



ΠΑΝΤΕΙΟΝ ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ
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STUDY ON HOMELESS UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN IN GREECE



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This study is a product of the European Center for Research in Human Rights and Humanitarian Action (EKEKDAAD) of the Panteion University of Social and Political Science.

The field research was conducted between February and October 2020 and the final study was published in October 2022.

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Disclaimer

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Cover photo:

An unaccompanied boy from Afghanistan seen on Lesbos Island in May 2019.

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Executive Summary

The research

This report examines homelessness among unaccompanied children (hereinafter referred to as UAC) in urban areas in Greece. It analyses the causes as well as the consequences of child homelessness, investigates the networks available to children, examines how current living arrangements expose UAC to risks, and highlights the physical and mental health conditions and the socio-economic situation of homeless UAC in Greece.

The field research was carried out between February and October 2020. The methodology of this research and the dissemination of its preliminary findings to relevant state stakeholders has contributed to early action in the field of policy. The period in which this research was conducted was marked by positive developments regarding the protection of homeless UAC such as the abolition of protective custody, swift appointment of guardians, and the establishment of a tracing mechanism for UAC living in precarious conditions.

The report is based on 251 individual interviews with homeless UAC in Athens and Thessaloniki, 34 interviews with child protection professionals working with UAC, and a desk review based on the collection and analysis of promising practices at international, European and national levels. Promising practices are included in Annex 1.

The field research placed special emphasis on giving children a voice. It sought to understand their needs, their future intentions, as well as their coping mechanisms. The research gave them the opportunity to share their own suggestions for support and protection.

Key findings

The majority of UAC interviewed were living in precarious and unsafe conditions, with several of them living on the street. When asked, 71 per cent of the participating children clearly voice their preference for staying in organized accommodation with other children.

Existing literature and the research findings highlight the lack of accommodation facilities as the most important cause of homelessness. Additional factors which contribute to homelessness of UAC include limited referral mechanisms, inadequate information to children on their rights upon their arrival, and prolonged waiting periods for placement in child-friendly accommodation facilities. Some children also run away from accommodation facilities.

One of the main findings of the research is that nearly half the children interviewed are unaware that they are entitled to special protection. Specifically, they are unaware of their right to accommodation. Similarly, many children participating in the research said that they have no or limited information on their asylum claims and their future status.

The vast majority of UAC interviewed during research constantly feel insecure and live in fear. The restrictions due to the COVID- 19 pandemic further exacerbated their situation.

Durable solutions in accordance with the best interests of the child are essential. Relocation schemes, based on the principle of solidarity among EU member states can alleviate the situation in Greece.

The views of children must be accounted for when planning and implementing activities affecting them. Transparency and dialogue are essential elements in building trust and fostering a feeling of ownership on decisions regarding accommodation, education, training, and so on.

The main requests and needs children expressed from the Greek state are to have their basic needs (including shelter, food, safety and access to education) met; easier access to documentation; and to have focal points who are reachable any time and who can support them, including by providing psychological support.

Recommendations

This report presents ten recommendations. The voices of homeless UAC guide the order of priority of the recommendations, validated through interviews with child protection experts. The recommendations take into consideration the promising practices identified during the desk review.

Basic needs: shelter, food, safety and access to education

1. Professionals, such as administrative personnel, border management authorities, police, guardians, interpreters, staff working at accommodation facilities, should be trained on how to identify, refer and support UAC.
2. Transit accommodation should be available for UAC pending their placement in long-term accommodation facilities.
3. UAC should be provided with sustainable and long-term child-friendly accommodation.
4. Access to healthcare and education must be guaranteed.

Identifying, registering and documenting UAC

5. Identification and registration points for homeless UAC should be strengthened and street work teams adequately funded.
6. Age assessment procedures should only be undertaken as a measure of last resort, not as standard or routine practice.

Focal points children trust

7. Referrals of homeless UAC should be facilitated through a dedicated 24/7 Helpline.
8. A guardian should be appointed for each child as soon as he/she is identified as unaccompanied.
9. Information provision to the homeless UAC should be prioritized from the day of their arrival in Greece, through various means, to ensure that they are informed about their rights, access to support services, and accommodation.
10. Psychological support should be accessible to UAC through free mental health treatment for UAC from a state institution.

Acknowledgments

This report would not have been possible without the valuable contribution of UNHCR, the Steering Committee, comprised of the Special Secretary for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors, Mrs. Eirini Agapidaki, the Vice Prosecutor of the Supreme Court with responsibility for Child Protection, Ms. Adeilini, representatives of the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs/ Protection of Unaccompanied Minors' Unit, the Deputy Ombudswoman for Children's Rights, Ms. Koufonikolakou, representatives of the Reception and Identification Service of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum and the Hellenic Police/ Sub directorate of Minors' Protection in Attica, IOM and UNICEF. We would also like to thank the NGOs ARSIS (Athens and Thessaloniki), Defence for Children, the Greek Council for Refugees, the Hellenic Red Cross, METAdrasi, Network for Children's Rights, Solidarity Now, STEPS and Zeuxis, who welcomed us into their premises. Their cooperation throughout the entire process, as well as their guidance and recommendations, have played a vital role in each stage of this ambitious study. We express our gratitude and appreciation to all homeless UAC who took part in this research. It is their courageous contribution that made this study feasible. Our efforts are fully dedicated to them.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the Special Secretary for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors in 2020 and 2021, for her willingness to thoroughly examine and adopt a number of policy recommendations. Long before the publication of the report but based on its primary recommendations, protective custody was recently abolished in Greece¹, thus putting an end to unlawful deprivation of liberty of unaccompanied children. In 2021, the SSPUAM in collaboration with UNHCR, has developed the National Emergency Response Mechanism for the comprehensive, effective and timely protection of UAC living in precarious conditions, including homeless ones, as an alternative to protective custody. The aim is to establish a safety net for UAC who are detained in the absence of care arrangements².

Finally, we would like to express satisfaction with the effect of this report, which led to constructive cooperation.

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Acronyms

| | |
|--------|---|
| BIA | Best Interests Assessment |
| BIC | Best Interests of the Child |
| BID | Best Interests Determination |
| BIP | Best Interests Procedure |
| CESCR | Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights |
| CPT | European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment |
| CRC | Convention on the Rights of the Child |
| EASO | European Asylum Support Office |
| ECHR | European Convention on Human Rights |
| ECSR | European Committee of Social Rights |
| EKKA | National Centre for Social Solidarity |
| EU | European Union |
| FRA | European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights |
| GA | General Assembly |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| JMD | Joint Ministerial Decision |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| OHCHR | Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights |
| PD | Presidential Decree |
| RIC | Reception and Identification Centre |
| SIL | Semi-independent Living |
| SSPUAM | Special Secretary for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors |
| UAC | Unaccompanied Children |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |

Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions are applied:

Application for international protection

An “application for international protection” means a request made by a third-country national or a stateless person for protection from a Member State, who can be understood to seek refugee status or subsidiary protection status, and who does not explicitly request another kind of protection, outside the scope of this Directive, that can be applied for separately.³

Source: Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection

Child

A **child** means every human being below the age of eighteen years⁴ unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier⁵.

Sources: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 1; Greek Civil Code, Article 127

Durable solution

“A durable solution in the context of the unaccompanied or separated child is a sustainable solution that ensures that they are able to develop into adulthood, in an environment which will meet his or her needs and fulfils his or her rights as defined by the CRC and will not put the child at risk of persecution or serious harm. Since the durable solution will have fundamental long-term consequences for the unaccompanied or separated child, it will be subject to Best Interests of the Child Determination (BID)”⁶. A durable solution will be long-term and sustainable⁷.

Sources: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNHCR Safe and sound, October 2014.

Homelessness

This report uses the following three-dimensional definition of homelessness:

- (a) The first dimension addresses the absence of a home – both the absence of the material aspect of minimally adequate housing and of the social aspect of a secure place to establish a family or social relationships and participate in community life;
- (b) The second dimension considers homelessness a form of systemic discrimination and social exclusion, recognizing that being deprived of a home gives rise to a social identity through which ‘the homeless’ constitutes a social group subject to discrimination and stigmatization;
- (c) The third dimension recognizes those who are homeless as rights-holders who are resilient in their struggle for survival and dignity. With a unique understanding of the systems that deny them their rights, homeless people must be recognized as central agents of the social transformation necessary for the realization of the right to adequate housing⁸.

Source: UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, A/HRC/31/54, 30 December 2015, p. 5-6.

Registered UAC

For the purposes of this study, the term 'registered UAC' only refers to those children who have submitted an application for international protection.

Unaccompanied Children (UAC), also called unaccompanied children

Children who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.⁹

Source: United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 6 (2005) on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside Their Country of Origin, para. 7.

I. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Between January and December 2020, out of 15,393 asylum-seekers who arrived in Greece by land and sea, 36 per cent were children¹⁰.

Many of them came unaccompanied. According to the National Centre for Solidarity (EKKA) responsible for statistics on referrals and placement of unaccompanied children, as of 30 September 2020, the estimated number of UAC in Greece was 4,222.

Of these 4,222 children, only 2,665 were in long-term or temporary accommodation, 120 lived in Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) on the north-eastern Aegean islands, 192 in open reception facilities on the mainland, 226 were detained in protective custody¹¹ and 1,019 resided in precarious conditions in informal housing such as temporarily staying in apartments, living in squats, being homeless, and/or moving frequently between different types of accommodation.¹²

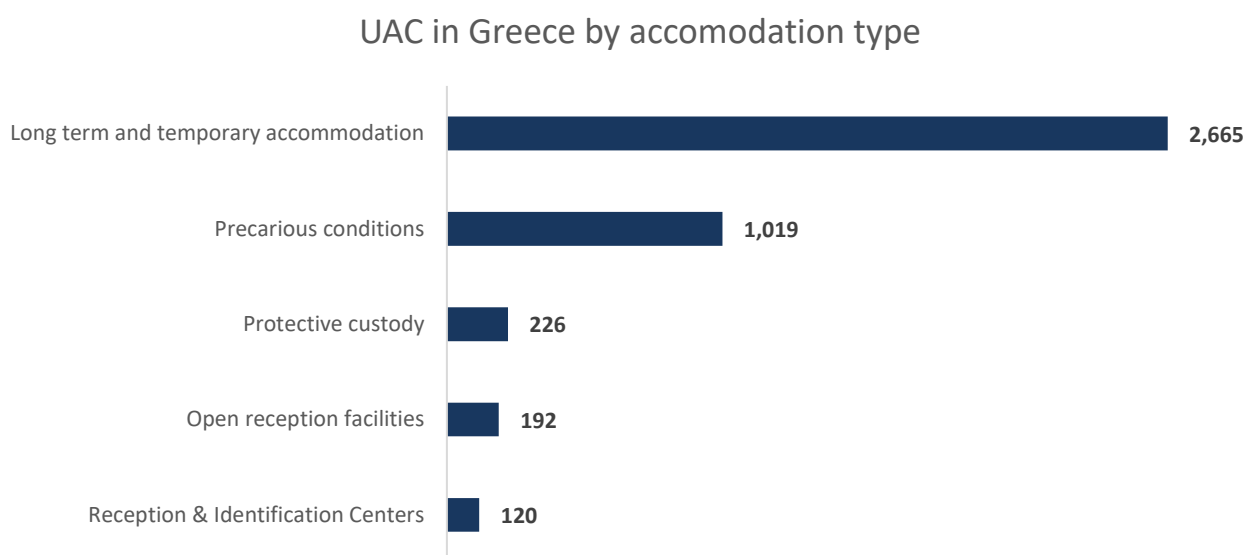


Chart 1: UAC in Greece by accommodation type (EKKA, September 2020)

In the absence of adequate care arrangements, children were exposed to serious protection risks and require urgently targeted support.

According to the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe “*unaccompanied and separated children are among the most vulnerable persons in the migration context, and as such are at increased risk of violation of their fundamental rights and freedoms, in particular the right to life, survival and development, the right to non-discrimination, the right to respect for private and family life, the right to acquire a nationality, the right to seek asylum, the right to the highest attainable standards of health and of access to health-care services, the right to education, the right to housing, access to justice, and the right to freedom from all forms of violence*”

Source: Council of Europe, Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)11 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in the context of migration, 11 December 2019.

Objectives of the research

This research analyses the prevalence of homelessness among UAC in Athens and Thessaloniki and the circumstances in which these children reside. It describes their living conditions, needs, risks and expectations.

The research relies on the meaningful participation and involvement of children, who contributed to defining the research. Special emphasis was given to what children had to say. The section on methodology provides more details on how this was achieved.

Scope

The purpose of the research was to:

- 1) Explore key aspects of the homelessness of UAC in Greece;
- 2) Give UAC a voice in telling their story;
- 3) Engage policy makers and civil society in the study and provide recommendations to policy makers for urgent response and solutions for homeless UAC.

Exploring the urban homelessness of UAC in Greece

The research focused on UAC homelessness in urban areas due to the urgent needs and risks homeless children experience there.¹³ The research explored the causes and consequences of homelessness.

The research findings highlight the importance and necessity of timely identification of UAC to ensure their protection and access to basic rights. Based on the multidimensional definition of homelessness, the report suggests ways to address the various aspects of homelessness. Recommendations centre on the immediate placement of UAC in child-appropriate accommodation, facilitation of their social integration, and their feeling of belonging in the host country.

Giving homeless UAC a voice

The research gives homeless UAC a voice by allowing them to identify and name the risks they face and describe how their living conditions impact their physical and mental well-being and development.

Children and adolescents are different from adults in the way that they view, experience and communicate their protection concerns. They often lack access to and are excluded from adult decision-making processes and face additional barriers to participation¹⁴. The research gives UAC the space to express their needs, intentions, and socio-economic situation. The children provide their own suggestions for support and protection. By providing a forum to speak to their situation, research empowers children, rendering them visible and making them feel not only *de jure* but also *de facto* rights-holders¹⁵.

Throughout the research, all homeless UAC were viewed both as active agents in their own lives, worth being listened to, respected and granted autonomy in the exercise of rights, as well as vulnerable children entitled to protection in accordance with their relative immaturity and age. It is through their meaningful participation that their concerns, complaints, problems, desires, dreams and suggestions come to light¹⁶.

Providing recommendations for urgent response

Based on research findings, the report formulates specific recommendations to the Greek government and other key stakeholders. These aim to alleviate the hardship of homelessness of UAC as an urgent priority and to promote the enjoyment of their rights, as enshrined in the international and national legal order. The recommendations cover a wide spectrum of UAC rights based on international standards. They include urgent measures to transfer all homeless UAC to child-appropriate accommodation to ensure access to adequate services, durable solutions through relocation, or legal residence.

II. METHODOLOGY

The main stakeholders participating in the study are homeless UAC, child protection experts, and policy makers. A responsible research approach was adopted, relying on feedback from child participants, NGOs doing street work¹⁷ and relevant stakeholders for the development of the interview questionnaire. The methodology of this research and the dissemination of its preliminary findings to relevant state stakeholders has contributed to early action in the field of policy. This has brought about benefits for the children even earlier than anticipated.

Research coordination and oversight

A team of experts of the Panteion University was responsible for the overall coordination of the research. The support of UNHCR facilitated linkage to homeless UAC through child protection actors, valuable information on the question of incentives for UAC participants, and child-friendly communication.

A **Steering Committee** was established with key state stakeholders including the SSPUAM of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, the Deputy Public Prosecutor of the Supreme Court with responsibility for Child Protection, representatives of EKKA and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs Protection of UAC's Unit, the Deputy Ombudsperson for Children's Rights, representatives of the Reception and Identification Service of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, the Hellenic Police Sub directorate for the Protection of Children in the Attica Region, UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM. The purpose of the Steering Committee was to promote ownership of the final research results and engagement in implementation of the policy proposals.

A **temporary Youth Committee** comprised of eight children aged 16-18 years who had previously experienced homelessness was established and consulted for the purpose of this research. The participation of children themselves is indispensable and in conformity with international law¹⁸. The Youth Committee members had been in Greece for an average 14 months and were living in Safe Zones* or apartments at the time of the study. Their contribution involved taking part in the pilot phase of the research, reviewing and also validating the children's questionnaire.

* Safe Zones (2016 - 2021): interim measure, designated areas in open accommodation facilities operated by IOM and/or its partners and funded by the European Commission. Typically made up of a series of containers, staffed by a multi-disciplinary team (social worker, lawyer, psychologist) who undertook case management work in respect of the children, as well as a team of 'caregivers' who provided 24/7 supervision. Each Safe Zone accommodated a maximum of 30 UAC. All safe zones were discontinued in November 2021 and UAC were transferred to long term age-appropriate accommodation facilities.

Research components

The research was conducted from February to October 2020. The desk review took place between February and April 2020, while the field work involving interviews with UAC and child protection professionals started in July 2020 and continued through October 2020.

The research included three components: desk research, interviews with homeless UAC and interviews with child protection professionals.

The desk review involved analysis of reports from international organizations, policy research institutes, NGOs, EU institutions, peer reviewed journal articles and websites on the topic of homelessness of UAC, with a view to identifying best practices in supporting homeless UAC across Europe. The recommendations of international, European and national actors and independent authorities, as well as UNHCR, UNICEF, FRA, Save the Children, the Council of Europe, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the European Commission and the Greek Ombudsman were investigated in depth.

National, European and international guidelines and standards on child protection were reviewed, with an emphasis on accommodation and access to rights. Promising practices allow one to learn from the experience of others in coming up with creative and durable solutions¹⁹. The promising practices included in Annex 1 of this report have been selected and adapted to the current situation in Greece. Relevant national authorities can use it as inspiration for an effective and sustainable framework for the protection of homeless UAC.

Interviews with Child Protection professionals

Overall, 34 child protection professionals completed questionnaires which were uploaded on the research platform. The questionnaire for the professionals working with homeless UAC in urban Athens and Thessaloniki was prepared in Greek and consisted of 17 questions, both qualitative and quantitative. It also contained an open-ended question to gather their suggestions. Professionals were asked to assess the current situation of homeless UAC, the challenges of current protection systems and practices, regarding the provision of assistance to homeless UAC, and, finally, areas for improvement. The NGOs who contributed to this exercise were child protection partners of UNHCR Greece, directly working with refugee children including unaccompanied children. They also participate in the Child Protection sub Working Group. In addition to completing the questionnaires, NGO child protection professionals were key in tracing and linking homeless UAC to this research.

Interviews with UAC

The research included 251 interviews with homeless UAC in Athens and Thessaloniki.

Initially, the research envisaged interviewing a sample of 30 per cent of the estimated population of homeless UAC in these two urban areas. According to EKKAs' estimations, on 30 September 2020, 1,019 UAC lived in insecure conditions. During a tracing exercise (July 2020 to February 2021) SSPUAM in collaboration with UNHCR and civil society organizations managed to trace 280 homeless UAC. The vulnerability of the many UAC in Greece, in conjunction with their invisibility and the fact that they are children on the move, makes the collection and analysis of information on this group²⁰ more difficult. Therefore, the sample of 251 completed questionnaires accounts for 25 per cent of the estimated homeless UAC.

Location of interviews:

The research focused on urban areas, namely Athens and Thessaloniki (Map 1). More precisely, 238 UAC in Athens and 13 in Thessaloniki participated in the research. This does not imply that there are no homeless UAC in rural areas, rather that the research commissioned by UNHCR targeted the specific group.



Map 1: Location of interviews

One of the primary sources of research information were the homeless UAC themselves, through their active participation and direct description of their experiences, risks, needs and their recommendations. It was thus a primary goal for the participating children to understand what they were taking part in, encouraging a feeling of agency and ownership that would give meaning to the entire interview process.

Potential participants were approached using the following methods:

- *Purposive Sampling (205 children):* identification and appointment with UAC facilitated by an NGO
 - a. where a child had already been briefed by the organization and agreed to take part in the research;
 - b. with UAC identified after taking part in the broad relocation exercise under the auspices of the SSPUAM of the Ministry of Asylum and Migration, in collaboration with UNHCR and other agencies;
 - c. ad-hoc with an UAC physically present at an NGO for other services, and requesting the child to take part in the interview on the spot;
 - d. through NGO partners (for Malakasa and Thessaloniki), where a professional from an organization conducted the questionnaire after first undergoing training with one of the researchers. UAC from urban Athens were traced to the Malakasa site where they were seeking temporary accommodation. *Note: the children in Malakasa were interviewed based on their experience as homeless UAC in Athens, and for the purpose of this study are included in the Athens group.*

Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which the researcher makes deliberate choices about who to include in the sample, based on the research question and whether the characteristics of participants will yield data to answer the research question.

- *Snowball sampling (46 children)* is a technique in which current participants recommend potential participants and is commonly used when collecting data from populations that are difficult to access. During field street work, 21 homeless UAC were identified as such, interviewed and then they were in touch with the researchers bringing 25 additional friends living in the same conditions.
- *Purposive and snowball sampling* methods were combined during street work, whereby researchers and interpreters approached children in the urban parks and squares in Athens. Often homeless UAC identified on the street would refer other children to the study.

Questionnaire

An online questionnaire with open-ended and close-ended questions was generated in a comprehensive, child-friendly manner in consultation with UNHCR and child protection experts working in the field.

Eight pilot interviews were completed in Athens prior to the launch of the research. The pilot results are not included in the final findings. With feedback from the Youth Committee, the pilot led to modifications of the initial questions. The pilot interviews established an appropriate duration for the interviews, delving into the suitability of particular lines of inquiry and assessing the possible risk of re-traumatizing UAC in the sense of old trauma resurfacing during the interview.

The final questionnaire addressing children consisted of 36 questions. It was translated into five languages (English, Farsi, Arabic, Urdu, and Pashtu). Among the interviewed UAC, the views and experiences of children (30 in total) who had experienced homelessness recently but were living in a safer environment at the time of the interview were also included. Initial interviews with UAC took 40 minutes. As the study continued, the average interview time was 20 minutes. The questionnaires included the following topics:

- *Causes of UAC's migration*
- *Intentions of UAC*
- *Networks outside and inside Greece*
- *Causes of homelessness*
- *Different types and mapping of informal accommodation in Greece*
- *Risks that children on the move face*
- *Expressed needs, desires and proposed services for children on the move*
- *Barriers for accessing services*
- *Socio-economic situation of children*
- *Main experiences of UAC*
- *Coping mechanisms of UAC*
- *Main priority areas of intervention proposed by the children*

Challenges

Challenges associated with tracing homeless UAC due their high mobility and lack of a stable contact number made it difficult to reach the children. The COVID-19 pandemic and the related lockdowns restricting freedom of movement, as well as, public health concerns made it harder to find and interview homeless UAC.

III. QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS

The findings below summarize the results provided by the 251 homeless UAC interviewed. The questions asked were primarily directed towards ²¹

- A. Framing the socio-demographic characteristics and living conditions of UAC at the time of the interview.
- B. Children's access to information and referrals, financial situation and access to services.
- C. Voices of the children, highlighting their main risks and coping mechanisms, priority of issues to be addressed, their intentions including their desires and dreams for their future.

A. Aspects of Homelessness: profile of UAC, living conditions

Profile of the homeless UAC interviewed

Country of origin

As illustrated in chart 2, out of 251 children interviewed during the research, 71 were from Afghanistan, 65 from Pakistan, 46 from Bangladesh, 15 from Syria, 15 from Egypt, and 14 from Somalia. Smaller numbers of participating UAC originated from the Middle East (Palestine, Kuwait, Iraq, Iran) and Central or West Africa (Mali, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Morocco).

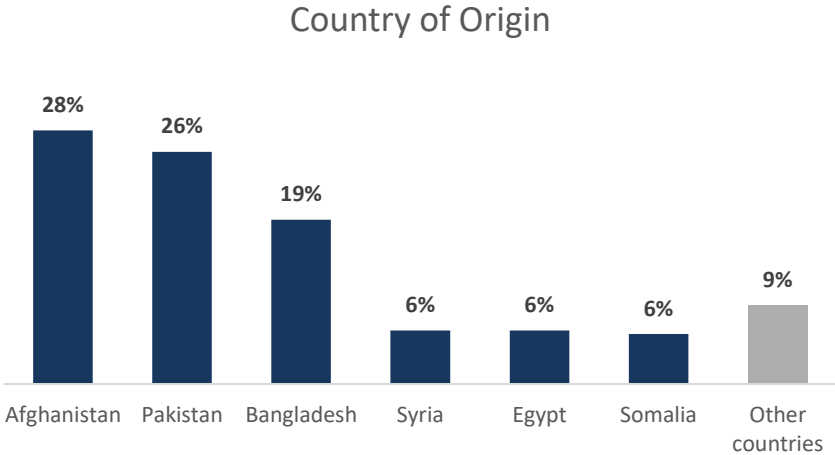


Chart 2: Country of Origin

Gender & Age of UAC

As shown in chart 3, out of the 251 UAC (Chart 3), 96 per cent were boys. The children who participated in the research were from 14 up to 17 years old (Chart 4). Most children were 16 (29) and 17 years old (57 per cent), while 7 per cent of the UAC were 14 years old and 7 per cent of UAC were 15 years old.

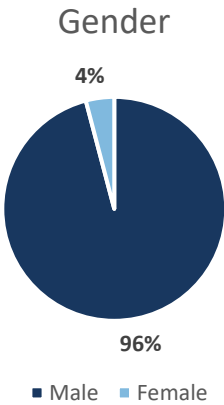


Chart 3: Gender

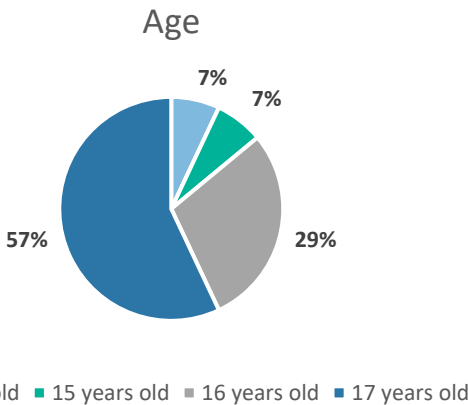


Chart 4: Age

On average, the children interviewed had been in Greece for 11 months. Most children had arrived very recently to Greece. The child who stayed longest in Greece had been in Greece for 69 months (almost six years).

Legal status in Greece

Among the interviewed children, 55 per cent had applied for international protection by the time of the interview. Of those who had applied for international protections **63 per cent have never stayed in an accommodation facility for UAC**. Some 31 per cent of interviewed UAC had not applied for international

protection. Nine out of ten of these children **have never stayed in an accommodation facility; among them half were living on the street at the time of the research.**

Reasons for fleeing their countries of origin/country of last residence

Children listed several reasons for fleeing their countries of origin. Out of 247 respondents to this question, 153 children said they left their country because their life was at risk. Other respondents claimed that either they were searching for a better life (70 children) or their trip was arranged (4 children).

