

What is the current situation of unemployment/employment for youth in Greece?

How do young people see the future in their home country?

My research topic was related to job opportunities for young people in Greece. I mostly stayed with locals through couchsurfing in order to understand the culture better and see the situation from inside. This experience was a good decision, because I met not only my hosts, but also their families and friends. My hosts led me to some places that I would not find easily in the internet.

I have also spent some days in the pension "Mylos" on Crete, whose owners kindly offered me a place to support the project.

It is a known fact that the highest unemployment rates are observed in Greece, especially those who are under 25 face the jobless problem.

My plan was to take a portrait of each interviewee, however not everyone agreed to be photographed.

Before this research I met a few Greeks in Berlin. Matina moved here to do an internship in the graphic design studio in 2017, when I just arrived to Germany too. She was happy about the opportunity to work at the professional studio and learn important skills from an established designer. In a year she moved back to Athens to finish her Master program and decided to stay there. I met her again this time when I arrived to Athens and we spoke about her current situation. She works in the printing company and enjoys her job very much, however, Matina is not getting paid enough to rent her own place, so she lives again with her parents. At that moment she did not feel like moving somewhere else.



On Crete I spent most of my time. In Heraklion I was hosted by Lukas - a 33-year-old engineer. Lukas moved from Greece to Mexico 6 years ago and he only comes during summer to help with family business.

His family owns a guesthouse by the sea. He grew up without financial troubles and their business was successful. However, in the last couple of years they had to work much more during the season in order to save for the rest of the year. They do not hire people to clean or cook anymore and have to do most of the things by themselves.

Lukas does not plan to move back to Greece.

Because of Lukas, I met other locals. His friend Thomas is a photographer, unemployed. He just came back from a year trip in South America and was planning to travel more. Thomas had started education in a public university, but had to quit, because he did not like the system. So he did not graduate at the end, and has no stable income. He has clients from time to time, but that is not enough, so he does other part-time jobs.

In my opinion, artistic jobs are hard to find in any country, not only Greece. And it seems that in Greece tourism sector is the most profitable.



Maria is a 27-year-old freelancer. She has graduated from university this summer, and her profession is a translator. She was born, grew up and studied in Thessaloniki. Maria likes Crete for the beaches and weather, she used to go there often while studying. She told me that from September her plan is to move to Crete and live with her boyfriend. Maria would like to move somewhere else, Berlin is one of the options. But for that she needs to save money, now is not possible. Maria is a bit worried about the translation jobs, because of instability. At the same time she would like to take a part-time job in the book store.



Kristos is a 33-year-old tattoo artist, who grew up on Crete. He lives with his parents. He shares one tattoo studio with his friend in Heraklion and did not complain about working conditions. He used to work as a sound engineer, but change the profession as wanted to learn new things. He travels often. Kristos would like to buy the land and build the house, but the laws had changed since few years, so the land price got extremely high.

I spoke with Helen on the beach. She is originally from Crete and currently is enrolled in Bachelor program. She is 20 years old, studies Psychology at university in Athens. She is not confident about the job in Greece even though she loves her country. Her profession is not in demand compared to other countries in Europe. She plans to do Master program in Holland. Helen used to work in England during summer breaks, to have enough for living while studying. She told me a bit about rent prices and salaries. She pays 250 euros for 1,5 room flat in the center of Athens, while the salary of her desired job would be 700 per month. Young student would be willing to work on Crete after graduation because of the nature and weather.



I met Anastasia while walking. She is 25, lives and works in Athens. This was her first time traveling to Crete. She told me that she enjoys solo trips, because she can learn about herself. She works as an accountant, and she earns around 800 euros per month. Anastasia is not willing to relocate, as she is satisfied with her life at home. But she definitely thinks that traveling is needed and important in order to change.



Kristina was born in Albania and her parents moved to Crete when she was a kid. She loves the island and does not want to move even to another city. At the moment she is 16 years old, studies at high school. Kristina did not tell me a lot about her future plans of studying or working, but definitely she would prefer to stay in Greece.

I did not talk much with Giorgos. He is a friend of Lukas, but he did not speak good English. I just know that he is from Crete, grew up there, stayed there all his life. He works for family business, grows olive trees and works in the farm. He seemed satisfied.

