



# **Power2UAMs**

## **Local report:**

# **Piraeus**



**GREEK  
COUNCIL  
FOR  
REFUGEES**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present local report is carried out by Greek Council for Refugees within the framework of the POWER2UAMs project. The main objective of the report is to explore the barriers UAMs face in accessing services at the local level. We explore and try to assess the unmet needs of UAMs in the locality, the gaps in the service provision system, and the impact of these gaps on the smooth integration of UAMs in the community and enjoyment of rights

The research combines desk and literature review, stakeholders mapping and qualitative interviews with 10 UAMs and 9 stakeholders from key organisations of the city of Piraeus. Among the last are included social workers, psychologists, educators, shelter and project coordinators, guardians, lawyers, and municipal officers, working within child protection units of non-governmental organizations or municipal departments responsible for social migrant integration and coordination with national mechanisms.

Throughout the desk research which constitutes the first part of the present report we are attempting to register some broader information about the institutional –national and local System of service provision to UAMs. We focus on the mapping of Piraeus service channels and attempt to sketch a realistic image of the way this system works in the city. At the same time, we explore the main gaps and malfunctions which lie within it.

In the second part, we present the findings of the interviews conducted with unaccompanied minors and stakeholders in two separated subchapters. We present the answers of UAMs interviewed analyzing the findings on the topics of provided services in Piraeus and the assessment of them through children's voices, their interaction with law enforcement and border police, their experiences on discrimination, violence, housing and homelessness. The children's voices were revealing and authentic sketching out the obstacles to their inclusion and integration into the community.

Stakeholders' opinions and insights provided us information on the topics of the identification of UAMs main challenges, the institutional and policy challenges in the service provision for UAMs, the good practices in the social care of them and their insights on discrimination and violence experiences of the children. Stakeholders from their part assessed also the adequacy of services for UAMs in Piraeus and shared their opinions on minors interaction with police.

The combined analysis of the outcomes of this research gave us the material to provide at the last part of this report policy recommendations to improve the protection, transition, and integration of unaccompanied minors, securing equal rights enjoyment through positive actions. The collected material from the present -mainly primary- research confirmed the main findings of the desk research and at the same time pictured additional, unseen or hidden obstacles in UAM's integration and inclusion, which render UAM's needs still unmet.

Main findings conclude that Piraeus municipal authorities having decisive capacity only at a local level, have only a limited role to play in securing children's rights, the protective authority and child protection system being under the responsibility of central government, seeming to lack a comprehensive integration strategy for children.

Despite positive legal developments, challenges persist over the years in the same areas of protection. (Limited accommodation capacity, detention, systemic barriers to education, challenges in the guardianship institution).

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

National legislation does not include supportive provisions for persons reaching adulthood. Protection and socioeconomic support is withdrawn immediately. Lacking any transitional arrangements for young adults (i.e exit shelter strategy, transitional housing, material or other support) minors reaching adulthood face housing insecurity and a risk of socio economic marginalization, despite early protective interventions within the shelter system.

Common experiences of unaccompanied minors sheltered in Piraeus appear to be among others persistent social and interpersonal discrimination in the community, hostility and intimidation by police authorities, a lack of adequate inter cultural mediator support throughout public local services, (schools, hospitals, youth centres,) anxiety for future employability and living conditions.

In contrast to a general experience of institutional neglect, bureaucracy and complexity of procedures - at the national and local level - civil society professionals effectively provide all the support and services required.

In light of the above the research concludes with recommendation to strengthen local coordination and institutional clarity, - ensure inclusive access to education and employment pathways pursuant to wishes and preferences of the child, -simplify administrative procedures and accessibility of services, - promote participation and empowerment mechanisms - foster community awareness and social cohesion, - secure state accountability for child rights violations from authorities, - extend protection and socioeconomic, vocational and psychosocial support to young adults (18+) to promote autonomy.

# INTRODUCTION OF THE LOCAL REPORT

The POWER2UAMs project aims to ensure equal access, participation, and voice for unaccompanied minors (UAMs) in the asylum system and in transit, in line with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The project begins with local-level research to identify the unmet needs of UAMs and to assess local social policies and services in Athens, Piraeus, Brussels, Gent, Liège, and Calais, through the work of partners in Greece (GCR), Belgium (NADOE and Caritas Belgium), and France (ECPAT).

This research methodology includes desk research, literature review, stakeholder mapping, and interviews with UAMs and stakeholders (at least 20 interviews per city). The research is coordinated by TARKI Social Research Institute, which is responsible for developing the research methodology, overseeing local reports, and elaborating a synthesis report based on their findings.

# METHODOLOGY

Methodology includes desk research consisting of the review of available legislation, statistical information and inputs at local, regional and national level indicative academic, policy and project publications and reports of International and European human rights bodies, Independent Authorities, (i.e. Greek Ombudsman) national and international Non-Governmental Organisations. The jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights concerning Greece child rights protection issues was also reviewed.<sup>[1]</sup>

The present desk research thought not exhaustive is thorough, precise and attempts to comprehensively map the institutional and services landscape in the city of Piraeus, indicating well or not well-functioning services and gaps in the establishment of UAM 's rights in the municipality<sup>[2]</sup>.

For the second part of the present local report<sup>[3]</sup> a mixed method approach was applied combining quantitative (questionnaire survey) and qualitative (interview) research methods. Every minor was interviewed in a face-to-face, child-friendly manner, with parallel interpretation in the minor's spoken language. The written consent of the children's guardians was obtained prior to the interview after thorough information about the aim of the interviews and our project. Consent was refused the recording of the interviews and thus a written copy of the questionnaire was provided. No harm policy was applied; the interviews were conducted upon the principle of non-re-traumatization and confidentiality.

Stakeholders interviews were conducted in a written form (questionnaire answered in writing by professionals) after their wish to proceed in the particular manner since their work schedule did not allow for an appointment and preferred to respond on their own time, remaining in direct communication with the interviewer for clarifications and additional comments. The questionnaires provided were modified to fit into a written interview, giving them the ability to share their opinions and elaborate on their insights in a direct and extensive manner.

[1] See citation in the relevant chapter, p. 3-9.

[2] See Annexes, Table 2, p.25-26.

[3] Chapter 5. & 6

## 4. DESK RESEARCH

### 4.1 Admission Procedures of an Unaccompanied Minor into the System-Institutional channel mapping

General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection (GSVP) established with article 6(1) of P.D. 77/2023 (A' 130/ 27.6.2023) and falling under the competency of the Deputy Minister of Migration and Asylum<sup>[4]</sup> is the competent authority for all matters concerning unaccompanied minors in the country. Its strategic objective is the design, implementation, and supervision of the National Strategy for the protection of unaccompanied minors. Its responsibilities regarding unaccompanied minors include the following:

- Management of accommodation and relocation requests for unaccompanied minors.
- Supervision and evaluation of shelters and supervised apartments.
- Issues of social integration and support of unaccompanied minors in the search for family members and family reunification, integration in the country, voluntary repatriation, and relocation to a third country, in cooperation with the competent authorities, international organizations, and certified non-governmental entities within and outside Greece.
- Institutional protection of unaccompanied minors.

The National Emergency Response Mechanism (NERM)<sup>[5]</sup>, initially designed by the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors (now the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Citizens and Institutional Protection) and UNHCR in 2020, was implemented in Greece in 2021 and institutionalized in 2022<sup>[6]</sup>. Its primary goal is to identify and provide immediate housing in emergency accommodation structures for unaccompanied minors living in homelessness or precarious conditions. NERM is dedicated to the protection and integration of unaccompanied minors in Greece and has recently expanded its services to vulnerable adults<sup>[7]</sup>. The goals of NERM are a) accommodation and relocation management, b) evaluation of hosting facilities, c) social integration support, and d) institutional protection.<sup>[8]</sup>

When an unaccompanied minor enters Greece, the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Citizens & Institutional Protection of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, as well as the competent Public Prosecutor, are immediately notified by authorities locating the child (which might be i.e. Border Police officers, Reception and Identification Services, or the Asylum Service) so that a

[4] MoMA, General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons & Institutional Protection, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/grammateies/geniki-grammateia-evaloton-politon-kai-thesmikis-prostasias/>

[5] Interreg Europe, National Emergency Response Mechanism (NERM) in Greece, 16 November 2023.

[6] NERM is supported by UNHCR (expert support), EUAA, IOM and the European Commission Its operation on the ground is carried out through NGOs Arsis, METAdrasi and the Network for Children's Rights.