Of the 153 children who answered that their life was at risk (chart 5), 33 per cent identified war as the main reason, 25 per cent referred to persecution because of their beliefs and 42 per cent cited specific reasons in which their physical and mental integrity was threatened (indicatively, because of sexual violence, family disputes and vendetta), further exhibiting the additional vulnerability inherent in this population.

Forty-five children provided more detailed responses for their reason of flight in open-ended questions. Most UAC out of these children left due to family disputes or abuse in the family (53 per cent), 9 per cent said they fled persecution by the Taliban, with an additional 2 per cent per cent fled forced recruitment by the Taliban. 18 per cent fled due to their own beliefs or their father’s beliefs, 5 per cent were orphans, 5 per cent were escaping forced marriage, 4 per cent fled due to not having any rights, specifically in Iran, 2 per cent fled sexual exploitation, and 2 per cent followed their father.

Reasons for flight

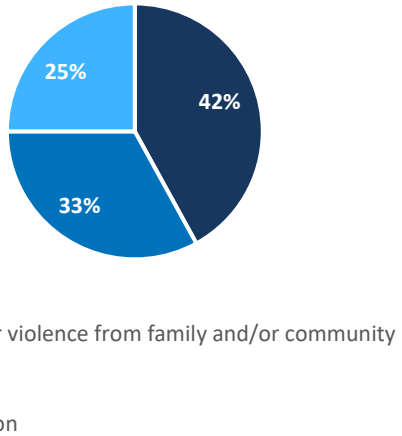


Chart 5: Reasons for flight

Risk to life, as perceived by the children

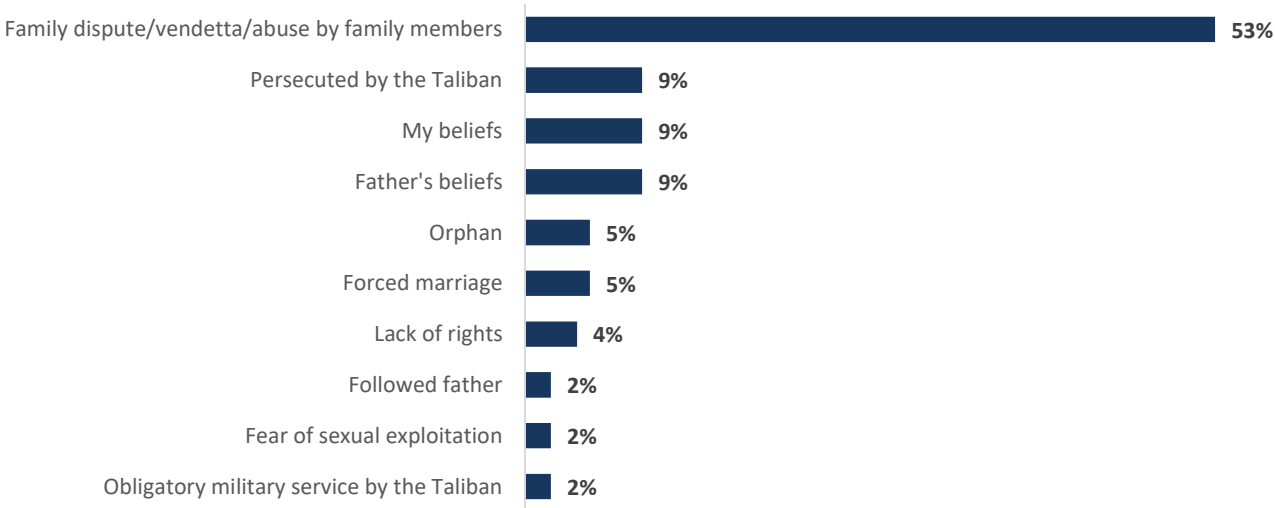


Chart 6: Risk to life, as perceived by the children

Experiences in transit

The majority of homeless UAC have already faced traumatic events and experiences in their country of origin/last residence and/or during the journey and therefore they are in need of support and protection, immediately after their arrival to Greece.

70 per cent of children interviewed experienced violence in their countries of origin/last residence and/or during transit.

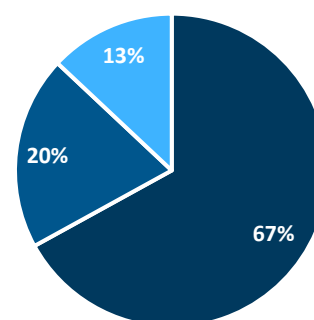
Some 67 per cent of interviewed UAC left their country completely on their own; 20 per cent left with their families or members of their families and 13 per cent travelled with acquaintances or friends.

21 per cent of children interviewed spent over one year in transit before reaching Greece. Of the children interviewed, 31 per cent said that they experienced child labour during transit.

“It helps me to think that eventually I will die and it will all end at some point”

Homeless child, female, 17 years old
from Afghanistan

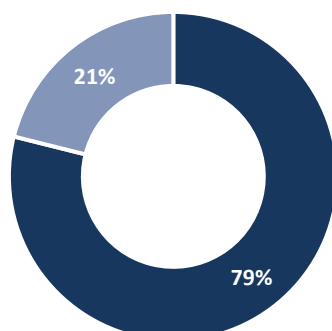
Accompanied by during transit



■ No one ■ Family ■ Friends/acquaintances

Chart 7: Accompanied by during transit

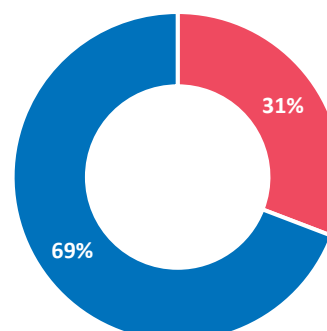
Length of time in transit



■ Less than a year ■ A year or more

Chart 8: Length of time in transit

Child labor during transit



■ Yes ■ No

Chart 9: Child labour during transit

Living conditions

During field research (July – October 2020) in the parks of central Athens, approximately 30 children were identified in a complete state of abandonment: some of them had been living on the street for months, in fear, and had no communication whatsoever with organizations that could help.

In several cases, homeless UAC had reached the competent authorities (whether alone or with assistance), applied for international protection or family reunification but, then for various reasons,

ended up homeless,²² thus facing the same problems as children who have not applied for international protection. The lack of available places in accommodation facilities and the related delay in transfers to such accommodation facilities may be one reason for this outcome.

Accessing formal accommodation facilities seemed to be difficult and long, exposing UAC to various risks in the interim.

Child protection experts interviewed **replied that it takes up to six months** to find an accommodation facility for a homeless child. Over half of the experts interviewed estimated the average waiting time to be between two to six months. One in five experts **claimed that the process may take over six months**.

Chart 10 illustrates where the interviewed UAC were living. These places were diverse and often characterized by insecurity.

Living arrangements of homeless UAC in Greece

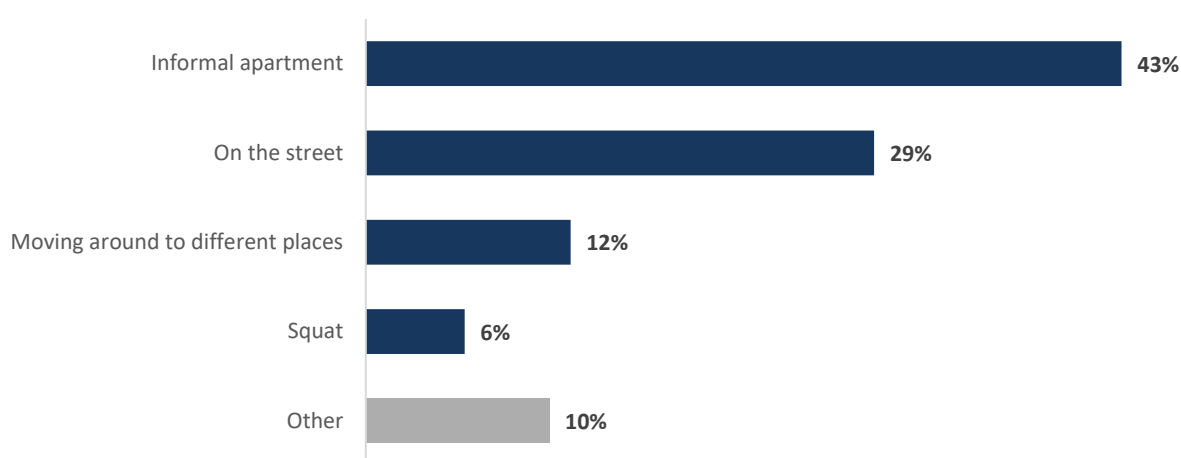


Chart 10: Living arrangements of homeless UAC in Greece

Children’s housing arrangements were characterized by high mobility and cohabitation together with adults in unsafe and crowded spaces. At the time of the interview, 43 per cent of children replied that they lived in an informal apartment, most of whom with adults, most often strangers. Some 29 per cent lived on the street, 12 per cent moved around between different places and six per cent dwelled in a squat.

Other accommodation arrangements where 26 of the respondents lived included safe zones (13 children), hostels (3 children), temples (2 children), unofficial stay in camps (2 children), in a minimarket (1), at a police station (1), and with a friend staying in ESTIA/ UNHCR accommodation (1). Children listed these accommodation types in the open-ended responses on their living conditions.

An area of concern was the wide use of protective custody. 65 per cent of experts stated that some children they are in touch with have remained in detention for prolonged periods, sometimes for several months.

Unaccompanied children interviewed indicated that they would prefer to stay with other children. The majority would prefer accommodation arrangements in centrally-located places, which are not isolated, where they will be able to satisfy their basic needs (good quality food, cultural diversity, clothing) and be able to attend school and recreational activities. Child protection professionals agree with this observation.

Overcrowded living conditions

Inadequate and overcrowded accommodation affects all aspects of the children’s lives, including mental health, increased exposure to risks, access to education, healthcare and absence of any form of integration.

Chart 11 shows that **overcrowded living conditions were a reality for many unaccompanied children**. Eight of the interviewed UAC lived with over 40 persons, fourteen of the UAC interviewed lived with over 30 cohabitants, twenty-three with 20-29 persons. Some 11 per cent stayed together with 10-19 persons. Two out of three children stayed with one to nine cohabitants.

Number of people living in the same dwelling

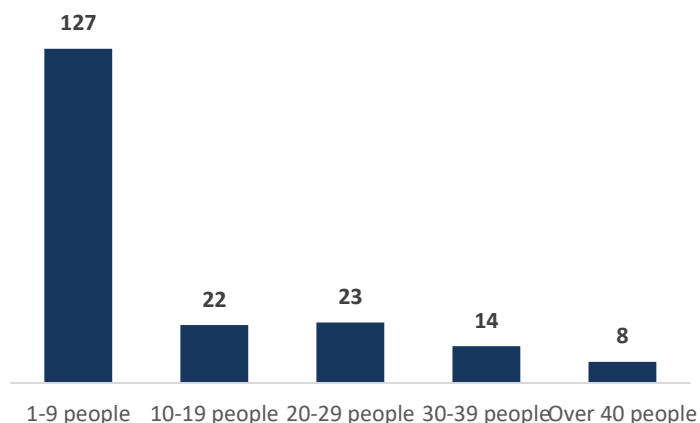


Chart 11: Number of people living in the same dwelling

People unaccompanied children live with

As illustrated in Chart 12, **almost half of the interviewed UAC cohabit with strangers**. Some 25 per cent stay with friends and some 17 per cent are alone. About 7 per cent stay with siblings or extended family. Respondents could select more than one option.

People unaccompanied children live with

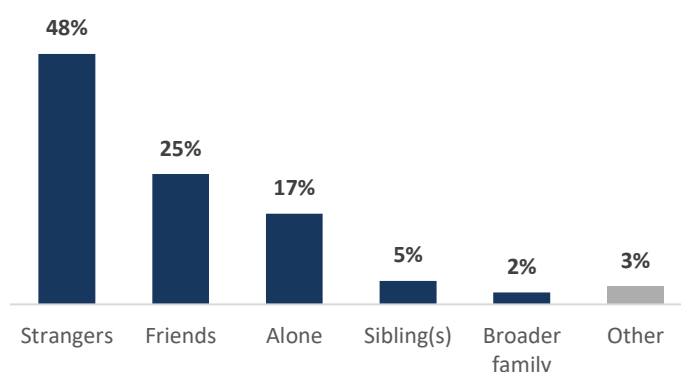


Chart 12: People unaccompanied children live with

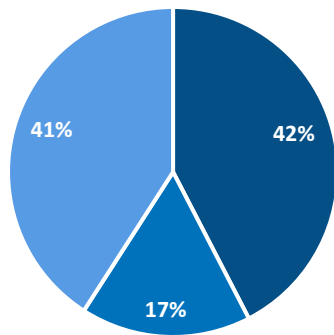
“I prefer living in apartment with strangers rather than on the street”

Homeless child, male, 16 years old from Somalia

Age and nationality of cohabitants

The cohabitants of UAC who were living in precarious conditions were predominantly adults (42 per cent). Some 17 per cent were children, and 41 per cent are a mix of adult and child cohabitants (see chart 13). As shown in chart 14, the majority (61 per cent) of cohabitants were of the same nationality as the interviewed UAC. Some 15 per cent were of nationalities different than that of the interviewed UAC, and 24 per cent of UAC lived with a mix of people from the same and different nationalities.

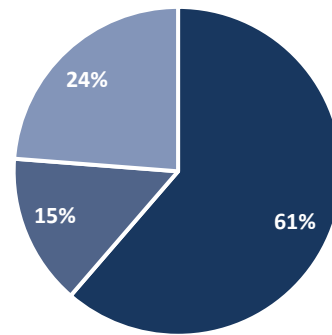
Age of cohabitants of UAC



■ Adults ■ Children ■ Both

Chart 13: Age of cohabitants of UAC

Nationality of cohabitants of UAC



■ Same nationality as me ■ Different nationality ■ Both

Chart 14: Nationality of cohabitants of UAC

Experiences with child-appropriate accommodation

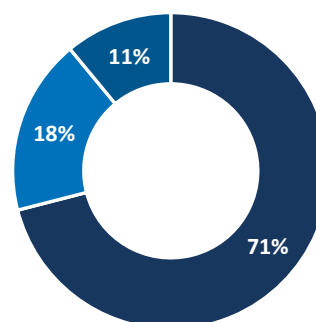
A question the research aimed to address is the accessibility of adequate and child-appropriate housing to unaccompanied children. Three out of four interviewed UAC have never stayed in child-appropriate accommodation.

Note on terminology:

Adequate and child-appropriate “care facilities” refer to housing providing holistic services to children, including shelter, food, psychosocial support, and access to education/healthcare. In the questionnaire for children, such facilities were described as “shelter” to help children understand the terminology. The term “shelter” is also used in charts.

As per chart 15, seven out of ten of the **234 UAC, who answered the question, stated that they would prefer to stay in a care facility with other children rather than where they currently resided**. 11 per cent of children have chosen to stay where they are or have left a shelter. 18 per cent of children chose other as a response.

Place of stay preference



■ Prefer to stay at a shelter with other minors
 ■ Have chosen to stay where I am; I left a shelter
 ■ Other

Chart 15: Place of stay preference

Of the 42 respondents who selected “other” in chart 15, only 26 children (62) provided responses (Chart 16) to the open-ended questions, 18 specifying that there is no point in going to a shelter (69 per cent), four (15 per cent) stated that they have no information on a shelter, and remaining respondents indicated that they are waiting for a reply from a shelter (1), are planning to leave (1), are planning to move to a shelter (1), and feel better alone (1).

Other views on shelters

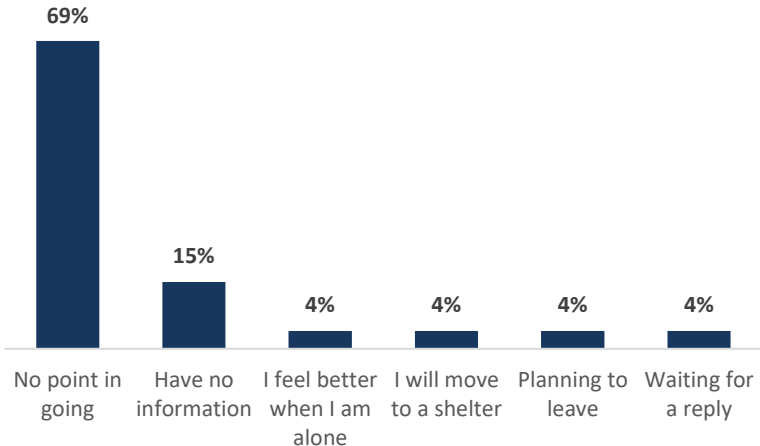


Chart 16: Other views on shelters

Of the 71 per cent of children who stated that they prefer to stay in a shelter in Chart 15, some specified further, with 70 per cent stating that they have not been accepted yet (chart 17), 7 per cent of children said they will go to another European country, 5 per cent stated that others decide for them meaning the state, and 5 per cent stated that they willingly absconded from a shelter and have not yet been re-accepted into a shelter.

I want to stay at a shelter but...

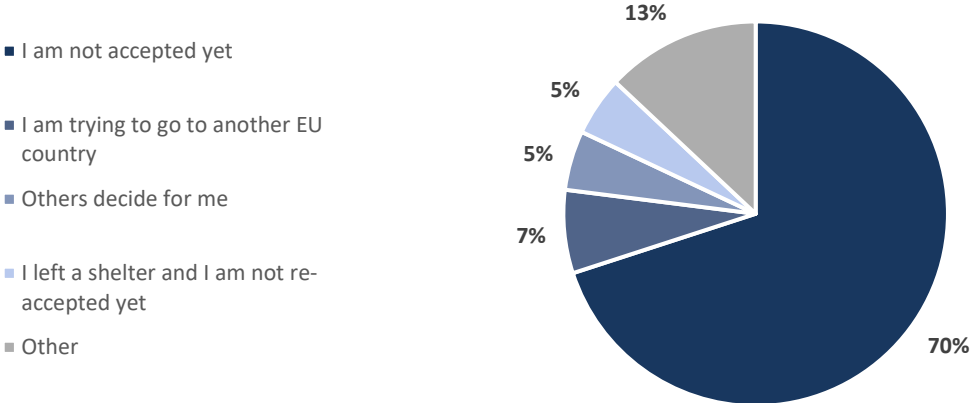


Chart 17: sStatus of access to a shelter

In reference to the 13 per cent who are grouped as “other” in Chart 17, of these fourteen respondents that agreed to specify further, eleven children stated that they have no information on a shelter, two answered that they do not want to be detained first, and one responded that he did not have legal documents.

Abscinding from accommodation

Prior to the start of this research, there was a commonly held belief amongst organizations working in the field²³ that many homeless children had left a shelter where they had previously been accommodated. It soon became apparent however, that **not only was the total number of children who had absconded from care facilities much smaller than anticipated, but a significant number of UAC do not even know what a shelter for UAC is²⁴.**

Some 47 interviewed children absconded from accommodation provided to them. Interviewed children were asked to reflect on any state-provided accommodation that they may have stayed in, including safe zones in sites, and to provide the reasons for leaving. As illustrated in Chart 18, the main reasons provided by children for absconding from accommodation were trying to continue to another European country (23 per cent), dislike of the rules imposed by the shelter or in the safe zone (15 per cent), pressure from family to reunite (4 children), lack of safety in the shelter/safe zone (3 children), the shelter/safe zone’s remoteness from services and peers (2), frequent transfer across shelters without consent (2), and fear of age assessment (1).

Other reasons for leaving accommodation, answered by 17 children, were that the children preferred a supportive community (6 children), preferred to stay in an apartment (3 children), had to work (3 children), the shelter/safe zone did not meet their needs (3 children), one child broke the quarantine rules and was not allowed to continue in the shelter, and another did not provide an answer.

Reasons for leaving shelters and safe zones

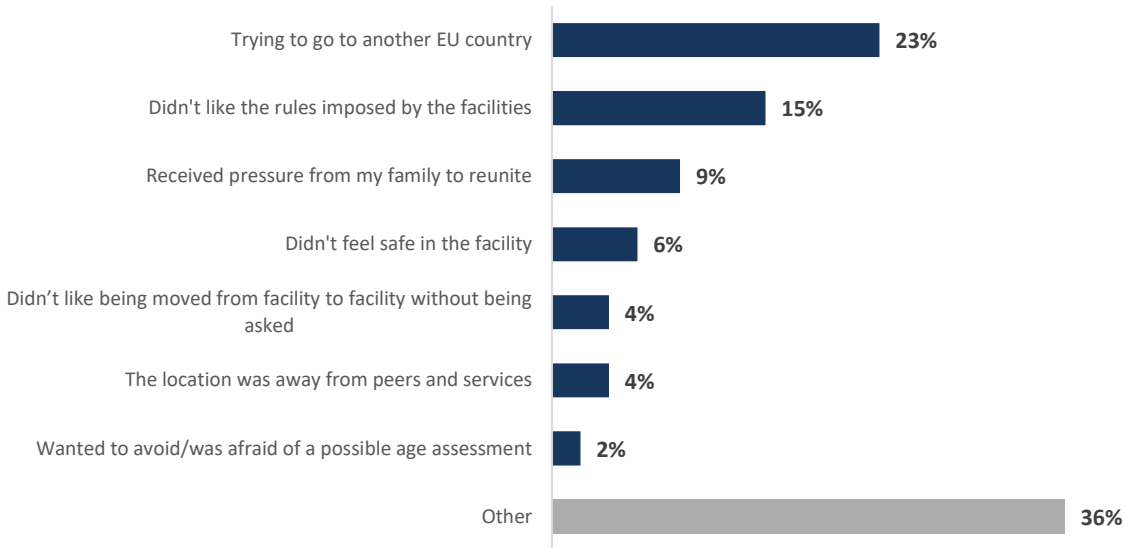


Chart 18: Reasons for leaving shelters and safe zones

This trend of children leaving state-provided accommodation, in combination with the fact that many children were unaware of their status, led to the conclusion that there is a significant number of homeless UAC living in Athens and Thessaloniki who are undocumented and 'invisible'. It is largely unknown how they got there, when they first arrived, and the conditions under which they circulated without being identified by the competent authorities.

B. Access to Information, referrals, financial situation, access to services: Key Gaps contributing to Homelessness

This research stresses a number of factors that lead UAC to homelessness and further compromise their everyday life experience. Indicatively, inadequate information upon arrival, limited organized referral mechanisms for children, long periods while waiting for a place in an accommodation facility to be found and the fact that children sometimes abscond from accommodation facilities are certainly the most urgent examples. Furthermore, the restrictions on movement imposed to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19) further worsened the feelings of insecurity among homeless UAC.

Inadequate information

The majority of children stressed their limited access to information²⁵. Many UAC valued information above material support, signifying serious problems in the dissemination of services, and lack of information about access to relevant support services. This attitude confirms their lack of information regarding the existing services and their access to them and highlights the urgent need for direct referrals to the competent services and appropriate support, as well as finding and designating known “mentors”. Nearly half the children interviewed were **unaware that they are entitled to special protection** (rights and procedural guarantees), **unaware of their right to accommodation** and existing processes. Since they **do not receive adequate information**, as a result they i) lose touch with services tailored to them even after they submit an application for international protection, ii) abscond from accommodation facilities, iii) essentially survive outside the protection system that exists for them. Obstacles to accessing state services are exacerbated every time a child is neglected rather than helped throughout the process, after his/her submission of the application for international protection.

Lack of effective referral mechanisms

For the purposes of this study, the meaning assigned to 'referral pathways' points to information communicated to children regarding governmental agencies and specific available services tailored towards children²⁶. **20 per cent of all UAC interviewed did not know of any organization that could help them**. 46 per cent indicated that they only knew one organization where they can seek help. Only 21 per cent visited organizations often, 10 per cent go rarely, and 3 per cent have never approached organizations. This highlights the urgency of establishing organized mechanisms for referral to the competent services.

Knowledge of organizations or youth centers in Greece

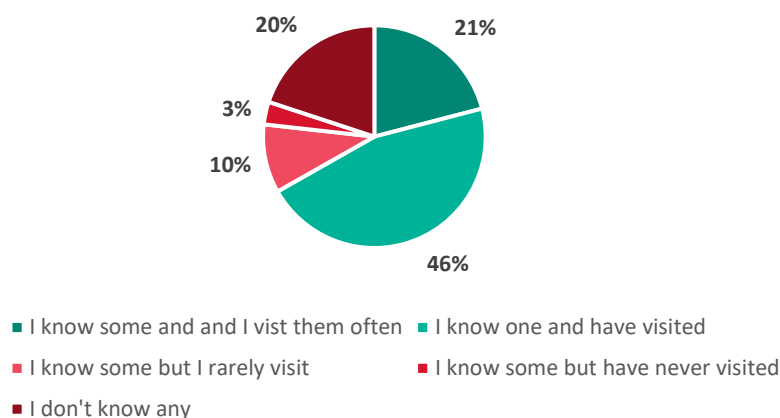


Chart 19: Knowledge of organizations or youth centres in Greece that can support me if I need something

This shortcoming in the referral process may subsequently lead to children who have applied for international protection going missing, i.e. children who have no adequate information about their asylum claim, no access to available services regarding healthcare and education and thus face the same problems as children who have not applied for international protection.

Leading to Homelessness

The findings lead us to conclude that even when homeless UAC reach the competent authorities (whether alone or with assistance) and apply for international protection, for various reasons they end up homeless despite the existing legal framework²⁷. The lack of available places in accommodation facilities are among the many reasons for the shortcomings in the protection system, since delays of over six months in transfers to accommodation facilities were identified.

Financial situation

Overall, the financial situation of interviewed homeless UAC was desperate. Several children declared that they prefer to find work rather than go to school. Some children mentioned that they wish to enter the workforce as soon as possible.

Of the UAC interviewed, half struggle with daily survival (127 children) while 25 per cent have little money but have some people who support them. Only 10 per cent receive monthly support and only 2 per cent said that they have sufficient money to survive. 8 per cent of interviewed UAC stated that they are paid for “things they do for people.” Of the 127 children struggling to survive, half (49 per cent) have applied for international protection.

The 3 per cent of children who indicated “Other” sources of income provided the following open-ended responses: three respondents said that family members from abroad support them, two respondents live in shelters, one indicated that a brother provides support, and another indicated that an organization provides support.

