



June 2021 - Welcome to the second edition of DCI Greece's bi-monthly newsletter! The aim is to update our partners and supporters on our work, achievements and plans ahead, as well as to give you an insight on the daily lives of the young people we work with, by giving them a platform to express themselves without filter.

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DCI Greece's highlights:

1. Over the last two months, our Children's Rights

Helpdesk's continued to offer children and families a safe space, information, empowerment, legal support and protection. For our children, finding accommodation and accessing the official asylum system means much more than having a roof over their head and obtaining documents, it means they can finally feel safe and start living again.

Over the months the last 2,5 months, DCIG achieved to:

- Help **20** homeless and exploited **children** in danger be transferred to state accommodations.
- Facilitate the access of **3 children** to the asylum process, making them visible in the eye of the official protection system
- Obtain the refugee status for **two families**
- Successfully get **5 cases of family reunification** approved. The children will be transferred to France, the United

Kingdom, Spain, Italy and Sweden to be reunited with their family.

- Get a single mother and her child **released from prison** and safe from deportation. A single mother from Congo and her 5-year-old son were placed in detention after she went to the police to report the loss of her wallet. After hearing this news, the DCIG lawyers worked tirelessly to get the mother and the child released from detention, and to make sure that they wouldn't be separated in any case. After hours of work, we managed to get both of them released, and to link them to competent psychosocial actors, while we will support them in their asylum case.
- Reverse the **misidentification** of a minor. Last month, we were made aware of the case of an alleged minor who claimed to be a 15-year old, but who had been registered as an adult when he arrived on Lesbos. We met him, and decided to initiate an age assessment procedure, we submitted a legal report to convince the commander of the camp to order this age assessment procedure, and our intervention led to an age assessment that proved the child was indeed under 18 years old. The child has since been transferred to a safe accommodation for UAMs. Although this case has a happy ending, it highlights one of the big problems in Greece: the misidentification of children at the borders and the difficulty to reverse the registration. We find that officials who register new arrivals often arbitrarily record children's ages as older than the children themselves give, and this has been happening for years, seemingly [without any improvement](#) recorded.

Our legal and protection services in relation to UAM's are currently delivered as part of a broader emergency support programme to UAMs (medical, psychological, humanitarian and outreach components) called Themida III and is run in collaboration with the NGO Better Days. Our successful and impactful collaboration in the family reunification interventions in Lesbos island in 2019-2020, made us believe that when we merge our expertise with the expertise of other Stakeholders who share the same ethics, values, determination and love for the children our impact can become even stronger.

2. DCIG Training on Family Reunification

Family reunification is a priority and vital concern for people on the move. From our experience however, bringing together protection seekers and their relatives often turns into a lengthy, cumbersome and unsafe process, and the COVID-19 pandemic aggravated the situation. The wide range of legal and practical obstacles in family reunification procedures put refugees and their relatives in harm's way: from the strict definition of the eligibility criteria, the tight deadlines, the housing and insurance requirements to the waiting period for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and high costs at different stages of the process, right to family life is often not respected.

At DCIG, we believe family reunifications should be possible without deadlines, that the processes should be free of charge, and made as easy as possible so people can reunite as fast as they can. It is important to remind Member States that family reunification is not a policy objective but a holistic, protection-oriented process that is critical for hundreds of thousands of people inside and outside the EU. We believe that an improved understanding of the challenges and solutions is necessary for national authorities to adjust practices so all people in need can truly enjoy their right to family life.

For this reason, DCIG organised a **two-day training on family reunification** of unaccompanied children under Dublin III in the EU on the 12th and 15th of May. The training welcomed the participation of the Coordinator of the Outgoing Requests Department from the National Dublin Unit, as well as a Dublin Case Worker as guest speakers, who shared their in-depth knowledge on how to successfully support unaccompanied children on the move with their family reunification claims. The training was attended by a wide range of professionals working in child protection and was reviewed very positively by all attendees, who called the training "**excellent**", "**important**" and "**of high-quality**".

Introduction - Dublin III Regulation

- Implementation: When?

From the moment a TCN/stateless applies for international protection in a MS of the EU

- Where? EU, Lichtenstein, Norway, Iceland and Switzerland

- Criteria for the determination of the responsible MS for the examination of an asylum application from a TCN/stateless: the principle of initial entry

□ Article 7 (2): "The Member State responsible in accordance with the criteria set out in this Chapter shall be determined on the basis of the situation obtained when the applicant first lodged his or her application for international protection with a Member State."

- In accordance with the ECHR and CFREU, respect for family life should be of primary consideration of the Member States when applying this Regulation



3. Joint Ministerial Decision designating Turkey as a safe country

On June 7th, the Greek government announced via a joint statement by the foreign ministry and the migration ministry that Turkey had been designated as a "safe third country" for asylum seekers from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Somalia. The aim of adding these nationalities to the list of those who can be rejected as "inadmissible" is to enable Greek asylum authorities to send more people back to Turkey without examining their application on its merits. *"They are not in danger because of their religion, their nationality, their political opinions, or inclusion in a social group, and can seek asylum in Turkey rather than in Greece,"* a [government statement](#) said.