[7] The Mechanism also includes a 24/7 telephone hotline for identifying and tracing children in need, which is available in six languages. The hotline provides guidance to children, citizens, local and public authorities on steps and actions to be taken from the point of identification of an unaccompanied child until their timely inclusion in emergency accommodation

[8] See European Commission: Greece: National Emergency Response Mechanism | European Website on Integration, also, UNHCR, Greece launches national tracing and protection mechanism for unaccompanied children in precarious conditions, 6 April 2021

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guardian will be appointed). During the initial registration at the Reception and Identification Service (R.I.S.), when the minor declares his/her age, a medical, psychological, and social assessment is carried out. If there is doubt about the age, an official age assessment procedure is initiated. This procedure is carried out by the Reception and Identification Centres (R.I.C.) and the Closed Controlled Access Centers (C.C.A.C.s) existing in the country. Specifically, in Greece, there are the C.C.A.S. of Leros, Kos, Lesbos, Chios and Samos; the R.I.C. of Fylakio, Malakasa, and Diavata.

In the R.I.C.s and C.C.A.S.s, unaccompanied minors are accommodated in designated areas called “safe zones.” Subsequently, unaccompanied minors are transferred in reception facilities (shelters for minors) in the mainland and are further on referred to the competent Asylum Office (Regional Asylum Offices (R.A.O) or Independent Asylum Unit).

### 4.1.1 Developments on age assessment procedure

In August 2025, the procedure was reformed by the Joint Ministerial Decision 147627/22-8-2025 by the Ministries of Migration & Asylum and Health. The JMD establishes a streamlined process for determining the age of applicants of international protection when doubts arise regarding their age. Competent authorities—including the Reception and Identification Service, the Asylum Service, and child protection agencies—initiate the procedure. It is conducted in a single session including a medical examination of physical development, a psychosocial assessment by a qualified specialist, and a wrist/hand X-ray for bone age estimation. In case of conflicting results, radiological findings prevail. Written consent from the individual or their guardian is mandatory; refusal results in a presumption of adulthood without affecting the asylum claim. The process requires all steps to be completed within the same day. With a joint letter to the Minister of Migration and Asylum in October 2025, 25 organizations expressed serious concerns that the new Ministerial Decision (JMD) violates fundamental safeguards as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, EU law, and the European Convention on Human Rights. They point out that the procedure should prioritize non-medical methods as mandated by Regulation (EU) 2024/1348<sup>[9]</sup>.

[9] Giving decisive weight to X-rays is considered scientifically questionable and raises ethical issues, while creating a rebuttable presumption of adulthood in cases of refusal to undergo examination conflicts with the principle of the child’s best interests. The organizations highlight also practical and procedural shortcomings: the requirement to complete the process “once and on the same day” is unrealistic; the number of actors authorized to initiate the procedure is reduced; there is no clear mechanism to correct erroneous registrations; and the deadline for appeals is shortened from 15 to just 5 days, making it impossible to secure legal assistance or appoint a guardian. Combined with additional bureaucratic requirements, these changes create a serious risk that minors will be registered as adults, undermining their protection and the presumption of minority.

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### 4.1.2 Available accommodation options for unaccompanied minors

Although national legislation strives to keep up with international child protection standards, in practice, despite legal provisions for a “family like” environment in foster care<sup>[10]</sup>, relevant legislation remains unimplemented<sup>[11]</sup>. Unaccompanied minors can only be housed in the following accommodation schemes:

**Shelters for unaccompanied children:** long-term accommodation facilities for unaccompanied children (shelters) are managed primarily by civil society entities, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and charities. A variety of services are provided for in shelters i.e legal and social support, referrals to other required services, medical, educational, with the collaboration of the appointed guardian.

**Supported Independent Living (SIL):** “Supported Independent Living for unaccompanied minors” is an alternative housing arrangement for unaccompanied children aged 16 to 18 launched in 2018. The programme includes housing and a series of services (education, health etc.) and aims to enable the smooth coming of age and integration to Greek society.<sup>[12]</sup>

**Emergency Accommodation Facilities:** Emergency accommodation facilities are temporary accommodation places for unaccompanied children who are traced living homeless or in precarious living conditions, operating under the National Emergency Response Mechanism (NERM) and run by International Organization for Migration (IOM). The Emergency Accommodation Facilities provide an immediate assessment of the best interest of UAMs and initial protection, including the provision of psychosocial, legal and medical support and the referral to long-term accommodation shelters<sup>[13]</sup>. Three emergency accommodation facilities are operating in Attica (Piraeus, Aspropyrgos and Chalandri) close to but outside of the municipality of Athens.<sup>[14]</sup>

As of 1 January 2025, at least 2.408 unaccompanied and separated children in Greece should have been placed in 1775 dedicated accommodation places in shelters and Semi-Independent Living (SILs) facilities, plus 155 places in urgent accommodation facilities.<sup>[15]</sup>

[10] Law 4538/16.05.2018, Measures for the promotion of the Institutions of Fostering and Adoption and other measures (Gazette A’85/16.05.2018)

[11] Foster Care (and Guardianship) have met repeated legislation reforms over the years in Greece and still remain a challenging area affecting unaccompanied minors and children of Greek nationality equally.

[12] Metadrasi, Supported Independent Living for unaccompanied minors, available at: <https://bit.ly/2tPEIjv>.

[13] MoMA / Special Secretariat for the Protection of UAMs, National Emergency Response Mechanism. A safety net for unaccompanied children identified in precarious living conditions, November 2022, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2msh79hc>.

[14] The fourth is located in Central Macedonia.

[15] MoMA / General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons & Institutional Protection, Situation Update Unaccompanied Children (UAC) in Greece, 1 January 2025.

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This indicates that in a total of 1930 available positions for minors in proper accommodation facilities, 478 minors remain automatically out of the system of proper and safe accommodation. Indeed, from the abovementioned estimated population, 1434 unaccompanied children were residing in Shelters, 215 in Semi Independent Living facilities (SILs) and 129 in urgent accommodation facilities. At the same time, there were a total of 448 unaccompanied minors residing in Reception and Identification Centres and Closed Controlled Access Centres of islands, while other 182 unaccompanied minors were in Controlled Accommodation Facilities for Asylum Seekers, having not received yet the proper reception treatment. That indicates that 152 minors could be located in proper accommodation, but they were not timely placed; in contrast they were kept residing in improper conditions. In December 2024, the average waiting time for the placement of unaccompanied minors residing in island RICs to suitable accommodation places for UAMs was 8,88 days. Lastly, the average time for the placement of UAM in a shelter was 13.45 days.

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## 4.1.3 Remaining at Reception Centres Before placement and transfer to long term accommodation facilities (shelters)

The survey identified several minors now residing in Piraeus, who referred in their interviews in the period they spent in the reception centres of Greek islands or safe zones before their placement in long term accommodation shelters as particularly traumatizing.

The lack of appropriate care, failure to secure adequate conditions and protection for children, including access to basic services like proper accommodation, has been repeatedly raised over the years by NGOs<sup>[6]</sup>, the Greek Ombudsman, domestic, UN and EU human rights bodies<sup>[7]</sup> the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights.<sup>[8]</sup> Nonetheless, inadequate and harmful reception conditions persist, among others living conditions for minors in “Safe Zone” designated areas in camps<sup>[9]</sup>, inadequacy of existing sheltering facilities and limited accommodation capacity.<sup>[20]</sup>

[16] “Children Cast Adrift. the exclusion and exploitation of Unaccompanied Minors (UAMs) , National Report : Greece” Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, HIAS Greece, Greek Council for Refugees and Steps (2019) [https://rosalux.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/national\\_greece\\_en\\_final\\_1211web.pdf](https://rosalux.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/national_greece_en_final_1211web.pdf)

“It does not feel like real life”: Children’s everyday life in Greek refugee camps” Greek Council for Refugees and Save the Children Europe – October 2024 <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/Children-in-Greek-refugee-camp-report-online.pdf>

[17] Indicatively see: UNHCR, Lone children face insecurity on the Greek islands, 14 October 2019. In 2019, in the context of his visit to the Lesvos, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees stated he was ‘very worried about children, especially children travelling alone...[who] are the most exposed to violence and exploitation’, while Human Rights Watch inter alia noted that “the lack of prompt transfers [from the islands] put vulnerable people, including people with invisible disabilities and children, at higher risk of abuse and violation of their rights”, UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding observations on the combined fourth to sixth reports of Greece, 28 June 2022, , and UN Human Rights Office, Council of Europe, New complaint registered concerning Greece, 21 December 2018. European Committee of Social Rights, Decision on admissibility and on immediate measures in the case International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) and European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) v. Greece, Complaint No. 173/2018, 23 May 2019.