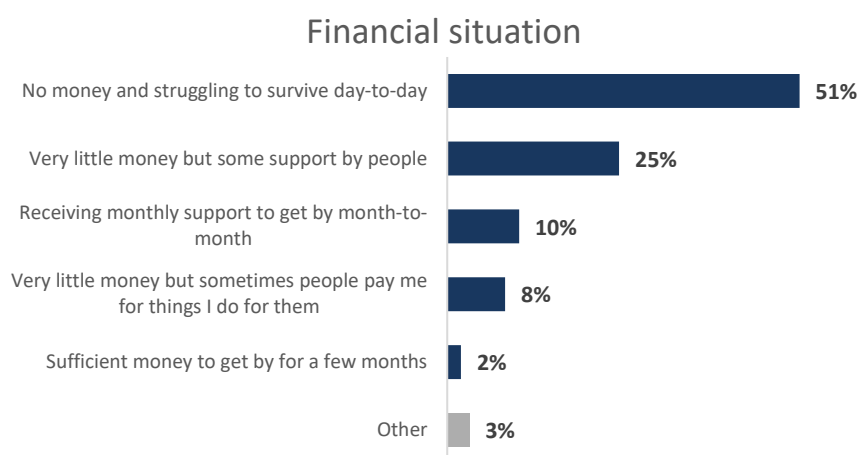


Chart 20: Financial situation

“Fortunately, my uncle sends me money because otherwise I would have to do dangerous things to live”

Homeless boy, 16 years-old from Pakistan

Access to services

One out of three children reported serious problems in accessing services in Greece. Almost half of the interviewed children mentioned that even their most basic needs (accommodation, food, clothing, medications) are not covered, let alone other services such as health, education, information, documentation, etc.

The findings of the research lead to the conclusion that **although the legal framework ensures protection of the rights of UAC, the reality is far from ideal.** The research confirms the shortcomings in child protection systems described in a number of other reports. All child protection experts interviewed rated child protection services as below average, specifically accommodation, education, healthcare, and guardianship. **75 per cent of the child protection experts were satisfied with their collaboration with public services to meet the needs of UAC.**

Another area of concern is that children need to apply for international protection or for family reunification to be considered as rights-holders. Even following their registration with the Asylum Service, some of them may remain invisible and deprived of their rights due to lack of referrals and ineffective protection from the competent authorities.

When children were asked about existing services for UAC, only 8 per cent said that they know what services are available to them. Out of the 106 unregistered children, 17 per cent did not know any NGO or actor providing services to UAC. This points to inadequate information about the procedures, rights and safeguards.

As shown in chart 21, the majority of children responded that they have difficulties accessing services in Greece. Some 28 per cent have never accessed services as a result, and 32 per cent have experienced problems accessing services. A further 3 per cent no longer seek services due to bad experiences in the past. The remaining 37 per cent of respondents accessed services either through the help of friends (21 per cent) or the local community (16 per cent) in Greece.

Ability to access services in Greece

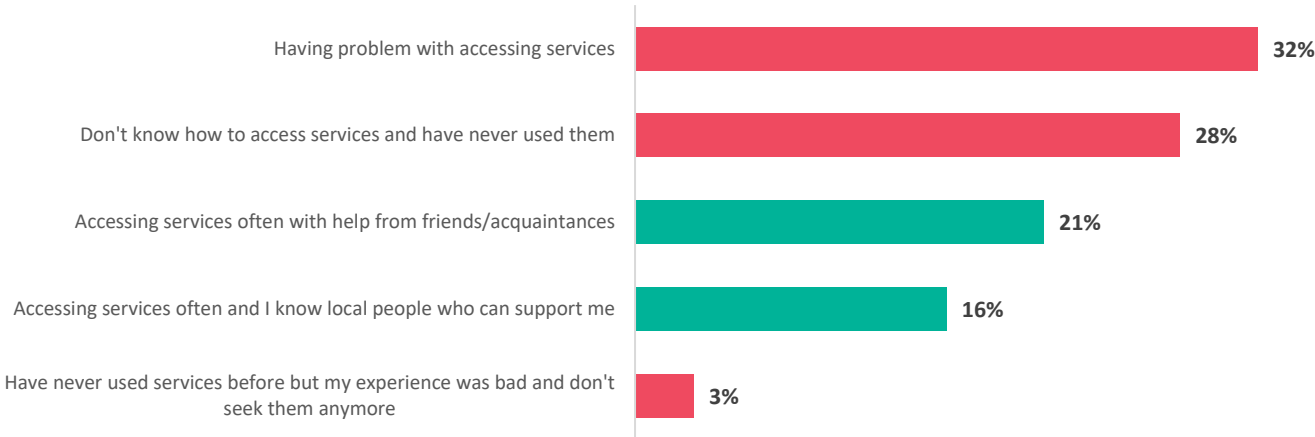


Chart 21: Ability to access services in Greece

The most crucial overarching problem is the absence of timely implementation of the legal framework. The gap means that key provisions for early identification, swift referrals, appointment of guardians, registration, placement in age-appropriate accommodation facilities, alternative care, and access to education and healthcare remain frequently unimplemented.

Health including mental health

The research findings reveal serious gaps with regard to healthcare. 60 per cent of interviewed UAC claimed they have no idea how to access healthcare services.

Over half of the child protection professionals confirm this. **They stated that UAC have limited access to physical and mental health services, as well as medical and pharmaceutical care,** mainly due to lack of documentation.

The significance of this outcome is further accentuated by the fact that the interviews took place during the COVID-19 public health emergency.



© UNHCR/ Gordon Welters

Child Protection professional:

“Those who have the new number called PAAYPA theoretically have better and quicker access to health services. Finding an appointment without significant delay is rare and sometimes children are not sufficiently examined due to time constraints, or interpretation barriers prevent doctors from fully engaging with the children”.

Child Protection expert:

“In many cases UAC remain undocumented for long periods of time. It is therefore very difficult to access health services as they don’t have PAAYPA or AMKA. Also appointments for certain doctors like neurologists and psychiatrists for children are very difficult to book or appointments may be scheduled for extremely distant dates (up to 6 months waiting list). In most cases UAC receive only first-degree healthcare”.

Health self-assessment

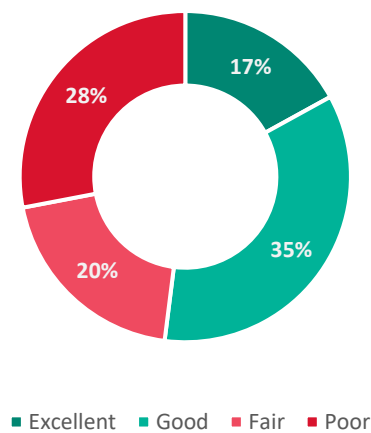
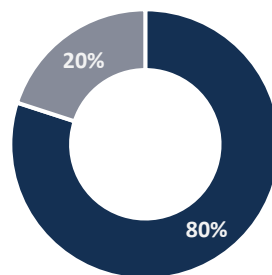


Chart 22: Health self-assessment

Respondents characterized their own health as excellent (17 per cent), good (35 per cent), fair (20 per cent), and poor (28 per cent).

Why is your health poor



- Feeling alone and vulnerable without any support
- Sickness and other problems related to harsh living conditions and the journey to get here, including headaches, heart issues, hearing problems & wounds

Chart 23: Why is your health poor?

The children who self-assessed their health as poor were asked to provide further details to this response. 80 per cent stated that their health is poor due to feeling alone and vulnerable, without any close, emotional or financial support. 20 per cent of respondents stated that they are sick due to the living conditions and may experience headaches, heart issues, hearing problems and wounds.

“I am young, I am scared, I have no one”

Homeless boy, 15 years old from Pakistan

“When you're bad psychologically your body suffers as well”

Homeless boy, 16 years old from Afghanistan

“As a big brother I need to take care of my siblings, that is making me stress”

Homeless boy, 17 years old from Bangladesh

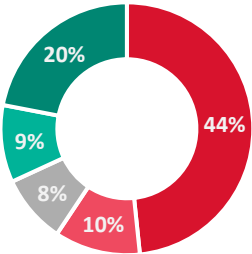
Among the children who identified their health as poor, most referred to their mental health, claiming that they experience overwhelming feelings of **loneliness** due to separation from their families and absence of people who they can trust. In addition, 12 children stated that they have absolutely no hope for a better future when asked to describe an ideal future for themselves. Three-fourths of the child protection professionals interviewed agree with this statement, confirming that **many children have faced or are currently facing violence including psychological, physical, sexual and gender-based violence, forced and early marriage**. Four out of five child protection professional experts stated that children they are in touch with have **thoughts of self-harm/suicide or they have already self-harmed or attempted suicide**.

Homeless girl, 17 years old, Afghanistan:
*“The ideal future for me is living free and without fear.
 To be able to hope and not be afraid.”*

According to the research findings, 44 per cent of UAC rarely have something interesting to do. Half of the children interviewed have **unpleasant thoughts and feel upset on a daily basis**.

An overwhelming number of interviewed children shared feelings of **loneliness**, with 44 per cent saying that they rarely or never have someone who they can trust to speak to, others responded that they can sometimes find someone they are comfortable to speak to, with 10 per cent saying once or twice a month they speak to someone they trust, 8 per cent indicated they speak with someone they feel they can trust once or twice a week, while nine per cent said they can speak to someone trustworthy most days but not all. Only 29 per cent of respondents said that they have someone that they trust and can speak to every day.

UAC have a trusted person/friend and feel comfortable speaking to



- Rarely/never
- Once or twice a month
- Once or twice a week
- Most days but not all
- Every day

Chart 24: UAC have a trusted person/ friend and feel comfortable speaking to

Education

Seventy-eight per cent of the UAC interviewed were not enrolled in school. The remaining 22 per cent are either enrolled in school (10 per cent), enrolled but do not attend regularly (2 per cent) or attend NGO-run education activities (10 per cent). Most children explain that they have not received any information on how to access education in Greece.

Despite the fact that access to education is legally unhindered²⁸, the majority of children believe that they can only enrol in school with a valid asylum card / residence permit. Even among those who have applied for international protection, only 12 per cent attend school on a regular basis.

It should also be noted that when asked about their ideal future, most children said that they would like to go to school to be able to pursue their ideal occupation.

“How could I go to school? I don't have shelter or anything at the moment”

Homeless boy, 16 years-old from Bangladesh

Access to education

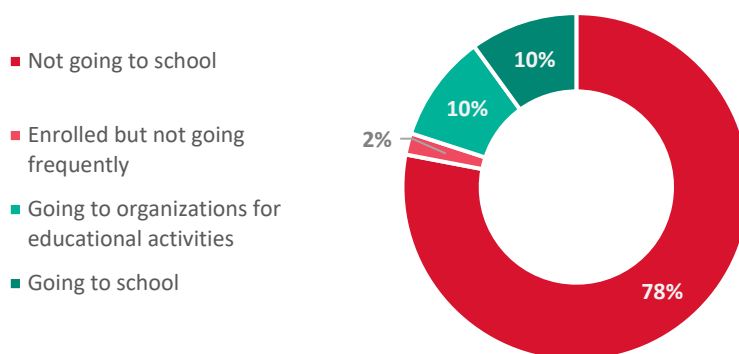


Chart 25: Access to education

“I want to go back to school and then attend university. I want to get excellent grades and go to the best possible university. I'd like to create something and leave back a legacy, do something important for humanity”

Homeless boy, 16 years-old from Syria

Asylum and Family Reunification

Over half of UAC participants stated that they had applied for asylum. The remaining 44 per cent had not. 42 per cent of the UAC interviewed stated that they do not know how to access asylum. Some 31 per cent know who to contact for help but not where to go; 10 per cent know where to go, but do not know people who can help, while a few mentioned that they avoid Greek officials because of prior negative experiences (2 per cent). Only 14 per cent claimed that they know what asylum services are available to them. Moreover, a number of children do not know the status of their asylum application.

Access to the asylum procedure

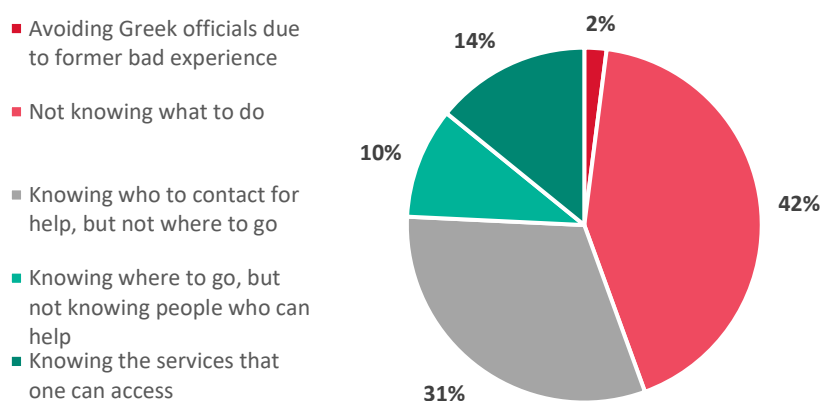


Chart 26: Access to the asylum procedure

The pandemic has made access to asylum even more difficult for these children. Indeed, when the emergency measures to protect public health from the spread of COVID-19 came into effect, the Asylum Service of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum served the public only following an electronic appointment booked via the Ministry's website.²⁹

This constitutes a serious obstacle, and also excludes illiterate and other vulnerable groups who may not have access to the platform and who may not be able to use it unless assisted. According to the field research, **the majority of children ask for the possibility of referrals to relevant services.**

Of the interviewed UAC, **109 children out of 247 indicated that they would like to go to another EU country to reunite with their families**, while in another question 92 out of 249 said they were in the process of reuniting with family. Several children wanted to be reunited with their family members elsewhere in Europe but lacked any details on the progress of their request.

Research findings show that only 14 per cent of interviewed UAC are familiar with the family reunification procedure and where to go. Almost half (42 per cent) of children do not know how to apply for family reunification. Another 31 per cent know of the service but not where to go, and 10 per cent know where to go but not who can help them. Of the respondents, 2 per cent answered that they would avoid the service due to bad experience with Greek officials.

In process of Family Reunification

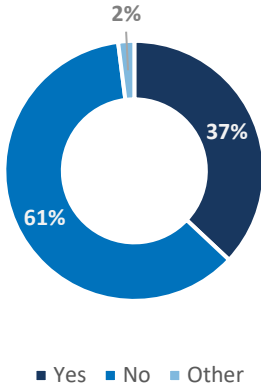


Chart 27: In process of Family Reunification

Asylum/Application for Family Reunification

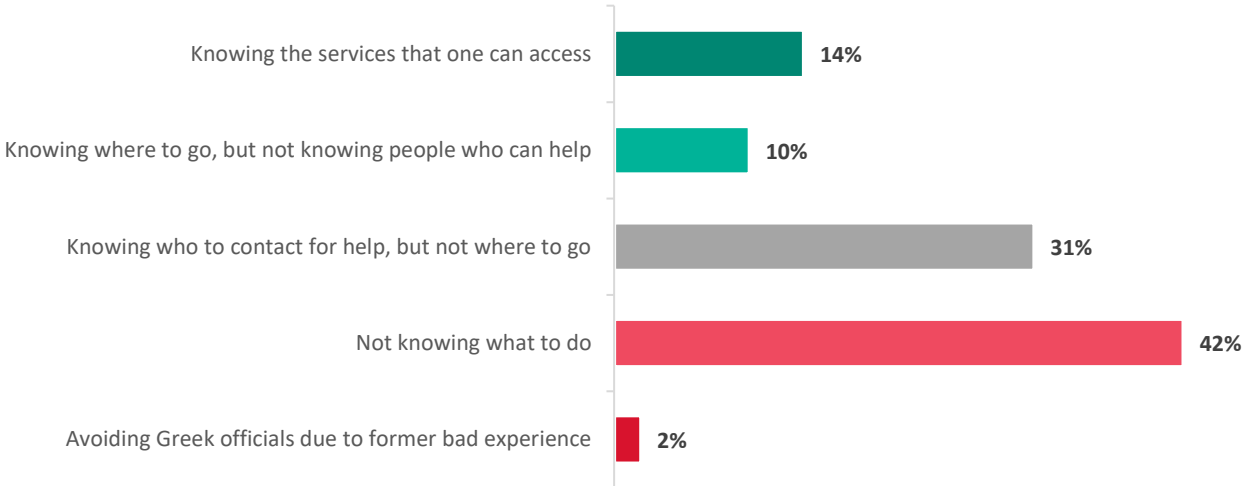


Chart 28: Asylum/Application for Family Reunification

Feeling scared for my life/physical integrity

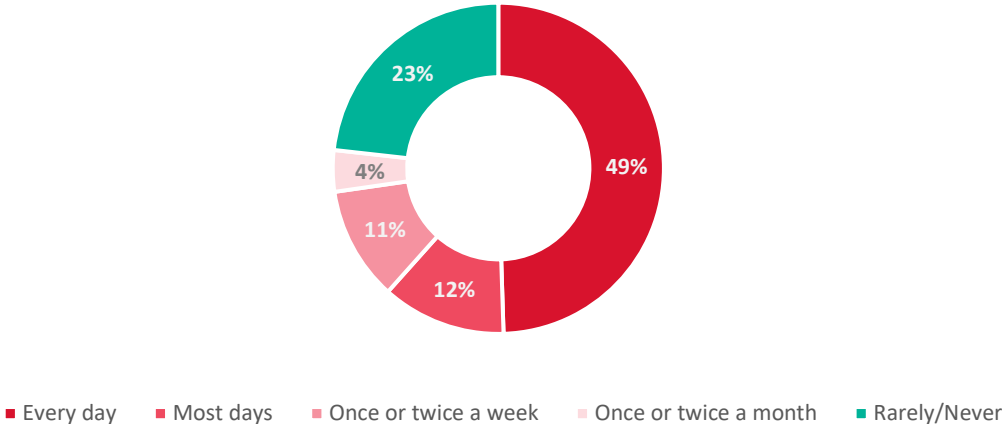


Chart 29: Feeling scared for my life/physical integrity

As indicated in chart 29 almost half of UAC feel scared for their life/physical integrity every day. Out of the 106 children living in an apartment with unknown compatriots, 41 per cent feel scared everyday while from the 72 children living on the street, 75 per cent feel scared every day.

Some 44 per cent of interviewed UAC stated that there are certain places that they avoid for fear of being treated badly. They therefore avoid certain locations, such as shops, cafes, public transport, school, etc.

Among the respondents who avoid certain places, the main reasons provided, as indicated in Chart 31 are their age (25 per cent), ethnicity (19 per cent), culture (11 per cent), social class (8 per cent), religion (7 per cent). 5 per cent indicated that they avoided places due to their gender or sexual orientation.

Further reasons provided for avoiding certain places, by some of the 27 per cent of respondents, include the fear of police (24 respondents), fear of thieves and gangs (11 respondents), not knowing the language (4 children), lack of money (2), lack of friends (1), and being afraid of Roma and Pakistani (3).

Avoiding certain places

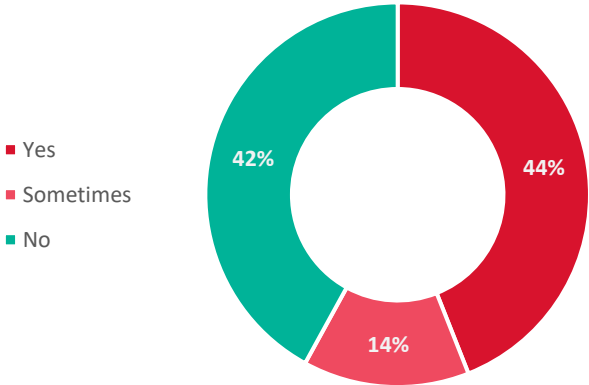


Chart 30: Avoiding certain places

Main reasons for avoiding certain places

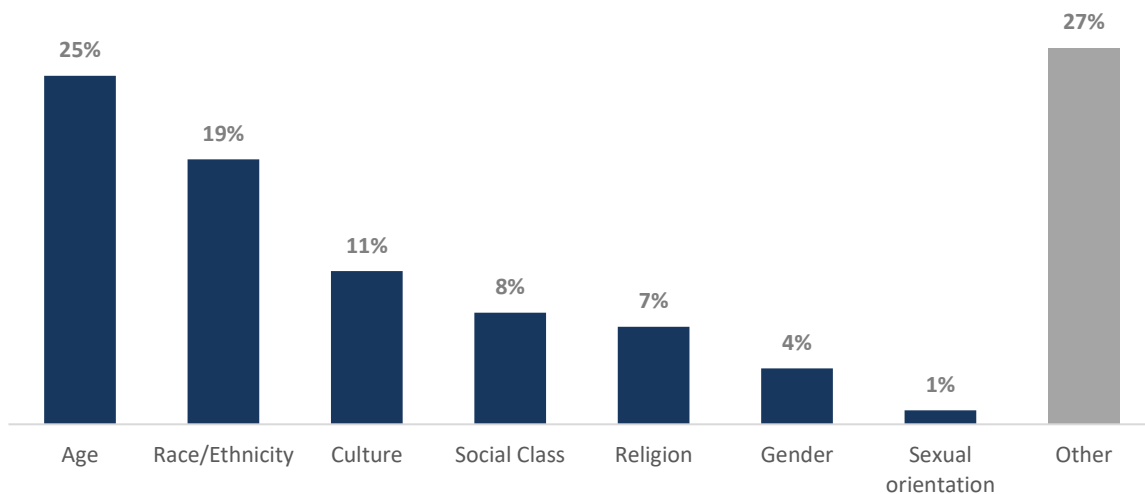


Chart 31: Main reasons for avoiding certain places

Other reasons for avoiding certain places

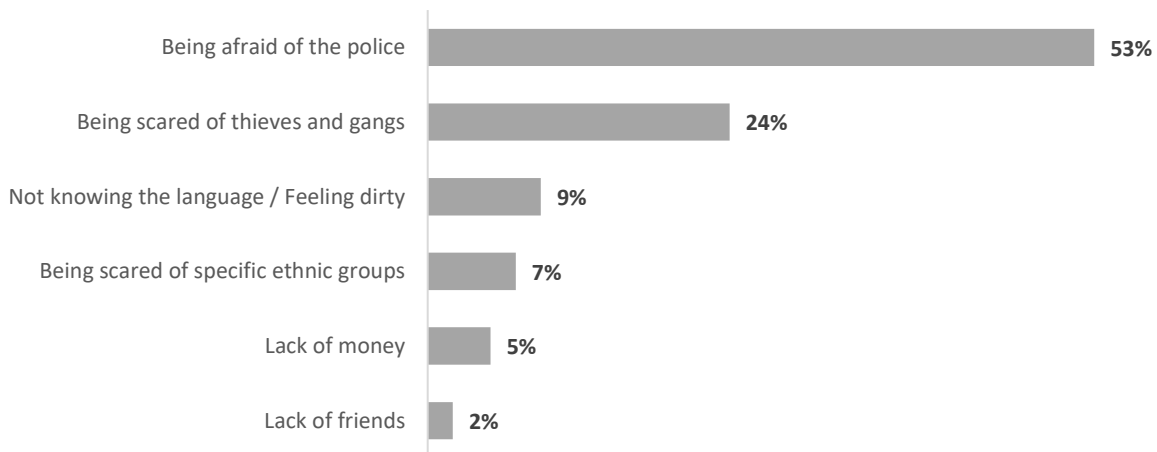


Chart 32: Other reasons for avoiding certain places

Chart 32 lists the responses of children when asked optionally to give more details about the “Other” option in chart 31. 24 children stated that they are afraid of the police, 11 children that they are scared of gangs and thieves, 4 children felt insecure because of language and their inappropriate hygiene, 3 children stated that they are afraid of Roma and Pakistani, 2 blamed the lack of money and 1 the lack of friends.

Approaching the police

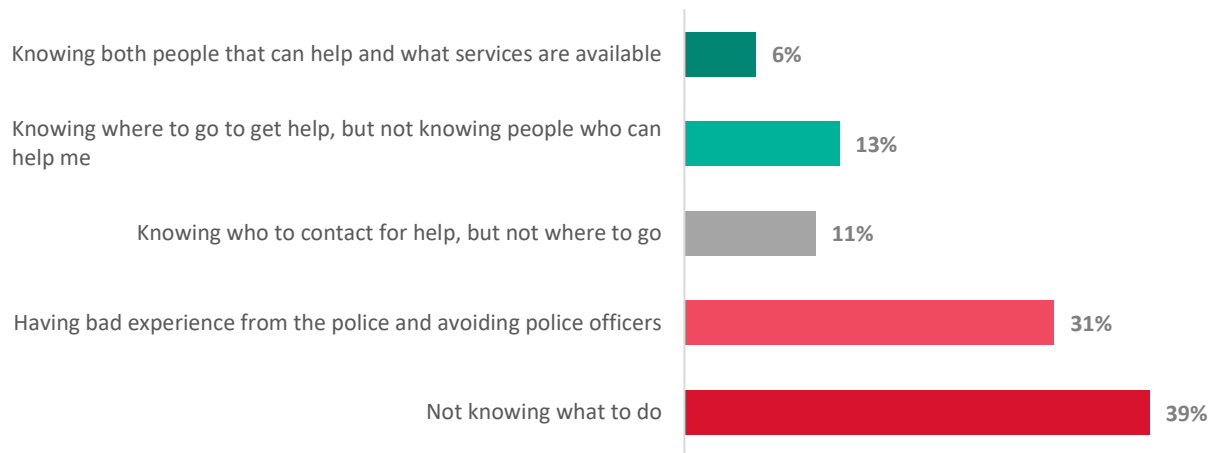


Chart 33: Approaching the police

Chart 33 lists the responses of children when asked whether they know where to access security and safety. 39 per cent of children said that they do not know what to do to seek protection from the police. 31 per cent said that they avoid the police due to previous bad experiences or the fear of being deported or treated badly. Thirteen per cent know where to seek help but do not know of people who could help them, 11 per cent know who to contact but not where to go, and only 6 per cent of UAC interviewed indicated that they know both where to go and who to ask for help.

C. UAC's views

Main risks

The UAC were requested to list their top three priorities among the risks they face. Each child provided three responses in order of priority which were compiled in the analysis below. The top priority of 143 respondents was **shelter, followed by food and money** as the second top priority for 134 respondents. **Feelings of constant fear and loneliness** were the third top priority for 131 respondents followed by lack of documentation listed by 60 respondents as a fourth priority which emerged.

Main risks, as prioritized by the UAC

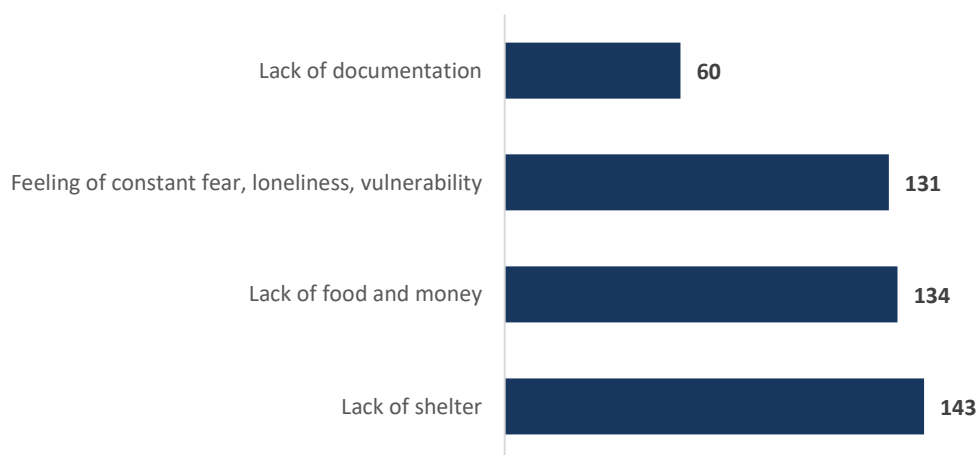


Chart 34: Main risks, as prioritized by the UAC

Coping mechanisms

The UAC were asked to share the top three things that helped them get by in Greece. The top coping mechanism was **staying in touch with family** (17 per cent), **spending time with friends** (13 per cent), **benefitting from support from NGOs** (13 per cent), playing sports (11 per cent), hoping for a better future (10 per cent), internet entertainment including social media, games, movies and music (10 per cent), walking around parks or the beach (9 per cent), learning Greek/English (6 per cent), and praying (4 per cent). 8 per cent of respondents stated that they do not have any coping mechanisms.

