



May 2022 - Welcome to the newest edition of DCI Greece's trimestral 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 into the daily lives of the young people we work with, by giving them a platform to express themselves without a filter.

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DCI Greece's highlights

1. Our Children's Rights Helpdesk, since 2016, has continued to be a focal point where vulnerable groups, such as unaccompanied minors, families, and single parents, can be represented, and receive legal support, protection services, and information, all in respect of a safe environment for the beneficiaries. The key factor for such actions is the adoption of a holistic approach that allows DCI Greece to ensure the protection of the most vulnerable on different and multiple levels, supporting and encouraging their personal empowerment.

During these months:

- 80 % of our children beneficiaries, representing homeless and exploited children in danger, were transferred to state accommodation
- 90% of our children applying for family reunification received a positive decision. They will be transferred in the coming months to Italy, Spain, Germany, and Portugal.
- 100% of the single mothers that have suffered torture in their country of origin or during their trip to Greece, managed to access protection services, so as to

receive proof of documentation of torture. In the meantime, our team is working, in order for them to be legally recognized as victims of trafficking

- 80% of our beneficiaries received a positive decision on their asylum and/or admissibility interviews

At the same time, all our beneficiaries received holistic support services including mentorship, and healing/empowerment sessions.

They were also granted access to social services through our referral pathway.

The services provided to the UAMs were delivered in the context of the impactful [Themida Greece Project](#), run in collaboration with the NGO Better Days.

Real stories from our Helpdesk



"For the first time, I feel optimistic. Things will go well for us"

A. is a 19-year-old mother, coming from Congo to claim asylum in Greece. She was 8 months pregnant, unregistered, and homeless. She also faced unprecedented obstacles in her effort to find safety for herself and her unborn child.

After our intervention, the mother received all the necessary support in order to deliver her newborn safely. However, that was not enough. The mother and her baby remained unregistered, invisible to the Greek State, and unable to exercise their social rights.

After intense legal actions, they both got registered and obtained the relevant documentation as asylum seekers.

Finding permanent housing and access to social rights is the next big obstacle to overcome. We will keep supporting them until we ensure all their rights are being respected while living in dignity and safety. We will also remain by their side during the next steps of their asylum journey, the asylum interview, in order for their pain to be recognized.



"Thank you. I thought I would never leave this place"

15-year-old J., from Bangladesh., left his home country because of his religion.

After reading the Bible, he decided to become a Cristian. When he arrived in Athens, he was unregistered, invisible to the official protection system. He lived in a shared apartment with 16 other adults, sleeping on the

balcony while being exposed to high risks of exploitation.

After our intervention, he managed to get registered within a few days, and also apply for family reunification with his sister in Italy. In the meantime, after activating the competent Authorities, placement in a safe shelter was arranged for him.

The family reunification process was long and with many bureaucratic obstacles to override. After intense legal actions, a month ago, J. traveled to Italy to find comfort in his sister's presence

2. DCI Greece Training on Institutional Violence in Lesvos

On the 11th of February 2022, DCI Greece held a workshop on the 'Response to Institutional Violence as Professionals', during which, Nantina Tsekeri (Director of DCI Greece) and Iris Pappa (Coordinator of the Children's Rights Helpdesk -DCI Greece) presented the forms of institutional violence children on the move experience in Greece while they try to navigate the asylum system.

During this training, we touched upon the many forms of institutional violence that show up during our work with children on the move, and its impact on them. With a fantastic group of professionals, we explored the ways to mitigate institutional violence through our work. All the participants committed to trying to bring structural change through their work, acknowledging results would not be evident instantly.

Institutional violence as a phenomenon is challenging for professionals and we often find ourselves hopeless in front of its manifestations. But we all need to acknowledge our ability to influence children's lives and the structures of the system as well.



This workshop was held within the framework of our [Become Safe Project](#), which is supported by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme. More workshops will follow in the coming months.

3. Legal intervention in Lesbos

In October 2021, DCI Greece in collaboration with the NGO Flüchtlingshilfe Doro Blancke lodged a legal project providing legal aid to vulnerable asylum-seekers on Lesbos, including single mothers, unaccompanied minors, youth and families. Under the guise of Covid-19, asylum-seekers are being placed in quarantine for the first two weeks after their arrival. They have no access to legal support and do not receive information on their rights. Once they are released from quarantine, asylum seekers have their admissibility or merit interview one or two days after their release, making it almost impossible to access legal support before the interview.

Through our program, we manage not only to have immediate access to the new arrivals but to also guarantee their fair access to the asylum procedures by receiving quality legal support and representation before the authorities, while having access at the same time to their social rights.

