Access to formal education for unaccompanied children in shelters
The assessment took place in April – May 2017 with the aim to examine the access to school of unaccompanied children accommodated in UASC shelters.

The assessment has been supported by members of Children on the Move Network that contributed with comments and submitting the completed questionnaires.

The Children on the Move Network is coordinated by the Deputy Ombudsman for Children's Rights, and it is included in the Ombudsman's mechanism for the monitoring of the situation of children on the move in Greece. In the Network, which is supported by UNICEF, three intergovernmental organizations (UNICEF, UNHCR, IOM) participate, as well as 15 civil society organizations focused on the field (ARSIS, Doctors of the World, Network for Children's Rights, Danish Refugee Council, Hellenic League for Human Rights, Greek Refugee Council, Medical Intervention, Babel Day Centre, Metadrasi, SOS Villages Greece, PRAKSIS, Save the Children International, Solidarity Now, Terres des Hommes, Smile of the Child).

The current document is a short summary version of the main findings and recommendations based on the original report produced in Greek.
Context and purpose of the assessment
The current assessment falls in the mandate of the Greek Deputy Ombudsman for Children’s Rights and is related with the objectives of the “Network for the Rights of Children on the Move”, which is coordinated by the Deputy Ombudsman. It took place from April to May 2017. At that time, more than 20,000 of Greece’s refugee and migrant population were children. Among them approximately 2,000 were unaccompanied children. As of 6 April, 1,180 unaccompanied children were accommodated in 54 shelters across Greece, with a total capacity of 1,382 places.

The purpose of the assessment is the protection and promotion of unaccompanied children’s right to formal education. Specifically, in view of the forthcoming school year planning, it was considered important to focus on the educational situation of unaccompanied children accommodated in shelters in order to identify crucial issues and promote proposals to the relevant stakeholders towards the safeguarding of their access to school.

Methodology and limitations
The assessment was conducted in shelters run by NGO members of the Children on the Move Network (ARSIS, Metadras, SOS Villages, PRAKSI, Save the Children). The referral start date for data collection was 6 April 2017 and data was collected until the end of April. Both qualitative and quantitative information was collected by key informants. A questionnaire was provided to the focal points of shelters, which included both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The questionnaire focused on the profiling of children accommodated in shelters and their educational needs, namely access to education, the main reasons that hinder their access to education, as well as factors that promote access to schools and regular attendance. Furthermore, the assessment aimed to identify how activities outside school and informal education can support the educational needs of children and further promote their enrolment and integration into formal education. In total the questionnaire was completed by 29 shelters (11 transit and 18 long-term), hosting 604 unaccompanied children.

Main limitations that should be considered when reading the findings include: The volatile situation during the assessment due to the continuous movement of unaccompanied children (new arrivals, relocation, family reunification, abscondments). The majority of children were close to adulthood between the age of 16-18 years old. Percentages may not total always to 100 due to rounding.

Shelters that provided information
Attica: 12 shelters
Central Macedonia: 9 shelters
Central Greece: 1 shelter
Western Greece: 1 shelter
Aegean islands: 6 shelters
Key findings

Demographic and other information:

- 78% of the accommodated children were between the ages 16-18, 15% between the ages 13-15, while 6% were younger, 0-12 years. Among them 87% were boys and 13% were girls.
- The main nationalities of children accommodated were from Pakistan (30%), Syria (26%) and Afghanistan (25%), while the rest (19%) were coming from other countries.
- It is estimated that approximately 38% of the accommodated children are likely to leave Greece (in the context of family reunification or the relocation programme), 47% are likely to remain in the country, while for 15% no clear estimation is available.

School enrollment:

- Among all accommodated children, **44% were enrolled in schools**. Specifically:
  - Among enrolled children, **89% were enrolled in secondary education and 11% in primary education**.
  - Among the accommodated children aged 6-15 (and for whom school access and attendance is obligatory by law), 54% were not enrolled.
  - 63% of the children from Afghanistan were enrolled in school; the percentage was 44% for children from Pakistan and 36% for children from Syria.
  - 90% of children residing in Central Macedonia (excluding Thessaloniki), were enrolled in schools. For Thessaloniki the percentage was 29%, for Central Greece 63%, for Attica 52% and for the islands 28%.
- The main reasons that hindered access (enrollment) to formal education were unavailability of places in schools (26% among the total cases reported), unavailability of reception classes (22% among the total cases reported) and the unwillingness of children (20% among the total cases reported). The main reason on why children did not want to attend schools, were (1) expectations of relocation/family reunification in the near future, (2) insecurity on what they will face within the school environment, (3) other psychological reasons.
- According to key informants, efforts are made towards the enrollment of the aforementioned children for the new school year. It should be noted that among accommodated children approximately **18% had never attended school**. Almost half of the latter children have been enrolled in school after their arrival in Greece.