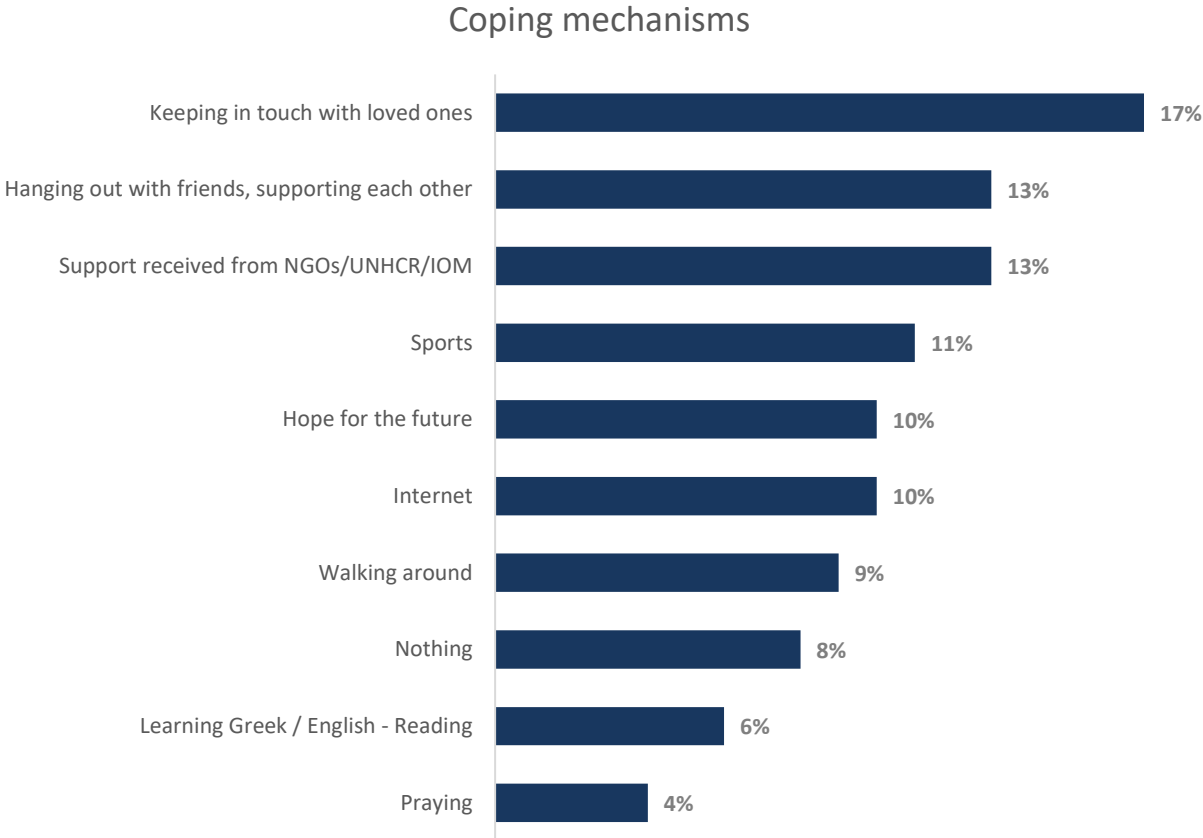


Chart 35: Coping mechanisms

Priority issues to be addressed

The UAC were asked to specify which services they need most from the Greek state. The majority (63 per cent) of respondents noted that their top requirement is to **meet their basic needs** with regard to shelter, food, safety and access to education. 21 per cent of the UAC said they would like **easier access to documentation**, and 16 per cent shared that they needed **focal points who could support them**, be reachable any time, providing psychological support, would be also beneficial.

Services that the UAC want from the state

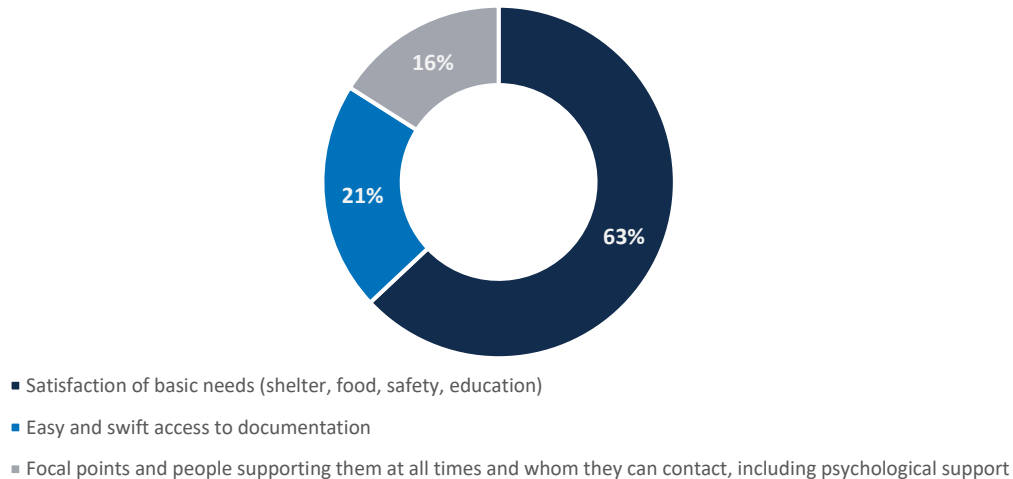


Chart 36: Services that the UAC want from the state

Intentions

Fleeing their countries of origin and a difficult journey to find safety in Greece, only to be welcomed with minimal support or accommodation options and a dearth of information on how to access such support, the UAC's intentions and ideal futures reveal their hope for something better.

"I am thinking how I've grown up since I left my country"

Homeless boy, 17 years-old from Afghanistan

The UAC were asked to share their wishes with regard to their stay in Greece and current plans. 44 per cent expressed the **desire to reunite with their family in another European country**, while 29 per cent want to **go to another country despite** not having family members there. **25 per cent of children want to stay in Greece**. Interestingly, of those children who have family members abroad, 45 per cent (61 in total) are not in the family reunification procedure. **Among the optional responses was "go back home". None of the children selected this response.**

Preferences of the UAC

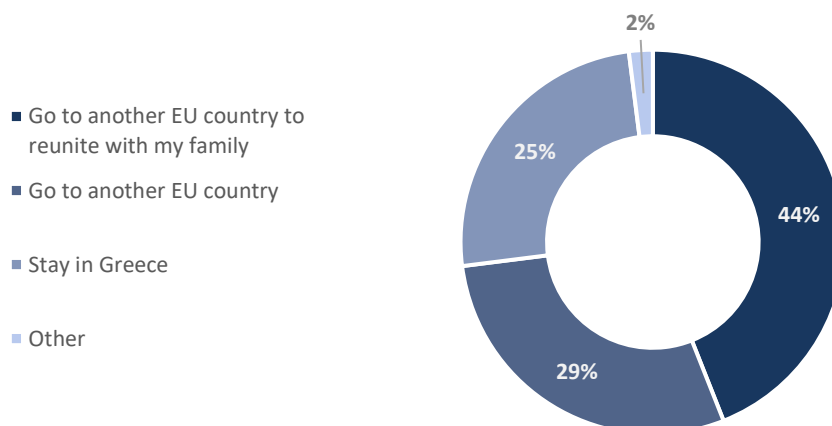


Chart 37: Preferences of the UAC

Ideal future

When asked how they would describe their ideal future, children oftentimes gave inspiring and encouraging answers, while others expressed utter loss of hope. **Pursuing their dream job was the ideal future** of 32 per cent of respondents, while five per cent wanted to find a job in order to support their family. Another 25 per cent aspired to continue education. 13 per cent wanted to reunite with family. 8 per cent were hoping that things will get better and 4 per cent of respondents stated that they are unable to think about their future. 8 per cent were hoping to live in another European country, only three per cent wanted a place to stay and feel safe, and 2 per cent were hoping to be granted international protection.

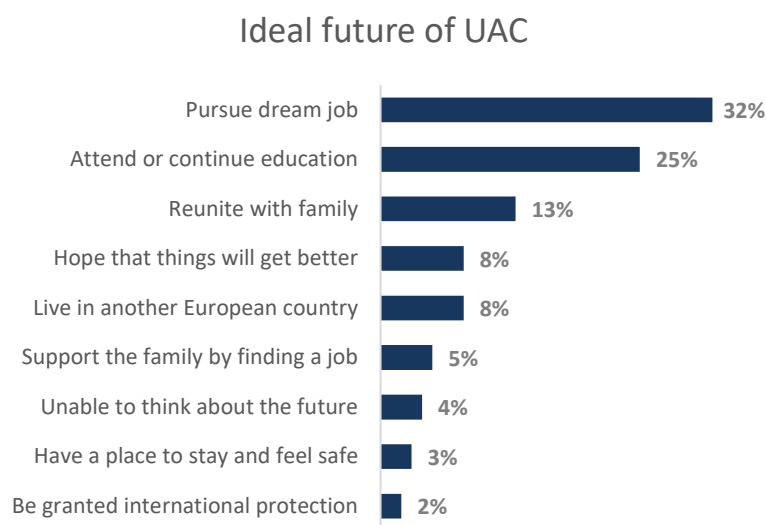


Chart 38: Ideal future of UAC

“Someday, I hope I’ll be able to get my smile back. I don’t know how. But I wish to be able to smile again”

Homeless boy, 16 years-old from Bangladesh

“My ideal future is a happy life, where I can help other people. I’ve lived through the challenges of being a refugee and want to be in position to support people who have gone through similar challenges. People can’t live like this; they need someone to be on their side

Homeless boy, 16 years-old from Bangladesh

“I want to be a poet. Watching one’s life unfold in a way where dreams become reality. All people seek success, some go up from the start and some fall down in the beginning. Life involves all feelings; health and sickness, anxiety and happiness, abandonment”

Homeless boy, 17 years-old from Syria

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The voices of homeless UAC included in the findings of this study guide the priority recommendations.

An alarming number of UAC participating in the research claimed that they have no or limited information regarding their asylum claims and their future status. Furthermore, not participating in decisions which affect them was one of the reasons for absconding.

The views of the UAC must be taken into account when planning and implementing activities for their protection. This will of course be in accordance with the maturity of each individual child, the specific situation and the options available in that context. Nevertheless, this must not be used as a reason to negate the child's views. Adequate information should be shared (what is happening, why, for how long,

the ultimate goal and all available options). Such transparency and dialogue are essential elements in building trust and fostering the feeling of ownership over any decisions regarding accommodation, education, training, etc.

The top wishes of UAC that they want from the Greek state are to have their basic needs met, including shelter, food, safety and access to education; easier access to documentation; and focal points who can support them and who are reachable any time, including with psychological support.

The recommendations of this study are categorized based on the top needs of UAC, further validated by observations from interviews with child protection experts. Each recommendation takes into consideration the best practice findings of the desk review, reflecting upon the current practice in Greece and providing suggestions on approaches to meet the main needs of homeless unaccompanied children.

Basic needs: shelter, food, safety and access to education

- 1. Professionals are trained on how to identify, refer and support UAC**, including administrative personnel, border authorities, police, guardians, interpreters, staff working at accommodation facilities, and more.
- 2. Transit accommodation is made available** to UAC pending placement in UAC accommodation facilities.
- 3. Sustainable long-term child-friendly and supportive accommodation** is accessible to UAC, with access to services including health and education guaranteed.

Documentation and Access to Rights and Services

- 4. Identification and registration of homeless UAC** is strengthened by setting up child identification and registration points, and funding street work teams.
- 5. Age assessment procedures** should only be undertaken as a measure of last resort, not as standard or routine practice.
- 6. Access to rights and services** including health and education are guaranteed.

Focal point to trust

- 7. Referral of homeless UAC** is facilitated through a dedicated 24/7 Helpline.
- 8. A guardian is appointed** to each child upon the identification of a UAC.
- 9. Information provision to the homeless UAC is prioritized** from the day of their arrival in Greece through pamphlets and videos, to ensure that they are informed about their rights, access to support services, and accommodation.
- 10. Psychological support is accessible to UAC** through free mental health treatment from a state institution.

Basic needs: safety, shelter and access to services

- 1. Professionals should be trained on how to identify, refer and support UAC*

Training of professionals working with UAC and dealing with their cases is required so they have the skills to identify, refer and support UAC. Regular, specialized training is necessary for all professionals who have contact with UAC, including, but not limited to administrative personnel, border management authorities, police, guardians, interpreters, staff working at accommodation facilities and NGO personnel. Such trainings should enable professionals to understand that they are dealing with vulnerable and potentially traumatized individuals, and should adhere to high professional standards³⁰.

Psychological First Aid (PFA) seminars on the collaboration between interpreters/cultural mediators and other professionals are recommended. Special attention should be afforded to police authorities to ensure that they do no further harm to UAC, as certain UAC claimed that they are scared of the police.

It is recommended that training for those who are in contact and work with children should be a prerequisite, prior to having any contact with them. The training should cover issues such as children's rights with a focus on child participation, the relevant legal and administrative framework; communicating with children; gender and cultural considerations (cultural sensitivity and inter-cultural communication); child development and psychology; security concerns; national referral mechanisms, as well as, on how to assess the best interests of the child to determine a durable solution. Furthermore, trainers need to draw attention to the diversity among unaccompanied children's needs, wishes and expectations³¹.

2. Transit accommodation should be available to UAC pending placement in long-term accommodation facilities

To address the pressing needs of currently homeless UAC, a holistic safety net is required. This includes emergency 24/7 transit accommodation for UAC in precarious conditions, a 24/7 helpline, a mobile unit, and case management.

Transit Accommodation facilities for homeless UAC should be used as emergency short-stay structures for the immediate reception, support and evaluation of the status of homeless UAC. These should be a short-term measure³² for a maximum of 30 days until the child is placed in an adequate long-term accommodation facility.³³

3. UAC should be provided with sustainable long-term child-friendly accommodation

Age appropriate and sustainable accommodation must be available for children. A holistic, long-term child protection system ensures the safeguarding of homeless UAC, promotes a multidisciplinary approach to child protection, covering basic needs, legal, psychological and social support, immediate provision of educational activities, access to services, and integration in Greek society. Age-appropriate accommodation improves all aspects in a child's life, including mental health, mitigated exposure to risks and increased integration prospects³⁴.

According to the specific recommendations from the European Committee of Social Rights to the Greek government regarding appropriate shelters³⁵, accommodation incorporates elements beyond the provision of child-appropriate accommodation. It includes safety, socialization, non-discrimination and durable solutions towards child's legal status and living conditions.

Once it has been determined that an unaccompanied child will remain in the community, an assessment should take place to delineate appropriate long-term arrangements. Placements should offer continuity in a child's upbringing regarding their cultural and linguistic background, and as a rule changes of placements should be kept to a minimum, while siblings should be placed together as a matter of priority. Child-headed families should receive effective protection and children ought to be informed about the plans being made for them.

The following measures help fulfil the right of UAC to long-term child-friendly accommodation:

- **Promoting semi-independent living (SIL):** Successful practices for older/mature children include semi-independent living. The SIL model places up to four children in apartments, where each child is provided with individual support by a multi-disciplinary team. UAC have access to psychosocial support, legal advice on asylum and family reunification procedures, educational and recreational activities, as well as, support to access the national healthcare system while also acquiring life skills, vocational training and access to the labour market.

- **Implementing foster care**³⁶ arrangements with national and/or refugee families, as recommended by various actors, namely UNGA, UNHCR and FRA³⁷ and building on existing promising practices. Such programmes should include skill building for foster families who would serve as support figures. Foster families could be assisted by a foster care actor/ state agency that supports both the foster parents and the UAC. The foster care personnel would be primarily responsible for assisting the foster parents and the child in his/ her development and following a case plan, providing crucial interventions where necessary. Foster agency personnel should support foster parents from the placement of the child until he/she leaves the programme. Foster care personnel should also regularly evaluate the foster care arrangement, ensuring that minimum standards are met³⁸.
- **Explore sponsorship** aimed at older children reaching adulthood. Municipalities could run programmes connecting housing sponsors with UAC. Interested residents with a spare room and under regular supervision from the childcare authorities, could offer housing to a child. The aim is to support the children on their way to independent living. Participants may benefit from advisory services and seminars that deal with legal questions and practical challenges. The sponsor and the young adult should receive some kind of financial support from the authorities.
- **Provide mentors to children:** Mentors can play a vital role in supporting and empowering children. Mentoring is carried out by professionals who work within a specific framework³⁹, towards specified and individual development goals and action plans set up jointly with the child.
- **Draw up life projects for the child after** a systemic analysis of the child's situation. The life project, which is devised together with the child, is based on reconciling the child's expectations and skills with the opportunities that exist within the host country, in the country of origin or a third country. A written agreement is concluded on the life project with the child, which is subsequently implemented and monitored with the support of a child protection actor.

Documentation and Access to Rights and Services

4. Identifying, registering and documenting unaccompanied children

Regardless of their background, nationality, and immigration status, UAC are first and foremost children and have rights, as guaranteed by the CRC⁴⁰. State parties are obliged to ensure the rights set forth in the Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind⁴¹.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child calls for prioritized identification of an unaccompanied child immediately upon arrival at ports of entry, or as soon as their presence in the country becomes known to the authorities⁴². Documentation services are needed to protect basic human rights, and are required in practice for access to accommodation, education and health services.

A step towards providing accommodation and subsequently protection to UAC is the regularization of their stay. In Greece, UAC try to regularize their stay by applying for international protection. However, as already noted above, an asylum application does not necessarily guarantee access to accommodation, health services and education.

To enhance identification, registration and documentation, the following measures are suggested:

- **Establish identification and registration stations country-wide:** Efficiently detecting children in need of protection at an early stage is the first step to ensuring that they are treated as rights-holders and receive prompt and appropriate assistance and protection. The first contact with the child should be short and limited to identifying the child, establishing basic information and whether they should be regarded as unaccompanied. Emergency measures need to be taken without delay.

Child identification and registration stations should be in place in as many areas as possible and in particular at entry points to the country and in urban areas. These can be established by the

competent authorities in collaboration with local actors and NGOs who have experience working with homeless UAC. Whenever a child is registered as unaccompanied⁴³, he/she should be provided with holistic case management. Psychosocial support should be afforded at the earliest possible stage, immediately after identification, to support UAC after their often distressing/traumatic experiences during travel and upon arrival.

- **Funding of UAC-specific Street Work teams to trace and swiftly assist homeless UAC:** Undocumented UAC fall out of the protective legal framework and as such they have limited access to services with detrimental effects on their well-being and safeguarding of their best interests. The Street Work teams would be responsible for the tracing, identification, registration, and provision of suitable support to homeless UAC. As regards both unregistered and registered missing children, these teams would ensure they are immediately transferred to an UAC initial transit accommodation facility (see below).
- **Activating the Residence Permit for vulnerability reasons under Article 19A(2)(d) of Law 4251/2014 for UAC who reach majority age:** A residence permit, combined with access to accommodation, education and healthcare would greatly improve the life of unaccompanied children, as well as, ameliorate the extent of the problem of undetected children in the country. Regardless of their background, nationality, immigration status or statelessness, UAC are first and foremost children and have rights as such, as guaranteed by the CRC⁴⁴. State Parties are obliged to ensure the rights set forth in the Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind⁴⁵.

A step towards providing adequate and suitable accommodation and subsequently protection to homeless UAC is the granting of a secure legal status, including residence status. Homeless UAC, due to their vulnerable situation and increased needs for protection, should be afforded access to basic human rights to adequate accommodation, education and health services until they reach the age of 21⁴⁶.

The durable solution is unlikely to be durable if it is based on a decision to allow the child only to remain up to their 18th birthday⁴⁷. Temporary residency is not a durable solution and must not be granted merely as an administrative response that will be ended abruptly upon the child turning 18. The process of finding a durable solution must be initiated immediately upon arrival in Greece. Individuals who arrived as children and were allowed to remain for humanitarian or other reasons, or who received any other kind of temporary status expiring at the age of 18, should be treated in a generous manner when they reach the age of majority and full regard should be given to their potential vulnerability. They should not receive lesser treatment than national children leaving care and should be offered support via an after-care programme, to assist them in their transition to living independently⁴⁸.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child stresses that *“In line with the generally applicable principles and, in particular, those relating to the responsibilities of States with regard to unaccompanied or separated children finding themselves in their territory, children who are neither granted refugee status nor benefiting from complementary forms of protection, will still enjoy protection under all norms of the Convention as long as they remain de facto within the States’ territories and/or subject to its jurisdiction”*⁴⁹.

Furthermore, according to EU legislation, Member States may at any moment decide to grant an autonomous residence permit or other authorization offering a right to stay for compassionate, humanitarian or other reasons to a third-country national staying illegally in their territory. In that event no return decision shall be issued⁵⁰. This general rule also applies to children⁵¹.

It should be stressed that according to Article 19A(2)(d) of Law 4251/2014, UAC who are accommodated at residential institutions, operating under the authority of the competent Ministries, have the right to lodge an application for a residence permit for humanitarian reasons with the decentralized administration (prefecture) of their area of residence. The residence permit referred to in the aforementioned provision is initially issued for a period of *two years* and can be renewed every two

years. However, it should be pointed out that such permit does not grant a third-country national the right to access the labour market.

Article 19A(2)(d) of the aforementioned law excludes all UAC who live in accommodation facilities, which are not administrated by the Ministries, let alone homeless ones. This is a legal gap, leaving UAC who are neither granted international protection status, nor reside in residential institutions operated by the Ministries, without any protection.

This report, aiming to guarantee that all UAC residing in Greece benefit from child protection services, irrespective of the outcome of their applications and answering to the need of UAC for documentation, as a means to access services such as accommodation, education, healthcare, even job opportunities, recommends the provision of a residence permit for vulnerability reasons to those UAC who are not granted or do not wish to apply for international protection status or are not granted a residence permit for humanitarian reasons (Article 19A(2)(d) of Law 4251/2014). This type of residence permit should be renewable until the age of 21, guaranteeing that all UAC are treated as vulnerable and as such are offered protection according to EU and international standards, regardless of their residence status. In contrast with the residence permit provided for in Article 19A(2)(d) of Law 4251/2014, the residence permit for vulnerability reasons should/ must entitle UAC to have access to salaried employment and to the provision of services or work, according to the applicable legislative framework in Greece⁵².

5. Age assessment procedures should only be undertaken as a measure of last resort

The need for age assessment should be duly justified based on substantiated doubts about the stated age. The documents available should be considered genuine unless there is proof to the contrary. Only in the absence of identity documents or other appropriate evidence, to make an informed estimate of age, should states undertake a comprehensive age assessment of the child's physical and psychological development. This implies that not only the physical appearance of the individual be taken into account but also his or her psychological maturity⁵³. The age assessment method should consist of multidimensional and multidisciplinary assessments⁵⁴, undertaken by independent professionals with appropriate expertise and familiarity with the child's ethnic and cultural background.

It is proposed that age assessment be carried out through prompt, child-friendly interviews with children in a gender-sensitive and culturally appropriate manner and in a language they understand⁵⁵. The interviews should be conducted on the assumption that the person is a child. If a child refuses to participate in an age assessment, the competent authority should seek to understand the reasons behind his/her refusal. The refusal must not entail an automatic adverse decision concerning the child's age or immigration status⁵⁶. In the event of uncertainty, the individual should be accorded the benefit of the doubt such that if there is a possibility they are a child, he or she should be treated as such⁵⁷. States should consider not only the physical appearance of the individual, but also his or her psychological maturity, thereby adopting a multidisciplinary approach. The benefit of the doubt should be given to the individual being assessed. Physical and medical examinations should be measures of last resort. States should refrain from using medical methods based on, *inter alia*, bone and dental exam analysis, which may be inaccurate, with wide margins of error, and can also be traumatic and lead to unnecessary legal processes.

Regarding the age assessment procedure in Greece, even though, according to the new JMD 9989/2020, in force since 13.08.2020, there is an explicit reference and expansion of the actors who are entitled to make referrals for age assessment, the age assessment methods followed in the field are many times subject to strong doubts from a legal, medical, psychosocial and moral point of view. It is the use of scientific methods to determine age which are objected to, including unsuitable and intrusive medical examinations, which may cause trauma, have large margins of error and are sometimes performed without the child's consent.

Age assessment procedures should only be undertaken as a measure of last resort, not as standard or routine practice. They should be performed where there are grounds for serious doubt and where other approaches, such as interviews and attempts to gather documentary evidence, have failed to establish the individual's age⁵⁸. Physical and medical examinations should be measures of last resort⁵⁹.

6. *Access to rights and services including health and education, must be guaranteed*

As international protection applicants, UAC have, in principle, access to medical, pharmaceutical and hospital care by obtaining a Temporary Number of Insurance and Healthcare Number for Foreigners. They also have access to housing and public education, free of charge. These rights need to be fulfilled as long as they stay in Greece and at least until they reach majority age. These rights are set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child for all children, irrespective of their legal status.

Access to healthcare, including mental health services

Access to healthcare must be guaranteed to all children without discrimination and irrespective of their nationality or status. To achieve this, it is necessary to incorporate mandatory interpretation services and intercultural mediation support at healthcare facilities. All UAC must be offered the possibility to undergo a thorough health assessment, with adequate healthcare guaranteed⁶⁰. The Greek state must address the particular vulnerabilities of the unaccompanied children and the impact of these on their health⁶¹. Specific attention should be devoted to the emotional problems and the mental health of UAC⁶².

All children, especially girls, should, as far as possible, be examined by doctors of the same sex when they have stated their preference.

Access to education

Education is a core right of all children and a fundamental component of their integration⁶³, must be offered to all children, without discrimination and in all phases of the displacement cycle⁶⁴, free of charge.

To promote fulfilment of the right to education, the following should be considered:

- **Municipalities and/or NGOs could run preparatory schools** offering age-appropriate education programmes to children arriving in the middle of the year. These programmes could focus on integration and language classes. Information on available informal lessons (mainly language classes) offered by various actors should be provided to UAC.
- **Make full use of the experimental and intercultural schools in Athens and Thessaloniki:** While this might be a difficult initiative in rural areas, Athens and Thessaloniki have set up experimental schools which employ highly trained teachers, many of whom have completed their Master's degrees in intercultural education. Homeless UAC should be able to register for classes there at any point during the school year. It would grant them access to Greek language classes, allowing them to understand basic Greek, and enable them to make informed decisions on future opportunities, for example attending vocational schools (EPAL).