<sup>[18]</sup>Communication In accordance with Rule 9.2 of the Rules of the Committee of Ministers regarding the supervision of the execution of judgments and of terms of friendly settlements by the Advice on Individual Rights in Europe (The AIRE Centre) and the Greek Council for Refugees Concerning the supervision of the cases of: O.R. v. Greece, App No 24650/19 W.S. v. Greece (Application No. 65275/19); T.A. and Others v. Greece (Application No. 15293/20); T.S. and M.S. v. Greece (Application No. 15008/19); N.N. and Others v. Greece (Application No. 59319/19); A.I. and Others v. Greece (Application No. 11588/2 , submission to the DGI Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law Department for the Execution of Judgments of the ECHR (21/11/2025 ) AIRE Center & GCR <https://gcr.gr/wp-content/uploads/O.R.-v.-Greece-Rule-9.2-submission-AIRE-Centre-GCR-.pdf>

[19] Joint Press Release: Hundreds of Unaccompanied Children in Unsafe Zones – Urgent Need to Activate Relocation, available at <https://tdh.gr/en/hundreds-unaccompanied-children-unsafe-zones-need-immediate-activation-relocation>

[20] Regarding the Malakasa R.I.C., the Greek Ombudsman following a complaint by the Greek Council for Refugees (GCR) concerning the stay of two unaccompanied minors in inadequate living conditions underlined in a (23/12/2024) the inappropriate living conditions. “Prolonged stay of UAMs in unsuitable conditions in Malakasa RIC.” Athens, 23/12/24 : “Regarding material conditions, the minors remain in the same clothes and underwear from their arrival, without having received clean or winter clothing. The facility where they reside presents serious deficiencies: there is no hot water, leaks are observed, and there are problems with the electricity, resulting in the air conditioning not functioning for heating and a lack of lighting. The space is limited. It is also reported that the space inside the unit is minimal, and in the first case, the minor was never provided with clean bedding. The amount of food is considered insufficient.”

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During 2024 in the case of T.K. v. Greece the European Court of Human Rights held that there has been a violation of articles 3 and 8 of the Convention in the case of an unaccompanied child on Samos, whose wrong registration as an adult and the failure to correct his age violated his right to respect for private and family life (article 8 ECHR). Moreover, according to the Court, the living conditions of the applicant amounted to inhuman and degrading treatment, in violation of article 3 of the ECHR.<sup>[21]</sup> Later on that same year the Court convicted Greece in the case of T.S. and M.S v Greece for violation of Articles 3 (prohibition of inhuman and degrading treatment) , 5 and 1 (right to liberty and security) and 5 and 4 (right to apply to a court) of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), for the violations suffered in 2019 by two unaccompanied minor sisters who were found, despite their apparent vulnerability homeless and subsequently detained<sup>[22]</sup>. The Court, inter alia, stressed that the Greek authorities had failed to take prompt action to accommodate them emphasizing that the large number of pending applications for accommodation of unaccompanied minors does not relieve the authorities of their positive obligations to protect them. Furthermore, specifically regarding the placement of minors in "protective custody", the Court accepted the minors' arguments that this constituted an unlawful deprivation of their liberty.

During 2025 critical gaps in child protection are repeatedly noted. According to Save the Children and GCR <sup>[23]</sup>"especially in overcrowded and under-resourced "safe zones," where unaccompanied children face de facto detention, poor living conditions, and limited access to medical care, legal aid, and education. A failing guardianship system and reduced reception capacity further heighten children's vulnerability. The report calls for urgent EU and national action, including immediate relocation mechanisms, a shift toward community-based accommodation, and guaranteed access to education and child-appropriate services"

On February 5th, 2025, the European Court of Human Rights Court granted interim measures – once again- for the horrific living conditions in the Safe Zone of the Samos CCAC where unaccompanied minors were residing<sup>[24]</sup>. The Court agreed that the 4 minors were at imminent risk of irreparable harm if they remain in the CCAC and ordered the Greek government to provide with adequate food, water, clothing and medical care, to ensure their protection from ill-treatment and ensure their speedy relocation to a shelter for minors<sup>[25]</sup>.

[21] I Have Rights, European Court of Human Rights Condemns Greece's Treatment of an Unaccompanied Child on Samos, 18 January 2024, T.K. v. Greece (Application No. 16112/20), represented by Refugee Law Clinic Berlin (Germany) and supported by "I Have Rights" (Samos),

[22] ECtHR case of T.S. and M.S. v. Greece, judgement of 3 October 2024, application no. 15008/19. The unaccompanied minors were represented before the Court by the Legal Unit of the Greek Council for Refugees (GCR).

[23] Children on the Move in Greece: January – April 2025 [https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/2025-Save-GCR-Joint-Briefing\\_Q1\\_ENGLISH.pdf](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/2025-Save-GCR-Joint-Briefing_Q1_ENGLISH.pdf)

[24] Human Rights Legal Projects'(HRLP)s represented 4 applicants unlawfully detained inside the CCAC's safe area for up to 4 months. In the request the abovementioned organization emphasized that more than 400 minors were detained in the same inhuman and degrading conditions at the Samos CCAC's "safe" zone, and that the ill-treatment they were subjected to exposed all of them to imminent risk of irreparable harm.

[25] ECtHR, O.A. and Others v. Greece, application no.2570/25.

# DESK RESEARCH

## 4.1.4. Guardianship

The legislation regulating the guardianship of unaccompanied minors in Greece is primarily based on Law 4554/2018 and Law 4636/2019. Additionally, Circular 7/2025 is applied, which concerns the uniform implementation of guardianship within the framework of foster care and adoption procedures<sup>[26]</sup>. Furthermore, relevant provisions are included in Articles 66A and 66KD of Law 4939/2022, as well as in Law 4960/2022. Nonetheless significant gaps in the application of the provisions have been noted and criticized since the institution does not work yet in a unified manner for all children located in Greece.<sup>[27]</sup> Two non-governmental organizations appointed by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum implement the programme. NGO Metadrasi and PRAKSIS. These organizations occupy staff acting as Appointee Guardians, representing the actual Guardian - being the head of each organization. In the present research appointee guardians are among the stakeholders participating in the interviews. Their insights are valuable for the unmet needs of UAMs in Piraeus.

[26] Relevant provisions on foster care and adoption remain unimplemented in practise, the two Institution appear extremely problematic in the Greek context for unaccompanied minors third country nationals and minors of Greek nationality alike.

[27] According to Save and Children and GCR (2025) , despite the establishment of a national guardianship scheme critical gaps persist, leaving many UASC without legal representation and support. As of early 2025, there are only 128 mandated guardians nationwide<sup>16</sup>, falling short of the target of 170 (or up to 180 if needed)— a figure still far below what is required to meet actual needs. The guardianship programme is hampered by severe bureaucratic delays (e.g. in the Public Prosecutors' offices) and structural weaknesses. Fluctuations in arrivals strain an already overstretched system, while high turnover rates and excessive caseloads undermine effective support. In some cases, children in CCACs/RICs are not being assigned a mandated guardian, delaying access to critical legal support and essential services such as healthcare, psychosocial support, clothing, and other basic needs. Children on the move January 2025 - April 2025. [https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/2025-Save-GCR-Joint-Briefing\\_Q1\\_ENGLISH.pdf](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/2025-Save-GCR-Joint-Briefing_Q1_ENGLISH.pdf)

# DESK RESEARCH

## 4. 2 Service Channel Mapping: System of local organizations, NGO s, service providers to UAMs in Piraeus

### 4.2.1 Accommodation services, including the majority of the necessary child protection provision services.

NGO's that run the Long term accommodation facilities (Centres of Hospitality of Unaccompanied Minors/shelters) are responsible for a variety of service provision to the children, such as the assessment of best interests and collection of social history, psychosocial support and legal counseling and representation, informal education, material provision and support, social services, daily health care, cash distribution, food, activities enrollment, referral system for social skills development, individual plan of action, social and community life of the children in the shelter etc.in collaboration with the appointee guardian . This reality indicates the absence of state 's capacity to provide direct, specialized and public services to UAMs.

NGOs remain in strong collaboration with the appointee guardians while they must obtain the guardian's consent for any action they undertake affecting the best interest of the child. Moreover, the overlap among service providers and excessive bureaucracy overwhelms professionals during duties, deprive the children from spending time with their social assistant or guardian due to the structure of the system.<sup>[28]</sup>These NGOs are supervised and controlled by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, which determines their mandate, budget and staff positions and carries out inspections and checks.

### 4.2.2. Service Providers in Piraeus - NGOs and actors of specific services

After placement in a long-term accommodation facility, UAMS are appointed a reference person within to facilitate the minor in everyday life adjusting to the life of the accommodation facility and surrounding environment, usually a social worker and /or the guardian. Minors can benefit from additional services from NGOs located in the region for supplementing services provided within the accommodation facility.

Civil society professionals provide a variety of services very much required i.e legal counselling, support in international protection proceedings, family-reunification assistance, supplementary language courses (Greek/English), remedial education, life-skills training (familiarization with budgeting, tenancy, additional vocational skills), trauma counselling, participatory workshops (arts, sports), employment liaison programmes, CV workshops. These kind of services are provided through short term occasional projects and programmes having neither the funding stability and continuance over time nor the capacity to include all minors in the region, being rather ad hoc initiatives from NGOs and/or private entities then part of a national or local strategy providing services for all. <sup>[29]</sup>

[28] See below

[29] For the relevant NGO's and their programmes see Annex Table 2, for the assessment of the service provision by stakeholders see Annex table 3. Also, below section 6.

