

WP 2 Initial Study

WP 2.4 Presentation of national situation for Greece, with reflection on transition of UAM to adulthood

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PRESENTATION OF NATIONAL SITUATION

1. GENERAL QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE SITUATION OF UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

Refugees consider Greece as a transfer state, a gateway to other European countries. However, due to the strict European laws considering the influx of refugees, it is common for them to stay in Greece for a larger period of time than desired. Compared to the 2018 report regarding unaccompanied minors, there has been an increase of 40% in the absolute numbers (3010 in 2018, 4222 in 2020). What is more there has been a change in the ratio between boys and girls, with the latter now occupying a larger percentage compared to 2018. There are multiple entry points for refugees, and upon entry, they are met by the Greek authorities, the Asylum service, the Greek police, and the Coast Guard. More specific information can be found below.

As of 30 September 2020, 4222 unaccompanied minors reside in Greece. Out of the total: 92.8% boys, 7.2% girls, 8.8% <14 yrs. old. 23% of UAC are from Pakistan, 39% from Afghanistan, 11% from Syria, and 27% from other countries.

The total number of places in shelters for UAC is 1797. 1557 UAC are in the waiting list for shelter, out of which 120 are in Reception and Identification Centres, and 226 in Protective Custody. The total number of UAC referrals received and processed between January 2016 and 30 September 2020 is 32364.

2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND OFFICIAL PROCEDURE GUIDELINES FOR PROTECTION OF UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

The legal framework and official procedure guidelines for unaccompanied minors are as follows (<http://www.opengov.gr/yypes/?p=4665>):

1. The competent authorities for the protection of dependent minors shall immediately take appropriate measures to ensure the necessary representation of the dependent minors in order to ensure the exercise of their rights and compliance with the obligations laid down herein. To this end, all public authorities and any third party informed in any way of the arrival or presence of an unexpected minor, inform without delay the Department for the Protection of Vulnerable Groups, Applicant Asylum Seekers of the General Directorate of Welfare. The latter shall take the necessary steps to appoint the Commissioner through the staff and the local competent prosecutor. The unaccompanied minor is immediately informed of the appointment of the Commissioner. The Commissioner carries out his duties in order to ensure the best interests and the overall well-being of the child. The person acting as agent is replaced only if required. Persons whose interests are or might conflict with the interests of the unaccompanied minor cannot be defined as conservators. The competent authorities for the protection of unaccompanied minors regularly assess the suitability of the commissioners and the means necessary for the representation of the partners.



2. In the case of helpless minors, and for as long as they remain in the territory, the competent authorities for the protection of dependent minors shall ensure:

- a. to accommodate unaccompanied minors together with adult relatives, to find a prospective family, to stay in special centres for the accommodation of helpless minors, or to hospitality centres, provided there are suitable areas for it and always in the best interest of the child,
- b. for the co-existence and coexistence of the siblings, taking into account the age, maturity and generally the interests of every minor,
- c. so that changes in the place of residence of disabled children are kept to a minimum.

3. Authorized authorities for the protection of disabled children may exceptionally place unaccompanied minors aged 16 or over in accommodation centres for adult applicants if this is in the best interests of the child in accordance with Article 17 hereof.

4. The competent authorities for the protection of unaccompanied minors shall seek the members of the family of the dependent child, possibly with the assistance of international organizations or other relevant organizations, as soon as possible after the submission of international protection, while at the same time protecting its best interests. If the life or integrity of the minor or his or her close relatives is threatened, especially if they reside in the country of origin, the collection, processing and transmission of information concerning such persons is done in a secret manner so as not to their risk. In case of non-submission or a final application for the expulsion of international protection, the provisions of Chapter C of Law 3907/2011 and in particular Article 25 shall apply. The competent authorities for the protection of dependent minors shall ensure the application of the cases a, b and d of paragraph 2 of Article 19A of Law B, based on the interest of the child. 4251/2014, as added by paragraph 25 of Article 8 of Law 4332/2015.

