

# **EEA Grants Programme II. Asylum & Migration**

Fund operated by



## **Final Evaluation Report**

**SARLI KOUVARAS CONSULTING PC  
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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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The dedication and transparency of all involved stakeholders have been instrumental in capturing the program’s achievements and lessons learned, and their contributions are deeply appreciated.

Sincerely,

Gerasimos Kouvaras  
Lead Evaluator  
On behalf of Sarli Kouvaras Consulting PC

## A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The final evaluation of the EEA and Norway Grants-funded “Asylum and Migration Programme” in Greece underscores the program’s critical contributions to addressing the needs of asylum seekers and vulnerable populations, while highlighting persistent challenges and opportunities for future improvements. Implemented in a complex and evolving context, the program focused on four interrelated outcomes aimed at improving reception conditions, strengthening institutional capacity, ensuring fair asylum procedures and legal aid, and facilitating voluntary return and reintegration.

The program’s impact was significant, reaching thousands of vulnerable individuals, including unaccompanied minors (UAMs), asylum-seeking women, and families. Through partnerships with international organizations, civil society, and public authorities, the program enhanced the quality of accommodation, strengthened asylum systems, and supported the reintegration of returnees. While external factors, including fluctuating migration flows, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and financial constraints, often created hurdles, the program’s adaptive strategies ensured that many of its objectives were met or exceeded.

The evaluation employed a robust methodology, combining a detailed review of program documentation, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, and selective field visits. While limitations, particularly in accessing direct beneficiaries, presented challenges, findings were triangulated to provide a thorough understanding of the program’s performance.

To provide a thorough understanding of the program’s achievements, challenges, and contributions, the evaluation addressed three key questions across effectiveness, sustainability, and impact. For effectiveness, it examined how well the program met its intended outcomes, posing the question: *To what extent did the program achieve its objectives, and what factors influenced its performance?* Sustainability was explored through the lens of long-term viability, asking: *How sustainable were the program’s results, and what mechanisms have been established to ensure their continuity?* Finally, the evaluation assessed impact by considering: *What were the long-term and systemic effects of the program, and how did it contribute to improving the protection and well-being of asylum seekers in Greece?* These guiding questions framed the assessment, ensuring a nuanced understanding of the program’s contributions within a complex operational context.

The program’s achievements under **Outcome 1** demonstrated the importance of tailored and context-specific approaches to addressing the needs of asylum seekers. Projects under this outcome provided safe and dignified accommodation to unaccompanied minors and vulnerable women, ensuring compliance with EU Directive standards. Psychosocial, legal, and educational services were delivered with a holistic approach, enabling beneficiaries to rebuild their lives and integrate into local communities. Advocacy efforts also led to policy changes, such as the inclusion of UAMs in Greece’s fostering and adoption frameworks. However, systemic bottlenecks, including delays in referral

processes, low occupancy rates, and insufficient financial flexibility, limited the full realization of the program's potential.

Under **Outcome 2**, the NORCAP program played a pivotal role in strengthening Greece's asylum and migration management capacity. Through the deployment of highly skilled experts, the program supported key institutions such as the Reception and Identification Service (RIS) and the Ministry of Health in developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), delivering targeted training, and providing strategic guidance. This enhanced operational efficiency, improved inter-agency coordination, and ensured adherence to international standards. Nonetheless, the reliance on external expertise highlighted the need for long-term capacity-building efforts and sustainable state-led systems.

**Outcome 3** focused on enhancing the quality of asylum procedures and providing free legal aid to vulnerable populations. UNHCR's intervention exceeded targets in several areas, offering legal representation to over 7,400 asylum seekers and refugees. The deployment of experts facilitated the development of quality assurance mechanisms, while strategic litigation addressed systemic gaps in detention practices and procedural safeguards. Despite these successes, challenges remain in ensuring the long-term sustainability of legal aid services and addressing procedural inefficiencies that undermine asylum seekers' rights.

The voluntary return and reintegration component (**Outcome 4**), implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), supported 229 vulnerable individuals in returning to their countries of origin. The project's tailored approach included pre-departure counseling, safe travel arrangements, and reintegration support. While satisfaction rates among returnees were exceptionally high, limited data on long-term reintegration outcomes constrained the evaluation of sustained impact.