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## 4.2.3. Educational Services

Greek administration had struggled over the years to fulfil its obligation to ensure that all children are promptly enrolled in school and receive a quality education throughout the country regardless of legal status and nationality. Barriers in education for UAMs have been reported over the years<sup>[30]</sup>. In an extensive report published in 2022<sup>[31]</sup> six key indicators / also indicative key barriers were reported and persist until today, namely access to enrollment, attendance, access to inclusive education, transportation to schools, adequate staffing and timely scheduling and action to end community hostility and xenophobia.

### I. Formal Education

National legislation provides for the mandatory enrollment and attendance of unaccompanied minors in primary and lower secondary school under the same conditions as children of Greek/EU nationality benefit from the in the public education system. For the better integration of the minor, the creation of Reception Classes (R.C.) in schools is provided for, which offer support to students with a different cultural and language background. In practice, unaccompanied minors in Piraeus face serious difficulties, not only during the school enrollment process but also in attending classes. Very often, especially in certain areas, schools lack appropriate structures or/and reception classes, resulting in many minors deprived of Greek language lessons in a formal public educational scheme and thus being effectively excluded from the education system. From the perspective of the children themselves, many show insecurity, reluctance, or even refusal to integrate into the school environment. The reasons vary. In some cases, these are children awaiting departure from the country, either through a relocation programme or through family reunification procedures. Other times, ignorance about what they will encounter at school or feelings of insecurity increases their reluctance—particularly for children who are illiterate or have never previously attended an educational setting.

Additionally, many minors consider school unnecessary for achieving their personal goals perceiving themselves as in transit to another destination within the EU or in immediate need to secure income. The psychological effects of uprooting and uncertainty about their future critically influence their perception of the need of education.

Another important lack in the educational scheme for UAMs<sup>[32]</sup> is the lack of flexible educational programmes fitting to the needs of UAMs, such as vocational training, continuity of education during adulthood, motivation for participation in formal education and placing positive measures to ensure equal treatment of UAMs with their Greek peers in school and educational environment are required.

[30] Children Cast Adrift. The Exclusion and exploitation of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) National Report: Greece. Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, HIAS Greece, Greek Council for Refugees and Steps (2019).

[31] Report "Must do Better: Grading the Greek government's efforts on education for refugee children "(2022) Greek Council for Refugees, Save the Children, Terre des hommes, [https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/Greece-Education-Scorecard-Report\\_3.pdf](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/Greece-Education-Scorecard-Report_3.pdf)

[32] See Relevant Chapter below

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## **II. Non-formal education**

Non-formal education refers to education that arises from planned activities, not always precisely designed as formal learning. Is a voluntary and flexible learning process that takes place outside the formal school system, it can take place in museums, summer schools, clubs, camps, etc. Non-formal education refers also to language courses (Greek/English etc.) that are provided by organizations of civil society and NGOs outside the public schools, where children often cannot benefit from adequate Greek language courses in an official school environment due to the above-mentioned structural gaps in public schools. It includes also supplementary teaching after the local school's lessons for the support of the learning procedure. Non-formal education plays a crucial role in the smooth integration of children into the school environment. It not only provides appropriate preparation for the start of their schooling but also serves as a consistent form of support throughout their education.

Through participation in Greek language lessons, as well as in various activities and non-formal learning programmes, children enhance their cognitive skills while simultaneously developing the social skills necessary for their socialization and integration into the school community.

### **4.2.4. Municipal Authorities (City of Piraeus / Immigrant Integration Centre):**

The Immigrant Integration Centre of Piraeus Municipality, is a local authority and thus has limited involvement to the supporting mechanism for UAMs remaining under Central administration- The assistance provided for by the Municipal authority to minors is the facilitation of referrals of UAMs to specific service providers depending on the minors needs, as well as provision of access to Municipal spaces dedicated to cultural, sports, and art events of the Municipality. The local authority of the city has limited competence over the relevant matters compared to national state actors. This national policy choice could decrease the chance of a more active participation, inclusion, and integration of minors in the city's life. Sometimes the local authorities can be more effective in the realization of integration policies, based on the direct management of the city's social, cultural, and educational life. The Immigrant Integration Centre could have a more determining and specific role<sup>[33]</sup> with relevant programmes for the inclusion and support of UAMs residing in the city.

[33] See Annex table 2. .See also policy recommendations

# 5. QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE SUMMARIES OF UAMS INTERVIEWS

## 5.1 Basic Information of UAMs Interviewed

This study draws on interviews with ten unaccompanied minors currently residing in Piraeus, offering insight into their demographic profiles, migration trajectories, educational backgrounds, health status, and future aspirations. The group consists predominantly of males (8/10), with two females, (2/10) and includes seven recognized refugees and three asylum applicants. Their countries of origin reflect diverse geopolitical contexts: Pakistan, Egypt (three respondents), Somalia (three respondents), Mali, Afghanistan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Arrival in Greece spans a wide temporal range, from recent entries in late 2024 and early 2025 to prolonged stays exceeding four years. For most, Greece was not a deliberate destination but rather the first point of entry into the European Union, often via the Aegean islands. Several minors expressed initial intentions to reach other European countries such as France, Belgium, Germany, or Italy, citing family connections, linguistic familiarity, or perceived opportunities. Constraints imposed by migration policies and logistical barriers have resulted in their prolonged presence in Greece.

The reasons for flight are rooted in insecurity, armed conflict, and socio-economic deprivation in their countries of origin. While some respondents acknowledged Greece's relative safety and access to education as positive factors, others emphasized the absence of choice, portraying their settlement as circumstantial rather than voluntary. This lack of agency in migration decisions emerges as a critical theme, underscoring structural limitations in mobility within the European asylum framework.

Educational attainment among the minors is markedly uneven. Two respondents reported no prior schooling, while others range from early childhood education (ISCED 0) to completed upper secondary education (ISCED 3). Current enrollment patterns indicate that most minors are registered in Greek schools—primarily high schools and lyceums—yet attendance and engagement vary significantly. Economic pressures and the imperative to work frequently compete with educational aspirations, with some minors prioritizing employment over schooling. Despite these challenges, the majority articulated ambitions to pursue further education, including technical training, language acquisition, and vocational studies, although one respondent expressed a clear preference for work over continued schooling. This tension between immediate survival needs and long-term educational goals reflects broader integration challenges and a lack of specialized integration policies for minors.

Health assessments were predominantly positive, with most minors rating their condition as “very good.” However, qualitative responses reveal underlying psychosocial stressors, particularly anxiety related to prospects, family responsibilities, and legal uncertainties. These findings suggest that physical well-being may mask significant mental health vulnerabilities; an issue often overlooked in service provision for the unaccompanied minors.

# 5. QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE SUMMARIES OF UAMS INTERVIEWS

Overall, the data portrays a group navigating complex intersections of displacement, structural constraints, and personal aspirations. While Greece offers relative safety and basic services, the minors' narratives reveal persistent barriers to integration, including language difficulties, economic precarity, and limited educational continuity and inclusion. These dynamics warrant critical attention, as they shape not only the minors' present circumstances but also their trajectories toward adulthood and autonomy.

## 5.2. Children's Assessment of Provided Services in Piraeus

The evaluation of services accessed by unaccompanied minors in Piraeus exposes systemic patterns that hinder integration and perpetuate limited inclusion. While certain provisions—such as legal aid and basic healthcare—are generally rated as adequate; these services operate within a framework that prioritizes short-term compliance over long-term inclusion. Legal support, often delivered through shelters and NGOs, receives positive assessments during the asylum process; however, its abrupt termination upon reaching adulthood creates a structural rupture. As one minor explained, “Since I turned 18, they forced me to leave the shelter; I suddenly had to stay outside because I had also lost my asylum application.” This discontinuity not only destabilizes their lives but actively obstructs pathways to integration.

Social support mechanisms reveal similar inconsistencies. Although some minors report helpful interactions with social workers, others describe these services as ineffective or irrelevant, assigning mid-range scores and noting they “don't gain anything” from such support. Financial assistance emerges as a critical barrier: repeatedly characterized as insufficient; it fails to meet even basic subsistence needs. This inadequacy compels minors to rely on informal networks for essential goods, reinforcing dependency and marginalization rather than fostering autonomy. Material support follows the same pattern—limited, inconsistent, and lacking flexibility—underscoring a system that provides survival-level aid without enabling meaningful participation in society. This lack indicates an important gap in locality initiatives to support minors' inclusion; none of the minors mentioned an initiative or actor bonded with the municipality which provides material support.

Housing arrangements, while offering temporary safety, do little to promote social inclusion. Minors report on isolation when placed with older residents and express nostalgia for previous accommodations where peer interaction was possible. Education services, though among the most positively rated, are undermined by structural and personal barriers: language courses are not universally accessible, and economic pressures often force minors to prioritize work over schooling. This tension between immediate survival and educational continuity reflects a systemic failure to reconcile protection with integration objectives.