5. Personnel dealing with cases of undesirable minors must have and continuously receive appropriate training on the needs of minors. Such staff shall have a duty of confidentiality for the personal data which they are aware of in the course of their duties or on their part.

3. LESSONS LEARNED FROM PROJECT CISOTRA AND ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

a. THE GENERAL NEEDS IDENTIFIED FROM FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS:

- Increasing capacity to register and process asylum claims
- Project work and limited funding limits the efficiency of the NGOs who are working with Unaccompanied Minors
- Addressing serious gaps on the islands
- A plan for a sustainable and adequate reception system on the mainland
- Providing adequate care for children
- Improving coordination and establishing clear responsibilities among organisations



- Promoting self-reliance and integration to refugees

b. ACTORS**State actors**

Greece is a party to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and a member of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Executive Committee, which today consists of 87 countries. It cooperates with the Greek government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the media and civil society to protect refugees and asylum seekers. The UNHCR's main governmental partner is the Ministry of Public Order and Citizens Protection (PSC) and its services, including the Asylum Service, the Appeal Authority, the First Reception Service and the General Directorate of Welfare (Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Welfare).

The Greek Asylum Service started operating five years ago and quadrupled in size since June 2013: a total of 22 Regional Asylum Offices and Units have been established all over Greece. The Asylum Service operates Asylum Units in all Reception and Identification Centers (RICs) as well as in all pre-removal detention centers.

NGOs and other organisations:

1. Arsis Guesthouse: (<http://arsis.gr/xenonas-asinodefion-anilikon/>)
2. Charitable organization of the Holy Archdiocese of Athens "Apostoli (Mission)": (http://www.mkoapostoli.com/?page_id=998)
3. Refugee Home Arsis: (<http://arsis.gr/estia-prosfigon/>)
4. World NGO Doctors of the World (Greece): (<http://mdmgreece.gr/our-mission/>)
5. International Medicine and Humanitarian Organization Médecins Sans Frontières: (<https://www.msf.gr/association>)
6. Structure of temporary accommodation of asylum seekers EKPOSPO "Nostos": (http://www.nostos.org.com/site/gr/about_us.html)
7. Greek Red Cross: (<http://www.redcross.gr/default.asp?pid=7>)
8. Greek Council for Refugees: (<http://www.gcr.gr/index.php/en/about-gcr/what-we-do>)
9. The non-profit company "Ena paidi, enas kosmos (A child, a world)": (<http://www.paidi-kosmos.gr/>)
10. The non-profit organization "Iatriki Paremvasi (Medical Intervention)": (<http://medin.gr/>)
11. Idryma Neolaias kai Dia Viou Mathisis (Youth and Lifelong Learning Foundation) (EIN): (<http://www.indeivim.gr/>)
12. Disease Control and Prevention Centre: (<http://www.keelpno.gr/>)



13. Temporary Residence Centre for Non-Natives - Lavrion: (<http://www.redcross.gr/default.asp?pid=122&la=1>)
14. The non-profit organization of special care and protection of mother and child " Kivotos tou Kosmou (Ark of the World)": (<http://kivotostoukosmou.org/kivotos/content/view/32/60/lang,el/>)
15. The non-governmental organization "AITIMA (REQUEST)": (<http://aitima.gr/index.php/gr/>)
16. The non-governmental organization "Metadrasi": (<http://www.metadrasi.org/>)
17. Ecumenical Refugee Program: (<http://www.ecclesia.gr/greek/koinonia/kspm.html>).
18. Syllogos Merimnis Anilikon (Association for Responsibility for Minors): (<https://www.sma-athens.org/>)
19. United Nations High Council for Refugees (UNHCR): (<https://www.unhcr.gr/>)
20. The Praxis non-governmental organization (Development, Social Support and Medical Cooperation Programs): (<http://www.praxis.gr/el/>).
21. Unaccompanied Minors' Housing "Stegi Plus" (House Plus): (<https://stegiplus.wordpress.com/>).
22. Hostel for the temporary accommodation of asylum seekers "Mellon (FUTURE)": (<http://tvxs.gr/news/kala-nea/dimioyrgia-neoy-ksenona-prosorinis-filokseniasaitoynton-Asylo>).
23. To Hamogelo tou Paidiou (Smile of the Child): (<http://www.hamogelo.gr/>)
24. EKKA (National Centre for Social Solidarity) - Administration of Housing Claims for Asylum Seekers and Unaccompanied Minors: (<http://www.ekka.org.gr/>)