School attendance:

- Among the children enrolled in primary education, 93% were attending school regularly. Among those in secondary education, 12% were not attending regularly and 33% had stopped school.
- The main reasons that affected attendance to formal education was language (33% of reported cases), lack of reception classes at secondary education (9.5%), and other issues, such as the distance between the shelter and the school, or expectations of relocation/family reunification in the near future.
Among the shelters included in the assessment, 88% provided remedial education, 83% provided school materials and 71% facilitated the daily transportation of children to the schools. In shelters where all three of the above were provided, the percentage of children not regularly attending or stopped attending was lower.

**Informal education:**
- In all shelters that were included in the assessment, informal learning activities are offered, such as language lessons, art therapy, computer learning etc.

**Crucial issues and recommendations**

*The Greek State should provide for the systematic support towards the access and inclusion of unaccompanied children in formal education.*

In this view, the following are recommended:

- All involved stakeholders should be immediately, appropriately and adequately informed of the existing regulatory framework on access to formal education for migrant and refugee children, so as to avoid any additional (administrative) obstacles and/or delays that prevent children's access to education.

- Any resulting impediments regarding access to formal education should be removed in line with the principles of sound administration and fairness. Additionally, all the favorable legal provisions that have been adopted for facilitating school attendance by foreigner students should be implemented without any discrimination (i.e. the provisions concerning the movement to higher classes based on previously awarded marks).

- **Reception classes** should be established both at primary and secondary education level (without excluding the higher classes/high school).

- **Informal education** could be used complementary to formal education with the aim to support children's regular school attendance (i.e. remedial education, reinforcing children through the participation in various learning activities).

- Specific issues concerning children older than 15 years. The latter issues occur mainly due to the absence of classes appropriate for older children who have not completed primary school, as well as to the extra need for enhancing access to night and vocational schools.
Brief presentation of key data and findings

Demographic information

Gender of children accommodated

- **Boys**: 87%
- **Girls**: 13%

Age groups of children accommodated

- **16-18 years old**: 78%
- **13-15 years old**: 15%
- **6-12 years old**: 6%
- **0-5 years old**: 1%

Nationalities of children accommodated

- **Pakistan**: 30%
- **Syria**: 26%
- **Afghanistan**: 25%
- **Other**: 19%

Among the children accommodated in the assessed shelters, most were boys **16-18 years old** from **Pakistan**.

School enrollment

- **71%** of children aged 6-12 years old were enrolled in schools. For the children aged 13-15 the percentage was **52%**, while for the age group 16-18 the percentage was **40%**.

Children enrolled - not enrolled in schools

- **Enrolled**: 56%
- **Not enrolled**: 44%

Among all children accommodated in shelters:

- Most of the children enrolled in school were boys **16-18 years old** from **Afghanistan**.
- Most of the children not enrolled in school were boys **16-18 years old** from **Pakistan**.
Among children that were enrolled in primary education 16% were in morning schools, but not in reception classes and 84% in morning schools in reception classes.

Among children that were enrolled in secondary education 58% were in morning schools, but not in reception classes, 17% in evening schools and 6% in intercultural schools. The remaining 9% refers to not clearly defined cases regarding the type of classes.

89% of the enrolled children were enrolled in secondary education, while 11% were enrolled in primary education.
Percentages based on the total number of children per age group (Syria)

6-12 years old

- In the process of relocation or family reunification: 69%
- It is assumed that they will be in Greece the next year: 15%
- Have been attending school prior of arrival in Greece: 62%
- Have been enrolled in school: 46%

13-15 years old

- In the process of relocation or family reunification: 70%
- It is assumed that they will be in Greece the next year: 22%
- Have been attending school prior of arrival in Greece: 67%
- Have been enrolled in school: 33%

16 - 18 years old

- In the process of relocation or family reunification: 48%
- It is assumed that they will be in Greece the next year: 26%
- Have been attending school prior of arrival in Greece: 87%
- Have been enrolled in school: 35%

Percentages of age groups based on total children from Syria

- 6-12 years: 9%
- 13-15 years: 19%
- 16-18 years: 72%
Percentages based on the total number of children per age group (Afghanistan)

