ARSIS PRESENCE IN DIAVATA CONCERNING UAMs: FROM 2016 TO 2025

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ARSIS, ASSOCIATION FOR THE SOCIAL SUPPORT OF YOUTH

PREVIOUS ARSIS PRESENCE IN DIAVATA

-First safe zone for UAMs that existed in Greece

-Functional from April 2016 till June 2021

-Created as a means to confront the lack of available places in the shelters and as an alternative to the detention of protective custody. It ceased to exist 6 months after the abolition of protective custody in December 2020

-These days Diavata was an open camp and not a Reception and Identification Center and Closed Controlled Access Center as it is nowadays

CHALLENGES THAT EXISTED AND THE WAY TO THEIR RESOLUTION

-Many of the children had survived shipwrecks and had come through the Aegean sea route, with no prior experience of receiving child protection services

-They had not been previously registered as international protection seekers, while at the same time there were legal obstacles in their registration inside Diavata RIC

-Once these obstacles were raised, we were in need of guardians to accompany them in their asylum registration.

-They were and still are de facto detained, while at the same time not de jure deprived of their liberty.

-Up to early March 2025 they were not able to be enrolled in high school classes and follow the relevant courses. Now a few of them follow them regularly. There are some film screenings and sports activities provided by ARSIS, as well as Greek language courses provided by Pyxida

THE EXISTING SITUATION IN LATE MARCH 2025, A SHORT WHILE BEFORE ARSIS DIAVATA SAFE ZONE STARTS WORKING

-There are 22 children residing now in Diavata, waiting to be hosted in ARSIS safe zone when it will start working in a few days

-The majority of the staff has already been recruited

-It will be constantly functional (24/7), with caregivers present during the night, and the ability to host 60 UAMs

-It will have a lawyer dealing with the legal cases of the children

-While waiting for the safe zone to be totally functional, in the meantime psychosocial and legal services are provided by ARSIS Streetwork Team in collaboration with the appointed guardians

A NEW NEED FOR SAFE AREAS AND SAFE ZONES-SOME NUMBERS AND THEIR MEANING

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In September 2020, 3 months before the abolition of protective custody, 370 UAMs were residing in safe zones and safe areas all over Greece, 402 in RICs and 204 in protective custody. In March 2025, 918 UAMs were residing in RICs in continental Greece and Closed Controlled Access Centers in the islands. In September 2020 1372 UAMs were residing in shelters and 162 in SILs, while in March 2025 1380 UAMs were residing in shelters and 214 in SILs. Numbers are very similar, 4.5 years later.

- According to the Greek National Plan on the Rights of the Child (July 2021) we permanently need 2000 places in shelters and 500 places in SILs (2500 places in total). Right now, we have 1507 places available in shelters and 238 places in SILs (1745 places in total). This is why we now need once more safe zones. Because in fact we do need the 2500 places in shelters and SILs mentioned in the Greek National Plan that do not exist. Furthermore, this is in line with the CRC 2022 examination of the periodic reports, urging Greece under Concluding Observation 40 h, to “Provide all refugee, asylum-seeking and unaccompanied children with sustainable, open and quality accommodation and shelter outside detention, including by increasing reception capacity and quality, implementing the European Union relocation initiative, promptly closing “safe zones” and developing a protection database.”

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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