c. KEY AREAS WHERE MINORS AND YOUNGSTERS IN TRANSITION NEED SUPPORT

Unaccompanied refugee youths can be characterised through three central elements: first, they are unaccompanied, mainly adolescents and refugees. As refugees fleeing from their home country, they all share fundamental experiences of 'loss': loss of home, belongings, friends, family, school, cultural identity, values and habits, status, perspectives, etc. (Berman, 2001). Secondly, traumatic experiences are very often an essential part of their life story in their home country (Hicks et al. 1993). Many experienced war, physical or sexual mistreatment, brutal death of a loved one, stay in refugee camps, etc. (Ajdukovic & Ajdukovic 1998; Weine et al. 1998; Barrett et al. 2000). In addition, the journey to the host country can be traumatising, due to difficult or dangerous travelling and living circumstances, or dependency on human traffickers and smugglers (Derluyn & Broekaert 2005). And even in the host country, these youths can experience traumatising events, such as the interviews as part of the asylum procedure, life in large-scale- and sometimes closed-centres, racism and so on. Thirdly, as refugees, they have to start a new life in an unknown country, where they are unfamiliar with the language, the social services and institutions, habits and customs, and so forth. Finding a role and position in this new society and adapting to a new culture and way of living can therefore be a difficult and stressful process (Guarnaccia & Lopez 1998; Geltman et al. 2000). Finally, these adolescents often quickly realise that achieving the goals, dreams, tasks and plans they brought along to the new country will be very difficult, especially when they learn to know the limited possibilities they have to obtain definitive permit to stay in the host country.

Since most of these unaccompanied refugee youths are adolescents, they have to complete the important developmental task of identity formation, which involves, amongst other things, personality development, sexual identity development, social skills acquisition, etc. (Derluyn et al. 2005). For refugee youths, dealing with traumatic experiences and staying without parents in an unfamiliar society, it can be very complicated to succeed in these important developmental tasks (Ajdukovic 1998; Bruce 2001). Because of their living circumstances as separated youths, some of them have to develop a large independence, but often this is only a premature maturation, requiring enormous resilience, and often contrasting sharply with the dependent situation they fall into once they have arrived in the host country (Derluyn et al. 2005). Moreover, they often suffer from a lasting loss and fundamental loneliness. And all children -even if their parents are physically not present- remain loyal to their parents, and also to the mission most of them received before their flight, such as achieving a high-skilled job, sending money home, realising a good living, taking care of a younger niece, etc. (Derluyn et al. 2005).

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN UAM TURN 18 YEARS OLD (THE TRANSITION)