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- **Vocational Training:** According to FRA, homeless adolescent UAC (aged 16-18) could clearly benefit from better access to vocational education and training; in this context, a more flexible approach to work permit requirements could facilitate this, in so far as they can meet educational and language requirements. Those children, who wish to work and fulfil the necessary age requirements, should be assisted in finding work, if this does not interfere with their education, for instance, by providing opportunities for appropriate work experience, such as summer jobs or paid internships. However, it is important to strictly monitor the application of the relevant regulations regarding hours and conditions of work to ensure that children are not exploited. It should be noted that, in accordance with the national legislation, access to the labour market for UAC must respect national legislation on the minimum working age, maximum working hours, and the types of jobs that UAC can undertake. Older homeless UAC, who do not wish to attend non-compulsory secondary education could participate in vocational training programmes in close cooperation with EPAL (vocational schools), which would be combined with language courses.

Creating focal points children trust

Irrespective of legal status, almost half of the children interviewed claimed that they have no one who they can trust in Greece. Twenty children identified this problem as one of the three main risks they face daily. Referrals to service and care providers are the first step to linking children to a focal point that they can trust. The appointment of a legal guardian is key to helping guide the child through complex legal procedures and accessing services. Information provision empowers the child to make decisions about their present and future. Finally, psychosocial, psychological support and access to psychiatric care through a formalized institution or mentors linked with care facilities can help begin to address the emotional and social needs of children.

7. Referral of homeless UAC should be facilitated through a dedicated 24/7 helpline

Prevention of homelessness is directly linked to registration upon arrival and immediate referral to adequate services. Bringing unidentified children on the streets into contact with the SSPUAM, the competent national authority for UAC⁶⁵, is the starting point.

The response to UAC should always be integrated into national child protection systems.

After the field research, the SSPUAM with the collaboration of UNHCR set up a pilot National Emergency Response Mechanism for the comprehensive, effective and timely protection of UAC living in precarious conditions as an alternative to protective custody⁶⁶. This pilot includes a helpline which is free-of-charge and active on a 24/7 basis. This helpline is for any citizen who identifies a homeless UAC (e.g. in the streets, parks, under bridges, etc.).

The helpline should also be accessible to homeless UAC and offer initial support and advice. Taking into consideration the vulnerability of homeless UAC and existing language barriers, interpreters or cultural mediators with expertise in working with children are also provided.

The helpline should be complemented with on-call emergency child protection services available at the municipality level. This would complement the services of the mechanism for immediate assessment and emergency placement of identified UAC. Every municipality should be able to offer immediate accommodation care for any identified homeless child (even if only for 24 hours) until the child is transferred, to the available under the mechanism, emergency reception facilities.

8. A guardian should be appointed to each child as soon as identified as unaccompanied

Guardianship is crucial for UAC. Individualized support for homeless UAC, through the timely appointment of trained guardians or social workers, is particularly important to help ensure that children's best interests are considered⁶⁷. The appointed guardian should be consulted and informed regarding all actions taken in relation to the child⁶⁸.

According to Greek Law, authorities must immediately inform the competent Public Prosecutor for Minors who will appoint a representative responsible to promote the child's best interests. The guardianship law⁶⁹ introduces the possibility of appointing professional guardians under EKKA, establishing a Supervisory Board for Guardianship. It clearly indicates that a 'best interests assessment' should precede any decision affecting the child⁷⁰. This law should be implemented as a matter of priority*.

9. Information provision to UAC should be prioritized

The vast majority of the children interviewed showed a complete lack of understanding about the procedures they are subject to and the rights they hold, with very few having had the available protection mechanisms properly explained to them.

Accurate and consistent information should be disseminated to unaccompanied children from the day of their arrival in Greece. This could be done through child-friendly information pamphlets or applications made available in the languages the children speak as well as through direct information sessions from qualified professionals who provide information and explain their rights and procedures (so that children who cannot read are not excluded), or videos shown at entry point in various languages.

10. Psychological support should be accessible to UAC through free mental health services

Most children who identified their health as very poor, referred to their mental health and claimed that they experience overwhelming feelings of loneliness due to separation from their families and absence of people who they can trust. In addition, several children experienced traumatizing events. Available mental health support services are not sufficient to cover the needs of the children and of the personnel working with them.

The Ministry of Health, as the responsible state authority for mental health issues, should assign dedicated resources to assist unaccompanied adolescents aged 16-18 in need of mental health services, irrespective of their nationality and their residence status. Assistance should be provided through psychiatric, psychotherapeutic, psychological treatment and psychosocial counselling.

This should be complemented by the provision of free counselling to mentors and other professionals who assist UAC and experience symptoms of burnout.

* The new guardianship law. 4690/2022 (Gov. Gazette A' 145/22.7.2022) entitled "National Guardianship System and Accommodation Framework for Unaccompanied Minors and other provisions of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum" was issued, provides for a **new system for guardianship of unaccompanied minors**, and replaces the system of Law 4554/2018 which was never put in effect. The new system allows a multitude of entities, including national and international NGOs, municipalities and UN agencies, to be designated as guardians through the creation of a national registry of actors.

Annex 1: Promising Practices

The desk research involved the analysis of reports from international organizations, policy research institutes, NGOs, EU institutions, peer reviewed journal articles and websites on the topic of homelessness of UAC with the aim of identifying and selecting a number of best/promising practices.

Practices listed in this Annex were chosen based on two criteria: the prevention and elimination of UAC homelessness and existing shortcomings of the Greek protection system for UAC, which were identified during our extensive research and field work.

This section of the study aims to review and summarize the promising practices in various European countries, and to provide inspiration for potential approaches that could be considered and tailored to the Greek context.

A promising practice can be defined as the optimal method of solving a given problem or accomplishing a certain goal that can be shared and used by others⁷¹. Best/promising practices presented in the study are practices adopted by other Member States, International Organizations, civil society and other stakeholders to prevent and combat the homelessness of UAC and improve the capacity of all protection mechanisms for UAC. International actors, Member States of the EU and their national actors, as well as projects/programmes on international, European and national level, primarily aim to prevent homelessness (rather than ameliorate the detrimental experience of homelessness whilst accepting it), promoting enjoyment of the rights of UAC. The ultimate goal is a durable solution for each child according to his/her best interests. Furthermore, various states have invested or are in the process of investing in the early establishment of trust between authorities and UAC⁷².

Promising practice: Documentation

Documentation is a key prerequisite for rights-holders to access services. Proper identification, registration and holistic age assessment procedures are amongst the priorities of international and national actors, as well as national institutions. The Committee on the Rights of the Child calls for initial assessment and measures. These include, *inter alia*, prioritized identification of an unaccompanied child immediately upon arrival at ports of entry, or as soon as their presence in the country becomes known to the authorities⁷³. In Greece, rights are recognized only to those UAC who have applied for some form of international protection.

| Promising practices on documentation in other countries |
|---|
| Some Member States of the EU do not differentiate protection accorded to children based on their legal status but instead UAC are covered by the ordinary law on child welfare. In some Member States, notably France, due to their age, UAC are not required to hold a residence permit at all: when a third-country national has been recognized as a child and unaccompanied, he/she is covered by the ordinary law on child welfare, enabling him/her to be cared for and provided with social, educational and legal protection until the age of 18 years. Former UAC, who have reached 18 years of age, in some Member States then have the possibility to apply for a residence permit on the general grounds that apply to third-country nationals (e.g. education, employment, humanitarian reasons) and their situation is assessed on an individual basis. In these cases, the education and degree of integration of the former UAC acquired in the host country are taken into account to inform the decision. In Italy, a special residence permit for UAC on account of their age is granted. In Belgium, the Czech Republic and Poland, there is a temporary residence permit in the form of specific residence procedures until a durable solution for the UAC is found. Finally, in Austria, Belgium, Finland, Croatia, Italy, Sweden, the Netherlands, the UK, Slovakia and Norway a residence permit is foreseen for UAC for humanitarian reasons/compassionate grounds ⁷⁴ . |

Promising practice: Age assessment

Age assessment is the process by which authorities seek to estimate the chronological age or range of age of a person so as to establish whether an individual is a child or an adult⁷⁵, through various assessments including interviews and medical examinations. Age assessment procedures that deny children the official recognition of their young age are likely to have a detrimental impact on the child’s safety, well-being and development⁷⁶. Asserting that a person is under 18 years old is important as certain safeguards and entitlements in migration and asylum procedures apply to children, while some apply specifically to unaccompanied and separated children. These include rights to child-friendly accommodation and care, the support of a guardian, the right to seek international protection based on child-specific grounds of asylum, and the right to family reunification. Children may also be protected from expulsion or deportation and from administrative or immigration detention⁷⁷.

In Greece, age assessment⁷⁸ includes examination of macroscopic characteristics, psychosocial assessment and medical examinations, while the procedural steps and safeguards to be followed in cases of doubt regarding the age of third- country nationals have also been defined.

According to JMD 9889/2020⁷⁹, in force since 13.08.2020, the first step in an age assessment is based on medical examinations, and, in particular, on macroscopic characteristics, such as height, weight, body mass index, voice and hair growth. Only in case the age cannot be adequately determined through the above-mentioned medical examination, will an assessment by the psychologist and the social worker follow to evaluate the cognitive, behavioural and psychological development of the individual. In case there are still doubts, the following medical examinations will be conducted: left wrist and hand X-rays to assess skeletal mass or dental exam and panoramic dental X- rays⁸⁰.

Although the JMD makes explicit reference to and expands the list of actors who are entitled to make referrals for age assessment⁸¹, the age assessment methods followed are subject to strong doubts from a legal, medical, psychosocial and moral point of view⁸². It has been observed that some third-country nationals who arrive at border locations are registered as adults by local authorities despite the fact that they claim to be children, while it has also been noted that the age assessment methodology applied at certain border locations does not follow the staggered approach outlined in the regulations in place, meaning that third-country nationals subject to age assessment are submitted directly to invasive methods such as X-ray of the wrist, which serves as the sole evidence of determination of minority. The use of unsuitable and intrusive medical examinations to determine age may cause additional trauma, have large margins of error, and are sometimes performed without the child’s consent⁸³.

| Promising Practices on Age Assessment | |
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| <u>Cyprus</u> | <u>Denmark</u> |
| An age assessment interview is carried out before referring the child to any medical examinations for the purpose of age assessment. In the interview, the child has the opportunity to state his/her age and all information relevant for age assessment and to provide documents or to offer explanations as to the lack of documents ⁸⁴ . | The Danish Immigration Service conducts interviews with persons whose age is unclear. The interview is conducted on the assumption that the person is a child. The questions and interview techniques are adapted to the presumed age, maturity, nationality and background of the child and care is taken to ensure that the child understands the questions. The age assessment interview is conducted before the child is referred to any further examinations ⁸⁵ . |

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| <u>Ireland</u> | <u>Italy</u> |
| The age assessment is conducted on the basis of a social work assessment according to the standards developed by the Child and Family Agency ('Tusla'). As with all social work assessments, the age assessment procedure generally foresees the child's active participation and a child-centred approach. The child is fully informed of the age assessment process and outcomes ⁸⁶ . | The child is free to refuse to undergo medical examinations for the purpose of age assessment. If a child objects to a specific method, the assessment should be carried out without the use of this method. In cases where the responsible practitioners consider that the specific method to which the child has objected is however essential and sufficient to assess the child's age, they should inform the Guardianship Judge. The Judge will consider the objections raised by the child and the reasons given by the medical practitioners and may authorize the medical staff to proceed with the examinations that are deemed essential and sufficient ⁸⁷ . |
| <u>Belgium</u> | |
| A leaflet has been produced that explains in simple and easily accessible language the age assessment procedure and why it is considered necessary. The leaflet is available in different languages and handed out to the person undergoing age assessment. The leaflet supplements the information provided to the person orally. It presents information about the doubts that have been raised with regard to the individual's age, what will happen and what the medical age assessment examination means, and the consequences of age assessment. It also explains what kind of documentation could be considered as proof of age ⁸⁸ . | |

Promising practice: Appointment of guardians

In the context of refugee and migrant UAC, a guardian is an independent person who safeguards a child's best interests and general well-being, and to this effect complements the limited legal capacity of the child. The guardian acts as a statutory representative of the child in all proceedings in the same way that a parent represents his or her child.

In Greece, in 2018 Law 4554/ 2018 on the guardianship of UAC was adopted by the Greek Parliament⁸⁹. The law also covers non-Greek nationals and stateless unaccompanied and separated children. It provides for the possibility to appoint a professional guardian employed by EKKA, it establishes a supervisory board of guardianship for UAC, it explicitly provides for the implementation of best interests' assessment and determination procedures with the use of specific tools, which should precede decisions regarding the child and lastly, it provides for the establishment of three registries (for UAC, for professional guardians and for reception centres for UAC).

As of June 2021, Law 4554/2018 had not yet entered into force. Instead, an interim scheme of Authorized Representatives for Minors has been implemented since February 2021 by METAdrasi under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Back in 2019 (January to December) in view of the application of the new legal and institutional framework, UNHCR worked with the Ministry of Labour (MoL)/EKKA and Metadrasi, within the context of a tripartite agreement, to temporarily pilot the implementation of the Guardianship Law and transition this responsibility to the MoL and EKKA under funding from the AMIF National Plan. This transition to the guardianship programme aimed operationalizing EKKA through secondment of staff who act as guardians for children seeking asylum (until the law is fully in force), for the protection and safeguarding of 1,100 children residing across Greece who are seeking asylum (in protective custody, RICs, hospitals, shelters and SIL scheme, IOM-run Hotels and Safe Zones), and homeless children.

Currently, according to PD 220/2007, the Public Prosecutor acts as a temporary guardian for all UAC and separated children (children seeking asylum) as soon as they come to his/her attention so as to be able to immediately act for the protection and representation of the child. The main duty of the temporary guardian is to introduce the case to court, which will then assign guardianship of the child to either an individual (most commonly a relative) under the supervision of a Supervisory Board (relatives, friends of the family, or public officials such as Social Services) or an institution or Social Services. The current legal framework lacks specialized provisions to address the specific reality and needs of children seeking asylum, for instance, the fact that there are often no relatives. Furthermore, the legal framework is rendered ineffective due to lack of bodies/services that will undertake the Supervisory Board’s responsibilities, but the Authorized Representatives mentioned above undertake the actual duties of guardians.

In practice, Public Prosecutors as temporary guardians must guarantee the best interests of the child as stipulated by Greek legislation in general. As no specific formal procedure for assessing the best interests of the child is provided by the legislation in force or has been adopted in practice, decision-making is based solely on the Public Prosecutor’s judgment, whilst no policy guidance exists on how to exercise it -some exceptions include the implementation of the relocation scheme for UAC to Europe. Also, currently, Public Prosecutors very rarely take cases to court for a permanent guardian to be designated. As a result, the Public Prosecutors remain the temporary guardians of a high number of children seeking asylum, in respect of whom they do not have the capacity to act.

In Greece, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has provided the green light to the NGO METAdrasi to implement an interim guardianship scheme. It is set up to specifically account for the needs of UAC in the country, however, this does not include those in the relocation scheme (November 2020).

Some states have invested or are in the process of investing in the early establishment of trust.

| Promising Practices: guardians | |
|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>The Netherlands</u></p> <p>In the Netherlands, NIDOS, a guardianship institution, is mandated with providing professional guardians as soon as an unaccompanied or separated child is identified. The role of the guardian is emphasized in government policy, giving weight to considering the procedural protection of the child as well as encouraging the establishment of trust with the child. The European Network of Guardianship Institutions (ENGI)⁹⁰ provides support to develop the capacities of guardians to give adequate support, including the establishment of trusting relationships with children in their care⁹¹.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>The United Kingdom</u></p> <p>A Panel of Advisers of the UK NGO Refugee Council supports UAC and young adults through the asylum process. The Panel was established in 1994 and is funded by the UK Home Office. It consists of 25 fully supported advisers, many of whom speak the languages of the children they are working with. The advisers facilitate separated children’s access to legal representation, accompany them to asylum interviews and hearings in the asylum and court procedures and assist children when going to the doctor, to Social Services or other services. The Panel also cares for young adults under the age of 21, who are caring for their younger brothers or sisters in the absence of a parent. In order to promote friendship among the children and meetings with peers and supervisors, the Panel organizes a social evening every week in London⁹².</p> |

Promising practice: Mentoring

Mentoring activities can play a vital role in supporting and empowering children. Mentoring is carried out by professionals who work within a specific framework, towards specified and individual goals set at the onset. The child, together with his/her mentor, sets up action plans and development goals.

| Promising Practices on mentoring | |
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| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>The United Kingdom – Personal Advisor</u></p> <p>The personal advisor helps coordinate a pathway plan (based on the care plan for a looked-after child) from age 16 onwards, setting out the services the child will access to support their aims and ambitions as they make their transition to adulthood⁹³.</p> <p>A Personal Advisor’s role is to: provide advice (including practical advice) and support to the young person; participate in reviews of the young person’s case; liaise with the responsible authority in the implementation of the pathway plan; co-ordinate the provision of services and take reasonable steps to ensure the young person makes use of such services; remain informed about the young person’s progress and wellbeing; keep full, accurate and up-to-date records of contacts with the young person and services provided; provide information about financial capability-how to manage day to day finances; advise on housing options available to the child leaving care; support in finding further education, employment or training; keep in touch with the young person.</p> <p>The pathway plan is the responsibility of the allocated social worker. Case law has held that the personal advisor should ‘participate’ in the pathway plan – not write it – and that they should be involved in the review of the plan.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Lithuania - Social Worker Role</u></p> <p>In Lithuania, the best interests of the child are taken into account in the context of drawing up an individual action plan for their integration, and this procedure is the same for all unaccompanied children, regardless of their status⁹⁴. The assigned social worker helps unaccompanied children to take decisions regarding education, health services, nutrition, provision of clothing, self-care, etc. His/her responsibilities include representing unaccompanied children’ rights and legal interests on a variety of issues, such as age assessment procedures, interviews regarding determination of their legal status, schooling (e.g. signing documents), banking procedures (e.g. opening of bank accounts), etc.</p> <p>The social worker also assesses the minor’s social issues and needs and, when necessary, refers them to other specialists; consults with them on educational matters and organizes their education, including Lithuanian courses to provide children with information on the conditions, culture, traditions and lifestyle in the country. As a result, children are accompanied in their day-to-day life and supported in everyday decision-making.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>The United Kingdom - “SMILE”</u></p> <p>SMILE – Supporting and Mentoring in Learning and Education, is a project run by the Children’s Section of the Refugee Council. It aims to reduce the isolation and absence of education and activities experienced by refugee children and young people. The project promotes inclusive education by challenging prejudices related to asylum and raises awareness of the needs of refugee children. Based in London, the West Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside, the project supports separated, asylum-seeking and refugee children, as well as children in families to improve their life chances by helping them to enjoy and achieve in education, and by raising awareness of their specific needs⁹⁵.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Sweden - “SOS Children's Villages”</u></p> <p>SOS Children's Villages Sweden’s mentoring activities support the establishment of UAC/youths (16-21 years old) living in network homes. A network home means that the unaccompanied adolescents have been placed by the authorities to live with a relative, family friend - simply a family that already is a part of the youth’s network. The programme is implemented by professional mentors who work within a specific framework, and towards specified and individual goals within the programme's context; together with his/her mentor, the youth sets up action plans and development goals in the described life areas: social understanding, leisure interests and networking, education, and work⁹⁶.</p> |

Promising Practices on mentoring

Finland

In Finland, different personalized plans may be developed for UAC with a view to tackling challenges they may face. These plans, which are drawn-up together with the child in line with Article 12 of the UN CRC, include: a client plan which is prepared for all asylum-seeking UAC by a social worker at the accommodation unit taking into account the child's situation and needs for support. The client plan broadly defines the means and measures aimed at yielding a positive impact on the child's situation; a care and upbringing plan complements the client plan, and is developed by an assigned counsellor at the accommodation units. In this plan the abovementioned means and measures are concretized into everyday actions; a care and upbringing plan is also drawn at the accommodation unit for UAC receiving international protection. The plan is updated every three months and is a tool for agreeing upon tailored support to the minor; and finally, an independence-promotion plan is drawn up when UAC receiving international protection come of age. This plan includes sports and hobby activities, private tuition and support for school attendance. In cooperation with the former UAC receiving international protection, the Employment and Economic Development Office and/or the municipality also draws up an integration plan that includes integration training, as well as other measures and services that support integration, employment and social inclusion⁹⁷.

Promising practice: Mental health

In Greece the best practices for psychosocial support available to refugee children are the following:

ZEUXIS - Day Care Centre for the "Psychosocial Support of Refugees and Immigrants aged 6-15, a standard space for holistic intervention and interdisciplinary support of underage refugees and migrants operating on two axes: through psychological provision and support from a clinical psychologist and the inclusion of beneficiary children in the non-formal education programme an attempt is made to make their integration into the school smoother and easier, as well as to develop their cognitive and emotional skills⁹⁸.

The Association for Regional Development and Mental Health – EPAPSY, is a non-governmental, non-profit organization, which operates in the field of psychosocial rehabilitation and mental health promotion. EPAPSY currently hosts 209 persons with mental health problems in 24 residential facilities and provides more than 14,500 therapeutic acts through two mobile units and two-day centres. It is funded by national support (the Ministry of Health) as well as the EU⁹⁹. Since March 2018 EPAPSY has collaborated with UNHCR to provide mental health and psychosocial support services to refugees/asylum-seekers. During the COVID-19 pandemic crisis EPAPSY, in collaboration with UNHCR, implemented a psychosocial support helpline through community psychosocial workers who are trained refugees and provide direct immediate psychosocial help and referral to services in Arabic, Farsi and French to refugees and asylum-seekers¹⁰⁰. They finance their activity through grants and funds, the main donors are the EU and the UN's OHCHR. It operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Health, but functions as a public body governed by private law. Although the project does not currently assist children, it has the potential to expand to teenagers.

Other best practices identified with a focus on mental health and psychosocial support are presented below.

| Promising Practices regarding mental health | |
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| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Teaching Recovery Techniques - UK</u></p> <p>Teaching Recovery Techniques is a psychosocial intervention for children who have experienced traumatic events. It was initially developed for children who had experienced war or disasters, including refugees and asylum-seeking children, but the programme has since been used for groups of children who have experienced other kinds of trauma. Children take part in group sessions aimed at enhancing emotional regulation, coping skills and problem-solving techniques, and in helping the children to express themselves. The Teaching Recovery Techniques approach has been used in numerous contexts since its first development in 1999 and has been shown to reduce children’s distress and post-traumatic symptoms and to improve peer and sibling relations. Recently, it was also adapted to the context of UAC, with positive effects on symptom levels. A manual for the programme is now available in 10 languages¹⁰¹.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Surviving to Thriving - UK</u></p> <p>Surviving to Thriving is a unique partnership project between the British Red Cross and the Refugee Council. The project supports refugees and asylum seekers aged 11 to 25 who do not have parents or guardians in the UK. It provides life skills, advice, mental health support and leadership opportunities to help them rebuild their lives and thrive. More precisely, the British Red Cross provides one-to-one specialist case work around the specific needs of the young people, regular group sessions designed to create social networks while increasing their knowledge, skills and confidence, help to access services and support young people in need, as well as support to change minds, policy and practice. The Refugee Council provides group and one-to-one therapeutic counselling for 11-18-year olds, a range of therapeutic approaches, including drama therapy and art therapy, support addressing trauma and restoring well-being¹⁰².</p> |
| <p><u>The Gordelia Foundation -Hungary</u></p> <p>It aims to assist torture survivors and severely traumatized asylum seekers, refugees and their family members arriving in Hungary through psychiatric, psychotherapeutic, psychological treatment, and psychosocial counselling. The treatment of the psychosocial and somatic problems of this unique target group is a basic-service, public-benefit task. The services of the Foundation thus supplement the national healthcare services through a comprehensive treatment system¹⁰³.</p> | |

Promising practice: Education

Access to education is a basic right of the child. Asylum-seeking children arriving on the Aegean islands in Greece have lost, on average, three to five years of education due to war and displacement, and a quarter of children have no education at all (*UNHCR snapshot September 2020*). According to the Greek Ombudsman report published on 11/03/2021: 62 per cent (14,423) of school-aged refugee children living on the mainland and island RICs are enrolled in schools and reception classes. In Greece UNHCR and partners have tried to bridge this gap by providing non-formal education on the Aegean islands to new arrivals, focusing on Greek, English and Math, with an aim of preparing children for entry into formal Greek schools. Access to formal education for refugee and migrant children is available through regular schools under the Zone of Educational Priority (ZEP) classes and reception/welcoming classes for refugee children living in accommodation sites (DYEP). Since 2010, ZEP classes are an additional component, or tool of intercultural education, to the morning regular classes, in order to assist children who do not speak Greek (Roma, migrant and refugee children).

| Promising Practices: access to education | |
|---|--|
| <u>France</u> | |
| <p>In some locations in France, delays in school enrolment for UAC led to <i>ad hoc</i> solutions, including unofficial schools set up by NGOs. In France, experts described one such solution adopted to deal with lack of places for newly arrived students in regular French schools: schooling through NGO support. For example, in Marseille, the local education authority in cooperation with two NGOs, called Pep13 and Centre d’Innovation pour l’Emploi et le Reclassement Social (Innovation Centre for Employment and Social Rehabilitation), runs two non-governmental schools that can enrol newly arrived foreign children who arrive during the school year¹⁰⁴. Also, France stands out in taking into account the previous level of schooling of newly arrived foreign children when allocating them to preparatory classes¹⁰⁵. In particular, newly arrived foreign children over 16 years old are first tested at an information and orientation centre (<i>centre d’information et d’orientation</i>) of the Education Ministry to determine in which type of school (general or vocational) and at what level they should be placed. They are tested on their level of French, writing and comprehension in their native language, and mathematics in their native language. Certificates of previous academic results are not required¹⁰⁶.</p> | |
| <u>Austria</u> | <u>Sweden</u> |
| <p>In 2018, Austria introduced a new model of language promotion. Pupils with no or little German language skills are separated from their schoolmates during most subjects and taught German. When they pass a test certifying sufficient language skills, they are integrated fully into the normal class¹⁰⁷.</p> | <p>In Sweden, asylum-seeking and protection status holder children between 16 and 18 years old are usually enrolled in separate language introduction programmes (<i>Språkintröduktion</i>) in upper secondary schools. The aim is to prepare the students for the regular upper secondary-level programmes or other education pathways. Within these programmes, schools must also offer additional school subjects that a pupil may need in order to be able to access regular study programmes at upper secondary level¹⁰⁸.</p> |
| <u>Germany</u> | <u>Netherlands</u> |
| <p>In Germany, separate preparatory classes (named differently depending on the location, e.g. <i>Willkommensklass</i>, <i>Vorkurs</i>, <i>Sprachlernklasse</i>) have been offered to all new children in primary, secondary and vocational schools. These classes vary in modality and duration. In some regions, students attend preparatory classes for one to two years before being transferred to regular classes. Older students (typically, in year 9 or 10) may also attend courses that combine language acquisition with professional training, such as a vocational qualification course (<i>berufsquali zierender Lehrgang</i>) or integrated vocational preparatory course (<i>integrierte Berufsausbildungsvorbereitung</i>) in Berlin; language acquisition and professional orientation (<i>Sprachförderungs-klass plus Berufsorientierung</i> and <i>Berufsorientierungs-klass mit Sprachförder-ung</i>) in Bremen; and SPRINT classes (<i>Sprache und Integration</i>) for language and integration in Lower Saxony¹⁰⁹.</p> | <p>The Pharos Schools Programme provides classroom programmes in the Netherlands focused on nurturing social participation among migrant children with host society children and adults while also providing individualized attention according to the needs of the child. The Programme is offered in special primary and secondary schools for refugee and asylum-seeking children. Teachers are trained in teaching techniques for children at each developmental level. The techniques include verbal and non-verbal activities, with attention to past and present life, identity, feelings of trust and safety, and the development of agency in the children. In a version of the programme in the United Kingdom, services from refugee community organizations are also included¹¹⁰.</p> |

Promising practice: UAC accommodation – residential facilities

UAC accommodation in refugee contexts can take several forms, including absorption of UAC in refugee families, inclusion of UAC in state accommodation intended for local children, or the creation of separate holistic care facilities intended for UAC. In Greece, in 2021, the following types of accommodation for UAC are in place:

1. IOM Hotels
2. Safe Zones in sites
3. UAC safe areas in Reception Identification Centres (RICs)
4. NGO-provided care facilities

In Greece, examples of best practices in holistic care accommodation include the following:

a) The Home Project provides a stable living environment, capable of covering the basic living and social needs of all children. UAC receive holistic child protection services covering food, material, medical provision, social, legal, psychological support and obtain immediate access to education and training. The Child Protection model has been established on four pillars: Mental health, Education, Pedagogical support, and Social Support¹¹¹.

b) SOS Children’s Villages offers accommodation and care to unaccompanied and separated children regardless of their migration status. The facility can accommodate up to 25 children (UAC have access to psychosocial support, legal advice on asylum and family reunification procedures, educational and recreational activities and support to access the national healthcare system). Those approaching 18 are prepared for employment.

