

EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

PROJECT	
Project name and acronym:	Civil Society Solidarity Movement II - CISOMO II
Participant:	INSTITOYTO KOINONIKIS KAINOTOMIAS KAI SYNOXIS
PIC number:	928680717

EVENT DESCRIPTION			
Event number :	4		
Event name:	"Study Visit in Greece: Exploring Greece's Grassroots Networks and Community Resilience"		
Type:	Study Visit		
In situ/online:	in-situ		
Location:	Thessaloniki, Greece		
Date(s):	07.05. 2025 - 09.05.2025		
Website(s) (if any):	https://www.cisomo.eu/thematic-events		
Participants			
Female:	28		
Male:	25		
Non-binary:	2		
From country 1 [Greece]:	28		
From country 2 [Bulgaria]:	4		
From country 3 [Poland]:	7		
From country 4 [Slovenia]:	3		
From country 5 [Sweden]:	4		
From country 6 [Denmark]:	3		
From country 7 [Germany]:	2		
From country 8 [Romania]:	4		
Total number of participants:	55	From total number of countries:	8

Description

Provide a short description of the event and its activities.

The 4th event of the CISOMO II project was held in Thessaloniki, Greece, and focused on exploring the power of grassroots networks and their role in fostering community resilience during times of economic, social, and migratory crises. The event brought together a range of civil society actors, migrant advocates, local community leaders, and grassroots activists in an engaging, interactive, and insightful program.

The day opened with a short welcome and registration session, during which participants were given an overview of the day's program. The project coordinators introduced the objectives of the study visit and the relevance of Greece's grassroots ecosystem in the broader context of CISOMO II.

The first thematic speech explored the role of civil society in strengthening refugee and migrant advocacy. The speaker emphasized the importance of horizontal participation, community-driven advocacy models, and the dynamic evolution of civic networks in Greece, particularly in light of Greece's dual experience of financial and migratory crises.

Session 1: Community Resilience in Practice

This session dived into:

- How local civil society actors responded to the 2010s financial crisis and subsequent migration waves.
- Innovations in grassroots social services, including self-organized clinics, food banks, and community kitchens.

The role of mutual aid structures and solidarity economies, which have helped bridge gaps left by weakened public services. Speakers from local NGOs and solidarity initiatives shared first-hand stories, highlighting how grassroots resilience became a pillar of survival and inclusion.

Session 2: Grassroots Culture as Empowerment

This lively and interactive session demonstrated how art and cultural expression serve as powerful tools for resistance and empowerment. Artists, youth collectives, and migrant groups shared how they use creative platforms (music, murals, zines, theatre) to engage with civic issues. Emphasis was placed on how cultural collectives act as bridges between communities and foster civic belonging. The format encouraged participant dialogue, enabling attendees to reflect on their own cultural advocacy experiences.

A regional and urban development expert delivered a thought-provoking address titled: "How Grassroots Action Shapes Urban Futures and Cities of Solidarity."

The speaker discussed:

- How grassroots initiatives have become drivers of inclusive urban planning.
- The potential of solidarity-based urban design to reshape cities from below.
- The connection between community participation and long-term urban resilience.

A group discussion and debate followed, examining community responses to both economic collapse and migratory pressures, negotiating up to the role of trust and care in building strong civic relationships, as well as the benefits of horizontal structures and informal networks in maintaining adaptability and responsiveness. Participants took part in a citizens' workshop focused on mapping their own networks of support, including NGOs, informal groups, friends, and public services, as well as identifying strategies for building resilient communities "from the ground up", by sharing actionable ideas on community empowerment across diverse social contexts.

In the afternoon, the group visited the Thessaloniki Book Fair, not only as a literary event but as a civic space for dialogue and advocacy. Highlights included that independent publishers, activist zine-makers, and migrant authors showcasing their work and examples of how books are used for grassroots storytelling, memory preservation, and advocacy. Lastly, interaction with NGO booths and platforms promoting anti-racist literature, migrant voices, and civil rights publications.

A concluding session allowed participants to share key takeaways from the day, discuss cross-country comparisons, and reflect on how similar grassroots approaches could be implemented in their own regions. The day closed with a communal dinner, giving participants space to network informally, share experiences, and deepen partnerships across countries and organizations.

Study Visit's Agenda

Date: 8 May 2025

Venue: 1st Floor, 51 Proxenou Koromila Str., 54623, Thessaloniki, Greece

10:00 – 10:15

Welcome & Registration

Participant registration

Overview of the day's agenda

10:15 – 10:45

Thematic Speech: The Role of Civil Society in Strengthening Refugee and Migrant Advocacy

Introduction to the day's objectives

Context of civil engagement, with a focus on experiences from Greece

10:45 – 11:15

Session 1: Community Resilience in Practice

Local responses to the financial crisis and migration flows

Grassroots innovation in social services

Solidarity economies and mutual aid networks

11:15 – 11:30

Coffee Break

11:30 – 12:00

Session 2: Grassroots Culture as a Tool for Empowerment

Art as resistance and resilience

Civic engagement through cultural collectives

Case studies from migrant and youth groups

12:00 – 12:30

Thematic Speech: How Grassroots Action Shapes Urban Futures and Cities of Solidarity

Delivered by a Regional and Urban Development Expert

Focus on solidarity-based urban planning and community-led change

12:30 – 13:00

Thematic Debate: Navigating Crisis Together

Local responses to crises

Building trust through participatory care

The role of horizontal structures in adaptability

13:00 – 13:30

Laboratory Citizens' Workshop: Mapping Our Networks – Building Resilient Communities from the Ground Up

Interactive mapping of participants' support networks

Strategy-sharing for local resilience building

13:30 – 14:30

Lunch Break

14:30 – 16:00

Site Visit: Thessaloniki Book Fair – Civic Publishing & Cultural Dialogue

Exploration of grassroots publishing and storytelling

Focus on activist publishers, migrant authors, and civil society narratives

16:00 – 18:00

Activities include refugee language classes, anti-racism campaigns, and climate advocacy

18:00 – 19:30

Reflections & Evaluation

Group reflections on the day's content

Discussion of key takeaways and next steps

20:00

Social Dinner

Dissemination Activities

On May 8th, 2025, Fifty-Fifty coordinated the 4th CISOMO II Study Visit in Thessaloniki, Greece, titled "Exploring Greece's Grassroots Networks and Community Resilience." The event brought together civil society actors, migrant advocates, artists, and community organizers from across Europe to exchange practices of resilience, solidarity, and empowerment. Through thematic sessions, site visit to the Thessaloniki Book Fair, and interactive workshops, participants explored how grassroots initiatives in Greece are leading innovative responses to economic and migratory challenges. The event was co-funded by the European Union and hosted as part of the CISOMO II project's mission to strengthen civic engagement across Europe. Snapshots are available at <https://www.fifty-fifty.gr/cisomo-ii> as well as on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/share/1AGrmu6jGV/?mibextid=wwXlfr>.

To conclude, the study visit in Thessaloniki confirmed that grassroots action is a vital force in shaping inclusive, resilient, and democratic communities. From solidarity networks born during crises to creative platforms that give voice to migrant and youth communities, the Greek experience offered practical lessons in adaptability, collaboration, and bottom-up empowerment. Participants left with a renewed commitment to support horizontal structures, participatory care, and cultural engagement as essential pillars for civil society in Europe.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2022	Initial version (new MFF).