- Most Reception and Hosting Centres of UAM cannot keep hosting the unaccompanied minors after they become adults; therefore, they need to move to hotspots with other adults. In certain cases, they are helped to find accommodation as roommates of other refugees in shared flats, but it is a rare occurrence. It is important to note, that these shared flats are not occupied necessarily by young adults, but older refugees as well. In even more rare cases, the UAM can stay in the Hosting Centre until they are able to find a job and support living autonomously, but this is the exception, as most hosting centres have a large number of minors that can be hosted in the vacant spot of the new adult, and the law states that when a UAM reaches adulthood, they need to leave the hosting centre for non-adult refugees.
- The process of preparing to leave starts at least four months before the guest comes of age. Firstly, the Social Worker, in collaboration with the minor himself and his Commissioner and under the supervision of the Coordinator, evaluates the level of autonomy of the unaccompanied minor, conducting group and individual meetings and preparing an evaluation report. The evaluation takes into account factors such as attending a formal education or vocational training program, the guest's current inclusion in the labour market or the prospect of finding work within a reasonable time, the existence of a supportive community (e.g. friends, extended family network with strong ties to members of the refugee / immigrant community or host community). In case it is possible to refer the guest to leave to an adult housing provider, the Social Worker sends the relevant referral form to the respective housing provider or housing manager. The young adult is then informed of the outcome of the request. The Social Worker delivers a file to the young adult upon his / her departure, which includes all the original documents related to his / her health (test results, health booklets, etc.), his / her legal status (e.g. documents on the procedure for granting international protection or a residence permit), education (e.g. progress checks, diploma, etc.), as well as any document kept at the offices of the operator or in the apartment and concerning the young adult.
- Transition into adulthood does not mean that the person is excluded from access to secondary education, if they want to continue studying.
- After becoming an adult, the UAM is able to get a license to work, and most UAM are anxious to start working as soon as possible, so that they can start generating income.

**d. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES****EMPLOYERS TOGETHER FOR INTEGRATION**

(https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/legal-migration/european-dialogue-skills-and-migration/integration-pact_en)

On 23 May 2017 the Commission launched the initiative “Employers together for integration” at the occasion of the second meeting of the European Dialogue on Skills and Migration to give visibility to what employers are doing to support the integration of refugees and other migrants into the labour market.

Employers can join this initiative by describing their current and future actions to support the integration of refugees and other migrants in their workforce and beyond. If you are providing apprenticeships for migrants and refugees, you can also join the European Alliance for Apprenticeships.

The successful integration of third-country nationals in the EU labour market represents an opportunity for our societies. When effectively integrated they can help improve the functioning and performance of the labour market, as well as support fiscal sustainability. In this process, the role of economic and social partners, and in particular of employers, is crucial. Several initiatives have been initiated by employers, trade unions, chambers of commerce in many member states.

The European Social fund is the main funding instrument supporting labour market inclusion, including of migrants. The Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) can also provide funding for preparatory measures to access the labour market.

WELCOMMON Refugees Community & Hosting Centre (<http://welcommon.gr/en/what-we-do/for-the-refugees/>)

The WELCOMMON Refugees Community & Hosting Centre constitutes a comprehensive and integrated model addressing the refugee issue, which covers for free and immediately all the basic needs of the refugees arriving in Greece, aiming not only at housing them, but also at empowering and including them in the local community through capacity building and facilitation of their active participation and cooperation with the local population, providing adequate infrastructure and quality services, applying best practices with respect to the dignity of the refugees. Unfortunately, funding from the European Commission ceased and Welcommon now operates with the help of donations.

What Welcommon offers to the refugees:

- Decent and safe housing, food and coverage of basic needs.
- Psycho-social support.
- Primary medical/health care and systematic support (medical records file, interpreting, escort) for secondary care, if necessary.
- Non-Formal education of children as well as adults, such as: continuous and innovative language courses (Greek, Arabic, English, German and more), painting, music, photography, theatre, creative activities for adults and children, sports, dancing.

– Preparation of the children who have been left out of school for many years to be able to return to school soon.

HELIOS (HELLENIC Integration System) (<https://government.gov.gr/parousiasi-programmatos-helios-gia-tin-kinoniki-entaxi-prosfigon-ke-metanaston/>)

HELIOS (HELLENIC Integration System) is a pilot project aimed at examining the possibilities of implementing decentralized integration policies for refugees and immigrants. It is implemented under the coordination of the Ministry of Immigration Policy in collaboration with the Municipalities of Leivadia and Thebes and the International Organization for Migration.

This innovative program exploits measures that are already being implemented such as education, financial assistance, housing, combining them with new supportive actions related to working life, social ties and social participation.

