GREECE – ADVOCACY UPDATE
March-April 2021

“What I’m waiting for is a positive decision so that we can live like normal human beings and see how it is to live one day of your life without anxiousness”

Esin*, 16-year-old girl from Afghanistan
currently in Mavrovouni, Lesvos

1 All the quotes on this document are from Esin.
CONTENTS

LIST OF ACRONYMS ........................................................................................................ 3

GENERAL OVERVIEW ....................................................................................................... 4
  IN GREECE ......................................................................................................................... 4
  COVID 19 SITUATION ........................................................................................................ 5
  EUROPEAN UNION DEVELOPMENT .............................................................................. 6

RECENT CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENT .......................................................................... 8
  ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN .............. 8
  UPDATE ON RELOCATION ................................................................................................. 8
  HUMANITARIAN SITUATION ON THE MAINLAND ........................................................... 9
  HUMANITARIAN SITUATION ON THE AEGEAN ISLANDS ............................................... 9
    Lesvos ............................................................................................................................... 10
    Samos ............................................................................................................................. 11
    Kos ................................................................................................................................. 12

KEY ADVOCACY MESSAGES ............................................................................................. 12
**LIST OF ACRONYMS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Asylum Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMKA</td>
<td>Greek Social Security Number</td>
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<td>ESTIA</td>
<td>Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation</td>
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<td>EODY</td>
<td>National Public Health Organization</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU MS</td>
<td>European Union Member State</td>
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<tr>
<td>GCR</td>
<td>Greek Council for Refugees</td>
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<td>GoG</td>
<td>Government of Greece</td>
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<td>HRW</td>
<td>Human Rights Watch</td>
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<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organization for Migration</td>
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<td>JMD</td>
<td>Joint Ministerial Decision</td>
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<td>MoMA</td>
<td>Ministry of Migration and Asylum</td>
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<td>MPRIC</td>
<td>Multi-Purpose Reception and Identification Center</td>
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<td>MSF</td>
<td>Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>OGG</td>
<td>Official Government’s Gazette</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAAYPA</td>
<td>Temporary Insurance and Healthcare number for third country nationals</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRDC</td>
<td>Pre-Removal Detention Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>POC(s)</td>
<td>Person(s) of Concern</td>
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<td>REC</td>
<td>Refugee Education Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>RIC</td>
<td>Reception and Identification Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>RVRN</td>
<td>Racist Violence Recording Network</td>
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<td>SGBV</td>
<td>Sexual and Gender Based Violence</td>
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<td>SSPUAM</td>
<td>Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors</td>
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<tr>
<td>UAC</td>
<td>Unaccompanied Children</td>
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<td>UASC</td>
<td>Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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**GENERAL OVERVIEW**

Greece is hosting approximately 91,945 refugees and 80,784 asylum seekers, although the actual number of recognized refugees present in Greece is believed to be significantly lower. Therefore, the total People of Concerns (PoC) population is estimated to be around 119,300. The Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum (MoMA) reports that around 27,000 people are living in 32 open accommodation facilities throughout Greece, while 11,650 are in RICs in the Eastern Aegean islands, and finally ESTIA beneficiaries are almost 20,000. Amongst the population hosted in reception facilities, 10,000 are recognized refugees.

At the moment, PoCs residing on the Eastern Aegean Islands (camps, RICs, ESTIA, other) are more than 14,100 - including 3,666 (26%) children, of which 16% are girls. The majority of these children (70%) are under the age of 12 years old, while 987 children (7%), mainly from Afghanistan, are in the Greek islands without being cared for by an adult (UASC).

Since 2015, more than 1,206,800 people have arrived to Greece, while since the beginning of this year, 2,157 people have reached the country, through land and sea, seeking international protection. Sea arrivals still continue to be relatively low. Between March 15th and April 18th, almost 2,200 refugees and asylum seekers were transferred from the Greek islands to the mainland.