Best practices from other countries are mentioned below:

| Promising Practices: UAC accommodation | |
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| Other EU Member States provide separate accommodation specifically for children, for example, children’s homes (the majority of Member States), and/or a designated section for children within general reception/accommodation facility, or specialized accommodation for UAC with specific needs, other options like living with adult relatives or supported accommodation for children at the age of 15-17 years old, and more rarely foster families. | |
| <u>Types of accommodation in France</u> | <u>Types of accommodation in Finland</u> |
| In France UAC who have applied for international protection can be accommodated in special centres, where, in addition to legal and educational support, continuous monitoring is also provided to UAC (legal and psychological support) ¹¹² . | Finland has adopted a functional system, whereby asylum-seeking UAC are usually accommodated in group homes within the reception system and, after receiving a residence permit, moved to a family group home established by the municipality ¹¹³ . |

Promising practice: Supported Independent Living

Supported Independent Living (SIL)¹¹⁴ provides adolescents with housing, appropriate supervision, and access to a range of protection services. This model aims to give UAC opportunities to develop their life skills and resilience, in order to support their transition to adulthood within the local community.

In Greece, UNHCR and UNICEF with partners piloted the Supported Independent Living (SIL) scheme in 2018, where EKKA guardians and dedicated teams supported children over 16 years old to live on their own. The SIL model, which was scaled up since 2018 to approximately 400 placements, places up to four children in apartments, with each child provided with individual support by a multi-disciplinary team (a social worker, carer and legal representative), who facilitate their access to services and work with them to build independent living skills¹¹⁵. UAC have access to psychosocial support, legal advice on asylum and family reunification procedures, educational and recreational activities, as well as support to access the national healthcare system while also acquiring life skills. Each child has access to 24/7 emergency support and is assisted with a personal action plan. Each multi-disciplinary team can support up to 24 UAC across six SIL apartments.

Recently, an effort to promote SIL in EU countries has been inaugurated through the Proud Project (Promoting Supported Independent Living as an alternative care practice for unaccompanied children), funded by the AMIF Programme (Transnational actions for Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the EU Member States and supporting legal migration) for the 2019 - 2021 period. The project will be implemented in Greece, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands, with the aim of cultivating an alternative care practice for unaccompanied children, with a focus on children aged between 15 and 18.

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| Promising practice: Our New Children programme - <u>Norway</u> |
| A municipality of Norway set up “family homes” for two to five children “from scratch” by first finding suitable housing and then recruiting foster parents. The family-home model is further backed up by close and frequent support from competent professionals. The first evaluation of the programme considered the family-home model a promising practice and recommended putting it to use in other municipalities in Norway ¹¹⁶ . |

Promising Practice: Accommodation through sponsorship

Sponsorship involves the engagement of adults who may either sponsor UAC through the provision of accommodation and care or who may support guardian sponsors to guide and support UAC.

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| Promising Practices on Sponsorship | |
| <u>Sponsorship programme - Belgium</u> | |
| The Belgium sponsorship programme facilitates young asylum-seekers in realizing their life goals. The objective is to give the children non-financial, moral support through an individual or a family. The ‘godmothers’ and ‘godfathers’ of this project who are selected and trained on the legal and social aspects of the asylum procedure help these children by sharing their life experiences, providing emotional support, or simply listening to them ¹¹⁷ . | |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>People Strengthen People,</u> <u>“Menschen stärken Menschen” - Germany</u></p> <p>Funded by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, People Strengthen People aims to promote and support sponsorships between refugees and people living in Germany. One of the main tasks of the programme is to develop specialist standards and recommendations for the care of young unaccompanied refugees, in particular placement with foster families, skill-building of foster parents and establishing volunteer support</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Municipality sponsorship – The Netherlands</u></p> <p>According to promising practices, involvement of Municipalities and other local actors greatly contribute to the success of the projects. The example from the Netherlands points exactly to that direction, with municipalities sharing a number of competences regarding integration of refugees. Local measures for overcoming linguistic or cultural barriers, such as providing information or services in a variety of languages, have had the advantage of avoiding parallel systems or different treatment based on</p> |

structures with guardians and sponsors. The initiative, implemented by Diakonie Deutschland and Competence Centre for Foster Children, has been tested in ten model locations in Germany¹¹⁸. Similarly, the initiative SchlüsselBund (“Key Chain”) connects housing sponsors with young adult asylum applicants and refugees. Interested residents with a spare room or flat offer housing and guidance to a young migrant. The aim is to support the young adult on their way to independent living. The sponsorship programme is funded by youth welfare authorities. The youth welfare authority and the implementing organization remain points of contact for the duration of the sponsorship. Participants may benefit from advisory services and seminars that deal with legal questions and practical challenges. The sponsor and the young adult receive financial support from the authorities¹¹⁹.

ethnicity or nationality, and have ensured sustainable access to public services and infrastructures for migrants. These measures are usually seen as providing initial support (i.e. language, accompaniment, etc.) to newcomers to navigate the system until the point it is fully accessible for all. The example from the Netherlands points exactly to that direction, with municipalities sharing a number of competences regarding the integration of refugees. As a result of the Participation Law (Participatiewet) adopted in 2015, municipalities now receive bundled funding (BUIG) for multiple social welfare regulations. Surpluses can be allocated elsewhere, while shortages have to be topped up by the municipality itself. Overall, the responsibility for refugee housing has been devolved to the local level¹²⁰.

Promising practice: Vocational Training

Vocational training is education, training and skills development with the aim of facilitating entry to the labour market. Inclusion of refugee youth in national accredited skills training and diplomas can contribute to self-reliance and independence. In Greece, technical high schools that focus on vocational training exist, however UAC need to have standard Greek language skills in order to access these schools. NGOs also provide *ad-hoc* vocational training to refugee and migrant youth.

Promising Practices on Vocational Training

In **Italy** a project targeting UAC not asking for international protection, is available until the age of 23. The project is based on the provision of an individual integration plan aimed at supporting unaccompanied children and young migrants' ability to gain self-sufficiency and access the labour market. The plan includes a set of integration services aimed at facilitating recipients' access to the labour market (tutoring, counselling, career guidance, job orientation, traineeships) and the possibility of attending an internship¹²¹.

In **Finland**, an unaccompanied minor who registers at an Employment and Economic Development Office as an unemployed jobseeker will receive an integration plan, which may include study plans, as well as other measures that support integration, employment and social inclusion¹²².

In **Germany**, unaccompanied children receive personal counselling within the youth welfare system, covering prospects for taking up vocational training and employment. In addition, unaccompanied children have access to programmes providing career orientation to children and adolescents such as vocational preparation schemes at schools or programmes funded by the Federal Employment Agency¹²³.

In the **Czech Republic**, if the child is placed in the Facility for Children of Foreign Nationals (ZDC), the facility helps unaccompanied children explore their professional orientation, for example through the arrangement of visits to job fairs and schools and short-term placements with different employers¹²⁴.

Promising practices for young people over 18 years old

Although this age category extends beyond the scope of the present report, it is deemed important to incorporate some promising practices which could be beneficial for the 18+ age group in continued need of protection, care, mentoring and solutions as a means to prevent homelessness while enabling integration¹²⁵. It is worthwhile restating that vulnerability should be recognized for all until the age of 21¹²⁶.

When UAC turn 18, they lose a range of rights and protection available to them as children: support from a guardian/social worker, opportunities for family reunification, access to accommodation, education, healthcare and psychological support, employment, protective environment and relationships they built previously in facilities for children. Evidence shows that this transition has a significant psychological impact on young people, with potential additional traumatization on top of the initial trauma they have experienced, added with fear and uncertainty. UNHCR with the Council of Europe (CoE) recognized the specific challenges this group is facing, and following a research report in 2014¹²⁷, the Council of Europe (CoE) adopted a resolution calling upon Member States to: 1) take account of the specific situation of unaccompanied or separated migrant children who reach majority; 2) establish a transition category, taking policy measures on welfare assistance and education, access to information, extension of housing assistance until solutions are found, and access to healthcare; 3) train social workers in this specific transition category.¹²⁸

Teenagers and young adults ought to be treated as such and offered protection regardless of their status. Youth should be included according to EU and international standards and States must take protective and support measures beyond the age of 18¹²⁹.

UAC should remain protected, even when they reach the age of 18 (age of majority), and therefore be allowed to stay in the same place/area where they are already accommodated whenever possible. Even when that is not possible, special measures must be taken when transferring UAC reaching the age of majority to an adult reception facility. The transfer should be carefully organized together with both reception facilities and the UAC¹³⁰.

In Greece, the ESTIA housing represents a temporary solution only for an exceptional few with a stay of up to six months after recognition. It excludes both the 18+ population that do not reside in UAC facilities whether they are refugees or asylum-seekers (50 per cent of the registered UAC in Greece (source: EKKA dashboard, 30 April 2019), as well as those assessed not to have any definite vulnerability beyond absence of family and support networks.

| Promising practices for young people who have turned 18 years old | |
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| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Norbotten - Sweden</u></p> <p>In the region of Norbotten in Sweden, when children with protection status turn 18, social workers move them to flats that they can sublet from social services. The subletting through social services is a guarantee for landlords. Case officers from the municipality regularly visit and support these young persons. After one year, the person usually has the lease transferred to them. Before they turn 18, children and social workers have a talk about the practical implications of reaching</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Bouches-du-Rhône and Nord - France</u></p> <p>In the French regions Bouches-du-Rhône (Provence- Alpes-Côte d’Azur) and Nord (Hauts-de-France), experts found that increasing numbers of young people turning 18 are homeless as a result of the scarcity of Young Adult Contracts and their lack of financial resources. According to an expert in Marseilles, child welfare services have therefore pointed UAC towards short vocational training courses so that they can support themselves when they</p> |

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| <p>adulthood in Sweden, for example in relation to the use of alcohol, drugs and tobacco, as well as individual responsibility to manage their education and continue their activities in sports associations or other physical activities. If the UAC is assessed as needing extra help during the transition, social services appoint a contact person, to whom the child can turn for social support¹³¹.</p> | <p>turn 18,. Local schools in Lille have also noticed pupils becoming homeless at the age of 18¹³².</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>France</u></p> <p>In France, the Young Adult Contract (<i>Contrat Jeune Majeur</i>) is an arrangement for material, educational and psychological support to adults up to 21 years of age facing difficulties¹³³. The aim of the contract is, ultimately, to enable the young person to live autonomously¹³⁴.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Austria/Italy</u></p> <p>Organizations running child facilities in Austria and Italy have tried to ensure transfers to facilities nearby that are run by the same organization. This allows social workers to follow up and to accommodate young adults together, avoiding a sudden and drastic change in roommates' ages¹³⁵.</p> |

Annex 2: Methodology standards and challenges

Sampling methodology

Homelessness refers to informal/insecure housing conditions that could vary from temporary stay in apartments with others, living in squats, being utterly homeless, and/or moving frequently between different types of accommodation. For research validity purposes, it is essential that sampling of these environments should cover as much variability as possible and practical. However, it was unlikely that sufficient data would be available in the uncontrolled environment at the centre of this study, to employ stratified random sampling or any other probability sampling. Instead, non-probability sampling techniques were chosen, namely maximum variation purposive sampling and snowball sampling.

Informed consent

Consent is a prerequisite to ensure that participants fully understand all aspects of the research before they can make a decision confirming their willingness to participate. This involves giving the space and opportunity to children to make their own decisions, all the while ensuring that they are in fact willing participants. Consent is not a one-off action, but an ongoing process for as long as one is involved in the research. This means that a child who agrees to take part in a research may still withdraw his/her consent at any time¹³⁶.

In accordance with the best interests of the child and taking into consideration the right of the child to be heard, the approval of each UAC was ensured throughout the research. Seeking to minimize potential negative reactions to the questionnaire by homeless UAC living in precarious conditions, it was important that they be fully briefed and informed on the purpose of the research. In particular, informed consent was obtained prior to and during the interviews/research. Before the completion of the questionnaire, children were informed of the study and its ultimate goal. Once the children agreed to answer the questionnaire, they were regularly asked during the process whether they want to continue completing the questionnaire.

Beyond the above-mentioned checks and balances, it was taken into account that according to responsible research guidelines involving children (and especially homeless children), participants may feel compelled to participate. This may occur due to a broad range of assumptions and expectations around adult power and control, gender, race and other markers and determinants of power and privilege. These could be based on their previous experiences as well as their current circumstances. In this regard, particular awareness was brought to the fact that the researcher may be viewed as an authoritative figure¹³⁷. Considering that the process involved friendly discussion on the questions and that the children knew the professional (e.g., lawyer / social worker, psychologist. Etc.) who was present in the premises ensured that children felt at ease to dropout during the interviews. Nonetheless, there were not any dropouts, signifying that children appreciated participating in the research.

Research information

In accordance with the law¹³⁸, the present research information does not include personal data and the principles of data protection do not apply, since all the information which was collected in the questionnaires was anonymous, namely, information which does not relate to an identified or identifiable natural person. The collection of the research information was carried out through the development of a child-friendly application (for use through smartphones and tablets). It was designed according to the best interests of the child and their protection needs, which were ensured through the anonymity of the UAC participating in the research and excluding any possibility to identify them. Furthermore, it is important to note that the processing of such anonymous information took place solely for academic research and statistical purposes.

Interviews

It was initially planned that children had the option to fill in the questionnaire on their own, with an interpreter next to them for clarification. After a few initial interviews, it was discovered that the quality of the interviews, the accuracy of the answers, and the rapport built with children was much stronger if the researchers were the ones filling in the questionnaires after first discussing each question with the children through interpretation. Interviews were conducted: a) individually, meaning on a one-to-one basis with the help of an interpreter; b) in pairs; or c) in groups of 3 and 4 UAC. Taking into account the inherent difficulties past initiatives with children have faced due to various languages being spoken in meetings, it was decided to group participants according to the language spoken.

Other than Greek and English, the interpreters/cultural mediators chosen for this project, speak Farsi, Arabic, Urdu, or Pashto. When interviews were conducted in groups of 3 or 4, two researchers were present to ensure that no information was disregarded and the process ran smoothly. In some NGOs, the child's psychologist/lawyer/social worker was also present during the interview as part of protocol. The presence of NGO professionals proved especially helpful since it enhanced the building of trust with the participating children, as well as their willingness to further open up about their experiences. Children were introduced to the concept of the research, were asked questions on their needs, risks and expectations (open-ended questions) and were given a choice among the available incentives. All participating UAC understood that the findings of the research could potentially improve the living conditions of all children in the same situation.

Temporary Youth Committee

The Youth Committee was established and consulted for the purpose of this research. To enable these children to express their views, they were provided with all relevant information about the scope and the goal of the research. They were also informed that it was not necessary to have comprehensive knowledge of all aspects of the matters affecting them, but that they have sufficient understanding to be capable of appropriately forming their own views on the matter.¹³⁹ Apart from participating in the validation of the questionnaire, they were also consulted on the type of incentives which would be received by the children participating in the research. It was important to find appropriate rewards that would not risk skewing the results, (motivating the children to take part only to receive the reward). The Youth Committee -once fully formed- when external circumstances allow it, hopefully will be under the auspices of the SSPUAM, as part of the strategy for UAC. It is intended to be a guide and inspiration to assess and improve the conditions their homeless peers face. Given that children's own opinions are key to achieving the most sustainable and effective solutions¹⁴⁰, the initial goal was the participation of these children in the Youth Parliament, an initiative of the Greek Parliament. This would provide an opportunity to directly address the urgent needs of homeless UAC living under dangerous conditions and for the members themselves, a sense of involvement (both symbolic and practical) in the decisions concerning their life (from survival and dignity to development)¹⁴¹. The intention of the research team and hope is for the Committee to establish itself beyond the scope of this field research. The Youth Committee can continue to play a meaningful role towards tangible policy recommendations (which is one of the overarching goals of the research)¹⁴².

Incentives

Following input from the organizations and children participating in the Youth Committee, it was decided to offer incentives to the children participating in the research. All UAC participants received hygiene kits provided by UNHCR. In addition, they received coupons or vouchers from a telecommunication company for prepaid internet data/telephone¹⁴³. Lastly, the UAC who participate in the Youth Committee received vouchers from Sklavenitis supermarket to purchase basic goods.

Qualitative and quantitative data

The research focused on understanding children's own problems, dreams and suggestions. Therefore, the questionnaires addressing children included both closed and open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were related to the identification of key problems homeless UAC have faced in their day-to-day life. They were asked three risks they face in their daily lives, three factors that help them to cope with the demands of their everyday life, three areas/services they can suggest which could improve their life, including a discussion of their ideal futures. Both qualitative and quantitative data from the questionnaire were received.

Safeguarding procedure

The purpose of this procedure was to protect UAC, researchers and the interpreters/cultural mediators participating in the research, while ensuring the efficiency of the research.

1. UAC are extremely vulnerable and researchers must take extra measures to protect both the children and themselves. When selecting participants, it is important to take personal histories into account. Researchers should consider how participants are likely to cope with being asked to talk about their past experiences. Being sensitive to past experiences can help minimise distress.
2. Non-disclosure of identity and personal information. The research information does not constitute personal data and the principles of data protection do not apply, since all the information which was collected in the questionnaires was anonymous, namely, information which does not relate to an identified or identifiable natural person, according to Regulation (EU) 2016/679.
3. Referral mechanisms are of crucial importance. Established referral pathways, including child protection actors on the ground and competent authorities were used for the purposes of the research.
4. Training of interpreters/cultural mediators and volunteers as to how to respond to security risks. A list of emergency phone numbers were distributed and different scenarios were discussed during the training sessions.
5. A number of meetings were organized between the meso-level participants and researchers in order to give the description of the research aims and conditions.
6. Process of the discussions:
 - Start the discussion with a brief introduction that should include: introduction; the purpose and objectives of the participation; why children's participation is important and an outline of the process; respect for confidentiality and use of the information.
 - Building trust among the researcher, child, interpreter/cultural mediator.
 - Being at ease with children, engaging with them in whatever style of communication suits the individual (e.g. by sitting on the ground, through play, going for a walk) and tolerating expressions of distress, aggression.
 - Using simple language and concepts appropriate to the child's age, stage of development, and culture.
 - Accepting that children who have had distressing experiences may find it extremely difficult to trust an unfamiliar adult. It may take time and patience before the child can feel sufficient trust to communicate openly.
 - Understanding that children may view their situation in distinctly different ways from adults: children may fantasize, invent explanations for unfamiliar or frightening events, express themselves in symbolic ways, emphasize issues which may seem unimportant to adults and so on.

- Being sensitive to gender, culture, ethics, and the power relations between adults and the child; it is important to be sensitive to cultural norms when conducting the sessions to ensure that no one feels rushed or excluded.
- Ask open questions, such as how, what, where, why as much as possible, especially to clarify or to check understanding.
- Do not judge children; listen to them carefully.
- Ensure time for children to raise their own questions, concerns and prospects; ask them which of the issues raised they consider to be the most pressing.

Research Limitations

a) Covid-19 limitations/Covid-19 dilemma

The outbreak of the pandemic inevitably affected the originally planned field research in various ways. NGOs were hesitant in arranging meetings with children for fear of the pandemic, the idea of focus group discussions was dismissed due to restrictions on the number of persons allowed to gather. Furthermore, a few of the interviews would have to take place without the physical presence of a researcher due to travel limitations, while the research team had a limited presence in the streets of Athens due to the pandemic. These restrictions led to the dilemma, would the field research continue or would it be postponed? The research team decided that it was imperative to address the needs of homeless UAC living in precarious conditions, hence the aforementioned limitations of the research were acknowledged.

b) Other limitations: access to UAC, and adapting the methodology for completion of the questionnaires

Tracking down UAC proved to be a difficult exercise. A smaller than anticipated percentage of the total number of UAC are in touch with organizations, leading us to conclude that the initial estimations of the NGOs regarding the homeless UAC they support were perhaps optimistic. In fact, 58 per cent of the meso-level participants claimed that it is common for UAC to sometimes disappear, which in fact remains one of the primary risks these children face.

Some other issues/reasons that limited the research efforts were the following:

- A number of UAC who were in contact with the organizations were not proposed for the research due to perceived vulnerability at the time the field research was conducted.
- During the first days of the interviews children were given the option to complete the questionnaires by themselves (with the help of an interpreter). This also meant from the side of the researchers that they would not be intervening, in order to make clarifications. In due course, it became obvious that there were some serious inaccuracies which could influence the results. The most obvious of these was that a number of children indicated that they had absconded from a shelter when, in fact, they meant RICs and Safe Zones on the North-Eastern Aegean islands. This realization justifies a lot of the observations regarding inadequate information and lack of access to information as experienced by the children, who, despite having been in Greece for months had not had their rights or procedures¹⁴⁴ properly explained to them.
- Limited presence of the NGOs' staff due to summer leave.
- Personnel limitations of the research team: lack of interpreters available due to demanding workloads, did at times become obstructive (e.g. Urdu speakers); in addition, scarcity of Bengali interpreters meant a large number of potential participants could not take part.
- The research coincided with a relocation exercise directed towards homeless UAC and those in precarious conditions (August 2020). Most organizations expressed their desire to combine the relocation exercise with our research. Despite the goodwill of all parties involved, the delays, both

before the launch of the relocation exercise and afterwards, in conjunction with the fact that the relocation exercise programme for homeless UAC and those in precarious conditions was conducted during the summer, led to inherent delays with regards to the conduct of the research through the interviews.

- Technical issues: the platform for the questionnaire crashed for a few days, and despite the fact that support services eventually managed to overcome the problem, valuable time was lost.

Ethical considerations

Research ethics in studies of refugee groups (in general) are multi-layered: it is not only the responsibility of the researchers to be ethical researchers on the micro-level in relation to the participants and their social and support network, but also the challenge to conduct ethical research on the macro/socio-political level. As researchers, identifying shortcomings in the support that refugee groups receive is a priority, which implies that the researchers are also considered responsible for denouncing these deficiencies on the level of policy and related practice, and that we should advocate for improvements on behalf of refugee groups. Also, on a macro-level, the ethical responsibility of the researchers arises due to the UAC's young age, lack of parental support figures and emotional vulnerability, and the shortcomings in the educational and psychological care structures for them.

According to UNICEF's 'Ethics Procedure' (which establishes the ethical standards for research with children), the following areas are of utmost importance: harms and benefits, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, payment and compensation in terms of incentives, and conflicts of interest¹⁴⁵. Ethical considerations within these areas may include the design of the research, the approval and structure of interviews, as well as the analysis and dissemination of results all the while maintaining anonymity¹⁴⁶. The research was conducted with full respect for and in accordance with the above ethical standards.

Vulnerability

UAC are regarded as '*vulnerable persons*' whose specific circumstances and conditions must be taken into account¹⁴⁷. As identified by a European Parliament study, factors that tend to add to this vulnerability (in addition to trauma experienced in the country of origin) are the impact of the journey and any confinement¹⁴⁸. Also, as documented by previous studies in the extensive literature review, UAC suffer from disproportionately higher levels of mental health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder and depression, than children who migrate with their parents. There is also evidence showing that some unaccompanied refugee children have complex physical health needs, including incomplete immunizations¹⁴⁹. This was duly taken into account in all stages of the research.

Best interests of the UAC

i. Concept and content

The Committee on the Rights of the Child defines the 'Best Interests of the Child' in CRC General Comment No. 14(2013) as a threefold concept:

- A substantive right: the right of the child to have his or her best interests assessed and taken as primary consideration when different interests are being considered in order to reach a decision on the issue at stake, and the guarantee that this right will be implemented whenever a decision is to be made concerning a child, a group of identified or unidentified children, or children in general. Article 3, paragraph 1, creates an intrinsic obligation for States, is directly applicable (self-executing) and can be invoked before a court.
- A fundamental, interpretative legal principle: meaning that if a legal provision is open to more than one interpretation, the interpretation which most effectively serves the child's best interests should be chosen.

- A rule of procedure: whenever a decision is to be made that will affect a specific child, an identified group of children, or children in general, the decision-making process must include an evaluation of the possible impact (positive or negative) of the decision on the child concerned. Assessing and determining the best interests of the child require procedural guarantees. Furthermore, the justification of a decision must show that the right has been explicitly taken into account. In this regard, parties shall explain how the right has been respected in the decision, that is, what has been considered to be in the child's best interests; what criteria it is based on; and how the child's interests have been weighed against other considerations, be they broad issues of policy or individual cases¹⁵⁰.