Across all outcomes, the program demonstrated a strong commitment to fostering collaboration between stakeholders, including NGOs, public entities, and local communities. These partnerships were instrumental in enhancing service delivery, addressing systemic gaps, and advocating for policy reforms. However, external challenges, such as shifts in migration policies, funding uncertainties, and bureaucratic inefficiencies, often disrupted implementation and highlighted the fragility of existing systems.

The evaluation concludes that the EEA and Norway Grants-funded program made substantial contributions to improving the reception, protection, and integration of asylum seekers and vulnerable populations in Greece. Its emphasis on capacity building, quality assurance, and holistic service delivery has set important precedents for future interventions. However, sustaining these achievements will require greater alignment with state systems, diversified funding strategies, and strengthened mechanisms for monitoring long-term impact. The lessons learned from this program underscore the importance of adaptive approaches that balance immediate humanitarian needs with systemic reforms, ensuring that the rights and dignity of asylum seekers remain at the forefront of migration management efforts.

## B. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This part introduces the program’s operational ecosystem, its focus on civil society, and its comparison with other funding realities like AMIF. It sets the stage for understanding the program’s role within Greece’s asylum and migration framework.

### ***Engagement with Civil Society***

The EEA and Norway Grants-funded “Asylum and Migration Programme” in Greece operated within a complex ecosystem shaped by national, regional, and global migration trends. With a primary focus on strengthening civil society organizations (CSOs), the program sought to fill critical gaps in service delivery and institutional capacity, particularly in areas where state mechanisms faced limitations.

Civil society was at the heart of the program’s interventions, with projects implemented primarily through experienced CSOs. This emphasis on civil society allowed for flexible, grassroots responses tailored to the specific needs of vulnerable populations such as unaccompanied minors (UAMs), women, and asylum-seeking families. By leveraging CSOs’ proximity to communities, the program ensured culturally sensitive, context-specific support while fostering trust and accessibility among beneficiaries.

In contrast to the EEA and Norway Grants’ emphasis on empowering civil society, AMIF (Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund) supports both governmental and non-governmental actors. However, its implementation often prioritizes state-driven projects, particularly in areas such as border management, asylum system capacity building, and integration policies managed through national programs. While AMIF also allocates resources directly to CSOs through specific calls, the EEA Grants distinguish themselves by consistently placing civil society at the forefront of their interventions, fostering grassroots and community-led initiatives as a core strategy.

The flexibility and multi-stakeholder approach of the EEA Grants stand out when compared to AMIF’s often bureaucratic and top-down structures. For instance, while AMIF-funded projects must align closely with EU migration policy priorities, which can shift with political dynamics, the EEA Grants allow for greater adaptability in responding to emerging needs on the ground.

### ***External context during implementation***

The program was implemented amidst significant external challenges and evolving migration dynamics that shaped its operational environment:

- **COVID-19 Pandemic:** The pandemic created unprecedented hurdles, including restricted mobility, delayed activities, and limitations on in-person engagements. These disruptions required innovative approaches to maintain service delivery and stakeholder collaboration.
- **Changing migration trends:** Refugee and migrant arrivals slowed considerably during the program’s implementation compared to the earlier crisis years, altering demand patterns in key reception areas. This shift impacted occupancy rates in

facilities, particularly on the islands, and led to a redistribution of asylum seekers to mainland Greece.

- **Policy shifts and prioritization:** The Greek government’s changing priorities—such as decongesting island hotspots, transitioning to state-led service provision, and focusing on integration—further shaped the program’s strategies. The emphasis on relocation to the mainland and integration underscored the importance of community-led initiatives supported by the EEA Grants.

**Description of the program evaluated**

The “Asylum and Migration” (Addressing urgent needs for the reception and screening of asylum seekers and for the accommodation of vulnerable groups) program in Greece started on February 20, 2019, and ended on October 31, 2023, with a total budget of 15.132.000 euros, as part of the EEA Grants 2014 – 2021. The program aspired to contribute to ensuring legal protection, support and care for the most vulnerable asylum seekers, with emphasis on unaccompanied children. The Fund Operator for the “Asylum and Migration” program in Greece was SOL Consulting S.A in partnership with HumanRights360.

The program’s objective was to ensure functioning national asylum and migration management systems and to safeguard the right to seek asylum. It supported the following areas:

- National systems for asylum and migration management, including voluntary return.
- Services to assist asylum seekers in exercising their basic rights.