**POLITICAL CONTEXT**

**In Greece**

Alleged pushbacks by the Greek border control authorities, both at sea and land borders, are still coming to light - with even greater intensity, which led the EU Commissioner on Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, to comment during her March visit in Samos and Lesvos that the Greek Authorities can “do more” to further investigate allegations. As reported by Aegean Boat Report, children are pushed back to Turkey as well.

MoMA’s plans to build new or upgrade existing RICs in the Eastern Aegean islands are still triggering strong local resistance, as they are not convinced that these facilities are

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3 UNHCR, Regional Bureau for Europe ‘Greece Update #16 Lesvos’. (17 February - 7 March 2021).
5 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
12 Reuters ‘EU official urges Greece to investigate reports of asylum-seeker pushbacks’, 29 March 2021. Available at: https://reut.rs/2OGpXbn
13 Aegean Boat Report reports on 5 children being pushed back to Turkey from Lesvos in late February, full report available at: https://bit.ly/2RSpUdA
meant to be temporary. At the same time, the upgrade and extension of Fylakio RIC in Evros (mainland) seems to create tension in the areas that local town councilors have announced their intention to resign if such plans were to continue. In other camps in northern Greece, open accommodation sites are currently being modified so as to have controlled entrance and exit: a 3-meter cement wall all around Nea Kavala accommodation site in Kilkis is being constructed at the time of writing, while in Diavata near Thessaloniki a fence-like structure is already set up. This is part of the GoG plan to ‘transform’ 12 camps in Greece into ‘controlled’ camps.

Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN) in April published its yearly report, according to which there was an increase in incidents of racist violence in Greece in 2020, particularly against refugees, migrants and human rights defenders (targeted due to their affiliation with the above-mentioned groups). Almost 24% of the racist attack incidents targeted children aged 11–17, while 6 incidents happened in camps or shelters hosting UAC.

Covid 19 situation

As Greece enters the 25th consequent week of general lockdown due to Covid-19 prevention measures, a new Joint Ministerial Decision (JMD) regulating activities in the country until May 10th, still stipulates – as others before it - that exiting RICs and accommodation sites (for daily needs) is suspended all over the country. In Assimakopoulou camp in Kavala (Northern Greece), 336 asylum seekers and refugees are in total quarantine, while according to the Vice-President of the European Commission Margaritis Schinas, there are 27 covid cases in Samos RIC and nowhere else on the Eastern Aegean RICs.

Regarding vaccinations, although some elderly refugees have been vaccinated against Covid-19, the Greek Government has been critised for not including refugees and asylum seekers in the initial national vaccination plan. MoMA announced that vaccinations in accommodation sites for residents and employees are going to start in May and be held by the National Public Health Organization (EODY). Following an amendment in law, any individual lacking AMKA or PAAAYPA number (social security number) can register online at the emvolio.gov.gr platform and to obtain a 90% vaccination appointment and to obtain Covid-19 self-tests. This constitutes a positive development considering the number of refugees/asylum seekers currently lacking such number.

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17 Press release of the RVRN yearly report can be found at: https://bit.ly/2Q5fzOZ
18 Ibid. p.15
20 Ibid.
21 JMD OGG issue B’ no 1682/24.04.2021
23 For more information on this: Margaritis Schinas briefing in front of LIBE Committee on April 19th regarding mental health issues of asylum seekers at the reception sites in Greece, video available at: https://bit.ly/3dOya77
24 InfoMigrants, Marion MacGregor ‘Greece: Migrants in camps to be vaccinated in May’. 30.03.2021, available at https://bit.ly/3ygr3f3, also see LoveWelcomes NGO ‘We must include refugees in vaccination plans, on a 90-year old Syrian woman being vaccinated’. Available at: https://bit.ly/32IKPl
27 With art. 97 of Law no 4796/2021 – OGG issue A, 63/17.04.2021, art. 248 of Law no 4782/2021 is modified as mentioned
European Union Development

