

**Speech Jean Asselborn Inauguration ANKAA project
19.06.2019**

Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen,

I see people from so many countries. Thank you for being with us today.

Greetings to Philippe Leclerc, the director of the Athens office of UNHCR. Tomorrow is World Refugee Day, one more reason to be present today.

I also welcome the Secretary General for Migration Policy, representing the Minister for Immigration Policy Mr Vitsas.

Special thanks to the three musicians from the Philharmonic Orchestra of Luxembourg. You were kind enough to perform at several refugee centers around Athens, including today at our opening.

Please allow me to congratulate Sara and her colleagues on the brilliant idea of this Ankaa center.

I am happy to be here today to inaugurate officially this impressively renovated building, together with your staff, so many hard working and dedicated volunteers.

Ankaa has been open and running since nearly one year and is currently working at cruising speed, taking in 250 migrants during the last term. To this date, altogether 500 people have already benefited. At any given time, the waiting list is 200 strong.

Building on your experience in Chios during the years 2016 and 2017, you identified a genuine gap in refugee assistance and integration programs and you rapidly and professionally tried to fill that gap.

While languages and ICT are two important priorities, the center further offers lessons in many trades, from carpentry to tailoring and gardening to cooking.

Through these lessons, migrants and, in the future, also local residents are taught skills that enable them to look and apply for jobs in Greece. Without skills no jobs. Without jobs, no integration.

To my knowledge, some people who were trained at the center have already been successful in finding a job, which confirms the quality of the training you provide.

Additionally, local and international NGO as well as local and international projects increasingly refer refugees to your project, a further acknowledgement to the value of your work.

I would also like to thank you for putting special emphasis on re-using old materials and for building most office and training equipment yourselves. Some of your classes specifically focus on the principles of a circular economy with many of the items exhibited today.

You even started selling some items on the global market place, including in Luxembourg

As you aim to put the center on a more professional footing, expanding numbers and paying your staff, I wish you well and support you wholeheartedly.

Volunteers, companies and donors in Luxembourg have kindly provided seed funding.

I am well aware that you are in touch with the Ministry of Economy in Greece and that you are applying for project funding from the Ministry of Employment in Athens. The Luxembourg government will support you in this endeavour.

To all migrants, refugees and asylum seekers who are here today, I would like to express my support and sympathy.

We know where you come from, the trauma you went through.

You deserve to be fully supported by governments and NGOs such as Ankaa.