The program aimed to alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable in Greece and address urgent needs for the reception and screening of asylum seekers and the accommodation of vulnerable groups through experienced partners.

The program was organized in four outcomes:

- **Outcome 1:** “Improved quality of accommodation and other services provided in open reception centers”
- **Outcome 2:** “Capacity of key institutions to ensure protection of vulnerable asylum seekers, particularly UAMs, is strengthened”
- **Outcome 3:** “Operational procedures and capacity of the Greek Asylum Service and Appeal Committees improved”
- **Outcome 4:** “Orderly and human voluntary return of migrants or vulnerable groups is secured”

The Outcomes were broken down into “expected programme results” and, for each of these, output and outcome indicators were established leading to the Results Framework presented below:

	Expected program results	Indicators	Target
<b>Outcome 1</b> (Open Call)	Improved quality of accommodation and other	Open reception centres are in line with EU Directives’ minimum standards for the reception of vulnerable asylum seekers, especially un-accompanied minors (UAM)	Yes

	services provided in open reception centres	Number of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers (UAM) receiving services (disaggregated by gender).	2250
		Number of non-UAM beneficiaries provided with services (disaggregated by gender).	750
Output 1.1	Accommodation places provided in open reception centres for vulnerable asylum seekers, in particular UAM.	Number of accommodation places provided in open reception centres.	≥300
		Number of the accommodation places reserved for UAM	225
		Average annual occupancy rate in the supported centres (based on monthly reports)	90%
Output 1.2	Close interaction and cooperation between non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and relevant public entities is established	Number of open reception centres where the NGOs and public entities formally and informally cooperate (Memorandum of Understanding or common activities implemented).	>3
<b>Outcome 2 (NORCAP)</b>	Capacity of key institutions to ensure protection of vulnerable asylum seekers, particularly UAMs, is strengthened	Number of decentralised sites operated by Reception and Identification Service (RIS) that implement national standard operating procedures (SOPs) for reception centres	6
Output 2.1	Expert support provided to key Reception and Identification Service (RIS) departments, to critical Reception and Identification Centres (RICs), to Ministry of Migration Policy (MoMP) and to the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA)	Number of NORCAP staff seconded to RIS and MoMP	14
		Number of NORCAP staff seconded to EKKA	3
		Number of months of secondment from NORCAP	522
<b>Outcome 3 (UNHCR)</b>	Operational procedures and capacity of the Greek Asylum Service and Appeal Committees improved	Number of beneficiaries of legal aid services (aggregated by gender)	4500
Output 3.1	Expert support provided to the Greek Asylum Service	Number of Associate Asylum Experts deployed to the Asylum Service all over Greece	18
		Number of staff deployed to the Asylum Service centrally (e.g. Legal Advisor, Legal Liaison Officers, Documentation Experts)	5
Output 3.2	Free legal aid provided to vulnerable asylum seekers related to first instance asylum procedures	Number of lawyers that have been involved in the free legal aid component	40
<b>Outcome 4 (IOM)</b>	Orderly and humane voluntary return of migrants or vulnerable groups is secured	Reduced waiting time from application to voluntary return achieved	Yes
Output 4.1	Financial reintegration support system established, with differentiated levels of support	Number of migrants departed through IOM for voluntary return	200

A description of each project under each outcome is provided below to set the context and background of our evaluation:

### **OUTCOME 1**

Outcome 1 was implemented through five projects for “Open accommodation centers for vulnerable asylum seekers in Greece”. The Project Promoters, who were selected through an open call procedure, were: **ARSIS**- Association for the Social Support of Youth, Médecins du Monde Greece (**MDM**), International Rescue Committee Greece (**IRC**), Society for the Care of Minors (**SMAN**), and **METAdrasi**. The total available grant budget was 7.6 million euros.



A brief description of the projects:

### **1. Open Call Project: DIAPLOUS**

The “DIAPLOUS” project, implemented by ARSIS, offered accommodation to unaccompanied minors and women- single mothers and/or victims of sexual or gender violence, in Northern Greece. During the project 12 SILs apartments (Supported Independent Living) for unaccompanied minors aged 16 years old and older were operated. The apartments were located near the Safe Zones and camps in Lagadikia, Diavata, Agia Eleni, Drama and Kavala. Moreover, the Diaploous project offered some places in the shelter “The House of Arsis” in Thessaloniki, and 4 apartments for single mothers, victims of sexual or gender violence. The project was completed in February 2022. In total, 140 unaccompanied minors and vulnerable women, asylum seekers in Greece, from the Middle East, Asia and Africa were accommodated in places offered by the project.

