and professional expertise from their home countries, as well as certification or validation of their existing knowledge and skills, which are often missing or insufficiently tailored.

CWCS should develop mentorship initiatives that pair migrants with local professionals who can provide career guidance, support skill development, and help them navigate cultural and professional differences. These programs should focus on industries where migrants' skills can be effectively utilized and recognized. Mentoring should focus on topics that genuinely interest migrants in their native languages or with the support of interpreters. Training programs should be designed to meet the specific needs of migrants, including language skills for professional settings, certification programs to validate existing skills, workshops on entrepreneurship, digital tools, and creative industries, guidance on employment-related topics, such as CV writing and interview preparation. Organizing networking events and collaboration opportunities between migrants, local entrepreneurs, and organizations would foster stronger connections. These events could include business idea pitching sessions to encourage entrepreneurship, cross-cultural exchange programs to promote understanding and collaboration, partnerships with local NGOs and employment services to increase outreach and inclusivity. In addition, encouraging migrants to lead workshops or share their experiences can empower them while creating relatable mentorship opportunities for others. This also helps highlight their skills and contributions within the CWCS community.

CWCS should embed inclusivity in their core practices by adopting consistent frameworks for mentorship and training programs that emphasize collaboration, skill recognition, and professional growth. This includes establishing partnerships with organizations that specialize in migrant inclusion, creating feedback loops to understand and address the evolving needs of migrants as well as sharing successful practices across EU countries to inspire replication and scalability.

The potential for CWCS to collaborate with external stakeholders is significant and underutilized. The findings indicate that while some CWCS have established relationships with NGOs and other organizations, these collaborations are often ad hoc, limited in scope, and lack sustainability.

Some CWCS have successfully collaborated with organizations like Amnesty International, Greek Council for Refugees, ACCMR (The Athens Coordination Center for Migrant & Refugee issues) and Solidarity Now. These partnerships focus on promoting events, workshops, or providing access to services like technological skill development or employment training. However, these interactions are often one-off initiatives and do not address long-term migrant inclusion. Certain CWCS maintain relationships with local authorities and EU-funded projects, leveraging these networks to provide basic resources or organize activities for migrants. These collaborations could be expanded to include joint initiatives that directly tackle challenges such as skill recognition, employability, and access to professional networks. Many CWCS expressed a lack of a structured network or strategy for collaboration with other actors. Support often comes from personal or informal networks, such as friends or acquaintances, rather than institutional partnerships. This limits the scope and impact of their efforts.

The RES-MOVE project can serve as a catalyst for fostering and strengthening multi-stakeholder collaborations to improve inclusivity practices in CWCS. RES-MOVE can establish a platform where CWCS, NGOs, start-ups, companies, and local authorities connect and share best practices. Regular forums or networking events can promote dialogue and facilitate partnerships. The project can also pilot initiatives that bring together diverse stakeholders to address shared goals, such as creating pathways to employment for migrants or implementing cultural exchange workshops. These efforts could be supported by EU funding schemes to ensure long-term sustainability. Training CWCS staff on how to effectively engage with external actors, including negotiation skills, partnership management, and proposal writing, would enable them to initiate and sustain collaborations. RES-MOVE can identify and document successful collaborations between CWCS and external actors and share these models with the CWCS participating in the research. For example, coworking spaces that successfully integrate migrants through partnerships with NGOs or start-ups across the EU could serve as case studies.

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