## 5. QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE SUMMARIES OF UAMS INTERVIEWS

Healthcare provision is consistently adequate, yet psychosocial needs remain largely unaddressed. Stress related to employment, family reunification, and future uncertainty emerges as a recurring theme, signaling an absence of holistic support. Employability programmes, rated as highly inadequate, epitomize the gap between policy rhetoric and lived reality: minors aspire to legal work and vocational training, but institutional pathways remain virtually nonexistent. One minor expressed this frustration clearly: “Life is not easy. I need to find a job because I must financially support my family back in Egypt. Until I find a job I am stressed with it.” Future aspirations—such as securing housing, obtaining a driver’s license, and achieving economic independence—are met with structural indifference, leaving minors to navigate adulthood without preparation or support.

Taken together, these findings reveal a protection regime that prioritizes containment over inclusion. Services are fragmented, time-bound, and reactive, offering temporary relief while systematically failing to equip minors for independent life. The absence of transitional planning, combined with inadequate financial and employability measures, transforms vulnerability into permanence, effectively preventing integration and reinforcing social exclusion.

### 5.3. Interactions with Law Enforcement and Border Police – Piraeus Context

The accounts of unaccompanied minors regarding their interactions with law enforcement and border police in the Piraeus context reveal patterns of treatment that range from routine checks to severe rights violations, with significant implications for protection and inclusion. While some minors report no encounters, others describe experiences marked by detention, physical abuse, and degrading conditions. Several respondents were detained upon arrival on islands such as Rhodes and Kos, despite declaring their minor status and presenting identification documents. One minor recounted, “I spent 4 days in prison in Rhodes. I told them my age; I gave them my passport, which I had; they obviously knew that I was a minor. We were sleeping on the floor.” Such testimonies underscore systemic failures in safeguarding minors from arbitrary detention and ill-treatment.

Incidents of physical violence were also reported. A respondent stated, “They beat us when we arrived in Rhodes Island. I told them I was a minor, but they put me in detention. After the intervention of an NGO, I was set free.” Another described being beaten and humiliated in Kos, including being forced to ingest coffee grounds. These accounts point to practices that contravene international standards on the treatment of children in migration contexts, raising concerns about accountability and oversight.

Beyond initial border encounters, minors also experience policing in urban settings. Several respondents noted being stopped on the streets even when carrying valid documents, and escorted to police stations until hostel staff intervened. While one minor reported respectful treatment after demonstrating language proficiency and legal status, others expressed fear and perceived hostility, describing officers as “very angry with all the refugees” and reporting feelings of insecurity during such interactions. These patterns suggest that policing practices often prioritize control over protection, reinforcing a climate of intimidation rather than trust.

## 5. QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE SUMMARIES OF UAMS INTERVIEWS

The interviews highlight the psychological impact of these experiences on the lives and mental state of minors, as they repeatedly emerge during their narratives, despite the fact that their current life in Piraeus does not include such conditions. These accounts underscore systemic weaknesses in ensuring dignity, equality, and protection for children in migration contexts.

Detention, physical abuse, and recurrent street checks reflect systemic gaps in child-sensitive procedures and highlight the tension between migration control and child protection obligations. These experiences not only compromise immediate safety but also erode trust in institutions, further obstructing pathways to social inclusion.

### 5.4. Findings on Discrimination and Violence – Unaccompanied Minors in Piraeus

#### Overview

The testimonies of unaccompanied minors interviewed in Piraeus reveal a differentiated landscape of discrimination and violence, ranging from isolated incidents of racial harassment to severe violations of fundamental rights during border reception. They reveal that experiences of discrimination and violence are neither uniform nor universal, but they are present across multiple contexts—border reception, urban environments, and educational settings. While several respondents reported no direct experiences of abuse, others described treatment that contravenes international standards, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) during their stay in the Greek islands. The interviews underline the psychological impact of those experiences in minor's lives and soul, coming repeatedly during our interviews even if their current life in Piraeus does not include the same conditions.

#### I. Experiences in Piraeus

Within Piraeus, direct reports of violence or discriminatory treatment were limited. Most minors stated they had not encountered abuse by service providers or authorities. However, subtle forms of exclusion were noted in public spaces and schools. One minor explained, “In the bus and a little in school because I am black. No, they did not speak to me, but I feel that they don't like me. It is a feeling—none attacked me, not verbally nor physically.” Another recounted an incident of racial teasing at school: “A Syrian kid made fun of me for being black. But I didn't pay attention... I spoke to the teachers, and they called this child. They told him that if I accept racism again and he offends me again, he will leave school. I felt safe and accepted by both the professor and the director.” These accounts suggest that while overt violence is rare in Piraeus, racialized perceptions and micro aggressions persist, requiring active intervention by educators to maintain inclusion.

#### II. Experiences in Reception Centres on the Islands

The most severe incidents of abuse and violence occurred during initial reception on islands such as Kos and Rhodes. Multiple minors reported being beaten by police, subjected to humiliating treatment, and detained under degrading conditions. One testimony illustrates this vividly: “Abuse and violence by the police. They made us sit on our knees for 2 hours at the Kos camp. In Kos, the police beat me; once they forced me to eat the coffee grounds.” Another minor described, “I spent 4 days in prison in Rhodes. I told them my age, I gave them my passport, which I had, they obviously knew that I was a minor. We were sleeping on the floor.” These accounts point to systemic violations of child protection standards and raise concerns about accountability in border enforcement practices.

# 5. QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE SUMMARIES OF UAMS INTERVIEWS

## III. Cross-Cutting Themes

Several cross-cutting patterns emerge. First, violence and degrading treatment are concentrated at entry points, where institutional safeguards appear weakest and enforcement priorities override child protection norms. Second, racial discrimination—though less frequent—manifests social interactions within schools and public spaces, often as subtle exclusion or verbal harassment. Third, coping strategies vary: some minors dismiss discriminatory acts as inconsequential, while others rely on institutional actors for redress, with mixed outcomes. Finally, these experiences collectively erode trust in authorities and reinforce feelings of insecurity, perpetuating structural barriers to integration. The persistence of such practices reflects a tension between migration control and human rights obligations, undermining the principle of non-discrimination enshrined in Article 2 of the CRC and the right to dignity under Article 1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

## 5.5. Housing and Homelessness – Insights from Interviews with Unaccompanied Minors in Piraeus

Housing emerged as a critical dimension in the lived experiences of unaccompanied minors in Piraeus, revealing structural vulnerabilities that compromise stability and inclusion. While most respondents were accommodated in shelters during their minority, several reported episodes of homelessness or precarious housing arrangements, particularly during transitional phases such as arrival or upon reaching adulthood. These findings underscore systemic gaps in ensuring continuity of care and compliance with the right to adequate housing, as enshrined in Article 27 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the EU Reception Conditions Directive.

Initial reception conditions were particularly severe for some minors. One respondent recalled: “In Rhodes Island I was sleeping for four days in the streets.” Such experiences reflect failures in emergency accommodation systems and expose minors to heightened risks of exploitation and harm. Beyond initial arrival, the most significant housing insecurity occurred when minors turned 18 and were required to exit child-specific facilities. Despite legal recognition as refugees, respondents described abrupt termination of housing support and limited transitional planning. As one minor explained: “When I had to leave the hostel due to my age, the only assistance from the ministry was to send me back to a camp like the one we stayed at on the islands, and that too very far from Athens, in northern Greece. At that time, it was very difficult; I had to find a place to stay on my own.” Another stated: “When I turned exactly 18 years old, I could no longer stay in the hostel even though I was a recognized refugee. I was informed to prepare to find a new residence a month before I turned 18.”

## 5. QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE SUMMARIES OF UAMS INTERVIEWS

These narratives reveal a systemic reliance on informal networks to prevent homelessness, with minors often depending on friends or co-nationals to secure temporary accommodation. While some respondents managed to transition into rented apartments through personal arrangements, this process was described as stressful and unsupported, highlighting the absence of structured pathways to independent living. The reliance on ad hoc solutions not only undermines legal obligations to provide adequate housing but also perpetuates social exclusion by limiting access to stable, rights-based accommodation.

Overall, the findings indicate that housing provision for unaccompanied minors in Piraeus is characterized by temporality and fragmentation. While shelters offer short-term protection, the lack of continuity beyond the age of majority transforms vulnerability into chronic insecurity, obstructing integration, and exposing young people to cycles of precariousness. These patterns reflect a broader tension between emergency reception models and the long-term inclusion objectives mandated by international and European human rights frameworks.

# 6. QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE SUMMARIES OF STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWS

## 6.1 Basic Information of stakeholders Interviewed

The stakeholder group interviewed for this study represents a range of organizations involved in the protection and support of unaccompanied minors in Piraeus. The sample includes professionals from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations, municipal social services, and specialized child protection agencies. Every invitation we made was accepted, except for the Ministry of Asylum and Migration and the International Organization for Migration, which were invited but did not participate in the research.

