

# Hands on: ROSA's research in Athens

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Finally, we have achieved what we had planned for a long time, what made Corona difficult for a long time and what always serves as a constructive point of criticism on the Tour de ROSA It was given to you.

We were finally at the future location of ROSA! We were in Greece, visited projects, got to know organizations, helped ourselves for 4 weeks in a support project and were thus able to discuss our concept and make concrete plans for how the Rolling Safespace can provide the help that is really needed. We were able to participate in a monthly meeting of all active (grassroot) organizations in Athens and tell them exactly what we plan to do with the Rolling Safespace. Organizations such as: Medial Volunteers International and Greek Council for Refugees (GCR) but also smaller projects such as Lighthouse Relief and Hope Cafe Athens.

It was particularly exciting for us, representatives of AMURTELE Greece to meet, as the organization already works with women\* on the run and sometimes also provides midwives in the accommodations.

The conclusion of the meeting is: Providing a safe place for women\* on the run in the refugee shelters will be difficult, but it can work! And most importantly, it is urgently needed! All organizations confirmed to us the need for care of women\* on the run and further ideas were forged directly on necessary help offers - for example, women\* houses are urgently needed<sup>1</sup> in Athens, as many accommodation on Greek islands such as Lesbos are closed and people are brought to the mainland, whereupon they often remain homeless in Athens.

After a few days in the city and getting to know the resident auxiliary structures, we had a strange feeling at first. There are already a large number of organizations that help the refugees on the street in different ways. The most important topic at the moment seemed to be housing, i.e. finding accommodation for all the people in the city, as well as the (food) supply of those living on the road - because winter is approaching.

We were discouraged from working out of a car within Athens. Large gatherings of refugees in front of such a vehicle attract attention from the police, so the project could not work for long. At the same time, many of the homeless have no possibility of legal registration for refugee status, which is why any police contact can be enormously dangerous for them.

We were suggested to open a safer space for women\* in Athens in rented premises. We also made contact with organizations such as Safeplace International who have already created a

place for LGBTQIA+ people and would be willing to share their premises with us.

After some thought, we noticed where the strange feeling in us came from: The idea of safespaces in existing community centers within the city is very far from our original concept of a mobile point of contact, which we have just designed to reach the people who do not have access to the infrastructure within the city (although, of course, the offer in the city is far from the need).

After further talks and meetings, however, it became clear again: there are the women\* who live in the collective accommodations outside the big cities and do not take the path of a train trip due to traumatization, children to be cared for or fears to take advantage of urban services. During our work at foodKIND, one of the many small organizations active in the accommodations outside Athens, we were able to gain insights into these accommodations. The picture was very diverse, but it was obvious that often only very limited support is offered by NGOs in the accommodation and thus traumatized or by children or physical limitations fewer mobile women\* can not go to direct contacts. These people are our target group. We want to bring help to these women\* because preventive work also means that there are few barriers to receiving help. A one-hour train ride from the property to Athens is one such barrier. The Rolling Safespace is therefore to drive to the accommodations around Athens and create a contact point for women with the help of discussion groups, a sports programme and childcare.

Even though we now know that these women\* exist, we want to support them and our original concept is suitable for this, some questions remain open. Since the beginning of the project development, we learn that it is increasingly difficult to be active in and around the refugee accommodation (it is necessary to register as a Greek NGO, which often takes more than one year and also a permit from the administration of the accommodation, which is not so often awarded). These hurdles are the reason why there is little to no (feminist) support in refugee shelters and the majority of these structures work in the center of Athens. And this is exactly why we want to try to bring the Rolling Safespace there. We believe that it can work and are already networked with important people, which opens up opportunities.

The Rolling Safespace is needed. There is an acute lack of assistance for women\* and mothers\*. There are already local organizations doing great work, but there is also still a lot to do. It should not be the task of the civilian population to carry out this work and to constantly build up new aid offers and support structures to help the people who are actually fleeing from misery. But as long as European governments violate and let human rights be violated on their own continent, we see our task as NGOs to be active here.

We are more than impressed by the good networking of the projects on site and are motivated to become part of this network!

With these impressions and contacts in our luggage, we would like to set off for the first test mission in spring 2022 soon. In order for us to be able to expand a suitable vehicle by then, and then to be able to provide a safe place for women\*, we now need your Support! Become MemberShare our channels on social media, Donated Tell all your friends about ROSA! We only do it together, but then it will be really good!

Your Roses

1 Women\* need their own safe accommodation as they are particularly at risk of experiencing sexualised violence in residential accommodation. In the case of a complaint of the perpetrators, however, it is impossible for the women\* to go back to the same place of residence, since mediation, i.e. a clarification discussion between the person concerned and the perpetrator, is often preferred as a solution approach.

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