



PROTECTION



FOR ALL MINORS

**THE INVISIBLE  
UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN  
PROGRAM REPORT  
PROTECTION FOR ALL MINORS**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



## The Invisible Unaccompanied Children Report of the *Protection for All Minors* Program

The *Protection for All Minors* program, implemented since August 2022 by **INTERSOS Hellas** in collaboration with the Network for Children's Rights, aims to protect unaccompanied and separated minors living outside shelters or in precarious conditions. The program provides comprehensive psychosocial, legal, and social support under the supervision and coordination of the National Emergency Response Mechanism (NERM) and the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Citizens and Institutional Protection. Its goal is to ensure the safety, dignity, and social integration of children who are unaccompanied or who have been separated from either their parents or primary caregivers.

### Key Actions

- Urban Safe Space Creation:** A secure center in Athens offering services such as social support, legal counseling, food, and clothing. It encourages children to transition from unsafe living conditions to safer options, such as shelter facilities.
- Role of "Attendant":** Professionals (social workers, psychologists, and legal advisors) appointed as the child representative, assessing their best interests and developing individualized action plans.
- Collaboration with NERM:** Through the National Emergency Response Mechanism, children are identified and referred to appropriate services. Mobile units ensure their safe transfer to emergency shelters.
- Support in Other Regions:** The program provides remote support to children outside Athens, ensuring service continuity through video calls and collaboration with local social services.

### Statistics and Demographics (October 2022 - September 2024)

- 1,514 minors supported**, including 1,091 referrals from NERM, 410 identified at Regional Asylum Offices, and 13 self-referred.
- 2,541 sessions** conducted by the multidisciplinary team (social workers, psychologists, legal advisors, and mentors) for holistic support and empowerment.
- 6,470 follow-up calls** made to monitor cases.

- 99 children** safely housed in shelter facilities.
- 98% boys**, mostly aged 15-18 years.
- Majority from **Egypt, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan**.
- 5.6% with additional vulnerabilities**, such as serious medical or psychological issues, or at risk of being trafficked.

### Added Value of the *Protection for All Minors* Program

- Presence at Regional Asylum Offices:** Professionals ensure immediate registration and needs assessment, providing information on rights and offering same-day transfers to emergency shelters if needed.
- Support for Non-Housed Minors:** The multidisciplinary team builds trust with minors outside housing facilities, explaining the importance of shelter and protection while guiding them on their rights and available assistance.
- Process of Actual Care:** Assigning unaccompanied and separated children to suitable adults for care who have been previously approved by Juvenile Prosecutors. Professionals assess the child's best interests, compile case files, and collaborate with prosecutors and social services.
- Support for Children in Other Regions:** Despite geographical distances, professionals maintain communication through video and phone calls, informing authorities about living conditions and providing expertise and interpretation for effective case management.

### Main Challenges

- Reluctance to Engage with Services:** Many unaccompanied and separated minors avoid collaborating with professionals, relying instead on their ethnic communities or informal networks. They often reject formal housing, prioritizing employment to support families in their home countries.
- Demand for Legal Work Opportunities:** Minors rely on informal, unsuitable jobs such as agricultural or construction work. Despite legal information, family pressures or debts to traffickers lead many to continue working illegally.
- Coordination with Guardianship System:** The 2024 guardianship law created overlaps in responsibilities between program professionals and appointed guardians, complicating support for minors. Efforts are underway to streamline roles and improve collaboration.

## Recommendations

- **Collaboration with Guardians:** Strengthen cooperation with appointed guardians to develop individualized plans for unaccompanied minors, leveraging complementary expertise and frequent contact to enhance trust and support.
- **Legal Residency Support:** Facilitate the transition to adulthood by assisting minors in obtaining a 10-year residency permit under the Migration Code, ensuring continuity in support and legal stability.
- **Continued Assistance for Vulnerable Youth:** Extend specialized support for vulnerable children post-18, including survivors of trafficking, gender-based violence, and those with significant health or psychological needs.
- **Preparation for Adulthood:** Implement programs to equip minors with essential life skills, such as navigating tax responsibilities and employment opportunities, to support their independence.

The *Protection for All Minors* program has significantly strengthened the protection system for unaccompanied and separated children in Greece, highlighting the critical need for support and safety for those outside official shelters. Despite its impact, the high number of children in precarious conditions underscores the necessity for increased staffing to provide more individualized and frequent support, fostering trust and guiding children toward safer living environments.





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