Our beneficiaries receive legal support and representation through individually tailored legal sessions and asylum interview simulations. Personalized legal memos are being drafted and submitted to support the above-mentioned legal actions before the 1st and 2nd degree for both Admissibility and Asylum interviews.

Vulnerability assessments of their situation are being conducted, in order to determine their needs and to provide our services accordingly, in an attempt to fill the existing gap in the state mechanism. Referrals for health and psychological support are also being made, to ensure their holistic support.

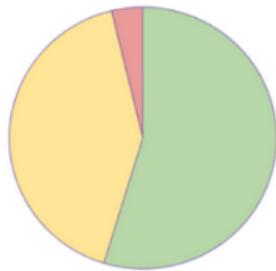
Since the beginning of the project, we have supported **86 individuals, of which 30 have already received international protection.**

LESVOS

In total 86 individuals

From them:

- **54 individuals** were supported with their **Asylum Applications**



- 30 individuals were already granted **Refugee Status**
- 22 individuals are still **waiting for the decision**
- 2 individuals received a rejection

- **24 individuals** received legal support with their subsequent asylum applications . For these individuals, the results are still pending.

- **8 individuals** received support with access to fair age assessment procedures, safe accommodation and SGBV/Victims of torture recognition

Real stories from Lesbos



“I just wish that me and my son will be safe”

Single Mother, Somalia

When she was just a child she was orphaned by both parents and started living with her uncle and his family. Her uncle, following the FGM cultural tradition of Somalia, forced her to undergo this practice twice, once when she was 8 years old and then when she was 11 years old. At the age of 13, she was sold by him to an old man and got married.

After 3 years of constant physical and sexual abuse, she took the decision to leave her country to save herself and her child. We met both of them a few weeks after their arrival on the island. Coming from Somalia, we had first to receive a positive decision on their admissibility interview, so as their asylum application to be examined by the Greek authorities. Alongside the legal support with the preparation for the interview and the regular follow-ups, DCI Greece linked her with a gynecologist who specialized in FGM and a psychologist, and her little boy with a pediatrician suited to his needs.

Through our legal intervention, we managed to secure a **positive asylum admissibility result** for them and protect them from deportation to Turkey, at the moment we are working on their asylum interview.



“I left my country to save myself and many other young girls' lives. I hope that with me, the evil will stop”

Single young woman, Sierra Leone

After her father passed away when she was 11 years old, her mother introduced her to the Buntu society, where she was a leader. While she was still a child, her genitals were amputated, twice. In 2021, her mother died and the young girl was called to fill her position, as a leader. Having experienced such atrocities, and knowing that she didn't want to be responsible for them, she decided to embark on the journey to flee her country.

After our first meeting, an individually tailored plan was organized. A referral was made for psychological and medical support. At the same time, the extensive preparation for her asylum interview started, with multiple sessions taking place. A legal memo was also submitted to further strengthen her case. Being extremely vulnerable, DCI GR also took all necessary legal actions for her so as to be transferred to a safe facility on the mainland. Two weeks after, her geographical restriction was uplifted, while in April she also **received her positive asylum decision**.

4. Our support for the Ukrainian refugees in Greece

The Ukrainian refugee crisis is escalating. The number of individuals – especially women and children – fleeing their country to reach safety, increases every day.

DCI Greece has always been by the side of all refugees, regardless of their country of origin. During this crisis, we were ready, once again, to offer our support to the victims of the new armed conflict.

Through our helpdesk, over **60 individuals** have been provided with legal support and healing/empowerment activities.

Being a key actor in the Ukrainian refugee crisis in Greece, we have been cooperating with various shelters, hosting refugee mothers and their children, and undertaking their whole case management. After conducting our risk assessment and determining their needs, an individually tailored plan is being implemented for each family, to support their legal and protection needs, while ensuring their access to all their social rights, through our referral pathway.

At the same time, all our beneficiaries at the shelters are already participating in our Healing Activities, aiming to empower and further strengthen them, as well as to increase their sense of value, safety, and belonging.



DCI-Greece has also developed an emergency response toolkit that reflects on our experience in the management of refugee flows from 2015, until today. The toolkit provides field professionals with guidance in the form of a checklist, the initial actions to be taken in response to protection risks of children on the move. We have already received much positive feedback from professionals and organizations, working within the borders of Ukraine's neighboring countries, and dealing with this emergency situation. [Download the toolkit](#)

Real stories from our Helpdesk

"Back in Ukraine, I had my own fashion design atelier. My daughters had a beautiful life too. All I want now is this war to stop and be able to choose the way we live again"

Svetlana with her two daughters flew to Ukraine a week after the war started and reached Greece for safety. We have been providing them with legal support and representation, in order to receive the temporary protection that is being issued by the EU for all Ukrainians, as well as applying for asylum, as a parallel procedure.

