



## Policy Plan 2023-2027



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# 1. Introduction

## a. Mission and Vision

Wave Aid's mission is to help where no help is being given and fill service gaps. We were formed to meet the most basic, primary and universal need of all: food. However, over time we have expanded to offer more services and act as a hub for other organisations.

We are currently one of the only services that accepts undocumented people, as well as documented, and firmly believe in equality between these two groups. We serve indiscriminately, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, and/or ability, and encourage interpersonal exchanges to foster solidarity and contribute to the fight against injustice.

## b. Origins

Wave started as a group of volunteers who had been working in Thessaloniki, Greece in 2018 to provide for the basic needs of the city's homeless population, with a specific focus on people on the move. We are open seven days a week, every week of the year, and our main goal is to provide each individual who comes to us with a nutritious, warm meal regardless of who they are, where they have come from, or what documents they have. On top of that we try to fill other gaps in services by providing information, referrals to medical care and legal organisations, hygiene kits, clothing, blankets, sleeping bags, shoes, basic showers and laundry services. For a long time, the majority of services in the city have been off limits for undocumented people, meaning they fall through the gaps.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Wave underwent necessary changes to operations to adhere to public safety measures, whereby we were forced to move our distributions outdoors and at the beginning were one of the only actors in the city to remain open. Fortunately, since July 2022, we have resumed indoor operations and returned to our original community centre model! We have further expanded operations to include laundry and charging services, WiFi, food throughout the day, hot showers and a barbershop.

## c. Statutory Goals

Wave Aid aims to help refugees, migrants without legal residential status and by default others without the means to meet their most basic humanitarian needs as well as to support other (grassroot) organisations with similar goals, including but not limited to:

- Food
- Clothing, hygiene items and blankets etc.
- Facilitating medical care



→ Enhancing safety, shelter facilities and information (concerning asylum procedures, legal rights, family reunification etc).

## 2. Activities 2020-2023

### a. COVID-19

In March 2020, the Greek state ordered a national lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic which meant individuals were not able to leave their homes without a confirmatory text and all gatherings were prohibited. Services across the city, including municipal and church run food distributions and free shops, were suspended and the homeless population of both locals and people on the move were left without assistance.

Wave Aid was one of the very few projects that remained operational. We adapted our distributions to the requirements using cones to mark distances, grouping individuals into smaller groups to collect their food and non-food-items (NFIs), and distributing masks and hand sanitiser. When people had to come inside for other services e.g. medical or legal support, NFI appointments, we tested them on a routine basis prior to entry.

Wave Aid operated in an outdoor distribution context under COVID-19 restrictions from March 2020 until July 2022. In this time we served **over 100,000 hot meals** and remained open and operational in spite of all the challenges we faced.

### b. Community Centre Re-opening

In July 2022, the lockdown was lifted and we were able to move back indoors into a community centre set up again. We began opening the centre in the early afternoon and leaving it as an open space for people to use as their own until the evening meal is served. In order to facilitate this we started buying snacks and extra food for the day, set up a coffee and tea station, and got a wifi router for the centre. We also turned one of the indoor storage rooms into a free-shop space and set up our new shower container with individual shower cubicles and sinks. Since July 2022 we have been operating as a community centre space that is open for up to six hours a day and offers food, snacks, clothing, hygiene items, shoes, sleeping bags/blankets, laundry services, powerbank/phone charging services, wifi and showers. In this way, our services expanded to act more holistically and provide a safe space that fits all the basic needs of the homeless population in the city. Since July 2022 we have served **over 20,000 hot meals** in our community centre.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Monthly breakdowns of meals, hygiene items, clothing, showers, charged devices and laundry loads can be found on the [‘Reports’ section of our website](#).



## 3. Activities Envisaged 2023-2027

### a. Current Projects

**Wave Aid** is currently running as a community centre for vulnerable homeless populations - namely people on the move who have been left out of the system and do not get access to camp or other accommodation, nor to the asylum system. We have an open-door policy so also serve members of the local homeless population who often have issues with substance abuse and thereby are largely left out of other service provisions. Anybody who comes to our centre can access a daily hot meal, a free shop, laundry, charging and shower services, and wifi. We also act as a hub for other organisations in the city to gain access to this high-risk, hard-to-reach population with legal information and medical support.

Increasingly since 2020 after changes to Greece's International Protection Act, people on the move have increasingly been detained in Pre-Removal Detention Centres (PRDCs) across the mainland. Legally, individuals can be held for 18 months whilst awaiting an assessment of their asylum claim which can be extended for a further 18 months. We provide **prison packages** to this population, providing basic hygiene and clothing items, coffee and snacks, and any other specific requests we are able to respond to. We also include leaflets inside the package that inform people about their rights in detention. We currently send **more than 50 packages** per month to individuals detained in PRDCs in the North.

Since the closure of the medical support project in Thessaloniki, both street and camp populations have been left without primary healthcare support. We are currently collaborating with other actors to try to find a way to fill that gap. This would include the operation of a clinic near the community centre as well as scheduled visits to community centres that serve camp populations.