*Apartments for vulnerable women asylum seekers.*

16 accommodation places were created in three apartments in the urban complex of Thessaloniki, where 20 vulnerable female asylum seekers were accommodated, of which 11 were single parents, and 17 children (9 boys and 8 girls). Their countries of origin are Iran, Iraq, Syria, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, Algeria and Somalia.

*The House of Arsis*

31 unaccompanied children (11 boys and 19 girls), from 5 to 18 years old, were able to find safe accommodation through 15 places in the emergency shelter for children at risk “The House of ARSIS”. Children were offered individualized services and care aimed at ensuring their best interest. The children’s countries of origin are Iran, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Vietnam and sub-Saharan African countries.

*SILs apartments (Supported Independent Living)*

In the context of supervised living, a total of 12 apartments for unaccompanied boys, aged 16 to 18, were operated, with 48 accommodation places provided both in Thessaloniki, as well as in Kavala, Drama and Ioannina. 72 unaccompanied minor boys were accommodated in these places, who were referred to the apartments by the Safe Zones, which were operated by ARSIS until November 2021, and by structures accommodating unaccompanied minors. The beneficiaries are from Syria, Afghanistan, Egypt, Algeria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Morocco, Sudan and Somalia. In total, 19 children managed to be reunited with their relatives in other European states, 8 children joined the Relocation program and traveled to Europe, while 15 of them became adults and were safely referred to adult housing programs.

### **2. Open Call Project: A step forward – Housing structure for women asylum seekers and especially for mothers with children**

The project aimed to protect and support a total of 175 women and their children, during the asylum application process and to quickly find sustainable solutions for their smooth living in the country. The project was implemented by Médecins du Monde Greece.

The Open Accommodation Center operates by offering all necessary services to women and their children according to their specific needs that need to be met in order to make the most of their time at the Centre.

The Open Accommodation Center is located in the centre of Athens, offering easy access to important services for the women beneficiaries, such as the Metro and the Open Polyclinic of Doctors of the World. With the capacity of 44 beds, it offers access to people with mobility disabilities, a room for disabled people, as well as specially designed areas for dining and creative activities.

On a daily basis, the basic and personal hygiene needs as well as the feeding of the beneficiaries are covered. In addition, integrated health services, psychosocial support, legal counselling, interpretation, language learning, empowerment, creative activities and supportive teaching are provided, while in cooperation with local schools, children are registered in the educational system.

### **3. Open Call Project: FUTURA – Fostering the Transition of Unaccompanied children to Adulthood**

The project of the International Rescue Committee provided accommodation for asylum-seeking unaccompanied children aged between 16 and 18, in 10 Supported Independent Living (SIL) apartments with the capacity of 40 places in Athens, Greece.

The project aimed to provide quality accommodation and a holistic package of individualized support services to at least 120 unaccompanied children, over the course of 33 months. Each FUTURA apartment hosted four children who received a range of services; legal aid, individual and group psychosocial support, non-formal education and skill-building activities, tailored to the needs of each child, by a core team of experienced social workers, caretakers and interpreters, with particular emphasis on empowerment and self-reliance. The staff and the children jointly created individual development plans aiming to achieve the children's full potential in life.

The SIL apartments are considered as an alternative to the traditional institutional models of accommodation, with great potential to support children's transition to independence and their integration into the local community. The project structure increased their chance of success outside of the institutional system.

The FUTURA team also aimed to inform public entities, NGOs, and civil society groups on key project developments and good practices in child protection, through events, reports, and social media.

In October 2020, the IRC launched the FUTURA project via an online event, in which the advantages of accommodation in SILs, the need for and the importance of multi-sectoral cooperation and advocacy on unaccompanied children's rights were highlighted by all participants, journalists, NGO staff and authorities included.

### **4. Open call project: HOUSE2**

HOUSE2 is a new shelter for unaccompanied minors, with a capacity of 16 people, implemented by the Society for the Care of Minors (SMAN). It accommodates boys aged 6-11 years and underage mothers with their children. It was founded in 2020, aiming to cover the need to provide accommodation and care to the most vulnerable people. "HOUSE2" becomes the second home for children who have been exposed to danger, persecution, violence and exploitation. It is the second shelter operated by the Society for the Care of Minors and Youth, a charity association that has been offering its services continuously since 1924.