At the same time, we have been supporting them in accessing other fundamental rights, such as housing, education, and healthcare. The two little girls are already attending school, as well as additional educational activities.

Our Helpdesk will remain by their side, in their efforts to build up a new life.



5. Information sessions for the African Community

Outreach to the people who need our support the most and delivering our services to them in a mobile way has always been the cornerstone of our Helpdesk Operation since 2016. At the moment there are thousands of children of African origin who are forced to run away from their home country and reach Europe for safety, with the majority of them being homeless and invisible to the Greek state

Access to registration to lodging their asylum claims, access to food and housing, education and health services are not provided to them effectively. At the same time, their parents have been experiencing serious mental health issues as a result of their trafficking experience along the way.

At the same time, all our beneficiaries at the shelters are already participating in our Healing

Activities, aiming to empower and further strengthen them, as well as to increase their sense of value, safety, and belonging.



DCI-Greece regularly organizes information sessions and has met many beneficiaries through these sessions, for which individually tailored support plans are developed. **Through a newly acquired grant, we are also planning to implement empowerment and mentorship sessions shortly.**

6. Become Safe Project - Training of trainers in Genova

Along with 11 other professionals, the DCI Greece team gathered in Genova from the 11 to 13 of April 2022 for a training of trainers, organized as part of the 'BECOME Safe' regional project. The training gathered project partner representatives from Belgium, Spain, Hungary, and Italy.

The purpose of the training was to strengthen the capacity of participants on the different

forms of violence affecting children and youth on the move, how to identify and respond to violence against children as well as how to mitigate institutional violence. These few days were also an opportunity to reflect on the work that has already been accomplished with regard to the training of youth facilitators.



7. DCI Greece Advocacy

- Nantina Tsekeri, DCI-Greece director, delivered [a statement](#) on behalf of the DCI International global movement, in front of the 49th Session of the UN Human Rights Council on the Annual Day of discussion on 'The Rights of the Child and Family Reunification'. Nantina urged States to commit to a well-established inter-state structure that places best interest procedures at its core, where children on the move are seen as children first and foremost and their voices can be heard, where all bureaucratic obstacles are replaced by accessible, effective, and child-friendly procedures. And for this to happen, as Nantina highlighted, States will need to commit to the allocation of budget for family reunification.



- Greece has been under examination by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child for the situation of the children's rights on its territory. This happens every five years and, unfortunately, within this timeframe, many appalling stories of children experiencing unprecedented violence at all levels have surfaced. DCI-Greece has been actively participating in the entire process by submitting expert reports to the Committee and delivering key information. [Read our observations here.](#)
 - DCI-Greece participated in the 'High Panel Conference launching the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child 2022-2027', taking place in Rome at the beginning of April. We discussed the crucial role of strategic litigation, law clinics, and our key contribution to children accessing justice.
 - 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 continued its partnership with the [International Detention Convention](#).
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8. What comes next

DCI Greece is restlessly attempting to improve and expand its activities.

In the following months:

- 'Healing Me' Project will take its suitcase and go on tour! Our team will be reaching out to various shelters and day centers in Athens, as well as the island of Lesbos, offering healing activities, and a safe space to find peace.
- Following the great success of our first training on institutional violence, more ones on the matter will follow, on the island of Lesbos, as well as in Athens.
- Our youth facilitators will continue to organize their own youth-led events, as well as create advocacy material with their peers. Their material will be presented to key stakeholders at a national advocacy event aiming to become the catalyst for structural change.
- As part of our advocacy strategy, DCI Greece will organize a UN side event in June, during the Human Rights Council Session, regarding children on the move.

Stay tuned for more, by following us on social media!

Facebook: [Defence for Children International Greece](#)

Instagram: [@defenceforchildreng](#)

9. What we've been reading

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

- [Seeking a new life - seeking employment: An assessment of the employment situation of applicants and beneficiaries of international protection in Greece](#)", IRC.
 - [Greece: A two-tier refugee system](#), Oxfam, Save the Children
 - [Mapping potential elements of an Independent Border Monitoring Mechanism in Greece](#), IRC
 - [Greece's Use of Migrants as Police Auxiliaries in Pushbacks](#), HRW
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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. You can help and support us by donating 

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Thank you all for your support,
The DCI Greece Team