6-12 years old

- In the process of family reunification: 64%
- It is assumed that they will be in Greece the next year: 18%
- Have been attending school prior of arrival in Greece: 55%
- Have been enrolled in school: 100%

13-15 years old

- In the process of family reunification: 73%
- It is assumed that they will be in Greece the next year: 30%
- Have been attending school prior of arrival in Greece: 80%
- Have been enrolled in school: 70%

16 - 18 years old

- In the process of family reunification: 31%
- It is assumed that they will be in Greece the next year: 53%
- Have been attending school prior of arrival in Greece: 59%
- Have been enrolled in school: 56%

Percentages of age groups based on total children from Afghanistan:

- 6-12 years: 8%
- 13-15 years: 22%
- 16-18 years: 70%
Percentages based on the total number of children per age group (Pakistan)

**13-15 years old**
- In the process of family reunification: 45%
- It is assumed that they will be in Greece the next year: 85%
- Have been attending school prior of arrival in Greece: 95%
- Have been enrolled in school: 55%

**16-18 years old**
- In the process of family reunification: 8%
- It is assumed that they will be in Greece the next year: 79%
- Have been attending school prior of arrival in Greece: 85%
- Have been enrolled in school: 36%

**Percentages of age groups based on total children from Pakistan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>6-12 years</th>
<th>13-15 years</th>
<th>16-18 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Percentages based on the total number of children per age group (Other countries)

6-12 years old

- In the process of relocation or family reunification: 100%
- It is assumed that they will be in Greece the next year: 17%
- Have been attending school prior of arrival in Greece: 100%
- Have been enrolled in school: 100%

13-15 years old

- In the process of relocation or family reunification: 71%
- It is assumed that they will be in Greece the next year: 57%
- Have been attending school prior of arrival in Greece: 57%
- Have been enrolled in school: 57%

16-18 years old

- In the process of relocation or family reunification: 34%
- It is assumed that they will be in Greece the next year: 49%
- Have been attending school prior of arrival in Greece: 63%
- Have been enrolled in school: 41%

Percentages of age groups based on total children from other countries

- 6-12 years: 6%
- 13-15 years: 7%
- 16-18 years: 87%
Issues related to the enrollment of children in schools

**Regarding refusal/unwillingness of children to enroll in schools, the main reasons were as following:**

1) **Relocation / family reunification** in the near future, regardless if children were already in the process or not.

2) **Insecurity** on what they will face in schools or belief that education is not required for their personal goals.

3) **Psychological reasons** that were not further defined.

*Other reasons that hindered the enrollment of children were:*

1) **Communication problems** due to language barriers, not only related with reception classes. Key informants noted the lack of intercultural tools, as well as lack of access to interpretation.

2) **Age of children:** Children based on their educational level were supposed to enroll in lower classes. Furthermore, there was a hesitation to enroll children who were close to adulthood.

3) **Reactions from the local community,** against the enrollment of children in schools.
**Attendance**

**Attendance rate - percentage based on the total number of children attending primary education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Regular</th>
<th>Not regular</th>
<th>Stopped attending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Out of reception classes</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In reception classes</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Attendance rate - percentage based on the total number of children attending secondary education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Regular</th>
<th>Not regular</th>
<th>Stopped attending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Out of reception classes</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Factors that affect attendance of children**
(Percentages based on total number of reported issues/factors)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue/Problem</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language barriers/difficulty in understanding</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other issues/problems*</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical location</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectancy of immediate departure due to relocation or family reunification</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of reception classes</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive factors**</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Other issues/problems, include:

- **Psychological situation of children**, that makes it difficult for them to be integrated into school daily routine.

- **Illiteracy of children**, that never attended school prior of their arrival in Greece.

- **Learning difficulties**.

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**Factors that affect positively the attendance of children despite the above obstacles, include:**

- Participation of children in activities **outside school** that enhance their socialization skills.

- Short **distance** between the shelter and school.

- **Teachers** encouraging children and promoting their participation in classes.
Among the 29 shelters, 88% provided remedial education, 83% provided school materials and 71% facilitated the daily transportation of children to the schools. Based on the available information, in shelters where all three supporting activities were provided, the percentage of children not regularly attending or stopped attending was lower. Additionally, there is a correlation between enrollment, as well as regular school attendance and the parallel attendance of children in various activities (informal learning, recreational) outside or inside the shelters. The latter may contribute to the enhancement of socialization and cultural awareness of the children.

**Enrolled - not enrolled children based on activities offered outside school**

![Chart showing enrollment based on activities offered outside school](chart.png)