The Vice-President of the European Commission, Margaritis Schinas, the Neighborhood and Enlargement Commissioner, Oliver Varhelyi, and the EU’s Home Affairs Commissioner, Ylva Johansson, sent a response letter to the Greek MoMA Minister, Notis Mitarakis, concerning issues that had been addressed to them by the GoG. In particular, they replied that “the deterrence of irregular departures and the restarting of readmissions from the Greek islands are still first priorities” as well as “a more effective and mutually beneficial” implementation of the 2016 EU-Turkey Joint Statement, especially regarding the management of migration issues. In the Commissioners’ letter they explicitly referred “to the need to restart returns towards Turkey without any further delay, starting with 1,450 returnees, who have exhausted every legal remedy.”

“What I would ask the decision makers is this: do you know that all these people have risked their and their families’ lives to be here? Why do you keep them here and you don’t hand them decisions for so long? Decisions for us it’s not a simple paper- it may ruin our lives.”

Another important development comes from the ruling of the Higher Administrative Court of Lower Saxony, Germany. In a case of the two Syrian sisters, the Court ruled that they should not be returned to Greece due to the destitution they are likely to face. According to the same ruling, there is a serious risk that they would not be able to meet their most basic needs upon return to Greece28. This judgment follows a similar one, issued in January 2021 by the Higher Administrative Court of North Rhine-Westphalia29.

OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION FOR UASC

Striking numbers of missing UASC were published in April as according to “Lost in Europe” - a journalists’ research initiative- 18,292 UASC disappeared in Europe in the last three years (2018-2020)30, out of them 2,118 of them were reported missing in Greece31. Greece runs 3rd after Italy and Belgium in numbers of missing children and, as in other EU countries, there is a discrepancy between statistical data provided by different public entities32.

One of the major developments regarding UASC in Greece is the launch of the national tracing and protection mechanism for unaccompanied children in precarious conditions (as of early April). MoMA’s Special Secretary for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors (SSPUAM), UNHCR, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Arsis, METAdrasi and the Network for Children’s Rights, announced setting up a mechanism to identify and trace unaccompanied children who are homeless or living in insecure conditions, including a 24/7 telephone line, inclusion in emergency accommodation, material and psychosocial support, interpretation, safe

28 For more info, please see the Court’s decision at https://bit.ly/3ngFcCj (in German)
30 More on this project can be found here https://lostineurope.eu/file/no-numbers-file
32 ibid.e.g. between data provided by Foreign Ministry and E.K.K.A for example
accompaniment when outside the accommodation, including representation during registration procedures with authorities and educational activities through mobile units day centers and information desks established in Athens and Thessaloniki.

This initiative is to facilitate UASC relocation efforts and the actual abolition of children’s “protective custody”, as in practice in mid-April there are still 37 children in custody (see table below). It is worth noting that in Thessaloniki only, there were 53 children (many between 11 and 14 years old), of which 36 belong to particularly vulnerable categories (subjected to violence, forced separation from family members, exploitation and suffering from physical and psychological issues) identified by the NGO Arsis as homeless or living under precarious conditions during the first trimester of 2021.

As far as demographics are concerned, as of April 15th, 3,776 UASC are estimated to be in Greece of which 92.3% are boys, 7.7% are girls and 8.5% children are below the age of 14 years old. The majority of the UASC are from Afghanistan (33%), other countries (31%), Pakistan (22%) and Syria (14%).

The table below presents the accommodation facilities for these identified UASC:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of UASC in long-term accommodation (Shelter/SIL)</th>
<th># of UASC in emergency accommodation sites (hotels)</th>
<th># of UASC in “Safe Zones” in camps/RIC</th>
<th># of UASC in camps and RICs</th>
<th># of UASC in informal/insecure housing conditions</th>
<th># of UASC in protective custody</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,755 (46%)</td>
<td>465 (12%)</td>
<td>371 (10%)</td>
<td>259 (7%)27</td>
<td>889 (24%)</td>
<td>37 (1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In contradiction to the above data - regularly provided by E.K.K.A- the Vice-President of the European Commission M. Schinas, declared on April 19th in front of the EP’s LIBE committee, that as a result of ongoing relocation there are no unaccompanied children currently on the Greek islands. A point that obviously needs some clarification by the Commission.

