

PRESS RELEASE

«A journey in the world of voluntarism of Epirus.

European Delegates visited Ioannina»

The Region of Epirus held a successful study trip of European Delegates, on the 4th and 5th of June, as part of the VERSO program (Volunteers for European Employment), in Ioannina. VERSO Program is a project referring to voluntarism, according to which, participating authorities will exchange best practice examples, in an effort to deal with unemployment issue across Europe.

The respective study trip was initiated with a tour of European Partners, on Wednesday the 4th of June, to major voluntary organizations activating in Epirus Region. The organizations participated in the visit, were:

- **KETHEA:** the largest rehabilitation and social reintegration network in Greece, providing services to drug addicts and their families



- **Red Cross:** one of the most important voluntary organizations globally



- **Ecosystem Interpretation Park of Lake Pamvotis**



- **Information Center of Pamvotis Lake Management Authority,** as important institutions of the Region, caring for Pamvotis Lake and its surrounding environmental areas.



The European Delegates were offered a warm welcome from the Directors of the organizations. During the visit, the European Partners had the opportunity to obtain the necessary information about the main activations and initiatives of the authorities, but also to have an “on the spot” observation of the structuring and functioning modes, which could be adapted and applied in a European level.



On Thursday the 5th of June, a congress was held, as part of the above actions, titling: **“A journey to the World of Voluntarism”**. The meeting took place at the Du Lac Hotel of Ioannina. During the congress, Mr. Potsis, Regional Counsellor and Member of VERSO Project Political Council, delivered a brief opening speech while Ms Eleni Kalaboka, Coordinator of VERSO Project, presented its objectives and the strategies of the Region for the coming season.



The meeting continued with Mr. Spyros Nakos, Social Scientist and Expert, who extensively referred to the present situation, and the useful tools of voluntarism movement in the European Union.



As a closing part of the presentations to European Delegates, there was a brief description of the activities of Greek Voluntary Organizations in Epirus. The respective speeches developed as following:

- **Ms Gazi**, President of Elix, analyzed the organization's practices



- **Ms Stefanidi and Ms Vafea**, President and Member **Voluntary Organization Christian Union of Young Women (XEN)**, which stands against women discrimination



- **Mr. Antonopoulos**, President of **Ioannina Lions Club (Seloi)**, an organization aiming to provide understanding and ready assistance to people and states throughout the world
- **Ms Theodorakopoulou**, Director of **Pogoniani Ark of the World**, which offers help and care to children that have been experiencing abandonment, racism and social exclusion.

A very interesting discussion time followed the presentations, during which various proposals and opinions raised, relevant to the previously analyzed topics but also about to the dimensions and actions of voluntarism.

Volunteering is an act of offering but also an act of contribution to society. Our country needs to meet the demands of our times, creating the necessary conditions for voluntarism to grow, develop and progress.

VERSO program sets a strong basis towards this direction, but we all need to undertake an active role.