The need to establish a procedure for operationalizing the Best Interest principle also stems from Article 3, paragraph 1¹⁵¹. The Best Interests Procedure (BIP) is a mechanism that UNHCR uses to ensure respect for the best interest principle for decisions that affect individual children¹⁵². The BIP includes comprehensive child protection case management through six key steps: identification, best interest assessment, action planning, implementation, follow up and case closure. There are two key procedural elements for making decisions throughout the different steps of case management¹⁵³: best interest assessment (BIA),¹⁵⁴ and best interest determination (BID).¹⁵⁵

ii. Best interests of the child applied in the research including no harm and intersectionality

The research guarantees the full respect of the Best Interests of the Child which is closely linked to the principle of 'do no harm'. All aspects of vulnerability and intersectionality were key elements in this research's methodology and analysis.

1. A participatory development process in line with a model of questionnaires for adolescents was chosen: the Best Interests of the Child Self-report questionnaire (BIC-S) which is based on the best interests of the child. In line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the primary intention of the BIC-S is to give young people in care a voice regarding decisions in legal and care areas that impact their future¹⁵⁶. The development process of the research's questionnaire consisted of two main phases (consultation and pilot) in which UAC had an active role.
2. The content and structure of the questionnaires were developed according to the requirements for the specific age group¹⁵⁷, and relative time limitation. Special attention was paid to the wording and formulation of the questions so as to avoid any possible (re)traumatization of the homeless UAC, while making the child feel comfortable was considered as a priority.
3. All interviews (apart from in the field) took place in the secure environment of the premises of NGOs in the presence of persons that children knew already and trusted. As regard the interviews outside those in an office environment, the researchers were friendly in their approach, discussions took place in informal settings, offering the children snacks of juice and biscuits, which contributed to the relaxed atmosphere. This also helped the children feel comfortable entrusting the researchers with their responses.
4. Children were reassured of strict confidentiality and anonymity. These conditions enabled the children to be heard (most of them for the first time), rendering them rights-holders and nurturing the belief and feeling that their 'voice matters'.
5. In extremely urgent cases, referrals to UNHCR of unregistered homeless UAC, victims of sexual exploitation, sexual harassment and victims of labour exploitation, who were located through the street research were conducted. Upon consent of the children they were also referred to UNHCR for potential inclusion in the Relocation scheme which has been implemented by SSPUAM, UNHCR and EASO since June 2020¹⁵⁸.
6. Finally, a safeguarding procedure was developed (Annex 1).

Annex 3: Legislation

The Right to Housing

| Instrument | Main Provisions |
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| Universal Declaration of Human Rights | Article 25(1) |
| Convention on the Rights of the Child | Articles 20(2), 20(3), 27(1), 27(2), 27(3) |
| UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment Number 6 (2005) on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside Their Country of Origin | Para. 39-40, 44-45 |
| Joint general comment No. 4 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 23 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on State obligations regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return, 16 November 2017, CMW/C/GC/4-CRC/C/GC/23 | Para. 11, 13, 49-52 |
| International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination | Article 5(e)(iii) |
| The 1951 Refugee Convention relating to the Status of Refugees | Article 21 |
| International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights | Article 11(1) |
| Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol | Article 28(1), 28(2)(d) |
| United Nations General Assembly, Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, A/RES/64/142, 24 February 2010 | |
| Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union | Article 34(3) |
| Revised European Social Charter | Article 31 |
| Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast) | Articles 2(g), 17(2), 17(3), 18(1), 18(3), 18(6) |
| Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (recast) | Articles 31(3), 31(4), 32 |
| Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals | Article 17(4) |

| Instrument | Main Provisions |
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| Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA | Article 11(5) |
| UN General Assembly, Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, 24 February 2010, A/RES/64/142 | Para. 4 – 5, 91 – 92, 104(a), 123 – 124 |

The Right to Health

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| Universal Declaration of Human Rights | Article 25(1) |
| Convention on the Rights of the Child | Articles 23, 24, 39 |
| UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment Number 6 (2005) on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside Their Country of Origin | Para. 46-49 |
| UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment Number 15 (2013) on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, 17 April 2013, CRC/C/GC/15 | Para. 23-31, 36-40 |
| Joint general comment No. 4 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 23 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on State obligations regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return, 16 November 2017, CMW/C/GC/4-CRC/C/GC/23 | Para. 9, 54-58 |
| International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination | Article 5(e)(iv) |
| International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights | Article 12 |
| Revised European Social Charter | Articles 11, 13 |
| Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union | Article 35 |
| Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast) | Articles 17(2), 17(3), 19, 23(4) |
| Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (recast) | Article 30 |
| Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA | Articles 11(5), 11(7) |

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| UN General Assembly, Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, 24 February 2010, A/RES/64/142 | Para. 84, 104(a), 136 |
| UNHCR, Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum, February 1997 | Para 7.9 - 7.11 |

The Right to Education

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| Universal Declaration of Human Rights | Article 26(1), 26(2) |
| Convention on the Rights of the Child | Articles 28, 29, 30, 32 |
| UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment Number 6 (2005) on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside Their Country of Origin | Para. 41- 43 |
| International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination | Articles 5(e)(v), 5(e)(vi), 7 |
| The 1951 Refugee Convention relating to the status of refugees | Article 22 |
| Protocol No. 1 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms | Article 2 |
| International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights | Article 13 |
| Joint general comment No. 4 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 23 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on State obligations regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return, 16 November 2017, CMW/C/GC/4-CRC/C/GC/23 | Para. 59 - 63 |
| UN General Assembly, Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, 24 February 2010, A/RES/64/142 | Para. 85, 104(a), 135 |
| Revised European Social Charter | Articles 9, 10 |
| Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast) | Article 14 |
| Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (recast) | Recital (42), Articles 26(2), 27 |
| Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA | Article 14(1) |

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| Council Directive 2004/81/EC of 29 April 2004 on the residence permit issued to third-country nationals who are victims of trafficking in human beings or who have been the subject of an action to facilitate illegal immigration, who cooperate with the competent authorities | Article 10(b) |
| Sustainable Development Goal 4 – 2030 Agenda, Quality Education | Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all |
| UNHCR, Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum, February 1997 | Para. 7.12 – 7.14 |

The Right to Representation

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| Convention on the Rights of the Child | Articles 18(2), 20(1) |
| UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment Number 6 (2005) on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside Their Country of Origin | Para. 21, 24, 33 - 38, 95 - 96 |
| Joint general comment No. 4 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 23 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on State obligations regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return, 16 November 2017, CMW/C/GC/4-CRC/C/GC/23 | Para. 17(f), 17(i) |
| Joint general comment No. 3 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 22 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the general principles regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration | Para. 36 |
| United Nations General Assembly, Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, A/RES/64/142, 24 February 2010 | Para. 19 |
| Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (recast) | Article 31(1), 31(2), 31(6) |
| Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA | Article 16(3) |

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| Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA | Article 20(1), 20(2) |
| Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings | Article 10(4)(a) |
| UN General Assembly, Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, 24 February 2010, A/RES/64/142 | Para. 19, 57, 145 |
| UNHCR, Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum, February 1997 | Para. 5.7 |

The Right to be heard

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| International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights | Article 19(1), 19(2) |
| Convention on the Rights of the Child | Articles 12, 13(1), 25 |
| UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment Number 6 (2005) on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside Their Country of Origin | Para. 25 |
| UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 12 (2009): The right of the child to be heard, 20 July 2009, CRC/C/GC/12 | Para. 21 - 39 |
| UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration (art. 3, para. 1), 29 May 2013, CRC/C/GC/14 | Para. 43 - 45 |
| Joint general comment No. 4 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 23 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on State obligations regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return, 16 November 2017, CMW/C/GC/4-CRC/C/GC/23 | Para. 17(d) |
| Joint general comment No. 3 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 22 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the general principles regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration, 16 November 2017, CMW/C/GC/3-CRC/C/GC/22 | Para. 34 - 39 |
| Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union | Article 24(1) |
| UNHCR, Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum, February 1997 | Para. 5.15 |

The Right to Information

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| International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights | Article 19(2) |
| Convention on the Rights of the Child | Article 13(1), 17 |
| UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment Number 6 (2005) on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside Their Country of Origin | Para. 24 - 25 |
| UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 12 (2009): The right of the child to be heard, 20 July 2009, CRC/C/GC/12 | Para. 3, 16, 25, 34, 41, 45, 48, 80-82, 97, 100, 103, 124, 134 |
| UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration (art. 3, para. 1), 29 May 2013, CRC/C/GC/14 | Para. 15(g), 77 |
| Joint general comment No. 4 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 23 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on State obligations regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return | Para. 17(b), 17(j) |
| Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (recast) | Article 22 |
| UNHCR, Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum, February 1997 | Para. 5.14 |

Access to the asylum procedure, legal safeguards and legal status

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| Convention on the Rights of the Child | 22(1) |
| UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment Number 6 (2005) on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside Their Country of Origin | Para. 26 – 28, 31, 64 - 78 |
| Joint general comment No. 4 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 23 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on State obligations regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return, 16 November 2017, CMW/C/GC/4-CRC/C/GC/23 | Para. 13, 4143 |
| Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union | Article 18 |

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| Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection (recast) | Articles 7(3), 25, 31(7)(b) |
| Council Directive 2004/81/EC of 29 April 2004 on the residence permit issued to third-country nationals who are victims of trafficking in human beings or who have been the subject of an action to facilitate illegal immigration, who cooperate with the competent authorities | Article 10(c) |
| UNHCR, Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum, February 1997 | Para. 5.1 - 5.4, 8.1 - 8.5 |

Annex 4: Schemes for young adults (18+)

I. Summary of existing 18+ schemes in various countries

| Country | Eligibility | Support received | | | | Comments |
|---------|--|------------------|------|--|--|--|
| | | Housing | Cash | Individual support (e.g. social worker/CM) | Support for self-reliance (Education/Employment) | |
| Austria | 18-20 | x | x | | | Young adults move to reception centres and after-care apartments managed by welfare institutions or NGOs |
| Belgium | Unaccompanied young adult refugees aged 17-22 years | | x | | | Pilot project in Antwerp using a co-housing scheme and buddy system with Flemish Nationals |
| Germany | Possible up to 21 if state of development justifies this | x | x | x | | Asylum-seekers must leave the accommodation provided by the youth authorities once 18, but practice on being allowed to stay on varies from one state to the other. Refugees access same services as German nationals. This includes the general assistance available to finance housing outside a youth accommodation centre. |
| Greece | Asylum-seeking and recognized refugees of 18+ : - with a recognized vulnerability (assessment made) - residing in a UAC facility (shelters, IOM hotels, safe zones) - those studying, until the end of the school year Duration: max. six months after recognition | x | x | | | ESTIA housing represents a temporary solution only for an exceptional few (stay six months after recognition). It excludes both the 18+ population that do not reside in UAC facilities whether they are refugees or asylum-seekers (currently 50 per cent of the registered UAC in Greece (source: EKKA dashboard, 30 April 2019), as well as those assessed not to have any definite vulnerability beyond absence of family and support networks. In addition, places in ESTIA are very limited in number. |
| Hungary | 18- 24, along the same lines as national children - can be extended up to 30 if enrolled in higher education | x | X | x | | Cash support up to 4,000 EUR |
| Italy | 16 to 23 years Asylum-seekers, refugees | | x | | x | Cash support 500 EUR per month up to 2,500 EUR |
| Spain | 18-25 | x | x | x | | |
| Sweden | 18-21 years | x | | x | x | Cited as good practice |

| Country | Eligibility | Support received | | | | Comments |
|---------|--|------------------|------|--|--|---|
| | | Housing | Cash | Individual support (e.g. social worker/CM) | Support for self-reliance (Education/Employment) | |
| Turkey | All 18+ exiting orphanages | | x | x | x | UNHCR-designed and supported programme. <u>Adolescents released from orphanages were identified as one of the two most vulnerable groups</u> among persons of concern (along with transgender), which led to inclusion in UNHCR CBI strategy. |
| Turkey | Children believed to be unfairly discharged from institutional care before their 18 th birthday due to a high margin of error with the bone tests | x | x | x | | Small scale project developed by UNHCR (12 children), cash 120 EUR monthly – support for four months according to concept note |
| UK | Aged 16-21 who have been “looked after” for a min. of 13 weeks in the UK Until 25 if in training or studying | x | x | x | x | |
| USA | Recognized refugees. Must enter programme before the age of 18, until 21 or 23 depending on state’s child welfare guidelines Refugees, asylum-seekers exiting foster care | x | x | x | x | |

II. Details on available 18+ schemes in various countries

| Country | Eligible | Description of support received | Implemented by | Relevant legislation |
|---------|---|---|--|----------------------|
| Austria | 18+ UAC | <p>In Austria, young adults move to reception centres and after-care apartments managed by welfare institutions or NGOs. However, these homes are often in remote areas, which limits young people's access to other services - education, training and potential opportunities for employment, as well as limiting their integration into a new society.</p> <p>Since 2013, and upon decision of the Ministry for Employment, Social Affairs and Protection of Consumers, young asylum-seekers can pursue an apprenticeship in a field where candidates are lacking in a specific region. However, any young person loses the support of the State at the age of 21.</p> | NGOs | |
| | Migrant students aged between 15 and 21 | <p>The Youth College has 1,000 young people attending different classes They also receive daily individual coaching and counselling as well as preparation for high school, apprenticeship, the job market and university.</p> <p>No mention of accommodation</p> | The Youth College in Austria | |
| Belgium | Unaccompanied young adult refugees aged 17-21 years | <p>Unaccompanied young refugees between the ages of 17 and 21 currently get financial benefits from the social welfare system but not any additional support to transition positively to adulthood – pilot project was developed in Antwerp:</p> <p>Co-housing and Case Management of Young Refugees in Antwerp (CURANT project)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot project: Nov 2016 – Oct 2019 • A “buddy” system • Accommodation: co-housing unit with shared living room, bathroom and kitchen with young Belgium nationals (often students of social work, but not a criterion). Unaccompanied young refugees co-habitat with “buddies,” young Flemish persons aged 20-30 for at least 1 year. • Support of the buddy in various areas, e.g., looking for a job, building a network, learning Dutch • Support to refugees such as support for independent living, case management and psychological support, organizing recreational activities • Support to the flatmate (“buddy”), for example training on intercultural competence. • A total of 75 co-housing units set up through purchase, renovation and private renting. In these units minimum 75 and maximum 135 persons. • Budget : 4.8 million EUR <p>https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/antwerp</p> | Led by the city of Antwerp, Co-financed by the ERDF through the Urban Innovative Action Initiative | |

| Country | Eligible | Description of support received | Implemented by | Relevant legislation |
|---------|---|---|----------------|---|
| Germany | Depends on state of development and on residence status. Particular assistance can continue until age 21 | <p>If the “state of development” justifies it, assistance provided is financial support and counselling services. Reasons may be, for example (as given by Youth Migration Services staff): language skills still too underdeveloped for accessing the labour market or some form of higher education or dealing appropriately with daily challenges (finding a place to live, paying rent, applying for financial support, other bureaucratic hurdles, enrolling in programmes, etc.), psychological problems. Practice and scope of provision of services really depends on the respective city/municipality.</p> <p>For asylum-seekers: support usually limited to the first 15 months of stay in Germany. Asylum-seekers have to leave the accommodation provided by the youth authorities when 18, but practice/leniency varies from one state to another. The young person may also apply to the aliens authority with a view to being released from the obligation to reside in collective accommodation and instead stay in a private flat. Particular assistance includes financial support and counselling services.</p> <p>For recognized refugees: needs covered in the same manner as German nationals in need of social assistance. This includes the general assistance available to finance housing outside a youth accommodation centre. Almost all the young adults enrolled in language programmes get additional assistance after coming of age. Written reasons are necessary in each case, but the respective approval is mostly granted.</p> | | Social Assistance Act (Section 41 Sozialgesetzbuch VIII) – provision on help granted up to 21 |
| Hungary | 18+ recognized refugees eligible for after-care arrangements under the same conditions as Hungarian children. | <p>Accommodation & personal counselling</p> <p>1 Reception centre for 50 young adults in transition in Fót; two post-care homes for young adults in Budapest and Mogyoród (these also accommodate Hungarian citizens). The possibility to stay in post-care homes depends exclusively on the progress of their education. Since 1 January 2018 after-care services have been extended until the age of 30 in case the young adult is enrolled in higher education. UAC reaching the age of majority also move to an after-care home until a decision is made on their status.</p> <p>Cash Assistance to facilitate their integration into Hungarian society. They may request housing support from the competent guardianship agency until the age of 30 (the value of which varies but reaches around 4,000 EUR) in case they fulfil the following conditions: they have not absconded from the home and have been taken into care by the child protection authority for over three years.</p> <p>For those who enjoy refugee status or subsidiary protection, most services provided before reaching adulthood simply continue at the age of 18.</p> | | Section 87 (3) of the Child Protection Law. Act XXXI of 1997 on child Protection and Custody Administration Implementing Decree 149/1997 (IX.10) on the Guardianship Authority and Child protection and Custody Procedures |

| Country | Eligible | Description of support received | Implemented by | Relevant legislation |
|---------|---|--|--|---|
| Italy | 16 to 23 years UAC & young people, asylum-seekers & beneficiaries of int. prot. | The aim is to support the enhancement and development of skills, integration into society and employment and to the accompany them towards autonomy. The support provided is as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No accommodation provided - Financial “indemnity” amounting to 500 EUR per month up to 2,500 EUR - Development of integration plans - including vocational training, internship, training on the job, facilitating employment opportunities - Capacity building activities to reinforce governance among institutional stakeholders. | Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity NGOs | Law no. 47 of 7 April 2017 (“Protection Measures for Unaccompanied Minors”, (Zampa Law) |
| Spain | | In Spain, a programme has been set up to help young migrants to become autonomous and when these young migrants turn 18, there is a special programme to help them become independent, including transitional housing, with programmes designed to help and take care of them until they become completely independent. | | |
| Sweden | asylum -seekers aged 18-21 | When turning 18, in Sweden, young unaccompanied and separated asylum-seekers can move to an after-care home. In Sweden, legal majority is at 18, but young unaccompanied and separated asylum-seekers (like other young foreigners) are still under the responsibility of the State until the age of 21 (instead of 20 for Swedish citizens in the welfare system). This is the case irrespective of their educational situation and their legal status. These homes are special accommodation aiming to facilitate the transition to adulthood up to the age of 21. They are given accommodation, social workers’ support, and usually cook for themselves. Social workers in after-care facilities also try to facilitate access to work through networks, job shadowing or internships. The activities in these facilities further encourage self-empowerment and young adults receive detailed information about the implications for when they turn 21. For those wishing to continue education after the age of 21, loans can be provided by the State in the same way as for Swedish students. | | |

| Country | Eligible | Description of support received | Implemented by | Relevant legislation |
|-------------|--|---|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| | Unaccompanied migrant young people aged 18 to 21 | <p>The Folk High School Track project</p> <p>Young people live and study at Folk High Schools all over Sweden. In 2017 around 70 young unaccompanied migrants attended 15 different FHS projects where they had the opportunity to improve their Swedish language skills, increase their social networks, get a summer job and participate in activities both inside and outside the school.</p> <p>Year-round accommodation at the Folk High school's internship. The accommodation is adjacent to the school, which creates a clear context for the young people. Breakfast and lunch, sometimes dinner, are included on weekdays during semester hours. Young people live with other participants, but usually get their own rooms. Kitchen and toilets are shared with others on the same corridor. There are always common rules, which of course also apply to the unaccompanied young people.</p> <p>The folk high schools have a special resource officer linked to the young people. It can be a course or boarding director, or a specially employed "extra mother". This ensures that the young people are introduced to the folk high school, and can orientate themselves practically in the locality.</p> <p>https://www.esn-eu.org/ro/content/folk-high-school-track-project-integrating-unaccompanied-young-migrants-schools</p> | The Folk High School Track project | |
| Switzerland | | <p>Varies significantly depending on the Canton. Some have no specific schemes, others may support UAC turned 18 until age 25 with housing (e.g. shared apartments or collective shelter) and individualized support</p> <p>https://www.ssi-schweiz.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/Tableau%20cantons_Mapping%20Update%202018.pdf</p> | | |

| Country | Eligible | Description of support received | Implemented by | Relevant legislation |
|---------|--|---|----------------|----------------------|
| Turkey | All 18+ exiting orphanages until self-reliance, max. 2 years | <p>Provision of conditional cash assistance to support adolescents released from orphanages because they turned 18</p> <p>Improve their language or vocational skills, thus facilitate their integration into society.</p> <p><u>Adolescents released from orphanages were identified as one of the most vulnerable groups</u> among persons of concern (along with transgender). This led to UNHCR including them in its cash based initiative (CBI) strategy.</p> <p>- A Protection Unit conducts individual phone interviews with identified adolescents, as support provided is conditional on regularly attending language courses or vocational training.</p> <p>A tool jointly created by CBI and Protection Units provides a baseline to assess the needs of adolescents for cash assistance (KoBo form filled out online. No limitations on ways to spend the cash).</p> <p>In addition, UNHCR’s partners also carry out individual interviews to better understand compatibility with the training/educational opportunities provided by UNHCR and its Partners.</p> <p>ASAM, HRDF and UNHCR then facilitate the registration of adolescents for one or more of the following opportunities: formal education, distance learning programme, vocational training, language courses and higher education language courses. Through continuous monitoring and follow-up with the beneficiaries and relevant provincial actors, UNHCR CBP Unit and Implementing Partner/s will then facilitate inclusion into the corresponding educational and/or vocational programmes.</p> <p>Young people are followed-up monthly for their attendance (formal education, language courses, distance learning, vocational trainings managed and certified by the Government) and any other protection concerns that may arise. Social workers and psychologists of partners as well as the UNHCR Protection and CBI staff, provide regular adult guidance and support to the young people involved for all parts of the country. During the programme and towards graduation, the young people receive follow-up individual interviews and participate in focus group discussions.</p> <p>A second small-scale project developed for cases of UAC released from orphanages based on bone tests. This only covers children <u>believed to be unjustly discharged from institutional care before their 18th birthday due to a high margin of error with bone tests</u> (12 in September 2018) - Provision of safe shelter, cash support (120 EUR monthly) for 4 months initially in the concept note</p> | UNHCR & IPS | |

| Country | Eligible | Description of support received | Implemented by | Relevant legislation |
|---------|---|---|--|---|
| UK | <p>Aged 16-21 who have been “looked after” for a min. of 13 weeks in the UK</p> <p>Asylum-seekers until 21, until 25 if in training or studying (e.g. basic skills course, VET, university)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation • Financial assistance • Employment, education and training • Pathway plan • Personal advisor <p>https://www.childrenslegalcentre.com/resources/leaving-care-support-fact-sheet/</p> <p>The main issue is that some children are given a temporary form of leave to remain until they are 17 1/2 years old (if they are not eligible for a grant of refugee status but there are no adequate reception arrangements in the country of origin). This determines their eligibility for care and support. Before turning 18, children can apply to extend this leave, but if they are poorly advised or run out of time, they can become undocumented. This means they can have the leaving care support removed which leaves them in a very precarious position.</p> <p>UNHCR research is underway; the emerging approach is to suggest a system in the UK which would utilise a multi-disciplinary panel which could recommend a durable solution for all children including those refused asylum.</p> | The Migrant Children's Project implemented by Coram Children's Legal Centre (CCLC) | Local Authority under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 |
| USA | <p>Recognized refugees. Must enter programme before age 18, until 21 or 23 (depending on their placing, state’s child welfare guidelines)</p> <p>Refugee, asylum-seeker</p> | <p>The Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Programme (URM) – operates in 15 different states, and provides the same range of child welfare benefits and services available to other foster children in those states. The URM programme accepts young people with refugee status who are referred for U.S. resettlement, but there are other eligible populations the programme serves, including young people identified in the U.S. who have received a grant of asylum or are deemed victims of human trafficking. Services are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The URM programmes offer a range of placement settings for young people, depending on their needs. Many young people are placed in foster homes, while some young people are in group homes or in semi-independent living arrangements (less supervision than a group home.) - The programme has paid staff to address the young people’s various needs, but does rely on volunteers from the community to supplement services. Volunteers are often used for tutoring (educational support) and as mentors. - Attention paid to cultural and linguistic needs, as well as their trauma histories. - Work with the young people on independent living skills, preparing for economic self-sufficiency, and social integration so they are ready to live on their own when they leave the programme. - A major focus is education to ensure young people finish high school and have the opportunity to pursue post-secondary education or a vocational training programme. | <p>Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the Department of Health and Human Services.</p> <p>Implemented by two NGOs</p> | Title IV-B of the Social Security Act, as well as 45 CFR 400.110 – 120. |

III. 18+ schemes in Greece

- At national level there are no child protection structures to support children in the transition to adulthood that can provide support for them after they leave care.
- Several NGOs are implementing specific support to care-leavers aged 18+ based on observed need. This may be formalized as described as in specific projects below, but in effect this is mostly on a needs and case-by-case basis.

Description of programmes for 18+ (non-migrant and refugee specific)

| Project name | Description | Implemented by | Comment |
|--|---|---|--|
| INTEGRA March 2018- March 2020 | <p>Project INTEGRA brings together five European partners from different countries (Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain). The project is not specifically intended for migrant/refugee populations, though it does include a small number of beneficiaries in that category. A new shelter will open in Kavala with half of the spaces (10) intended for refugees Young persons aged 16-19 years old who are either in care or have recently left care are provided with housing, training, financial support, legal, labour and social inclusion.</p> <p>The specific objectives are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) to develop and undertake a comprehensive strategy to better enable care-experienced children deliver improvements in their educational, social and economic outcomes. Preparation for leaving care will provide young persons with opportunities for planning, problem solving and the learning of new competencies, 2) to develop personal and self-care skills such as budgeting, time management, health, nutrition, hygiene, and conflict resolution. <p>A multi-country research project was carried out in September 2018¹, where children 16+ were interviewed and asked about their concerns around leaving care and turning 18. The findings of similar research carried out in 5 participating countries highlighted the importance of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Designing systematic, specialized and personalized multidisciplinary support for children in care from the age of 16; - Introducing national standards, based on specific/local/regional evidence-based guidelines; - Investing in mentoring approaches and capacity building for caregivers; - Developing alternative care systems that allow for a family/community setting; - Building on the existing, yet sporadic, good practices and evidence-based initiatives. | The Smile of the Child | Funded by the Rights, Equality & Citizenship Programme of the EU European Programme Erasmus + |
| Right after Care Capacity Building and Training for Professionals in Alternative Care Programme: Rights Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020) | The Right After Care project provides Life Skills Workshops & Capacity Building Seminars for both to caregivers and to young people (Greek nationals and refugees and migrants) to prepare children to become self-reliant and to integrate fully in society. | Athens Lifelong Institute, Civis Plus, Praksis, Arsis | Funding: European Commission http://civisplus.gr/portfolio-view/right-after-care/ |

¹ Integra, Supporting Youth Ageing out of care, National Report Greece, The Smile of the Child, December 2018.