Age assessment procedures continue to run in different speeds across the country, despite the latest Ministerial Decision 9889/2020 meant to harmonize and thus accelerate the overall procedure. As a matter of example, in Alexandrea accommodation site (Northern Greece) age assessments were carried out and concluded, while in Koutsoschero camp central Greece, in Lesvos and Samos, all age assessments are on hold, until the relevant EODY field personnel have been trained. In Kos, questions are raised regarding the step-by-step concrete application of the relevant procedure. It’s worth noting that age assessment procedural issues noted in Greece were reported by GCR and other NGOs in

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36 based on EKKA statistics, ibid.
37 of which 166 (4%) in the eastern Aegean islands
39 OGG B/3390/13-8-2020
40 Information provided at the Child Protection Sub-Working Group for North Greece, Epirus, Thessaly on 25.02.2021
41 Information provided at the Child Protection Sub-Working Group in Lesvos on 24.02.2021
42 Please see more on Kos section below
the Joint Submission for the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) regarding the situation of refugees and asylum seekers in Greece.

**RECENT CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENT**

**Access to Education for refugee and asylum-seeking children**

A poignant issue on children’s rights in Greece remains refugee/migrant children access to education. According to the Findings of the Ombudswoman for Children’s Rights in Greece, presented at a national level during the online Roundtable ‘Refugee Children are not in Schools - the educational community seeks for solutions’, organised by GCR along with six other NGOs, only 14.2% of children residing in accommodation sites and RICs are attending Greek schools, while access to technical perquisites (internet, devices etc.) for distance learning is extremely scarce.

More than 2,000 children have spent this year in the temporary Mavrovouni site. Some child-advocates for change, marched on April 9th between tents protesting for their right to play and right to education.

> “Every human being must go to school, but we here, in the camp, we cannot because of the lockdown. I feel sad that I lose all this time of my school education”

**Update on Relocation**

**Relocation scheme for UASC.** Since January 2021, the UASC relocation process is coordinated and managed by the SSPUAM (for France and Germany) or the GAS (for other EU MS), in close collaboration with IOM, UNICEF, UNHCR and EASO. While relevant data (number of UASC, gender, destination for relocation) are not regularly published by the SSPUAM, IOM most recent statistics show that a total of 733 UASC - out of the 1,600 target - have been relocated since the beginning of 2020. Amongst those relocated 95% were boys and 5% girls, with Germany and France still being the Member States that welcome most of these children. Unfortunately, the relocation of 28 UASC to Ireland is being challenged by Covid-19 restrictions, as according to Irish officials deploying ‘garda’ personnel to Greece to perform required security checks would be ‘a breach of Employer Health and Safety Regulations’.

As part of the Voluntary Scheme for the Relocation, a total of 3,049 people (families with children) – out of the 3,600 targets have been relocated, mostly to Germany and France. As of March 2021, relocation from Lesvos to Germany was concluded, with the

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43 The online Roundtable, attended by more than 400 people, was held on the 20th of April and can be watched at [https://bit.ly/3euWIGL](https://bit.ly/3euWIGL) (in Greek)
44 The full findings of the Independent Authority can be found at [https://bit.ly/2QuT8Pt](https://bit.ly/2QuT8Pt) (in Greek)
48 Ibid.
final relocation flights from Athens to Germany taking place on the 22\textsuperscript{nd} of April. This last relocation was followed by German Ambassador’s Ernst Reichel statement that “the situation on the Eastern Aegean islands, and in the whole of Greece, demands European solidarity and a fair distribution of burden in the EU”\textsuperscript{50}.