Interviewees hold positions such as social workers, legal advisors, psychologists, shelter coordinators, and programme managers, reflecting a multidisciplinary approach to service provision. Years of professional experience among stakeholders vary significantly, ranging from 3 to over 15 years, with most participants possessing extensive backgrounds in child protection, migration management, and humanitarian assistance. Academic qualifications include degrees in law, social work, psychology, and education, complemented by specialized training in asylum procedures, trauma-informed care, and intercultural mediation.

The organizations represented collectively work with a substantial number of unaccompanied minors, with estimates ranging from dozens to several hundred cases annually, depending on the size and scope of the institution. The minors served by these stakeholders typically fall within the age range of 14 to 18 years, originating primarily from South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East. Profiles include both asylum seekers and recognized refugees, with varying levels of vulnerability, including histories of displacement, exposure to violence, and psychosocial distress.

This composition of stakeholders provides a comprehensive perspective on the operational realities of child protection in Piraeus, encompassing legal, social, and educational dimensions of support.

## 6.2. Main Challenges of Unaccompanied Minors as Identified by Stakeholders

Stakeholder interviews reveal a constellation of interrelated challenges that impede the protection and integration of unaccompanied minors in Piraeus. These challenges span legal, social, educational, and psychosocial domains, reflecting structural deficiencies in the national child protection and migration framework.

The most frequently cited obstacle concerns the precarious legal status of minors and **the minimum chances of obtaining legal documents**, which stakeholders describe as a critical vulnerability. This insecurity is compounded by procedural opacity: “Children often receive documents without anyone explaining their content to them,” noted one legal expert, highlighting systemic failures in ensuring informed consent and procedural fairness. The absence of adequate legal assistance and representation, combined with language barriers and lack of interpretation in judicial settings, further undermines access to justice and violates obligations under Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## 6. QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE SUMMARIES OF STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWS

Stakeholders consistently identified the inability to find safe accommodation after reaching adulthood as a structural gap. The abrupt termination of housing support upon turning 18 forces minors into precarious living arrangements or irregular work, perpetuating cycles of vulnerability. This discontinuity contravenes the principle of continuity of care embedded in EU Reception Conditions Directive and exposes young adults to heightened risks of exploitation.

Educational exclusion emerged as a recurrent theme. Stakeholders emphasized that minors often fail to attend formal schooling due to economic pressures, lack of interpretation, and insufficient language support. As one respondent observed, “The lack of language skills hinders their ability to communicate with their peers and teachers.” These barriers not only impede academic progress but also obstruct social integration, reinforcing isolation, and marginalization.

Trauma and mental health concerns were repeatedly mentioned, linked to experiences of war, abuse, and loss. Stakeholders noted the absence of specialized psychological and psychiatric services, leaving minors without adequate coping mechanisms. The lack of family environment exacerbates these vulnerabilities, creating conditions of emotional instability that hinder resilience and adaptation.

Several stakeholders expressed concern over the absence of crime prevention programmes and the increase in detention following recent amendments to the Penal Code, which disproportionately affect minors in contact with the justice system. The lack of reintegration programmes for children involved in criminal proceedings further entrenches exclusion, contradicting international standards on restorative justice for juveniles.

Underlying these challenges are systemic factors: fragmented service provision, insufficient coordination among actors, and chronic resource constraints<sup>[34]</sup>. These deficiencies collectively undermine the principle of non-discrimination<sup>[35]</sup> and the right to development<sup>[36]</sup> (CRC), transforming temporary protection into prolonged precarity.

### 6.3. Services for UAMs in Piraeus: types and adequacy assessment from stakeholders

Stakeholder interviews reveal a diverse but fragmented service landscape for unaccompanied minors in Piraeus, encompassing guardianship, housing, education, psychosocial support, interpretation, vocational counseling, and advocacy. Core services such as guardianship, legal assistance, housing, and language education are generally rated highly adequate, indicating strong compliance with immediate protection needs. Guardianship providers emphasize their role in representing minors in personal and legal matters, preparing them for adulthood, and maintaining individual action plans. Housing services, including semi-independent living arrangements, are similarly assessed as effective during minority, while language courses and school support receive positive evaluations for promoting educational inclusion.

[34] See below chapter 6.2.4. Institutional and Policy challenges,

[35] Convention of the Rights of The Child, article 2.

[36] Convention of the Rights of the Child, article 6.

## 6. QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE SUMMARIES OF STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

However, stakeholders consistently identify structural weaknesses that undermine service continuity and sustainability. Psychosocial support and mental health programmes, though present, are rated less favorably (inadequate), reflecting resource constraints and limited specialized staff. One stakeholder noted: “Although these actions meet the needs of minors and are designed together with children, they unfortunately depend on project funding cycles, which limits their sustainability.” This dependency on short-term funding creates discontinuity, leaving minors without stable access to essential services.

Advocacy organizations report providing empowerment activities, child rights education, and experiential interventions such as Adventure Therapy, aimed at fostering resilience and integration. While innovative, these programmes are vulnerable to funding fluctuations and lack institutional embedding, reducing their long-term impact. Similarly, vocational guidance and employability support are described as sporadic and insufficient, with stakeholders highlighting the absence of structured pathways to legal employment—a gap that perpetuates irregular work and economic insecurity.

Stakeholders also underscore systemic coordination challenges. While municipal actors describe cooperation as “satisfactory,” others point to the absence of a binding protocol, fragmented responsibilities, and lack of shared databases or digital communication tools. As one respondent observed: “Actions often depend on which NGOs are active at a given time or on the availability of funding. It is not always clear who is responsible for what—housing, legal protection, psychological support.” This fragmentation leads to neglected needs, duplication of efforts, and inefficient resource allocation. Moreover, stakeholders note the lack of common training standards across agencies, resulting in inconsistent protection practices.

Finally, gaps in specialized services persist, including transitional accommodation for young adults, targeted mental health programmes, intercultural mediation, and facilities for minors with increased needs (e.g., disabilities, addictions, pregnancy). Stakeholders also mention the absence of safe community spaces, professional counseling, and recreational opportunities such as sports and arts, which are essential for holistic development and social integration. Overall, the findings depict a protection system that offers a broad spectrum of services but remains constrained by structural fragmentation, funding dependency, and lack of continuity. While immediate needs are often met, the absence of long-term, rights-based strategies transforms temporary protection into prolonged vulnerability.

### 6.4. Institutional and Policy Challenges in the Service Provision for UAMs, examples of good practices

Stakeholder insights reveal a range of institutional and policy-level challenges that hinder the effective integration of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) in Piraeus. While emergency responses and basic care are often prioritized, long-term integration remains underdeveloped and fragmented.

A major concern is the lack of a comprehensive integration strategy following the minors’ transition to adulthood. Upon turning 18 and receiving asylum, many UAMs face sudden exclusion from housing and support services, with no structured pathways for accessing safe accommodation or employment. This gap leaves them vulnerable to homelessness, exploitation, and social marginalization.

## 6. QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE SUMMARIES OF STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Stakeholders also highlight a limited political will to promote integration, with national priorities often centered on border control and migration management rather than social inclusion. This is compounded by slow and complex family reunification procedures, particularly under the Dublin Regulation, which prolongs the uncertainty and isolation of minors.

Institutional fragmentation further undermines service delivery. The absence of effective coordination between state agencies, municipalities, and NGOs results in overlapping responsibilities and inconsistent support. Professionals report a lack of specialized personnel across key sectors—such as law enforcement, judiciary, and social services—who are adequately trained to work with children in contact with the law.

The legal and policy framework is described as overly complex and unstable, with frequent legislative changes and insufficient alignment with EU directives. This creates confusion among service providers and limits the continuity of care. Pilot initiatives, such as child-friendly justice programmes, are rarely institutionalized or scaled up, and redeployment of staff without adequate training further weakens service quality.

Education, a key pillar of integration, is also failing many UAMs. Stakeholders note that schools often do not function as effective integration spaces, especially minors with low literacy or no prior schooling. Limited availability of reception classes (ZEP) and the lack of accessible English language programmes exacerbate educational exclusion.

Finally, xenophobic rhetoric and stigmatization in public discourse contribute to a hostile environment, indirectly affecting the morale and effectiveness of professionals working with UAMs and impeding broader societal acceptance.

In summary, the integration of UAMs in Piraeus is constrained by systemic policy gaps, institutional weaknesses, and a lack of long-term planning. Addressing these challenges requires a coordinated national strategy, stable legal frameworks, investment in specialized personnel, and a shift toward inclusive, child-centered integration policies.

Questioned on the good practices –followed by any kind of actor-in the service provision for minors in Piraeus municipality the stakeholders identified the following practices:

A notable good practice is the implementation of Supported Independent Living (SIL) programmes, which offer psychosocial support and life skills training (e.g., money management, household tasks) without excessive supervision. These programmes aim to prepare minors for adulthood in a dignified and empowering way.

In the field of education, the municipality cooperated with refugee education coordinators to support school enrollment, while NGOs contributed through ZEP reception classes that provide language and academic support for children with no prior schooling.