END NOTES

- ¹ See recent Law 4760/2020, Art. 43 (Government Gazette Series I, Issue 247/11.12.2020). Furthermore, following the fire incidents in Moria on 8, 9 & 10 September, the Special Secretary for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors (SSPUAM) with the support of UNHCR's partner METAdrasi, transferred 406 unaccompanied children and young people to IOM temporary care arrangements in northern Greece. In response to the long-standing issue of unaccompanied children stranded in precarious conditions in RICs, the SSPUAM with the support of UNHCR's partner METAdrasi transferred another 299 unaccompanied children from Chios, Samos, Kos, Leros and Fylakio, between 21-29 September, raising the total of children evacuated from RICs to 705 up to 29 September. Besides, between 4-14 November, UNHCR through its partner METAdrasi supported the SSPUAM in transferring 170 unaccompanied children who were under protective custody, in police stations and Pre-removal Detention Centers to long-term and temporary care arrangements across Greece, available in Greek at: <https://migration.gov.gr/telos-sti-filoxenia-anilikon-sta-astynomika-tmimata/>. This development was coupled with the intention of the SSPUAM to gradually abolish the Presidential Decree for protective custody (Art.118 PD141/1991), based on which homeless UAC/ those in precarious conditions are placed in protective custody as a minimum measure of "protection" by the Police, until care arrangements are available.
- ² Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, available in Greek at: <https://migration.gov.gr/telos-sti-filoxenia-anilikon-sta-astynomika-tmimata/>.
- ³ Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (recast) (**Qualification Directive**), Art. 2(h), available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32011L0095&from=EN>, Law 4636/2019 "On international protection and other provisions" (Government Gazette Series I, Issue 169/01.11.2019), as amended by Law 4686/2020 "Improvement of the migration legislation, amendment of Law 4636/2019 (Government Gazette Series I, Issue 169), 4375/2016 (Government Gazette Series I, Issue 51), 4251/2014 (Government Gazette Series I, Issue 80) and other provisions" (Government Gazette Series I, Issue 96/12.5.2020), Art. 2(b).
- ⁴ Greek Civil Code, Art. 127 (presumed conversely).
- ⁵ Law 2102/1992 on Ratification of the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (Government Gazette Series I, Issue 193/2.12.1992), Art. 4, pursuant to which child is considered to be any person under 16 years of age.
- ⁶ UNHCR, Safe & Sound: what States can do to ensure respect for the best interests of unaccompanied and separated children in Europe, October 2014, p. 22, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5423da264.pdf>, Separated Children in Europe Programme, Statement of Good Practice, 5th Revised Edition, 2019, p. 8, available at: <https://defenceforchildren.nl/media/3798/2019-scep-full-report-statement-of-good-practice-including-annex.pdf>. See also, CRC, Art. 1, 22, Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment 6 (2005), para. 79, Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA, recitals (22) & (23), Art. 14, 16(2), Directive 2011/95/EU, Art. 30, 31(3), 32, 34, UN Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW), Joint general comment No. 3 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 22 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the general principles regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration, 16 November 2017, CMW/C/GC/3-CRC/C/GC/22, para. 32(j), available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5a1293a24.html>, UNHCR, Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum, 1997, para. 9-10, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/legal/3d4f91cf4/guidelines-policies-procedures-dealing-unaccompanied-children-seeking-asylum.html>, Irish Refugee Council, Durable Solutions for Separated Children in Europe, 2015, available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326265878>. Greek Council for Refugees, Durable Solutions for Unaccompanied Children, National Report: Greece, available in Greek at: <https://www.gcr.gr/media/k2/attachments/greek.pdf>.
- ⁷ UNHCR, Safe & Sound: what States can do to ensure respect for the best interests of unaccompanied and separated children in Europe, October 2014, as above, p. 45.

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- ⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, A/HRC/31/54, 30 December 2015, p. 5-6, available at: https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/alldocs.aspx?doc_id=25820.
- ⁹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 6 (2005) on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside Their Country of Origin, para. 7, available at: <https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/GC6.pdf>. See also, Directive 2011/95/EU, art. 2(l), available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32011L0095&from=EN>., Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (**Reception Conditions (Directive)**), Art. 2(e), available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013L0033&from=EL>, Council Directive 2004/81/EC of 29 April 2004 on the residence permit issued to third-country nationals who are victims of trafficking in human beings or who have been the subject of an action to facilitate illegal immigration, who cooperate with the competent authorities, Art. 2(f), available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32004L0081&from=EN>. Law 4636/2019, Art. 2(i).
- ¹⁰ UNHCR, Operational Portal, Mediterranean Situation, Greece, Last updated: 13 December 2020, available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>.
- ¹¹ Law 4636/2019 Art. 48(2) and Law 3907/2011 "On the establishment of an Asylum Service and a First Reception Service, transposition into Greek legislation of Directive 2008/115/EC "on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third country nationals" and other provisions (Government Gazette Series I, Issue 7/26-01-2011), as amended by PD 133/2013, Law 4058/2012, Law 4375/2016, Art. 32(1). See recent Law 4760/2020, Art. 43 "Abolishment of the protective custody of UAC" (Government Gazette Series I, Issue' 247/11.12.2020). Aida 2020 Update Report, Greece, p.124: "*protective custody [...] de facto amounts to detention*". For further analysis see p. 189-193, available at: <https://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece>. Save the Children, Protection beyond reach, State of play of refugee and migrant children's rights in Europe, 2nd September 2020, p. 14.
- ¹² National Center for Social Solidarity (E.K.K.A.), Situation Update: Unaccompanied Children (UAC) in Greece, 30 September 2020, available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/81541>.
- ¹³ UNCHR call Project No. RFP-GRC-2019/019.
- ¹⁴ UNHCR, Listen and Learn, Participatory Assessment with Children and Adolescents, 2012, p. 7, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4ffe4af2.pdf>.
- ¹⁵ Connect, Local Co-operation for Unaccompanied Children, Identification, Reception & Protection of Unaccompanied Children, A tool to access and improve reception conditions, p. 14: "*Article 12 of CRC is a unique provision in a human rights treaty as it addresses the legal and social status of children who lack the full autonomy of adults, but are also rights holders. The right of all children to be heard and taken seriously constitutes one of the fundamental values of the CRC*", available at: http://www.connectproject.eu/PDF/CONNECT-SWE_Tool.pdf. See also UNCHR, Listen and Learn, Participatory Assessment with Children and Adolescents, 2012, p. 7, "*Participatory assessment is an important way of ensuring that boys and girls of all ages and backgrounds are at the centre of decisions concerning their protection and well-being. Effective participation also recognizes children and adolescents as rights-holders, it builds their capacity and resilience, and allows them to better protect themselves and their peers*", as above (endnote 18).
- ¹⁶ Save the Children – UNICEF, Every Child's Right to be Heard, A resource guide on UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No. 12, 2012, available at: https://www.unicef.org/french/adolescence/files/Every_Childs_Right_to_be_Heard.pdf. See also Separated Children in Europe Programme, Statement of Good Practice, 5th Revised Edition, 2019, p. 16 "*Measures must be put in place to facilitate their meaningful participation in line with their age and maturity. [...] Separated children should always be enabled and encouraged to voice their views, aspirations, concerns and complaints regarding their care and guardianship, education, health services, social services, legal representation and durable and secure solutions*", available at: https://defenceforchildren.nl/media/3798/2019-scep-full-report-statement-of-good-practice_-including-annex.pdf.
- ¹⁷ ARSIS (Athens and Thessaloniki), Defense for Children, Greek Council for Refugees, Hellenic Red Cross, METAdrasi, Network for Children's Rights, Solidarity Now, STEPS and Zeuxis. In addition to these, the expertise and assistance was sought of members from the Homeless UAC Task Force of the Child Protection sub-Working Group in Athens.

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- ¹⁸ CRC, Art. 12, 13(1), UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment Number 6 (2005), para. 25, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/42dd174b4.html>. General Comment No. 12 (2009): The right of the child to be heard, 20 July 2009, CRC/C/GC/12, para. 21, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4ae562c52.html>. General Comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration (Art. 3(1)), 29 May 2013, CRC/C/GC/14, para. 43-45, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/51a84b5e4.html>. Joint general comment No. 4 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 23 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on State obligations regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return, 16 November 2017, CMW/C/GC/4-CRC/C/GC/23(1)7(d), available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5a12942a2b.html>. Joint general comment No. 3 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 22 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the general principles regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration, 16 November 2017, CMW/C/GC/3-CRC/C/GC/22, para. 34-39, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5a1293a24.html>. EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Art. 24(1), available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT&from=EN>. UNHCR, Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum, February 1997, para. 5.15, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/legal/3d4f91cf4/guidelines-policies-procedures-dealing-unaccompanied-children-seeking-asylum.html>.
- ¹⁹ Council of Europe, Best Practice in Local Government, p. 2, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/bpp-best-practice-programme-for-local-governments/1680746d97>.
- ²⁰ UNICEF, IOM, UNHCR, Eurostat, OECD, A Call to Action: Protecting children on the move starts with better data, February 2018, available at: <https://data.unicef.org/resources/call-action-protecting-children-move-starts-better-data>.
- ²¹ - There were no required answers in the questionnaire due to children's vulnerability, since an obligatory answers would have a major impact on their psychology according to the psychologists in the research team. Thus there will be fewer responses to the questions than the number of UAC in the sample;
- Some questions were multiple choice and as such responses will be greater in number than the number of respondents;
- Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.
- ²² Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, Unaccompanied Minors, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/gas/diakasia-asyloy/asynodeytoi-anilikoi/>.
- ²³ Faros, Children on the Run, Experiences of unaccompanied children leaving shelters in Greece, available at: https://faros.org/site/themes/faros2019/assets/pdfs/uasc_absconding_report_eng.pdf.
- ²⁴ This conclusion derives from the repeated questions of the UAC participating in the field research to the researchers asking for clarifications about the term 'accommodation facility'.
- ²⁵ CRC Art. 13(1), 17, Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 6 (2005) on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside Their Country of Origin, para. 24 - 25, General Comment No. 12 (2009): The right of the child to be heard, 20 July 2009, CRC/C/GC/12, para. 3, 16, 25, 34, 41, 45, 48, 80-82, 97, 100, 103, 124, 134, General Comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration (Art. 3(1)), 29 May 2013, CRC/C/GC/14, para. 15(g), 77, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Art. 19(2), Joint general comment No. 4 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 23 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on State obligations regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return, 16 November 2017, CMW/C/GC/4-CRC/C/GC/23(1)7(b), 17(j), Directive 2011/95/EU, Art. 22, UNHCR, Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum, February 1997, para. 5.14.
- ²⁶ The referral pathway for Homeless UAC / those in precarious conditions, as developed by Homeless Taskforce Actors. The last version is dated 27.07.2020. The Homeless Taskforce Actors which drafted and established the referral pathways are the following: Arsia (Athens – Thessaloniki), Defense for Children International Greece, Faros, Greek Council for Refugees, METAdrasi, Network for Children's Rights, Praksis, Solidarity Now (Athens – Thessaloniki), Steps, Velos Youth, Hellenic Red Cross (Athens – Thessaloniki).
- ²⁷ Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, Unaccompanied Minors, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/gas/diakasia-asyloy/asynodeytoi-anilikoi/>.

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- ²⁸ Law 4251/2014 “Immigration and Social Integration Code and other provisions” (Government Gazette Series I, Issue’ 80/1.4.2014), Art. 21(7)(8). See also, Legal Council of the State, Opinion No. 71/2010, available at: http://www.nsk.gr/web/nsk/anazitisi-gnomodoteseon?p_p_id=nskconsularories_WAR_nskplatformportlet&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-4&p_p_col_pos=2&p_p_col_count=3.
- ²⁹ Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, Asylum Applications, available at: <https://applications.migration.gov.gr/en/ypiresies-asylou/>.
- ³⁰ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment Number 6 (2005) on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside Their Country of Origin, para. 75, 95, 96, Directive, 2011/95/EU, Art. 37, Law 4636/2019, Art. 38, Directive 2013/32/EU, Art. 10(3)(c), Law 4636/2019, Art. 74(b), Directive 2013/33/EE, Art. 18(7), Law 4636/2019, Art. 58(3).
- ³¹ Sidery, A. (2019). Fostering unaccompanied asylum seeking young people: the views of foster carers on their training and support needs. *Adoption & Fostering*, 43(1), 18.
- ³² The Greek Ombudsman, Rights of Children on the move in Greece, Annual Report 2018, p. 142, available in Greek at: <https://www.synigoros.gr/resources/docs/ee2018-kdp-dikaiom-paid-pou-metakin.pdf>.
- ³³ The Greek Ombudsman, Annual Report 2019, p. 61, available in Greek at: <https://www.synigoros.gr/resources/ee2019-p00-plires-keimeno.pdf>: See also, Council of Europe, Report to the Greek Government on the visit to Greece carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 13 to 17 March 2020, CPT/Inf (2020) 35, para. 46, 19 November 2020, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680a06a86>.
- ³⁴ CRC, Art. 27(1).
- ³⁵ European Committee of Social Rights, International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) and European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) v. Greece, Complaint No. 173/2018, Case Document No. 1, 21 December 2018, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/cc173casedoc1-en/168090390c>. See also, *European Committee for Home-Based Priority Action for the Child and the Family (EUROCEF) v. France* Complaint No. 114/2015, 24 January 2018: The Committee found that “the lack of general measures taken by the States to ensure the special protection of children resulting in overcrowded reception facilities, lack of reception homes and children living in the streets where they were exposed to moral and physical harm amounted to a violation of Article 7§10 of the Convention” (para 137), available at: <https://www.refworld.org/cases,COEECSR,5b2cc7494.html>. In its decision *Defence for Children International (DCI) v. the Netherlands*, Complaint No. 47/2008, ECSR, 20 October 2009, the Committee underlined that “States Parties are required, under Article 31§2 of the Revised Charter, to provide adequate shelter to children unlawfully present in their territory for as long as they are in their jurisdiction. Any other solution would run counter to the respect for their human dignity and would not take due account of the particularly vulnerable situation of children.” (para. 64), available at: <https://www.refworld.org/cases,COEECSR,4b9e37ea2.html>. Moreover, in its decision *Conference of European Churches (CEC) v. the Netherlands (decisions on the merits)*, Complaint No. 90/2013, ECSR, 10 November 2014, underlined that it “has repeatedly considered the right to shelter to be closely connected to the right to life and crucial for the respect of every person’s human dignity” (para. 137). The Committee, also, restated that “shelters are required to meet health, safety and hygiene standards and, in particular, be equipped with basic amenities such as access to water and heating and sufficient lighting in order to ensure that the dignity of the persons sheltered is respected.” (para. 138), available at: <https://www.refworld.org/cases,COEECSR,54e363534.html>.
- ³⁶ Law 4538/2018 “Measures to Promote Institutions of Accession and Adoption and Other Provisions (Government Gazette Series I, Issue 85/16-05-2018), SOS Children’s Villages International, When care ends - Lessons for peer research, p. 67, available at: <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/80a754d9-8832-4a16-9e7e-11ece55b23e0/PeerResearch-European-Report-WEB.pdf>. See also, The Greek Ombudsman, Rights of Children on the move in Greece, p. 123 – 125, available in Greek at: <https://www.synigoros.gr/resources/docs/ee2018-kdp-dikaiom-paid-pou-metakin.pdf>.
- ³⁷ UNGA on the Rights of the Child, with a focus on children without parental care, formal alternative care should always be a temporary measure whilst permanent solutions are sought, and should have the clear purpose of offering children a stable, protective, and nurturing environment, See UNGA, A/RES/74/133, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2019, available at: https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/A_RES_74_133_E.pdf. Similarly, UNCHR in its recommendations to the Greek government in 2017, underlines that greater emphasis is needed on the creation of other types of alternative care, e.g. foster families (care systems in host families –

local or refugee families) and supervised independent living for older children (smaller group care for those 16-17 years old), where children would be placed based on their best interests UNHCR Recommendations for Greece in 2017, February 2017, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/58d8e8e64.pdf>.

According to General recommendation from FRA, separated, asylum-seeking children should be placed in suitable care according to their best interests based on a thorough assessment of their needs, which must be regularly reviewed. Younger children should preferably be placed in the care of adult relatives or with foster families from their own culture, following a thorough assessment of their suitability. Older, more mature children should be placed in suitable, preferably semi-autonomous small group accommodation, with due regard to their need for privacy, under the supervision of adequately trained social workers. The provision of suitable facilities is particularly important with respect to children requiring special care, protection or treatment for their physical or mental health. Accommodation in facilities hosting a small number of children is, in principle, preferable to large accommodation facilities. The placement of separated children together with adults not responsible for their care, including in hotels and hostels, or other forms of rented private housing is not suitable. The placement of separated, asylum-seeking children in closed facilities should only be considered, if deemed essential for child protection, in response to the child's best interest requirements, determined and reviewed in the same way as for citizens of the host state, p. 32, available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/1692-SEPAC-comparative-report_EN.pdf.

³⁸ For more see, UNHCR, Manual on Foster Care for Unaccompanied and Separated Children, April 2018, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5bf417294.html>. See also, UNHCR, Away from home, and all alone: Helping displaced children understand foster care (Handbook for Children in Foster Care), April 2018, p. 11, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5bf416224.html>.

³⁹ The framework should be similar to the provisions of the Greek Civil Code, See Art. 1603 and subsequent articles.

⁴⁰ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment Number 6 (2005) on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside Their Country of Origin, para. 12 & 18, available at: <https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/GC6.pdf>.

⁴¹ CRC, Art. 2.

⁴² Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 6 (2005) on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside Their Country of Origin, para. 31. See also, UN Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW), Joint general comment No. 3 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 22 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the general principles regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration, 16 November 2017, CMW/C/GC/3-CRC/C/GC/22, para. 32(h), available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5a1293a24.html>. See also, UNHCR, The Way Forward to Strengthened Policies and Practices for Unaccompanied and Separated Children in Europe, ('The Way Forward'), July 2017, p. 9, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/59633afc4.html>. See also: Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, Unaccompanied Minors, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/gas/diakikasia-asyloy/asynodeytoi-anilikoi/>.

⁴³ Law 4636/2019, Art. 32, 51, 55, 58, 59, 60. See also, Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, Unaccompanied Minors, "*In case you are an unaccompanied minor, i.e. you are under 18 years old and not accompanied by an adult who is responsible for your care, according to the Greek law, the authorities must immediately inform the competent Public Prosecutor for Minors. The Public Prosecutor will appoint a representative who will be responsible for you and will defend your interests. In case you are under fifteen (15) years old, your application for international protection must be submitted by the appointed representative. In case you are over 15 years old, you may submit your application yourself. The authority responsible for your protection is the General Secretariat for Unaccompanied Minors of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, which, in cooperation with the Authorities, will care for your protection and your accommodation in a facility suitable for minors*" available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/gas/diakikasia-asyloy/i-aitisi-gia-asylo/>.

Besides, as international protection applicants, UAC have access to medical, pharmaceutical and hospital care by obtaining a Temporary Number of Insurance and Healthcare Number for Foreigners (Art. 55(2) Law 4636/2019). They also have access to public education, free of charge (Art. 51 Law 4636/2019), available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/gas/diakikasia-asyloy/meta-tin-aitisi/>.

⁴⁴ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment Number 6 (2005) on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside Their Country of Origin, para. 12 & 18, available at: <https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/GC6.pdf>.

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- ⁴⁵ CRC, Art. 2.
- ⁴⁶ In this context, Article 76(5) of Law 4251/2014 “Immigration and Social Integration Code and other provisions” (Government Gazette Series I, Issue 80/1.4.2014) as regards the autonomous residence permits for family members shall apply *mutatis mutandis*. Specifically, Article 76(5) of Law 4251/2014 stipulates that an autonomous residence permit is granted to children reaching the age of majority, which is valid for three years and may be renewed until children become 21 years. Without prejudice to any grounds involving the applicant and related to public order and security, this residence permit is renewed for three more years with the only obligation of producing the previous independent residence permit. The permit may be renewed further according to the provisions of this Code.
- ⁴⁷ Separated Children in Europe Programme, Statement of Good Practice, 5th Revised Edition, 2019, p. 56, available at: <https://defenceforchildren.nl/media/3798/2019-scep-full-report-statement-of-good-practice-including-annex.pdf>.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 71.
- ⁴⁹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment Number 6 (2005) on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside Their Country of Origin, para. 78. *See also* para. 88-89 “88. **Local integration is the primary option if return to the country of origin is impossible on either legal or factual grounds. Local integration must be based on a secure legal status (including residence status) and be governed by the Convention rights which are fully applicable to all children who remain in the country, irrespective of whether this is due to their recognition as a refugee, other legal obstacles to return, or, whether the best interests-based balancing test has decided against return.** 89. *Once it has been determined that a separated or unaccompanied child will remain in the community, the relevant authorities should conduct an assessment of the child’s situation and then, in consultation with the child and his or her guardian, determine the appropriate long-term arrangements within the local community and other necessary measures to facilitate such integration. The long-term placement should be decided in the best interests of the child and at this stage, institutional care should, wherever possible, serve only as a last resort. The separated or unaccompanied child should have the same access to rights (including to education, training, employment and healthcare) as enjoyed by national children. In ensuring that these rights are fully enjoyed by the unaccompanied or separated child, the host country may need to pay special attention to the extra measures required to address the child’s vulnerable status, including, for example, through extra language training”*, available at: <https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/GC6.pdf>.
- ⁵⁰ Article 6(4) of the Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals.
- ⁵¹ European Commission, Annex to the Commission Recommendation establishing a common "Return Handbook" to be used by Member States' competent authorities when carrying out return related tasks, No. C(2017) 6505), 27.9.2017, available at: <https://goo.gl/LWpbd>.
- ⁵² Greek Civil Code, Art. 136, Law 3850/2010, Art. 50-52, 55-56, 57, 59, 64, 66, PD 62/1998, Art. 2, 5(4), 6, 7(5), 8-10
- ⁵³ Committee on the Rights of the Child, Views adopted by the Committee under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, concerning communication No. 26/2017, CRC/C/85/D/26/2017, 2 November 2020, para. 9.9, 9.12, available at: <https://juris.ohchr.org/Search/Details/2749>. See also, Views adopted by the Committee under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, concerning communication No. 11/2017, *NBF v. Spain*, CRC/C/79/D/11/2017, 27 September 2018, para. 12.4, available at: <http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPrICAqhKb7yhsIL3RnKhyHMTpCHdoHML2lm1lysoKbeuTLDZnMzFJqrs38mxwuDxrRWTngDGLToyoDDnmng%2BLOplqgaD8%2B0o8WytHyF2aF9ErRo82%2FLgywvw9kiN9aYA%2BDmDArMrbbdh%2BYw%3D%3D>.
- ⁵⁴ European Parliament, European Parliament resolution of 12 September 2013 on the situation of unaccompanied minors in the EU, 12 September 2013, para. (1)5, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52013IP0387&from=EN>.
- ⁵⁵ Joint general comment No. 4 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 23 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on State obligations regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return, 16 November 2017, CMW/C/GC/4-CRC/C/GC/23, para. 4, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5a12942a2b.html>.

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- ⁵⁷ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment Number 6 (2005) on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside Their Country of Origin, para. 31(i), available at: <https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/GC6.pdf>.
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systems for refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees, stateless and internally displaced persons; fostering safe, enabling environments that support learning for all students, regardless of legal status, gender or disability; enabling learners to use their education toward sustainable futures, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/5d651da88d7>. FRA, Separated, asylum-seeking children in European Union Member States, Comparative Report, 2011, p. 40-41: “In compliance with the relevant EU legislation, access to education must be guaranteed to separated, asylum-seeking children under similar conditions as for country nationals. In order to be able to make adequate choices, child-friendly information on educational possibilities should be provided as soon as possible to these children in a language that they understand. Educational authorities and schools should be adequately resourced to provide special educational and psychosocial support to these children, particularly in relation to language training. In order to ensure that they regularly attend and participate in school, educational authorities should systematically monitor school attendance and performance. Separated, asylum-seeking children could clearly benefit from better access to vocational education and training; in this context, a more flexible approach to work permit requirements could facilitate this, in so far as they can meet educational and language requirements. Those children, who wish to work and fulfil the necessary age requirements, should be assisted in finding work, if this does not interfere with their education, for instance, by providing opportunities for appropriate work experience, such as summer jobs or paid internships. However, it is important to strictly monitor the application of the relevant regulations regarding hours and conditions of work to ensure that children are not exploited”, available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/1692-SEPAC-comparative-report_EN.pdf. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 Quality Education, available at: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2017/goal-04/>. CRC, Art. 28, 29, 30, 32, General Comment Number 6 (2005) on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside Their Country of Origin, para. 41-43, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Art. 5(e)(v), 5(e)(vi), 7, International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 26(1)-(2), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Art. 13, The 1951 Refugee Convention relating to the status of refugees, Art. 22, Art. 43(1)(a)-(c), 45(1)(a)-(b), 45(2), 45(3), 45(4), Joint general comment No. 4 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 23 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on State obligations regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return, 16 November 2017, CMW/C/GC/4-CRC/C/GC/23, para. 59 – 63, UN General Assembly, Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, 24 February 2010, A/RES/64/142, para. 85, 104(a), 135, Protocol No. 1 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Art. 2, Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Art. 14(1)-(2), Directive 2011/95/EU, Recital (42), Art. 26(2), 27, Directive 2013/33/EU, Art. 14, Council Directive 2004/81/EC of 29 April 2004 on the residence permit issued to third-country nationals who are victims of trafficking in human beings or who have been the subject of an action to facilitate illegal immigration, who cooperate with the competent authorities, Art. 10(b), Revised European Social Charter, 9, 10, UNHCR Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum, February 1997, para. 7.12 - 7.14.

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Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 22 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the general principles regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration, para. 36, United Nations General Assembly, Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, A/RES/64/142, 24 February 2010, para. 19, Directive 2011/95/EU, Art. 31(1), 31(2), 31(6), Directive 2011/36/EU, Art. 16(3), Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA, Art. 20(1), 20(2), UNHCR's Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum, 1997, para. 5.7.

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adequately trained social workers”, available at: *semi-autonomous small group accommodation*”, available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/1692-SEPAC-comparative-report_EN.pdf.

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¹²⁶ European Commission, European Migration Network Synthesis Report for the EMN Focussed Study 2014, Policies, practices and data on unaccompanied minors in the EU Member States and Norway, Synthesis Report: May 2015, p. 33, “*To support UAMs’ transition to adulthood, some (Member) States provide for the possibility for UAMs to continue to receive state care until they reach a certain age. In Austria, Belgium and Sweden UAMs may continue to receive state care until 21 years of age and in Poland until 25 years of age*”, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/emn_study_policies_practices_and_data_on_unaccompanied_minors_in_the_eu_member_states_and_norway_synthesis_report_final_eu_2015.pdf.

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