**Humanitarian situation on the mainland**

Cash assistance will cease to be provided to asylum seekers living anywhere outside of MoMA’s facilities by July 1\textsuperscript{st}\textsuperscript{51}. This decision, together with recently modified eligibility criteria for ESTIA and relevant cash allowance excluding asylum seekers whose negative asylum service decision is suspended by courts until a final court decision is issued\textsuperscript{52}, create serious concerns about risks of homelessness and destitution for refugees’ families with children, amidst the pandemic.

At the same time, it has been announced that mainland’s accommodation sites Skaramangas in Attica and Volvi in Central Macedonia shall close within very few weeks\textsuperscript{53}. The latter hosts approximately 741 people – among which 314 are children, while Skaramangas site hosts more than 2,500 PoCs - among which 1,024 children\textsuperscript{54}. At the moment there is no official announcement, regarding where these people are going to be transferred. Since the announcement of Skaramangas closure, tensions run high within the resident population\textsuperscript{55}.

**Humanitarian situation on the Aegean Islands**

As of April 2021, official statistics regarding the population residing in the Eastern Aegean islands read as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesvos</th>
<th>Chios</th>
<th>Samos</th>
<th>Leros</th>
<th>Kos</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OCC.</td>
<td>CAP.</td>
<td>OCC.</td>
<td>CAP.</td>
<td>OCC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,800</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>962</td>
<td>1,014</td>
<td>2,488</td>
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</table>


The compounded effects of confinement, uncertainty, and insecurity are having a serious impact on children, who are gravely affected by the reception conditions and the lack of child-friendly activities. RICs conditions, especially in Mavrovouni site, are seriously impacting the mental health of children:

‘It is these appalling conditions which are causing children to break down to the point where some are even losing the will to live (…) It is living in this constant nightmare of insecurity and uncertainty that is causing children to break down’\textsuperscript{56}.

**Mental Health** issues are amongst the most serious issues affecting the refugee/migrant population on the Eastern Aegean Islands. Concerns around the situation have been repetitively raised by various NGOs\textsuperscript{57} and has also caught European Parliament's (EP)

\textsuperscript{50} Athinaiko-Makedoniko Praktorio Eidiseon, Τον τελευταίο χρόνο μετεγκαταστάθηκαν 2.765 πρόσφυγες και αιτούντες άσυλο από την Ελλάδα στη Γερμανία, 22.04.2021 [in Greek]
\textsuperscript{52} Information provided by GCR lawyers who manage pending court cases in Thessaloniki
\textsuperscript{54} IOM, Supporting the Greek Authorities in Managing the National Reception System for Asylum Seekers and Vulnerable Migrants (SMS), Factsheets, March 2021, available at: [https://bit.ly/3YaAgF](https://bit.ly/3YaAgF)
\textsuperscript{57} Please see below in Samos a relevant report focusing on this issue as well
attention. Margaritis Schinas’ in his opening statement at the EP’s LIBE committee mentioned that “Migrants and especially refugees are at higher risk of developing mental health problems, due to the […] post arrival experiences often shaped by social inclusion, exclusion and isolation”\(^{58}\) and encouraged, among others, the Hellenic Government to allocate AMIF funds on this serious issue\(^{59}\).

**Lesvos**

Of the total number of asylum-seekers remaining on Lesvos, 23% are women and close to 3,000 (35%) are children, 16% of which girls. Nearly 70% of the children are below the age of 12, while close to 180 (6%) are unaccompanied and separated\(^{60}\).

Following a decision from the GoG in September last year, Kara Tepe municipal camp (Lesvos) is being closed, although it is considered to be one of the sites where basic dignified accommodation was provided to the most vulnerable population\(^{61}\). It has a capacity of 1,200 people and at the time of writing, 880 (including 389 children) were living in this site and are now asked to move to Mavrovouni (also referred to as “Moria 2.0”), where tents and mud prevail, together with the lack of access to support needed\(^{62}\).