Some first steps and efforts to inclusion of the minors into the city's and society's life are noted in Piraeus: the local authorities provide access to municipal sports facilities, such as swimming and football, in collaboration with amateur teams. The involvement of UAMs in cultural and musical education programmes, including chess clubs and community events and their participation in public celebrations, such as the "Sea Days" festival, where UAMs engaged in games, music, and shared meals in public parks.

## 6. QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE SUMMARIES OF STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

### 6.5. Findings on Discrimination, Violence and Interaction with Law Enforcement and Border Police: Stakeholders' Insights

Stakeholders across multiple professional sectors in the Municipality of Piraeus—including social workers, reception centre staff, educators, and legal professionals—offered valuable insights regarding discrimination, violence, and the behavior of law enforcement authorities toward unaccompanied minors (UAMs). Their accounts reveal a complex and often contradictory landscape, characterized by instances of both careful handling and problematic, sometimes abusive, practices.

A recurring theme concerns physical coercion and inappropriate restraint. Professionals reported individual cases in which minors alleged that police violence had been used against them. The routine handcuffing of children, even minor offences, emerged as a specific point of concern. Such practices, while perhaps justified under procedural pretexts, were widely deemed unacceptable and inconsistent with child-rights principles and proportionality standards.

Equally troubling were multiple references to verbal abuse, intimidation, and humiliation. Stakeholders described incidents of police officers shouting at minors, threatening imprisonment, or making mocking and racist remarks. These behaviors were perceived not only as forms of discrimination but also as deterrents to minors' willingness to seek assistance or report victimization. The data also highlight the transformative impact of professional accompaniment: when social workers or guardians were present, officers' demeanour often shifted toward courtesy and compliance with protocol, underscoring the importance of advocacy and supervision in police–minor interactions.

Reports also point to discriminatory treatment and institutional bias across wider public services. Beyond police conduct, professionals cited examples of a teacher expelling a child from the classroom on the grounds of insufficient Greek-language knowledge and incidents where public authorities or schools refused to enroll or serve minors. These findings suggest that systemic discrimination extends beyond law enforcement, reflecting broader societal and bureaucratic barriers to inclusion.

Stakeholders further described procedural neglect and denial of basic services. Instances included claims by police that there was “no budget” to provide food for minors in protective custody and other cases where victims approaching the police to report incidents were dismissed without assistance. Such examples point to material deficiencies and institutional inertia that compromise the well-being and legal protection of minors, often under the guise of administrative or financial constraints.

Nevertheless, the overall picture is not uniformly negative. Some respondents acknowledged that many police officers demonstrate careful and non-abusive behavior, particularly during interventions at reception facilities. This ambivalent pattern—ranging from exemplary professionalism to discriminatory conduct—implies inconsistency rather than systematic hostility. The divergence in practice appears to stem from differences in individual training, institutional culture, and situational pressures rather than explicit policy.

## 6. QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE SUMMARIES OF STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

From an analytical standpoint, these testimonies illustrate the interplay between structural and interpersonal discrimination. While overt abuse or violence may occur sporadically, structural deficiencies—such as lack of resources, inadequate training, or unclear procedural guidelines—create environments in which discriminatory or negligent behavior can persist unchallenged. The data emphasize the urgent need for comprehensive, rights-based reform of institutional responses to UAMs, including capacity-building, monitoring, and accountability mechanisms.

In summary, stakeholders' insights depict a system marked by both protective intent and procedural fragility. The evidence reveals physical and psychological mistreatment, unequal access to services, and educational exclusion, juxtaposed with examples of proper conduct and responsiveness when oversight is present. Addressing these issues requires the implementation of child-sensitive policing standards, mandatory anti-discrimination and trauma-informed training for all frontline staff, and a guaranteed right to accompaniment for every unaccompanied minor during contact with law enforcement or administrative authorities. Strengthening accountability and ensuring the consistent provision of basic needs—such as food, shelter, and education—are equally vital.

Overall, the findings highlight the dual reality faced by unaccompanied minors in Piraeus: while formal frameworks for protection exist, gaps in implementation and everyday practice continue to expose children to vulnerability, distrust, and secondary victimization. Only through systemic coordination, institutional oversight, and a steadfast commitment to child rights can these shortcomings be effectively addressed.

# 7. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

There is an urgent need for a coordinated and sustainable approach to improve the protection, transition to adulthood, and integration of unaccompanied minors. In the below, key recommendations are presented based on the gaps identified in the research and in the literature review.

**1. Establish and strengthen of youth centres.** It is necessary to establish and adequately resource permanent youth support centres for adolescents and young adults, providing integrated services such as interpretation, legal assistance, social counselling, and mediation. These centres should work in close coordination with schools, healthcare providers, and other relevant public services to ensure timely and effective access to essential support and facilitate social inclusion and integration.

**2. Create smooth transition programmes to adulthood.** It is necessary to develop structured transition-to-adulthood programmes for unaccompanied children turning 18. These programmes should be needs-based and cover, inter alia, access to higher education, apprenticeships, vocational education and training, language learning, and targeted socio-economic support.

**3. Establishment of a Municipal Coordinating Body.** It is important to establish a municipal coordination mechanism to ensure effective cooperation on the protection and inclusion of unaccompanied children. This mechanism should bring together relevant municipal departments, the Prosecutor's Office, schools, reception facilities and civil society organizations, and meet on a regular basis to facilitate information-sharing, coordinated responses, and continuity of care.

**4. Capacity building of public employees.** Regular and mandatory capacity-building for public employees should be established, for those who interact with unaccompanied children, including municipal staff, healthcare personnel, education staff and social services. Capacity-building activities should cover, inter alia, child protection standards, the rights of unaccompanied children, and anti-discrimination.

**5. Ensure access to housing during the transition to adulthood.** Structured and planned housing pathways for unaccompanied children approaching adulthood should be developed to ensure continuity of care and integration upon turning 18. Accommodation and housing support should be extended beyond the age of 18, enabling young adults to transition gradually to independent living without interruption of support. Effective coordination between child protection services, housing authorities, municipalities, and civil society organizations is essential to prevent homelessness during and after the transition to adulthood, and to move away from emergency or shelter-based responses towards rights-based housing solutions.

**6. Promote participation and empowerment of minors.** While participation initiatives exist, they remain limited. It is necessary to establish and develop structured participation mechanisms, such as youth advisory groups and consultation spaces within municipal services. Strengthening minors' agency and representation would support accountability and rights protection.

# 7. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

**7. Ensure equal access to inclusive and effective access to education.** Unaccompanied children should have unconditional access to non-segregated mainstream education, with language support and other necessary measures provided within schools rather than through segregated classes or parallel systems.

**8. Access to public services. Non-discriminatory access to public services should be ensured for unaccompanied children.** This should include the availability of qualified interpretation in public services, including in-person and remote interpretation, to guarantee access to healthcare (including psychosocial support), education, social services and administrative procedures

**9. Ensure access to justice. Unaccompanied minors should have access to justice to ensure that fundamental rights violations are addressed.** This should include access to legal aid, with the support of guardians, as well as capacity building of legal professionals and counselling services to better understand the needs and challenges faced by unaccompanied children.

**10. Ensure unaccompanied children have access to the mainstream child protection system, with access to foster care.** It is essential to ensure that unaccompanied children are fully included in the mainstream child protection system on an equal basis with all children deprived of parental care, including access to quality, family-based care such as foster care. This requires strengthening and adequately resourcing child protection and foster care systems, expanding foster services, and ensuring individualized access to services based on identified needs of each child. It also necessitates the systematic recruitment, training, and ongoing support of foster parents, with specific attention to the particular experiences, vulnerabilities, and protection needs of unaccompanied children.

**11. Develop long term integration strategies.** Long-term integration strategies should be developed to ensure continuity of support and respect for fundamental rights of unaccompanied children and young adults. These strategies should combine access to information, community-based support and participation mechanisms, and may include, inter alia:

- accessible, multilingual information tools on housing, education, healthcare and rights;
- community mentorship or accompaniment schemes to support administrative navigation and social inclusion;
- outreach mechanisms to ensure timely access to information and services,
- opportunities for participation, including consultative or advisory bodies enabling unaccompanied children and young adults to contribute to the design of integration measures;
- initiatives to promote social inclusion and combat discrimination
- access to legal information and assistance on residence, documentation and rights.
- for young adults aged 18 and above, supported and voluntary pathways towards employment, embedded within transition-to-adulthood and aftercare measures, and aligned with education priorities.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The findings of the present local report highlight a complex and often fragmented protection landscape for unaccompanied minors (UAMs) in Piraeus, where significant efforts by shelters, NGOs, and individual professionals coexist with structural gaps that continue to leave many children's rights unmet. While the immediate needs of minors, - emergency accommodation, basic medical care, legal counselling - are largely addressed, the system struggles to ensure continuity, stability, and meaningful integration, particularly as children transition into adulthood.