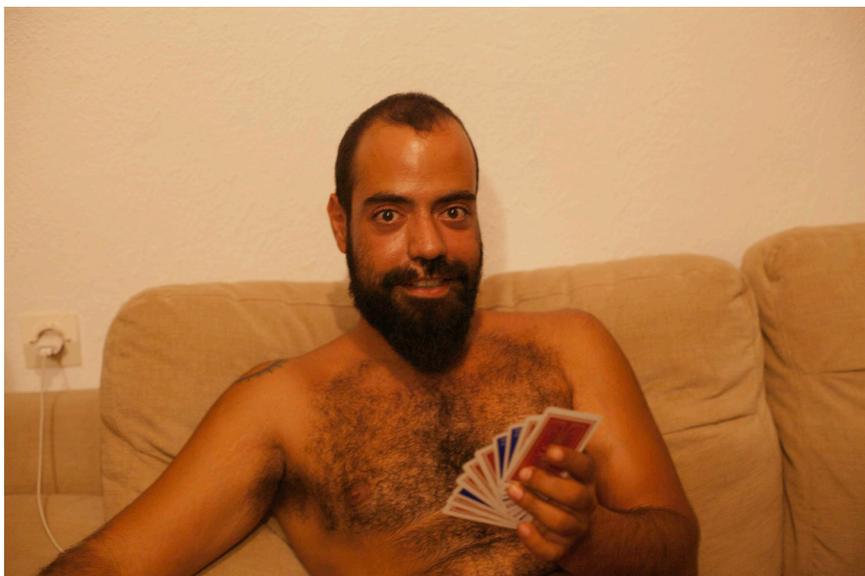
A few people that I met and did not photograph.: Alexandra – in the ferry. She was coming back from her holidays with friends. She is 24 y.o., lives and works on Crete as a dentist. She studied there as well. Alexandra did not think about moving abroad, because all her friends and family are on Crete.



Amanda is 16 y.o. We have met on the local beach. She is at high school. Amanda wants to study business in Athens and she will try to apply for the scholarship. She told me that universities are free, but it may change. Her parents have a store, a hotel and a restaurant on the island. She used to work and help with the family business, but she wants to have her own. Amanda said that everyone who looks for a job can find one, it is possible. Maybe, the payment wouldn't be high, but there are jobs for sure. She spoke very good English, comparing to other teenagers I talked to.

On Santorini island I stayed with Spyros, another couchsurfer Maja and his friend Kostas, and a dog! Spyros is 29 years old and he works as a tourist guide. He had 1 week holiday when I arrived but mostly stayed in the house, because it was hot outside. He moved to Santorini from Thessaloniki 4 years ago. He told me that it was really difficult to find a permanent place to live on the island, so he is lucky to have the apartment. Spyros works 6 days a week, he does not travel, he does not go out. Especially, when season starts, there is a big competition for any job, so he works hard in order to keep the working place. In some years he dreams to open his bar by the beach, and from that time he can start traveling.

Maja is 31 years old, originally from Athens and she arrived for a few weeks like me. She just quit her job as a chef. Maja told me that she liked her job, but she used to work in different restaurants. She was not happy about her teams, it felt like everyone is separated, there was no unity. For Maja it is important to have good relationships people she works with. At that moment, she was thinking to change the



profession and that's why she just went to Santorini, for inspiration, for a change. Maja was abroad only once and in Greece she did not travel much, but that is what she wants to do.

I had a quick chat with Kostas (35 years old), he was working 9 hours a day, mostly during the night and I did not see him very often, as he was away or sleeping. He came to do seasonal work from April till November. His job was also in a tourism sector – receptionist in the hotel. During the last few years he was doing the same often – coming somewhere for a season to get paid and then return back home – to Thessaloniki. The average salary in his homecity is 700 euros for full time job, while in Santorini his was making 1200 euros. Kostas and Spyros are good friends from the childhood, that's why Spyros offered Kostas to stay at his place during the season.

Ageloti is another friend of Spyros. He is also from Thessaloniki and arrived to the island 2 years ago. He is also 35 y.o. He was fired 1 day before we've met and was looking for another job. Before he was a driver. His situation was not the best: the company was giving the room for employees, so he lost not only job, but home, and was sleeping in the car. Ageloti said that working conditions in Santorini are tough: most of people were working without any day off, even though it's illegal. There is mafia that rules everything, and if you disagree – you will have to move and there are plenty of people who are willing to work much, because this is the only chance to make savings. On other islands the salaries are less. His plan is to go to Sweden after season is over, to work in better conditions for more money and later open coffee place in Santorini with another friend of him.

I have noticed that Greeks are not willing to relocate because of their friends, family, weather, nature, and culture. Locals feel very connected to each other and it is important for them to live in Greece, even when there are not so many options for their dream career. Greeks speak very good English and it was easy to communicate, they are open to talk with strangers. People seemed to be happy with what they have and they accept the situation. From my perspective, one of the problem is that Greek people do not travel a lot, so they cannot compare and see other ways of living and thinking. In order to change the system, there should be mind change individually, and traveling is the best thing to do to have this change. In my opinion, we, young generation, can do and see a lot. We can make impossible, if we decide. We can create a better today as well as tomorrow if we can dream and believe that it will happen. Though this possibility is limited to those who do not have enough motivation and interest.

I was surprised that locals did not complain much in general, maybe they are used to the current situation, or they do worry about career much. Greeks appreciate their homes, value families and friends, and this I find fascinating. Despite of the crisis, lack of opportunities, low salaries, they are united, they want to live in their historical, cultural, naturally rich and beautiful home land.