According to the General Secretariat for Information and Communication, on April 8\(^{th}\) there were 6,025 people in Mavrovouni camp\(^{63}\) - including 1,825 children and 24 UASC in the Safe Area. In Megala Therma, where the quarantine camp lies, 233 people were living there as of March 31\(^{st}\), among which 83 children, including 33 likely UASC, living with the adult population\(^{64}\). Finally, 143 UASC are still residing in Iliaktida’s Minor’s shelter.

**WASH & HEALTH**

- Government test results indicate contamination of the ground in Mavrovouni site and suggest serious health risks for small children and pregnant women\(^{65}\).
- By the beginning of April, out of the 414 toilets in the camp, only 289 could be used (that is around 21 people per latrines) and there were just 155 showers (with hot water) on site\(^{66}\).
- Water and sewage supply systems are still not being completed and expected now for June 2021.
- Access to health is extremely limited with camp residents reportedly waiting and queuing in front of the doctor’s office from 5 am in the morning despite opening hours being between 8am to 2pm. As NGOs emphasize, one of the greatest gaps is the lack of MHPSS care.

“Here, when you have a medical problem and you go to the doctor’s office, they think you are lying, they don’t treat you – only if they think you are about to die, then they will pay attention”

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\(^{59}\) Ibid.

\(^{60}\) April 2021, GCR & Oxfam Bulletin, ibid


\(^{62}\) April 2021 GCR & Oxfam Bulletin, ibid., p. 5


\(^{64}\) April 2021, GCR & Oxfam Bulletin, ibid., p. 3


\(^{66}\) April 2021, GCR & Oxfam Bulletin, ibid.
SHELTER

The majority of people are still living under makeshift tents, regularly flooded and humidity is a perennial issue. Electricity shortages keep being reported. Lately, a basketball court provided a positive addition.\(^{67}\)

CHILD PROTECTION

Age assessment procedures are put on hold due to pending EODY trainings and, in some cases, examination of international protection claims is being held under the border procedure even though age assessment is not concluded.\(^{68}\)

- Questions on procedural guarantees for potential UASC in Megala Therma quarantine camp have also been raised.\(^{69}\)
- Praksis Protection desk in the new emergency site will be operating on Mondays from 10:00 to 12:00.

EDUCATION

Partly due to Covid-19 on site related restrictions, educational opportunities are limited. METAdrasi facilitates 60 pupils (re)connection with their lessons in a learning centre in the town of Mytilene, while around 50 children in Mavrovouni continue to receive daily homework packages with self-learning material. With some 2,200 children in the camp, out of them 1,500 are between 5 and 17 years old, educational integration is still a challenge to tackle as soon as possible.

Samos

With around 2,500 residents, Vathy RIC continues to be running over capacity (+284%). On the 6\(^{th}\) of April, 36 UASC were living in the RICs Safe Area. According to UNHCR, 20% of the RIC population is made of children living both within the RIC limits and in “the jungle” around it.\(^{71}\)

Speaking to the national broadcaster (ERT), MoMA stated that by June 2021 the new multi-purpose RIC (MPRIC) will be ready.\(^{73}\)

A report issued by 7 NGOs on the island, focusing on examining the impact of reception conditions on the mental health of asylum seekers came to light in April. According to the report: ‘As things stand, the circumstances allow for only extreme, critical cases to receive urgent treatment by medical authorities—if any, leaving the majority of needs unattained’.\(^{74}\)

CHILD PROTECTION

Age assessment procedures are put on hold, the CP Sub Working group is to send a list of questions, to which GCR has contributed as well, in order for the competent authorities to provide CP actors with answers much needed.