### b. Strategies

Wave Aid was set up to fill gaps in service provision that left the most vulnerable without access to support. We have operated in numerous unpredictable contexts and continuously adapted to our environment, be it outdoor distributions, COVID-19 restrictions, in a context of increasing criminalisation. Our coordination team on the ground are the ones with hands-on experience and who understand the evolution of the context at any given moment. Our board and former coordinators are there to advise them with previous lessons learned but will always take the lead of those who understand the daily operations.

It is essential to our core mission and vision to include the population we serve in the operations of the project itself. In this way, Wave has always sought to include members of the community in its



volunteer team and to consult community leaders on any changes to operations so that procedures are built collaboratively with the input of those we are here to serve. Wherever possible, members of the community take a leading role in cooking, translating etc.

Wave's aim is to facilitate a space that individuals can have the agency to freely use as their own in a safe and responsible manner. In line with this, our team has had extensive training in conflict de-escalation, risk assessment and volunteer management. For the coming years our aim is to improve that training, share our lessons learned with similar grassroots groups and to continue fruitful collaborations with other civil society actors in the field. We see ourselves as key actors in identifying and filling gaps in the region, with a coalition of similar-minded groups.



## 4. Organisation and Governance

### a. Board

The Board at present consists of five members with three of those members having the respective positions of Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. Collectively, they are responsible for the long-term vision, strategic planning, budgeting and running of Wave as an organisation. It will be ensured that adequate knowledge and updates from the ground are transferred to the Board so that they are able to make strategic decisions coherently with the coordination team running the Wave project in Thessaloniki.

The Board maintains a high standard of integrity and complies with the regulations concerning conflicts of interest. Decisions need to be backed by at least three out of five members, but they are usually taken by common consensus. The functioning of the organisation is evaluated by the Board at least once per year. Board members are in a four year fixed position that can be prolonged two times amounting to a maximum total of twelve years. No two Board members can leave the Board in the same three month period to ensure longevity and sustainability.

### b. Oversight

Wave does not have a Supervisory Board. Wave is a relatively small organisation, the contacts are direct and regular and include all those directly involved in the organisation including Board members, project coordination team, and the main donors. Monthly reports keep volunteers, donors and Board members updated on the operations of the project and there is regular contact between the project coordination team and the Founders.

### c. Volunteers at Wave

In Thessaloniki, Wave has a part-time coordinator dedicated only to the wellbeing and organisation of volunteers. The volunteer team consists of between four and thirteen individuals. The coordinator is responsible for going through applications, interviewing potential volunteer candidates, being their point of contact during their stay, and coordinating their induction, check-ins and exit interviews to provide routine feedback on the project and its management. Prior to arrival, volunteers are given an induction pack that explains the project and its operations but also Wave's key mission, vision, Code of Conduct and Safeguarding policies. Check-ins are facilitated at least once per month on a one-to-one basis so volunteers can give their input and have any further questions answered. Notes are anonymised but kept to track identified concerns and what has been done to address them. Volunteers also have access to an anonymous incident reporting form and an anonymous complaints form in case they don't feel comfortable raising something in their check in. If something is raised but hasn't been handled well or correctly, volunteers have access to a Whistleblowing Policy that



facilitates their contact to Board members in order to escalate complaints. All these resources are available to all those who volunteer with the project.

#### **d. Privacy Policy (AVG)**

Following the Privacy Policy regulations implemented throughout Europe in 2018, Wave has drawn up a Privacy Policy, published on its website [www.wave-thessaloniki.com](http://www.wave-thessaloniki.com). This is evaluated yearly and updated when necessary.

#### **e. Risk Management**

Through training with Front Line Defenders, Indigo Volunteers and CANVAS, our team has developed risk assessments and matrixes for the different aspects of the project - operational, fiscal, digital, volunteer-specific. These risk assessment documents are available upon request to any donor or supporter of the project. Any time an incident occurs it is quickly written up in the Incident Reporting Log so that there is a coherent understanding of what happened and what steps are being taken to mitigate future risk. Any safeguarding breaches are quickly identified and dealt with firstly by the project coordination team and then, if necessary, by the Board through escalation procedures.

Wave does not ask for, nor retain, personal information related to service users. Information relating to volunteers is treated consistently with a standard GDPR policy.





## 5. Finances

### a. Budget

In 2020, 90% of the funds received by Wave were spent on direct project costs such as premises costs, dry food, water, take-away equipment etc. Since 2022 and the re-opening of our centre and expansion of our services these costs have increased and the need for a stable, compensated team to run the operations has become increasingly clear. In 2021 and 2022 the two Founders left the field and handed the project over to a stable and trained team which was a vital step in the sustainability and longevity of the project. Since then the services have expanded from just serving food to a whole range of other things. Not only has Wave increased the scope of its activities, but we also always strive to improve the quality of the services we provide and the meals we serve have improved considerably, taking a lead from the community in preparing dishes from their home countries. This has revealed the need for a stable, equitably compensated long-term coordination team who can ensure the institutionalisation of lessons learned and the day-to-day smooth running of operations. As a result, our overhead costs now stand at 27% of the overall project budget. Nevertheless, we always strive to reduce our costs and impact on the environment where possible. We work with the local food waste organisation, Boroume, and get fresh food for free from markets and we run our showers and kitchen trailer using solar panel energy.

