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DCI Greece's highlights:

1. Our Children's Rights Helpdesk provides protection to children and aims to offer them an enabling environment to exercise their rights and to give them the opportunity to reclaim their lost childhood. Our team works closely with these children to reach the best solution for each particular case. Since its creation, the Helpdesk has continuously supported children and families in the legal and practical proceedings of the asylum application procedure. Our team works closely with these children to reach the best solution for each particular case. Since its creation, the Helpdesk has continuously supported children and families in the legal and practical proceedings of the asylum application procedure.

Through the Helpdesk, DCI also operates a **Child Protection Center** that offers its beneficiaries a 'safe space' to trust their story, needs, fears but also dreams. We aim for the center to turn into their 'refuge' when they reach us after a long and dangerous journey, and we desire to be the people in their lives that accompany them through their complex journey and enable them to become visible, protected and empowered. Our Child Protection Center becomes their focal point where they can ask and receive information, empowerment, legal support and protection.

DCIG reached its objectives of helping children in need in **2020**:

2021 started well! During the months of January until March:

- **31 homeless children**, sleeping rough on the streets or in shared apartments with adults, in high risk of exploitation, were transferred to a safe shelter
- **9 children** managed to access the asylum procedure and receive their asylum documents
- **1 child** received a positive family reunification decision and will soon be safe with his relative in another EU country
- **2 single mothers** and their children received international protection
- **6 children** were released from detention and were transferred to safe accommodation

For these children, finding accommodation and accessing the official asylum system means much more than having a roof over their head and obtaining documents. It means that they are no longer invisible. They become visible again, and have lower chances to be sexually or otherwise exploited. We need to keep working hard, until every single unaccompanied child becomes safe again.

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. Soon we will launch Themida Greece aiming to reach out greater impact.

2. Become Safe Project:

This month we are kicking off our 'Become Safe project'. The latest data shows that in Greece, **more than 2.000 unaccompanied minors on the move are exposed to homelessness and rough living conditions incompatible with their needs and rights as children.**

Consequently, these children are exponentially exposed to serious protection risks such as sexual and labor exploitation, abuse and threats of their life. DCIG observes that many unaccompanied minors are being sexually abused in Athens and in reception camps, or that they are continuously harassed and exploited by criminal gangs that operate in the country. Most of the cases go unreported because children are afraid and lack support to file a complaint to the authorities, since there is no system to protect them as witnesses.

The Become Safe project aims to prevent violence against children through the promotion of protective factors and a culture of safeguarding, and through addressing the barriers refugee and asylum-seeking children face to access multidisciplinary victims support in Greece. The first phase of the project will equip a wide range of professionals with tools and knowledge, while in the second phase, we will train migrant children to become advocates for children's rights within their communities.

If you are interested in this project and want to know more, please contact us.

3. #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, we want to give on of our children a platform to express themselves each month via this newsletter.

For this issue, we spoke to **Neda, a young girl from Afghanistan** that arrived in Camp Moria on Lesbos almost 3 years ago. Neda has since been transferred to a shelter in Athens and is a beneficiary of international protection in Greece, but her journey to get to this point has been paved with many difficulties.

When recalling her experience on Lesbos, she says the biggest difficulties were the insecure living conditions, but that an often overlooked problem was that of the lack of support and help minors received in the camp, "**we had no information on our rights, on the laws, on the possibilities that exist for us**" she recalls, "**it is urgent something is done about this. Minors need to know about their rights.**"

Neda says that her story is one of many amongst migrant children that arrive on the islands, "**we are left alone, no one listens... there is no support or help available there.**" For her, it is crucial we give a voice to the children and make them feel that they matter. Her experience in the camp spurred her to become an outspoken advocate on issues migrant children face in Greece, and it is the reason she came up with the idea of organizing a **webinar** that would give a voice to a wide range of children who have been in similar situations.

The webinar, she says, "will be an **opportunity for migrant children to express their views, their dreams** and show the other side of migration, that is always viewed and addressed as an issue to be resolved. **We want to show the world we are not a problem to be scared of, but that we embody many possibilities.**" She continues by saying this webinar will give the opportunity to children to express and defend themselves, "**I want people to listen to us.** I think the least they could do is to hear our stories, not to judge but with the intent to understand. **We are here but feel invisible. I hope people will hear us and listen.**"

If you are interested about attending the webinar, stay tuned, we will be

sending out more information in the coming weeks.

We hope you enjoyed this short read and if you want to hear more about Neda's story and views, you can visit the [Migratory Birds newspaper](#), to which Neda contributes as a Young Journalist by writing articles and hosting the site's web radio.

4. DCI Advocacy:

Greece is currently conducting its [Universal Periodic Review \(UPR\)](#) under the auspice of the UN Human Rights Council. The UPR has emerged as a key mechanism to scrutinize the human rights record of all UN Member States, but **robust civil society participation** is crucial to ensuring effective counterbalances to States' self-reporting of their human rights records, which is why DCIG has submitted a complementary report reviewing the situation of children on the move in Greece.

DCI'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](#)

Furthermore, we wish to highlight the European Migration Network (EMN)'s "[Report on the state of the implementation in 2019 of the 2017 Communication on the protection of children in migration](#)" that incorporates information provided by NGOs affiliated to the Initiative for Children in Migration (ICM), which includes DCIG. Our inputs are to be found on pages 25, 26 and 27 of the EMN report.

5. News from the field and beyond:

-Adoption of the GC25 on children's rights in relation to the digital environment: The Committee on the Rights of the Child has

adopted the final version of its General Comment No. 25, which sets out how State Parties should implement the Convention in relation to the digital environment, and provides guidance to ensure the promotion, protection and respect for all children's rights in the digital world.

The CRC also published a [child-friendly version of the GC](#) which can be found here & click here to [read the Committee's General Comment No. 25](#)

- **The EU has launched a new Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the European Child Guarantee.** The strategy is a new comprehensive EU policy framework to ensure the protection of rights of all children, and secure access to basic services for vulnerable children. Read it [here](#).

6. What we've been reading:

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

- This Open Letter to the Greek and EU ministers "[All Children have the Right to go to school](#)"
 - This report by HelpRefugees "[Under Pressure - How Greece is closing on Civil Society](#)"
 - EuroMedMonitor's Release on Greece's [discriminatory vaccination practices](#)
 - [The Mobile Info Team Report](#) on Housing Access for asylum seekers and refugees in Greece
 - [UNHCR's recommendations](#) for the presidencies of the Council of the European Union in 2021
 - The [UNODC Global report on trafficking persons](#) in 2020
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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