During the pilot phase, the actions concern a sample of a population of refugees and immigrants, about 80 people in Leivadia and 40 in Thebes. The two Municipalities offer different accommodation options, apartments in Leivadia and Open Hospitality Structure in Thebes.

The initial duration of the program was set at six months, with the option of extending it for another six months if it is necessary to extend it and ensure funding. The aim of the pilot project was to create a model for the integration of refugees and immigrants that can be applied across the country.

I_Ref_SOS – Innovative Response to Facilitate Social Assistance for Young Refugees (<http://www.iefimerida.gr/news/402066/programma-gia-omali-ergasiaki-entaxi-neon-prosfigon-etoimazei-o-oaed>)

Within the framework of the ERASMUS + Youth Program, the Greek organisation of unemployment (OAED) has designed and implemented a project aimed at developing an effective reception system, social support and smooth employment of young refugees aged 16-24.

This was the project "I_ReF_SoS-Innovative Response to Facilitate Social Assistance for Young Refugees", coordinated by the OAED, with the participation of the Educational Policy Development Centre (KANEP), the Ministry of Education of Turkey, country of entry of refugees, and the DEKRA Akademie Training Organization in Germany, a country of potential final settlement of refugees.

The central idea behind the project is to take advantage of the time required for the arrival of new refugees in the countries of entry until the time of their final settlement in the host countries.

As stated in a relevant OAED statement, this time remains untapped by the official mechanisms of the states receiving mass refugee populations.

With the project "I.REF.SOS-Innovative Response to Facilitate Social Assistance for Young Refugees", the Agency sought to create a new approach to vocational training for new entrants, enriched with innovative educational counselling, mentoring, language and intercultural training and career guidance for trainers

and trainees, which will be designed and implemented at a pilot level for new refugees who have applied for asylum.

It attached particular importance to the evaluation and wide dissemination of this work and its conclusions.

The central aim of all partners was to incorporate these new methods and approaches, not only in the strategies and practices of the organizations involved, but also in the countries' policies to tackle the problem of newly arrived refugees of this age.

The Project had a two-year duration (2017-2019) and was funded by the European Commission under ERASMUS + Youth Sector - Key Action 2: Youth Partnership Strategies.

Greek Ministry of Education

(https://www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2017/16_06_17_Epistimoniki_Epitropi_Prosfygon_YPPET_H_Apotimisi_Protaseis_2016_2017_Final.pdf)

Education is a vital step to help integrate refugee and migrant youths into Greek society, and at the same time to help protect a fundamental human right. The Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs in cooperation with international organizations such as UNHCR, UNICEF, and IOM started in 2016-2017 the educational integration of migrant children in public schools, in specialized afternoon classes. Approximately 3,500 children aged 6-17 were in formal education in 2016-2017 school year in reception classes for children residing in temporary sites, as well as those living in urban accommodation.

For the school year 2017-2018, the Ministry aimed to integrate all refugee children in school putting emphasis on the gradual integration to morning zone classes. Specialized reception afternoon classes will be maintained, where necessary, in order for all children to have access in education. According to the Ministry, 2,493 children aged 6-16 living in urban accommodation have already enrolled in schools throughout the country in all school levels and this number is still growing. School education for 2,360 children living in Accommodation Centers in mainland is under preparation. When the project is completed, almost 1.000 schools in Greece will provide education to refugee children.

5. CONCLUSIONS

From the above, and from the discussions with young refugees and professionals who work with unaccompanied minors, we conclude that direction should be given to important areas of health promoting interventions, beyond dealing with the sequel of the traumas they have been exposed to, that can be implemented by case workers, schools and other institutions locally: first, the efforts of caseworkers and NGO's in locating family members abroad is very important. Next, facilitating and scaffolding participation in culturally diverse, including host, peer networks, appears to be an important domain of intervention that could be focused in systematic ways. Third, organized activities to strengthen the youngsters' culture competence may promote their coping with discrimination and mental health. Reinforcing the unaccompanied refugees' resources by such interventions maybe valuable alternatives and supplements to professional mental health services.

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