#### *Care*

SMAN offers services to children and young people following the "family model". Thus, HOUSE2 inhabitants are empowered to feel the shelter as a second home that provides them safety and care.

#### *Community engagement*

Within the first few months of its establishment, HOUSE2 had managed to build ties with the neighborhood and partnerships with public and private actors. Aiming to succeed effective integration and interaction with the local community, highlighting the benefits of intercultural coexistence, SMAN has been trying to reach out to a broad audience and cooperate with volunteers and other organizations.

#### *Child Protection Team*

An important aspect of the operation of HOUSE2 is the interdisciplinary project team which supports the unaccompanied minors. Child Protection Team consists of different scientists of various faculties, welcoming new graduates who are willing to work in this specific field.

### **5. Open Call Project: Transit accommodation facilities for Unaccompanied Minors in Chios and Samos**

Metadrasi's Transit Accommodation Facilities provide unaccompanied children a safe, suitably equipped space, in accordance with their age. The goal of these facilities was to minimize and ideally eliminate the time spent by minors in detention centers, until legal procedures are completed for their safe escorting (through METAdrasi's escorting missions) to accommodation centers for unaccompanied minors of a permanent nature, throughout the Greek territory. This activity also contributes substantially to the protection of minors against networks of smugglers and traffickers.

The specialized interdisciplinary groups (psychologists, social workers, special educators and nurses) and the support staff, along with the support of METAdrasi's interpreters, offered children care, covered their everyday needs and provided psychological and social support, as well as health care and legal advice. The daily schedule of the children hosted was enriched with a variety of activities for their psychosocial development, highlighting their skills. Furthermore, social, cultural, recreational and educational events were organized in the facilities.

The transit accommodation facilities in Chios and Samos, supported by EEA Grants, aimed to meet the needs of 280 unaccompanied children.

## ***OUTCOME 2***

Outcome 2 was implemented through the pre-defined project: “Capacity building in Greece: Capacity development for dignified reception and protection of the rights of migrants and asylum seekers in Greece” by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)/**NORCAP**. The total amount of the grant was 3.5 million euros for two years.

### **Pre-defined Project: Capacity Building Project – Capacity development for dignified reception and protection of the rights of migrants and asylum seekers in Greece**

The Greece Capacity Building Project (2019-2021), implemented by NORCAP, aimed to strengthen the capacity of key government institutions in Greece, upholding the rights of refugees and migrants and ensuring dignified reception, especially for the most vulnerable people, such as unaccompanied children and victims of gender-based violence and human trafficking.

A primary key institution regarding asylum seekers’ reception was the Reception and Identification Service (RIS), which was both supported with experts deployed at the Headquarters, as well as at the camps in multiple locations all over Greece (Site Management Support Advisors). Amongst the capacity building activities (incl. on-the-job training and targeted thematic trainings), the SMS Advisors developed Standard Operating Procedures, incorporating good practices and protection standards, as well as adapting them to the particular circumstances of the ground.

The second component of the Project regarded the set up and operation of the Greek National Referral Mechanism for the protection of victims of human trafficking (NRM), deploying Anti-trafficking experts (including a legal advisor) at the responsible Authority, namely the National Center for Social Solidarity (EKKA), in order not only to develop and improve existing tools, but to deliver a series of trainings as well. Apart from the trainings, the main deliverable was a Practical Guide for the identification and protection of victims of human trafficking for first-line professionals. By the time of the final reporting the NRM had received more than 320 referrals, and more than 800 first-line professionals had been trained on human trafficking and NRM role and tools.

## ***OUTCOME 3***

Outcome 3 was implemented through the pre-defined project: “Quality assurance of asylum procedures and free legal aid to vulnerable asylum seekers” by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (**UNHCR**). The total amount of the grant was 3 million euros for one year.

### **Pre-defined Project: Quality assurance of asylum procedures and free legal aid to vulnerable asylum seekers**

The aim of the project was the provision of necessary support to the Asylum Service to set up a quality assurance mechanism (via developing centrally the Asylum Service’s Quality

tools and SOPs and by providing continuous support to new and more experienced caseworkers in a very large caseload of complicated cases), as well as the increase of its presence regionally (to Offices across the country). The project was implemented by UNHCR and finished in February 2020.

