



OPENING DOORS FOR EUROPE'S CHILDREN

WWW.OPENDINGDOORS.EU

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. ENDING INSTITUTIONAL CARE.

GREECE

COUNTRY FACT SHEET

There is no official database holding data on children in alternative care in Greece. According to the first nationwide mapping study¹ carried out by the Opening Doors National Coordinator in 2014, there were 2,825 children living in institutional and residential care² in Greece and only 309 children in family-based care. Greece is among the 12 Member States³ where the European Commission identified the need for deinstitutionalisation reforms. European Structural and Investment Funds have been allocated in Greece for this purpose. However, Greece has not yet proceeded with a comprehensive deinstitutionalisation strategy and the action plan that would allow the funds to be released under the pre-conditions defined in the ex-ante conditionality 9.1⁴. Greece has a long-standing culture of using institutions for its population: institutional care is not questioned by the State or general public; it continues to be funded by the State along with many private actors.

In Greece, there is no legislative and policy framework regulating the child protection system and there is no national plan on children's welfare living in residential and institutional care settings.

In 2014, there were 2,825 children living in 85 institutional care settings for children in Greece, including 760 adults. The majority of institutional care facilities are run by the state, however, there are many private actors as well as faith-based organisations that run unregistered institutional care settings.

1 http://www.openingdoors.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Data_institutionalised_children_Greece.pdf

2 There is no difference between the terms institutional care and residential care in Greece

3 This need was identified in 12 Member States: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Croatia

4 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32013R1303&from=EN>

KEY DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS CHILD PROTECTION REFORM



AT THE END OF 2017, GREEK GOVERNMENT ALLOCATED €15MLN FOR DEINSTITUTIONALISATION REFORMS; HOWEVER, THERE IS NO DEINSTITUTIONALISATION STRATEGY OR ACTION PLAN TO PROCEED WITH THE TRANSFORMATION.

Institutional care settings are largely funded by the state and through private donations. Institutional care is conceived as the most appropriate type of care for children deprived of parental care. Only during the recent years, there has been some awareness raising regarding the benefits of family and community-based care. For example, although the new legislation on foster care has not been approved yet, children under the age of three are no longer placed in institutions, but go directly into family-based care or for adoption. However, this does not apply to children with disabilities who are still being sent in institutional care.

KEY RECOMMENDATION TO THE EU



TAKE ACTION TO ENSURE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL STRATEGY ON DEINSTITUTIONALISATION AND THE ACTION PLAN FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION. THIS WILL ENSURE THE USE OF EU STRUCTURAL FUNDS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEINSTITUTIONALISATION REFORMS AND NOT AS THE ONE-OFF MEASURES.

Although Greece has been identified as a country with a specific need for deinstitutionalisation reforms by the European Commission, and European Structural and Investment Funds have been allocated to implement these reforms, funds have not been released yet due to the lack of strategy on deinstitutionalisation. Civil society is concerned about potential misuse of these funds towards support of the institutional care settings as authorities may prioritise the investment of these funds in residential care settings that are already in place and that face difficulties maintaining their staff.

Greece is still facing severe challenges with the high population of asylum seekers and refugees residing on the Greek islands and on the mainland. In November 2017⁵, there were approximately 3,250 unaccompanied and separated migrant children in Greece and only 1,151 of them were placed in shelters for unaccompanied children. The rest of the children were on the waiting list, placed in police departments, reception centers, safe zones or temporary accommodation sites.

Greece relies heavily on the good will of civil society for the protection of migrant and refugee children. The European Union has allocated vast amounts of money through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and Fund for Humanitarian Aid for the protection of people in migration and children in particular. However, there are no plans from the Greek Government to ensure sustainability of these EU-funded interventions and to guarantee integration of migrant and refugee children into the Greek society.

The Opening Doors campaign encourages the Government of Greece to proceed with the development of a deinstitutionalisation strategy and the action plan that with support of EU funds and the commitment of the government will result in a sustainable reform of Greek child protection system. We also encourage to establish a dialogue with and between the European Commission and private donors and to end the use of institutional care for children in Greece.

KEY RECOMMENDATION TO THE MEMBER STATE



TAKE ACTION TO ENSURE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL STRATEGY ON DEINSTITUTIONALISATION AND THE ACTION PLAN FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION, IN CONSULTATION WITH CIVIL SOCIETY AND SERVICE USERS.

⁵ <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1bR3TYe-d9rl5zmgF9P-1WYoZR0YWNIJP>

OPENING DOORS NATIONAL COORDINATOR IN GREECE



Roots Research Center is working with adult adoptees who aim to find their biological parents, also they are supporting/consulting adopted families to work with their adopted children. Since 2004 they promote foster care, give speeches around the country, raising public awareness on the benefits of foster care and why community based care is better for children. They have been involved in private foster care cases of children with disabilities, supporting and consulting the foster parents. They run training seminars for social workers and University students promoting foster care and community based care. Other NGOs have showed interest, cooperating with them, in training their people on the DI direction, by supporting vulnerable families. Justice experts are their supporters on child protection affairs, walking with them slowly on the way to change the residential culture in Greece. To find out more visit www.roots-research-center.gr

NATIONAL PARTNERS

Federation of Women's Associations of Heraklion Crete, Iliachtida, Family support center of the Holy Archdiocese of Athens Foundation Family and Children Support Center, NGO Association of adoptive families Amfidoron, Therapeutic riding association, Association of Juvenile Court Curators NGO Federation of Greece, Network for Children's Rights

The Opening Doors for Europe's Children campaign supports national efforts to develop child protection systems that strengthen families and ensure high-quality family and community-based alternative care for children, by leveraging EU funding and policy and building capacity in civil society.

It is a partnership between 5 international organisations and civil society across 16 European countries. For more information go to www.openingdoors.eu