

Supporting unaccompanied and separated children and youth in Greece

In a collaborative effort, the European Programme for Integration and Migration (EPIM) and eleven other European Foundations, including the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, the Bodossaki Foundation and the John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation are dedicating a funding programme to the particularly urgent situation of unaccompanied and separated children and youth in Greece. The programme is part of the Europe-wide initiative “Never Alone –Building our future with children and youth arriving in Europe”.

Greece is currently confronted with the challenges of not only being a key country of arrival and transit but also now of destination in Europe. This challenge becomes explicit when looking at the situation of unaccompanied and separated children in the country: according to EKKA (National Center for Social Solidarity), only in early 2016, 1,947 unaccompanied and separated children have arrived in Greece and there are currently about 671 of them in Greece without a shelter, 55% under the age of 14. Moreover, services such as guardianship, psychological care, language training and street work are only provided by civil society organisations who are constrained to maintain or expand their activities due to a lack of funding. Civil society organisations expect that there are even more than the officially registered cases mentioned above of children and youth who are living in non-official camps and on the streets of Athens, Thessaloniki and other locations in Greece. This is putting them in danger, increasing their vulnerability and delaying their integration into European society.

Responding to the immediate needs in Greece, the EPIM fund supports civil society organisations in:

- IDENTIFICATION: Build safe structures and networks at the first points of arrival and strengthen mechanisms for identification in registration centres and main cities of transit.
- PROTECTION: Provide alternatives to detention with the support of sustainable transit structures. Foster individualised support and protection with the scaling up and improvement of the guardianship system for children and youth transiting through and/or establishing their life in Greece.
- AWARENESS-RAISING: Raise awareness of the issues concerning unaccompanied and separated children and youth to avoid misinterpretation and increase the attention given to such children and youth.

Three projects will be supported with funds totalling 450,000 EUR in the years 2016-2017:

“Responding to the needs of female unaccompanied and separated children and youth in a dynamic environment with a holistic model of intervention” led by PRAKSIS

The goal of this project, led by PRAKSIS in partnership with CIVIS PLUS and ELIX is to enhance protection through increased access to information and services for female unaccompanied and separated children and youth who face particularly high risks on their journey. Trafficking and gender based violence are experiences that too many of these young girls share and that require a particularly sensitive, extensive and rapid intervention and support through a holistic set of services.

With accommodation for female unaccompanied and separated children and youth in a child friendly environment in line with BIA and BID standards, PRAKSIS aims to ensure quality care and protection through high level of medical, legal, psychological and social support which will pave the way for integration into the Greek society. The project pilots a service that is currently not provided in this form and, by filling this gap, aims to provide a model whose standards can be replicated by the Greek state and other institutions.

Collaborating closely with the responsible state authorities and the police, PRAKSIS expects to help reduce the number of cases of child smuggling and trafficking, while providing vulnerable groups with sufficient information and skillsets to respond to everyday challenges in their young lives.

“Following their Footsteps” led by Faros

Together with the NGO partners Solidarity Now, Merimna, CIVIS PLUS and Babel, Faros expands a project with a holistic approach to identification, protection and the prevention of absconding for unaccompanied and separated children and youth in Athens, where many of them are currently stranded.

Through extensive street work, the project strengthens the identification process of unaccompanied and separated children and youth in the street of Athens to then ensure the provision of an alternative to detention or street-life after their identification. Unaccompanied and separated children and youth are accommodated in a transit centre with the capacity for 20 children. Accompanying them in their transition to permanent shelter, Faros ensures with its partners that the children and youth have the opportunity to attend Greek language courses and other social activities that facilitate their integration into the host society and give them structure and stability on a daily basis.

In order to strengthen the capacities of their own and other care-giving staff, professionals will be trained in grief counselling and supervised in groups to ensure good quality care that also takes into consideration the particularly encumbering situation for the professionals themselves.

Based on the experience of the organisations involved and additional research, Faros will further identify and learn more about the reasons and the prevention of absconding of children and youth in care; an issue of high concern in Greece and other EU Member States. A policy brief will address the issue on a political level, accompanied by awareness raising activities targeting practitioners to allow them to implement the identified measures to reduce the phenomenon of absconding.

“Strengthening the Protection Network: A project on guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children” led by METAdrasi

METAdrasi has established a Guardianship Network for unaccompanied and separated children assisting overstretched public prosecutors who hold the legal responsibility for often hundreds of children at the same time, and cannot provide the individualised care that would be required.

Guardians who are trained, supervised and employed by METAdrasi are authorised by the First Instance Public Prosecutors and Prosecutors for minors to offer personalised support on issues relating to asylum claims and family reunification, medical care and education and to safeguard the children’s rights. They further assist in the early and accurate identification of unaccompanied and separated children.

With this project grant, METAdrasi will prolong, enhance and expand the guardianship system in Athens, Lesbos and other locations of urgency. This includes more trainings of guardians based on best practices in the fields of child protection and international protection in Greece and other EU countries. Additional guardians will be placed in locations such as Lesbos to enhance the identification and registration procedures at the point of first arrival. Scaling up the number and services of guardians employed by METAdrasi will ensure the protection of children at particularly high risk with the provision of personalised counselling and support in order to ensure access to the asylum procedure, healthcare and education as well as promotion of the general psychosocial well-being of the children, and support in activities relevant to family reunification.

METAdrasi intends to raise awareness of the needs of unaccompanied and separated children, including advocacy for the reform of the legal framework for guardianship in Greece, and for the establishment of an independent and flexible register of guardians for unaccompanied and separated children throughout Greece in the long term.



[“Never Alone –Building our future with children and youth arriving in Europe”](#) is a collaborative funding initiative established in the European Programme for Integration and Migration (EPIM). Together with EPIM’s thirteen Partner Foundations, eleven additional European foundations support this fund aiming at providing protection and long-term perspectives for children and youth in the context of migration: Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Bodossaki Foundation, John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation, Fondazione Cariplo, Compagnia di San Paolo, Fondazione con il Sud, Enel Cuore, Fondazione CRT, Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Cuneo, Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Padova e Rovigo and Fondazione Monte dei Paschi di Siena, King Baudouin Foundation and Bertelsmann Foundation.