The testimonies of the minor's underscore both their resilience and the precariousness embedded in their journeys. Their experiences in the reception centres on the islands point to severe rights violations, treatment which leave lasting psychological impact and erode trust in state institutions. Although their current experiences in Piraeus are comparatively safer, subtle forms of discrimination in public spaces and schools continue to hinder full inclusion and reinforce feelings of otherness. Mental health support—though recognized as essential—remains insufficient, with too few specialized professionals and no guaranteed continuity of care.

Education emerges as a domain of both opportunity and exclusion: while many minors value schooling and benefit from language classes and supportive teachers, structural barriers undermine consistent attendance and educational progress.

Stakeholder insights align closely with children's narratives, reinforcing the view that legal insecurity, housing instability, mental health vulnerabilities, and limited prospects for employment are the most critical challenges affecting UAMs in Piraeus. The abrupt discontinuation of housing and support services upon reaching adulthood, pushes young adults into homelessness, precarious work and/or marginalization. Despite the dedicated work of guardians, social workers, and NGO staff, the system's effectiveness is undermined. At the municipal level, despite certain positive initiative, the role of local authorities remains modest and largely non-institutionalized. The absence of a stable municipal structure for migrant and refugee integration restricts the city's capacity to respond proactively to the needs of UAMs and to coordinate the multiple actors involved.

The system succeeds in offering short-term safety but falls short of enabling minors to build autonomous, dignified lives as they approach adulthood. Integration opportunities remain limited, fragmented, and unevenly distributed across organizations, resulting in trajectories that depend largely on luck, individual staff initiative, and temporary programmes rather than on coherent, rights-based policies.

The findings of this report point toward the need for a strategic shift from reactive protection to structured inclusion. By addressing the systemic shortcomings identified, Piraeus can move towards a model of protection supporting immediate and long-term wellbeing, integration, autonomy, and equal participation in the life of the city.



# ANNEXES

<b>Number and % of foreign-born pop, pop. with refugee / migrant background - local level</b>	20.897 asylum applicants (0,6%)		2.429 asylum applicants( 0,06 %)	3.903 asylum applicants(0,10%)	3.012 asylum applicants				
<i>4.2 Unaccompanied minors</i>									
TOTAL UAMs. - <b>country</b> <sup>37</sup>			2573	1987	2414	89%M, 11% F	15%<15 YEARS OLD	45% Egypt, 16% SYRIA, 16% SOMALIA,10% AFGHANISTAN, 9 %OTHER, 3%PAKISTAN	61% ARABIC, 16% SOMALI, 10% FARSI, 3%URDU, 9% OTHER
TOTAL <u>UAMs</u> - <b>locality</b>			>1404	>960	>1119				

<sup>37</sup> Dates of reference of the data: 31/12/2020.2021.2022,2023,2024.

**Table 2:  
Language,  
institutional,  
service  
and  
recruitment  
channel  
mapping**

<b>Mapping</b>		Title of the report
<p><b>Language mapping:</b> list the main languages of refugees and UAMs in the locality<sup>38</sup>. Please add prevalence/frequency and put them in order</p>		
<p>1 Arabic 2 Darsi/dari 3 lingala/french 4 English 5 Somali</p>		
<p><b>Institutional and service mapping</b></p>		
<p>Relevant national, regional and local level <b>politics</b> and <b>legal</b> framework relevant for UAMs (with a summary)</p>	<p>1 The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 2 <a href="#">Law 4554/2018</a>, law 4636/2019, Circular 7/2025 3 EU Reception Conditions Directive (2013/33/EU) 4 Law 4939/2022, law 4960/2022 5 European Convention on Human Rights</p>	
<p>Relevant national, regional, but <b>mostly local administration units, stakeholders, NGOs</b>, etc. responsible for supporting UAMs<sup>39</sup>. The list should provide information on each organization's area of expertise, services, responsibilities, target groups etc. and contact information and the linkages between various organizations. Add these information below the table, if more space needed.</p>	<p>1 Piraeus Juvenile Prosecutor's Office 2 Piraeus Mental Health Center 3 Secondary Education (Refugee Education Coordinator) KEDASY 4. Sports clubs (football clubs, municipal gyms, swimming pools...)" 5. <del>Centres</del> Centres of Hospitality of Unaccompanied Minors 6. Emergency Accommodation Facility for Unaccompanied Minors of Piraeus (IOM) 7. National Opera 8. Organization Earth 9. <del>Pyxida</del> Pyxida 10. Faros School 11. A.O. Agios Dimitrios Piraeus (soccer team) 12. Yoga and Sports with Refugees 13. Activities on "Sea Days," where UAMs participate, play sports and games, listen to music. The municipality offers lunch to UAMs in a park in Piraeus.</p>	
<p><b>Recruitment channel mapping:</b> of relevant local institutions (including social services providers, reception <del>centres</del> hotspots, schools), NGOs, localities (e.g. popular meeting or leisure time spots in the city), channels and methods to recruit potential respondent UAMs for quantitative and qualitative research.</p>		
<p><del>UAMs</del> UAMs</p>	<p>1 <del>Centres</del> Centres of Hospitality of Unaccompanied Minors 2 Network of Guardianship of Unaccompanied Minors 3 4 5</p>	

<sup>38</sup> Dates of reference of the data: 31/12/2020.2021.2022,2023,2024.

<sup>39</sup> This list attempts to make and indicative and not exhaustive registration of the main national and particularly local authorities and stakeholders supporting UAMs in Piraeus. Due to often changes in UAMs supporting projects the registration cannot be exhaustive.

[40] This list attempts to make and indicative and not exhaustive registration of the main national and particularly local authorities and stakeholders supporting UAMs in Athens. Due to often changes in UAMs supporting projects the registration cannot be exhaustive.

<b>Number and % of foreign-born pop. with refugee / migrant background - local level</b>	20.897 asylum applicants (0,6%)		2.429 asylum applicants( 0,06 %)	3.903 asylum applicants(0,10%)	3.012 asylum applicants				
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**Table 3. Service Domains, Key Providers, and Stakeholder Assessment of Adequacy (Athens)**

Service Domain	Main Providers / Actors	Indicative Activities	Adequacy Assessment (1-5)	Qualitative Remarks
Accommodation & Basic Needs	NGOs (ARSIS, METAdrasi, PRAKSIS), KFAA semi-independent housing, Municipality of Piraeus	Emergency and semi-independent accommodation, food, clothing, hygiene	2 – Mostly adequate	Housing provision and daily care assessed positively; food and clothing occasionally inadequate; transition to adulthood still unsupported.
Legal Support & Guardianship	Appointed guardians, NGO lawyers (METAdrasi, Greek Council for Refugees)	Representation in personal/legal matters, property access, asylum and documentation support	2 – Mostly adequate	Guardianship widely valued; however, limited free legal aid in criminal cases and fragmented guardianship framework; lack of continuity after 18.
Interpretation & Mediation	NGO interpreters, municipal mediators	Translation, asylum/medical/educational interpretation	1 – Totally adequate	Considered effective and essential; ensures access to services; needs more institutional stability.
Education & Language Learning	NGO educators, municipal programmes, public schools	Greek/English lessons, study support, school enrolment	2 – Mostly adequate	Strong school and NGO collaboration; persistent barriers for older minors and those without documents.
Psychosocial & Mental Health Support	NGO psychologists, adventure therapy projects, social services	Counseling, trauma therapy, outdoor experiential interventions	2-3 – Partly adequate	Innovative programmes (e.g., Adventure Therapy) effective but unsustainable; shortage of specialised trauma professionals; funding interruptions harm continuity.
Recreation & Participation	NGOs, youth advisory committees, Municipality	Sports, art, cultural and youth empowerment programmes	1-2 – Mostly adequate	Very positive effect on integration; lack of stable venues (e.g., gyms, art spaces); project-based activities limit consistency.
Employment & Vocational Guidance	NGO employment counsellors, municipal referrals	Job counselling, CV preparation, vocational orientation	4 – Mostly inadequate	Few structured employment pathways; limited professional counselling; absence of stable vocational programmes.

**Table 3. Service Domains, Key Providers, and Stakeholder Assessment of Adequacy (Athens)**

Medical Care & Health Services	NGO medical units, local clinics, public hospitals	Health checks, referrals, emergency and primary care	2 – Mostly adequate	<b>Generally accessible through NGOs; specialised services (e.g., dental, optical) insufficient; barriers in public system persist.</b>
Case Management & Coordination	NGOs, municipal social services, guardianship network	Individual case follow-up, inter-agency referrals, crisis response	3 – Partly adequate	Dedicated professionals but fragmented coordination; lack of unified framework or shared database; overlap of responsibilities.
Municipal Coordination Functions	Municipality of Piraeus, Migrant Intergation Centre	Advocacy, public awareness, facilitation of cooperation	4 – Mostly inadequate	Municipal role is informal and project-dependent; absence of permanent child protection mechanism.



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