

Street Roots joins fellow street papers at world conference

While the 112 publications differ in some ways, they have a shared mission

BY EMILY GREEN
STAFF WRITER

Newspapers and magazines with models similar to Street Roots' are providing income opportunities to vulnerable citizens in cities around the globe.

Some papers, such as Big Issue in the United Kingdom, are glossy-print magazines and operate as social enterprises rather than nonprofits.

Others, such as Mi Valedor in Mexico City, feature art and photography rather than news stories.

But they all share a mission: to serve as a

voice for the otherwise voiceless, to give those in extreme poverty the means to lift themselves up, and to create a community of love and support for the vendors who sell the paper.

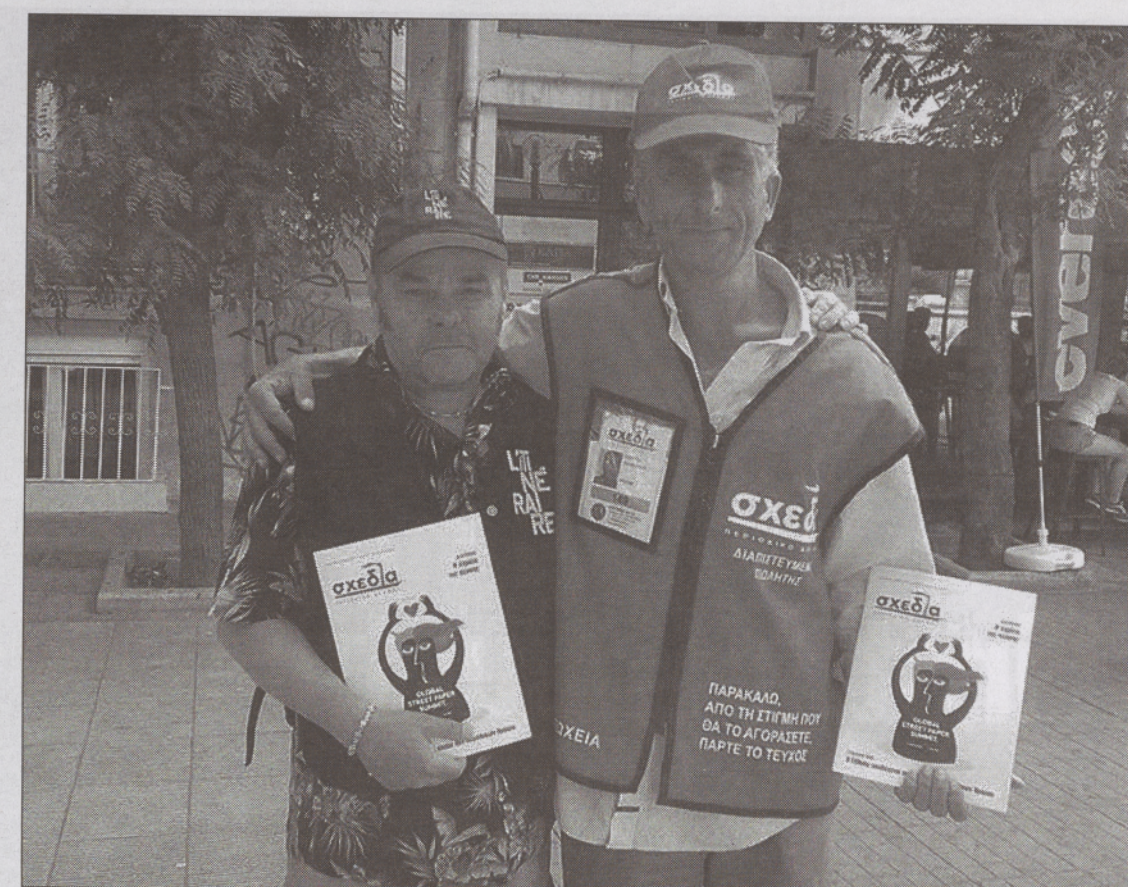
Most of these organizations are members of the International Network of Street Papers, an international nonprofit based in Glasgow, Scotland. On June 14, Street Roots and more than 120 street paper representatives from 30 countries gathered in Athens, Greece, for INSP's 2016 Global Summit. It's a time when delegates from the 112 member street papers can come together to learn from each other, network and brainstorm ideas.