In total, the project reached 7.415 legal aid beneficiaries (asylum seekers and refugees), supporting men and women (5.022 and 2.393 respectively). During the project, UNHCR deployed 18 Associate Asylum Experts (AAEs) to the Asylum Service all over Greece and 5 employees to the Asylum Service centrally, constituting UNHCR's quality assurance team, whereas deployed 41 lawyers (15 in the mainland and Crete and 26 for the border areas). During the implementation period, the legal aid needs were increased. In total, UNHCR supported the Asylum Service in 12,490 instances corresponding to 10,201 cases examined by the AS, which represented 32% of total decisions issued by the AS. Moreover, UNHCR reviewed 200 decisions and shared key points.

Moreover, UNHCR, in cooperation with the Quality Department of the Asylum Service, delivered numerous urgently needed trainings, workshops and group-sessions to Asylum Service caseworkers. In total 69 days of training in various RAOs/AAs with up to 40 participants were delivered.

In mainland, legal aid was provided mainly at reception desks at the partner's premises to 4,691 beneficiaries. On the islands and Evros, legal aid services were provided to 2,724 beneficiaries, within Reception and Identification Centers, where most of the population reside, and other (open) accommodation facilities (e.g. Kara Tepe). In complementarity with legal aid services and to maximize the impact of legal aid, 3,620 beneficiaries were also provided with social support through social workers, and interpretation services were ensured for all the aforementioned beneficiaries.

#### **OUTCOME 4**

Outcome 4 was implemented through the pre-defined project: "Assisted voluntary return and reintegration of vulnerable groups" by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The total amount of the grant was 1 million euros for one year.

##### **Predefined Project: Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration**

The project aimed to provide voluntary return and reintegration assistance to migrants who, in situations of vulnerability, express the will to return to their country of origin.

The nine-month project aimed to provide voluntary return and reintegration assistance to migrants who, being in a vulnerable situation, express their desire to return to their country of origin. The project targeted 200 migrants in a vulnerable situation, including, among others, single-parent families, victims of human trafficking, migrants with health problems, unaccompanied children and elderly migrants. Specifically, the project aimed to support 80 people who would enter the reintegration program receiving financial assistance of 1700 euros/person, 40 families (3 members on average) who would enter the reintegration program receiving financial assistance of 2000 euros, as well as financial assistance of 1000 euros/ person, which was given once, upon departure from Greece.

## ***Bilateral initiatives***

In addition to these four outcomes, the Program contributed to strengthening bilateral relations between Greece and the Donor States. For this reason, a Bilateral Fund was reserved to facilitate donor partnership projects by carrying out, inter alia, match-making events and activities in conjunction with launching calls for proposals, as well as by encouraging donor partnership projects in call texts. Regarding the bilateral component of the program, the starting date was September 1, 2023, and the ending date October 31, 2024 with a total budget of 125.000 euros.

## ***Main purpose and scope of the evaluation***

The primary purpose of this evaluation was to assess the extent to which the EEA and Norway Grants-funded “Asylum and Migration Programme” in Greece achieved its stated objectives, while identifying lessons that could inform the design and implementation of future programs. By evaluating the program's four key outcomes, the evaluation aimed to provide evidence-based insights into its effectiveness, sustainability, and long-term impact within the broader national and European asylum and migration management framework.

The scope of the evaluation encompassed the following dimensions:

1. **Effectiveness:** The evaluation explored the degree to which the program achieved its intended outcomes and delivered meaningful results for beneficiaries. Key questions included:
  - To what extent did the program meet its objectives, particularly in addressing the needs of vulnerable asylum seekers such as unaccompanied minors, women, and families?
  - What factors contributed to or hindered the program's performance?
2. **Sustainability:** This aspect examined the program's ability to ensure continuity and durability of results beyond the funding period. Specific questions included:
  - How sustainable were the program's results, and what mechanisms or strategies have been established to ensure their long-term viability?
  - To what extent did partnerships, financial strategies, and systemic integration support the continuation of program achievements?
3. **Impact:** The evaluation assessed the broader systemic and social changes initiated or supported by the program. Key questions included:
  - What were the long-term and systemic impacts of the program on the well-being and protection of asylum seekers in Greece?
  - How did the program influence national asylum and migration management frameworks?