As it is not clear when, or if, this announcement will take effect, as it seems to be incompatible with EU law, and if it covers pending asylum applications or migrants who have been registered by police but have not applied for asylum yet, DCIG director, Nantina Tsekeri, and her colleague Iris Pappa, **flew to Lesbos** a few days after the announcement was made to assess the situation on the ground and meet with other NGOs **to prepare an action plan** to respond to the announcement.

4. #CanYouHearMe?

At DCIG, we strongly advocate for the right of all children to be heard and have their views taken seriously, in accordance with the UNCRC.

In this light, DCIG is proud to announce its first entirely youth-led online event “**We are More Than a Refugee**” on the 28th of June at 2.30 PM on Facebook live or Zoom ([register here](#)).



We invite you to our youth-led panel discussion with five young Afghan refugees who will share with us their experience as unaccompanied minors in Greece. On Monday 28th, these young people will give us the chance to get to know them better, through a discussion moderated by Neda, who will be accompanied by four guest speakers: Arash, Parwana, Rahmat and Mahbobe, all (former) unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan.

These inspiring young people will not only discuss their journeys and share their insights; they will also present their artworks, writings, and other achievements. Through these discussions, these youngsters aim to show that behind every refugee there is a voice, talent, aspirations and unique insights,

which they will share with us throughout this event.

5. Become Safe Project:

As part of our 'Become Safe project', DCIG interviewed a wide range of professionals working in the area of child protection in Greece to identify the needs, the gaps and the obstacles of the child protection system. Based on the rich data collected through these interviews, DCIG will now design trainings that will be aimed at professionals, to implement child-friendly procedures and adopt a child-friendly lens in their work. Secondly, the data has also prompted DCIG to prepare the launching of a national advocacy campaign on the issue of child protection, child safety and child abuse prevention. Lastly, DCIG is currently in the process of recruiting youth ambassadors to become the voice and face of the project.

6. DCIG Advocacy:

- DCIG participated in the consultations process with the OHCHR on the report submitted for the Universal Periodical Review. DCIG's report highlights the current issues in Greece related to children on the move as it touches on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and other international human rights instruments.

[Read our report here](#)

- DCIG participated in consultations with the National Anti-Trafficking Line and the Child protection line, in partnership with EKKA, the Greek National Center for Social Solidarity
 - DCIG strengthened its partnership and position within the Children in Migration Network
 - DCIG started working with the the International Detention Coalition working group
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7. News from the field and beyond:

- A Memorandum of Understanding called “**Education for All Children**” was signed this month by Sofia Voultepsi, Deputy Migration Minister, and Luciano Calestini, Representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Greece, committing to providing a route for all 26,000 school-age refugee children in Greece into formal education in a three-year programme expected to cost €34 million. Currently, only 40% are enrolled in Greek schools. In a statement, Ms Voultepsi said: "We want all children to start from the same starting point, because this is a cornerstone of the struggle for respect for human and democratic rights. It is a pioneering idea that we are committed to serving with dedication." This development comes after the publication of an incendiary [report](#) by the Greek Ombudsman on the state of education for refugee children in Greece.

- The UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants described in his [report to the Human Rights Council's 47th session](#) the widespread practice of “pushbacks”, and how it manifests an entrenched prejudice against migrants and demonstrates a denial of States’ international obligations to protect the human rights of migrants at international borders. The Special Rapporteur concludes that, in the absence of an individualized assessment for each migrant concerned and other procedural safeguards, pushbacks result in human rights violations incompatible with States’ obligations under international human rights law, in particular, the prohibition of collective expulsion and refoulement. The European Commission has [not yet responded](#) to the report, stating "We will have to complete our in-depth an analysis of this report before giving more in-depth reactions."

- [Read our snapshot report on the state of children's rights in Greece](#)

8. What we've been reading:

We want to share with you our list of the most interesting reports and articles that came out recently:

- MSF's report "[Constructing crisis at Europe's Borders](#)" showing the scale of

suffering caused by the hotspot approach in the Greek Islands.

- Oxfam's report '[Teach us for what is coming: the transition into adulthood of unaccompanied minors in Europe](#)' that present case studies from France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, and the Netherlands and looks at how how young refugees across Europe are falling through the gaps and into homelessness, exploitation and danger.

- IOM Greece's "[This is Our Story](#)" booklet, that presents unique stories from people, who have been living in open accommodation sites all over Greece during 2020.

DCI Greece is committed to securing a just and viable future for all children present in the Greek territory. DCI Greece aims to ensure through its actions that children's voice is heard and their rights are fully respected in practice.

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Thank you all for your support,
The DCI Greece Team