Greece is not only still reeling from economic collapse; it's also flooded with refugees from the Middle East, Asia and Africa. These two crises have culminated in an ongoing state of unrest and hardship for the people who live there.

The unexpected closure of the venue INSP had selected for the conference, just weeks before the event, sent organizers scrambling. Luckily, they were able to secure the Onassis Cultural Center for the event, and the conference prevailed.

Despite sporadic public transit strikes throughout the week, delegates found the host city to be warm and inviting.

Unemployment has remained higher than 25 percent, and many Greeks who are employed are earning a mere 300 to 400



L'itinéraire vendor Guy from Montreal (left) and Greece's Shedia vendor Lefteris stayed with each other during the summit.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE INSP



International Network of Street Papers

euros a month, less than \$450.

The Greek street paper, Shedia, is just over three years old. It has 140 to 150 vendors at any time. According to staff, most are individuals who, in the economic collapse, lost their employment and later their homes.

Shedia and has earned a reputation for honesty and objectivity in its reporting, according to U.S. Embassy staff who attended the awards ceremony on the second night of the conference.

Georgios Arapoglou is a journalist and vendor manager at Shedia. He said that before the newspaper hired him, he was close to becoming homeless himself.

Along with most journalists in Greece, he lost his job around 2010 when many newspapers went bankrupt.

"Everyone can say we have problems," Arapoglou said, "but we try to propose solutions."

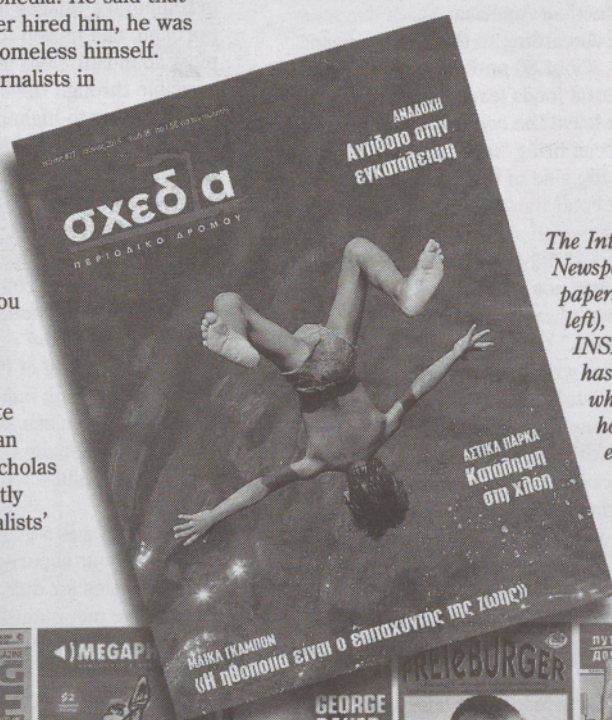
One of the conference's keynote speakers was veteran Greek journalist Nicholas Voulelis, who recently founded The Journalists'

Newspaper. It is a cooperative, owned and controlled by the 150 journalists it employs.

One thing became clear at the conference: We have a lot more in common than we have differences.

From rising rents and increased income inequality to failure of big media in many countries to represent the poor, we see that poverty is a global issue and that street papers everywhere are stepping in to lift people up and tell stories that matter.

emily@streetroots.org



The International Network of Street Newspapers is made up of 112 street papers worldwide. Shedia (pictured at left), the street paper in Greece, where INSP held its 2016 Global Summit, has 140 to 150 vendors, most of whom lost their employment and homes as a result of the nation's economic collapse.

PHOTOS BY SHEDIA AND INSP