In addition to these core areas, the evaluation also scrutinized the implementation of five open-call projects under Outcome 1. These projects were assessed through three distinct stages of intervention:

- **Stage A (Preparation for accommodation):** This included evaluating referral systems, collaboration with authorities, and the adequacy of preparatory procedures to support occupancy rates.

- **Stage B (During accommodation):** The evaluation considered safety and security, living conditions, the quality of services provided, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and beneficiary dynamics within the facilities and local communities.
- **Stage C (Post-accommodation):** This focused on exit strategies, the effectiveness of follow-up support, and the degree to which beneficiaries transitioned to safe and sustainable living arrangements.

Other critical areas of focus included accountability mechanisms, such as beneficiary-centered feedback systems and child protection policies, as well as the sustainability of operations and long-term impacts on beneficiaries and policy frameworks.

By employing a rigorous and mixed-methods approach, the evaluation aimed to provide a holistic understanding of the program's performance, challenges, and legacy within the broader national and European context of asylum and migration management.

## C. OVERVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY

This evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative data collection, document analysis, and triangulation to assess the effectiveness, sustainability, and impact of the EEA grants program. The methodology was designed to provide a thorough understanding of the program's outcomes, informed by diverse data sources and stakeholder perspectives.

### ***Data sources and stakeholders consulted***

#### 1. **Document review**

The evaluation began with an extensive review of project-related documentation, forming the foundation for subsequent data collection and analysis. The reviewed materials included:

Key documents reviewed included:

- **Final reports:** These served as primary sources for understanding project achievements, challenges, and implementation strategies.
- **Quarterly reports:** Referenced selectively when cited in the final reports to provide additional context and details.
- **Project proposals and contract annexes:** Used to identify any variations between the original concept and the final agreement, including log frames, risk assessments, and communication plans (with a focus on stakeholder engagement rather than publicity).
- **Contract amendments:** Assessed to understand modifications made during implementation and their implications.

This document review enabled a deep understanding of program frameworks and objectives, identified gaps or inconsistencies, and informed the design of stakeholder interviews.

#### 2. **Stakeholder consultations**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted following the document review to validate findings and address questions that emerged. These interviews provided additional context and insights into program implementation. Key stakeholders included:

- **Project promoters:** Representatives from management and field officers from project promoters.
- **Public authorities:** Former Special Secretary for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors at the Ministry of Migration (28/12/2021-27/6/2023) currently General Secretary of the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum (including written input from Ministry's officials)
- **Beneficiaries:** While interviews with direct beneficiaries were limited, efforts to include perspectives from returnees and local offices in countries of origin (IOM programs) resulted to successfully conduct a phone interview with a Georgian



single mother returnee with the mediation of an IOM staff interpreting from Georgina to Greek and vice versa.

A detailed list of interviewees is provided in Annex 1.

### **3. Field visits**

One visit to the MDM Center in Athens was conducted and interviews were organized face to face at the Center and MDM's headquarters

## ***Data Collection and Analysis***

### **1. Data collection methods**

- **Document review:** The evaluation commenced with a comprehensive review of program documents and reports. This step aimed to consolidate data, evaluate results against established targets, identify discrepancies, and contextualize program performance. Insights from this phase informed the design of stakeholder interviews by highlighting questions and areas requiring further investigation.
- **Semi-structured interviews:** Building on the findings from the document review, semi-structured interviews were conducted to validate consolidated data, explore discrepancies, and gather in-depth perspectives on program implementation and outcomes. This approach ensured both consistency across interviews and the flexibility to delve into individual experiences and emerging themes.
- **Observational field visit:** This was used to validate findings and gain first-hand insights into program operations.

### **2. Analysis approach**

- **Thematic analysis:** Information from interviews and document reviews was systematically organized to identify key insights, recurring themes, and patterns relevant to each program's unique outcomes. For the open call of five projects under the same outcome, a synthesis of findings was conducted to ensure consistency and highlight cross-cutting issues while respecting the individual context of each project.
- **Triangulation:** Findings from documents, interviews, and the field visit (in the case of MDM) were cross-referenced to ensure reliability and address any discrepancies.
- **Comparative review:** Adjustments made during project implementation were analyzed against the initial project proposals to evaluate the program's responsiveness and adaptation to emerging needs. This process also facilitated a more accurate assessment of results against targets, highlighting areas of alignment or deviation and informing deeper exploration during interviews.