Our budget is reviewed every two quarters to monitor how the different budget lines are being implemented in reality. As Wave works in a constantly changing environment it is important to be flexible in adapting to new needs and costs. Wave reports to donors on a monthly basis about the operations of the project and the use of their donations.

### b. Payments and Monitoring

All payments are done according to a simple principle: they must follow from the accorded budget, based on the funds actually committed and received. For the coordination teams' living costs, the receipts are checked by the responsible Board member and then paid by the Treasurer, thus following the 4-eyes principle.

Each month there is a check of the receipts uploaded into our QuickBooks account, ensuring they align with spending from our bank account and everything is accounted for. This is done both by the Logistics Coordinator in Thessaloniki and a third party volunteer with education and experience in Accounting. The Founder also monitors budget spending on a monthly basis to ensure that all these tasks are being carried out and the project spending is in line with the outlined budget.



### **c. Financial Accounting**

Wave uses its QuickBooks membership to draw up an Annual Financial Report and publish it on the website. A remote volunteer with experience and education in Accounting also checks all receipts and spending on a monthly basis on both the QuickBooks software and the bank account.



## 6. Fundraising

### a. Activities

In order to ascertain the funds necessary to run the project in Thessaloniki, Wave engages in many activities: engagement of long-term private donors and consistent reporting and feedback, fundraising events, crowdfunding for specific costs, partnering with other organisations for in-kind donations, and funding applications to donor organisations. Wave is lucky enough to count on guaranteed monthly donations by a number of donor projects and previous volunteers that sustainably cover stable costs like premises rental. Generally, larger grants are sought out to cover specific operational costs.

### b. Donors

Wave's activities are supported by a broad variety of people and organisations: private donors, businesses, social funds, and larger grants. Regular contact is maintained through monthly reporting and check-in calls where required.

The activities would not be possible without the generous donations of time and energy that our volunteers and community members provide to us on a daily basis to ensure the project can be run smoothly.

### c. Transparency

Transparency is a key value for Wave Aid. We report on every cost we have and are always happy to keep donors up to date with the specific budget line they are supporting. We publish our Annual Financial Reports on our website and only pursue funds that are in line with Wave's Mission and Vision. We maintain the highest standard of accuracy and go through multiple checks in order to establish trust with our donors, supporters, volunteers, and the community we serve.



## 7. Cooperation with Partner CSOs

In order to act effectively, we must act together - this value lies at the heart of Wave and in line with it we seek healthy and open collaboration with other actors in the region. We attend monthly coordination meetings held between actors in Northern Greece in order to share updates and understand the shifting situation in the wider context.

On a closer level we work with a few organisations that serve the urban street population of Thessaloniki. Mobile Info Team and Equal Legal Aid provide legal information and advice, Irida Women's Centre are long term supporters and collaborators of ours, and local Greek anti-fascist groups such as Steki and Room 39 have also engaged in fruitful collaborations over the years. Embedding ourselves in the local context, empowering the community to be equal members of our team, and working collectively to address problems holistically are all essential to our Mission and Vision of working.



## 8. Communication with Stakeholders

### a. Social Media

We regularly post updates on our activities on both our Facebook and Instagram accounts. This provides information for those using our services in case there is a change that needs to be communicated. It also provides updates for volunteers, donors, collaborators so that they can have an insight into the daily workings of the project.

### b. Website

Our website ([wave-thessaloniki.com](http://wave-thessaloniki.com)) is more static than our social media and contains basic information regarding our Mission and Vision, our history, and some photos and videos of how the project works. We also update the website monthly with our monthly report updates and annually with our financial reports.

The website also contains a statement of income and expenses, the Privacy Policy, many of our donors, the contact details of the Board. Thus, we aim to comply with the ANBI regulations and be transparent with all stakeholders interested in our work.

### c. Mailing Lists

We have several mailing lists that receive our monthly reports but also calls for information, donations or other forms of support. These include a mailing list of donors, a mailing list of previous volunteers, and a public mailing list that people can sign up to online. This is another means by which we keep stakeholders up to date with our work and the Thessaloniki project.



## 9. Caveat

This strategic plan outlines where the organisation has come from and where it plans to go. It is important to keep in mind, however, that we operate in a volatile and unpredictable environment. In winter 2019 we were serving up to 600 people per day with one hot meal, in summer 2023 we serve up to 80 with food throughout the day, a hot meal, showers, a free shop, a safe space where they can access wifi, speak with their families, wash their clothes and charge their devices. It is impossible to predict where the project will go in the coming years and what needs will materialise. Nevertheless, our Mission and Vision will remain the same and we will continue to work to fill any gaps we identify to ensure that all people have access to basic services that fulfil their fundamental rights.

Wave always has, and will continue to, rely on the generous support of donors, volunteers, collaborators, and the community we serve. We are eternally grateful for that support so that we can continue to cultivate a space where people feel safe and are treated humanely in the midst of Europe's brutal border regime.

Wave Aid,  
Thessaloniki 16/08/2023