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\(^{67}\) Ibid.
\(^{68}\) Information provided at the Legal SubWorking group on Lesvos, 30.03.2021
\(^{69}\) Ibid.
\(^{70}\) Regional Bureau for Europe: Greece Update #16 Lesvos (17 February - 7 March 2021), Ibid.
\(^{71}\) Ibid.
to support children on the move. Since March 29th GCR’s field lawyer has sent a complaint to the Deputy Ombudswoman for Children’s Rights, asking the Authority to take action for 4 UASC cases whose age assessment is pending since August 2020. As authorities have not always applied the benefit of doubt in favour for minority, children are found living in conditions not appropriate for their age.

**EDUCATION**

Various actors struggle to support learning activities for children. Four NGOs (Praksis, Arsis, Still I rise and Samos Volunteers) are currently providing some forms of non-formal education (often restricted to one subject such as mathematics) – mostly through distance learning due to Covid 19 restrictions.

**Kos**

In Pili area in Kos, 180 people were living in the RIC in March 2021 and on April 26th, 9 UASC were living in the designated Safe Area.

**CHILD PROTECTION**

Serious concerns have been raised on whether the new law on age assessment is applied in practice, since cases of children going through the x-rays procedure only (and as a first step) have been reported in both the RIC and the pre-removal detention center (PRDC). In addition, no official assessment document is served to the children or representing lawyer.

**EDUCATION**

Two refugee pupils’ teams attending the non-formal education centers operated by ARSIS NGO on Kos (KEDU) and Leros (LEDU) islands won **first place in the pan-European technology and programming competition “Meet & Code” with their project “My Story”**.

**KEY ADVOCACY MESSAGES**

Towards the European Union and its Member States:

- **We urge member states to support the European Commission's efforts to relocate children from Greece and expedite the transfer of unaccompanied children and vulnerable families.**

- **Support the Greek Government in ending the overcrowding and unsafe conditions on the Islands, while accelerating the transfer of the most vulnerable to the mainland, in appropriate accommodation facilities.**

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75 Naftemporiki, Μ. Σχοινάς από την Κω: Εντελώς διαφορετική η εικόνα στις δομές φιλοξενίας σε σχέση με το 2015, 06.03.2021, available at https://bit.ly/3aDC018 (in Greek)

76 Information provided to GCR

77 Information provided at Legal Aid SubWorking group in Kos, 24.02.2021

• The monitoring mechanism for fundamental rights at EU borders must be broad in scope to cover all fundamental rights violations at the border and well-resourced to ensure its meaningful contribution towards more accountability.

**To the Greek Government:**

• The lack of access to medical, including mental care, appropriate hygiene measures and even clean water exposes children to contagious diseases and increase the risk of a spread of Covid-19. **As a matter of urgency vulnerable people should be evacuated from the Greek islands to the mainland where access to proper accommodation and health care must be provided.**

• While offering safe living environment, child mental health care, in line with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (IASC MHPSS) guidelines and principles, should be a priority, particularly for children. Squalid and unsafe living conditions, lengthy asylum procedures and the pandemic threats are all factors affecting the already fragile situation of refugee/migrant children.

• **The rights of children on the move should always be respected, even in time of the pandemic.**

• **Unimpeded access to quality education to children of all ages and nationalities – being on the islands or in the mainland, in line with Articles 28 and 29 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, which foresees that all children, without any exceptions, have equal rights to primary and secondary education. Any policy aiming at providing education within camps or other closed-type facilities should be immediately abandoned to avoid the creation of “ghetto schools”**.

• Provide **protection services to homeless UAC** living in the streets and in unsafe housing. These children should be the absolute priority in the referral mechanism of the Special Secretary for Unaccompanied Minors (SSPUAM).

• **Regarding the asylum procedures under the pandemic**, the Greek Government should ensure that all asylum seekers have meaningful access to legal aid, translation, internet, and that interviews are conducted in a safe environment (both ensuring confidentiality and social distancing), and that health needs and vulnerabilities are detected and swiftly acted upon.