

ODIHR – OSCE
Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM)

Working Session 9 on Humanitarian Issues and Commitments, including

- *Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings,*
- *Refugees and Displaced Persons,*
- *Persons at Risk of Displacement*

Warsaw, September 20th, 2019.

CONTRIBUTION OF “THE SMILE OF THE CHILD”, GREECE.

- “The Smile of the Child” is the largest internationally recognized non-profit Civil Society Organization in Greece in the field of child care and child protection. We are the national operator of the national and European helpline for children, as well as the European hotline for Missing Children, and are also actively involved in search and rescue operations for children gone missing. In 2018, about 30% of our nearly 200 handled cases of missing children, were migration related.

Moreover, we run nationwide structures and have at our disposal numerous tools to support children at risk of or victimized by violence and poverty.

- On this basis, we wish to make a few recommendations.
 1. In the current environment of politically and socially overwhelming migration issues, one tends to omit that local children also fall victim to human trafficking. For the sake of identification of cases and adequate response, there needs to be more awareness of this among actors. Our Organization runs sensitization programs with this purpose, and we shall continue doing so.

2. Trafficking and exploitation risks also exist for children living abroad without being refugees or recent migrants. Their protection specifically requires a proper level of cooperation among authorities of the countries of residence and origin, based on mutual trust and, at least within the European space, on effectively implemented mutual recognition of judicial decisions.
3. In the context of the refugee and migration crisis, policy and effort remain very heavily focused on unaccompanied children. However, accompanied children fall victim to trafficking and exploitation as well. We welcome OSCE Decision 6/18 on Strengthening Efforts to Prevent and Combat Child Trafficking, Including of Unaccompanied Minors. However, we call for robust and comprehensive implementation by participating States, in terms of prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership.
4. It needs to be systematically re-stated in this broad international gathering that detention of children is under no circumstances and never acceptable. With this year's 30th anniversary of the UN Convention of Rights of the Child in mind, we must ensure that the migration phenomenon, the cost it entails and the security concerns it provokes, will not be allowed to dethrone human rights and fundamental children's rights from being a cornerstone value in our societies. Unfortunately, however, we cannot but notice that the recognition of children's rights in policy making, let alone in effective implementation, is really not to be taken for granted yet.
5. And finally, children in migration who have fallen victim or are at risk of falling victim to exploitation or trafficking, should have a direct involvement in decisions fundamentally determining their future. They should not merely undergo these decisions step by step, without contributing their empowering insight into the track ahead of them.

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