## ***Limitations***

Despite rigorous efforts to ensure comprehensive coverage, the evaluation faced several limitations:

- **Limited access to beneficiaries:** Across all projects, challenges in accessing beneficiaries posed a limitation, primarily due to the difficulty of identifying individuals who could reflect on the evaluation period and the sensitivity of certain groups, such as unaccompanied minors (UAMs).
- **Data gaps in impact outcomes:** Certain impact outcomes, particularly long-term effects, could not be fully assessed due to limited qualitative data and challenges in follow-up.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

All data collection adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring:

- **Informed consent:** Participants were informed of the study's purpose and their rights before participating.
- **Confidentiality:** Data were anonymized and securely stored to protect participant identities.

## D. EVALUATION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis of the program's performance across its key outcomes, evaluating effectiveness, sustainability, and impact. The findings offer evidence-based insights into achievements, challenges, and areas for improvement. Each outcome is discussed with a focus on the extent to which the program met its targets, contributed to systemic reforms, and addressed the needs of vulnerable groups. This chapter also highlights critical lessons that shape the recommendations for future interventions included in the next chapter.

### OUTCOME 1: Improved quality of accommodation and other services provided in open reception centers

#### *Numeric overview of results*

The table below consolidates data from all five projects under the Open Call for Outcome 1, presenting a comprehensive overview extracted from the Open Call Results Framework, the contract/application logframes of each project, and the targets and reported data from the online system. This approach ensures the most accurate representation of the achieved results.

Indicator	Project Promoter	Contract / Application Logframe TARGET	Online system			
			TARGET	REPORT		
				Total	Female	Male
<b>OUTPUT 1.1</b> Open reception centres are in line with EU Directives' minimum standards for the reception of vulnerable asylum seekers, especially un-accompanied minors (UAM) <b>TARGET as per OPEN CALL: YES</b>	ALL	YES	YES	YES	n/a	n/a
<b>Number of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers (UAM) receiving services (disaggregated by gender).</b> <b>TARGET as per OPEN CALL: 2.250</b>	MDM	0	0	0		
	IRC	120	80	61	7	54
	ARSIS	244	244	105	19	86
	METADRASI	280	280	114	40	74
	SMAN	96	96	49	26	23
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>740</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>237</b>
<b>Number of non-unaccompanied asylum (UMA) beneficiaries provided with</b>	MDM	175	175	172	142	30
	IRC	0	40	15	11	4

<b>services</b> <b>TARGET as per OPEN CALL: 750</b>	ARIS	64	64	37	28	9
	METADRASI	0	0	0		
	SMAN	0	0	0		
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>239</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Number of other (additional) vulnerable groups provided with services (i.e. (recognised refugees, undocumented, other) ADDITIONAL INDICATOR NOT INCLUDED IN OPEN CALL <sup>1</sup></b>	MDM		0	55	44	11
	IRC		25	31	14	17
	ARIS		0	0		
	METADRASI		0	85	17	68
	SMAN		0	17	8	9
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>25</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>OUTPUT 1.2</b> <b>Number of accommodation places provided in open reception centres</b> <b>TARGET as per OPEN CALL: ≥300</b>	MDM	44	44	100		
	IRC	40	40	36		
	ARIS	77	77	79		
	METADRASI	40	40	40		
	SMAN	16	16	16		
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>217</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>271</b>		
<b>Number of the accommodation places reserved for UAM</b> <b>TARGET as per OPEN CALL: 225</b>	MDM	0	0			
	IRC	40	20	20		
	ARIS	61	61	63		
	METADRASI	40	40	40		
	SMAN	16	16	16		
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>157</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>139</b>		
<b>Average annual occupancy rate in the supported centres (based on monthly reports)</b> <b>TARGET as per OPEN CALL: 90%</b>	MDM	90%	90%	71%		
	IRC	90%	90%	39%		
	ARIS	95%	95%	180%		
	METADRASI	90%	90%	73%		
	SMAN	90%	90%	50%		
<b>TOTAL AVERAGE</b>		<b>91%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>83%</b>		
<b>OUTPUT 1.3</b> <b>Number of open reception centres where the NGOs and public entities formally and informally cooperate (Memorandum of Understanding or common activities implemented).</b> <b>TARGET as per OPEN CALL: &gt;3</b>	MDM	9	9	14		
	IRC	3	3	3		
	ARIS	1	1	7		
	METADRASI	2	2	2		
	SMAN	8	8	15		
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>41</b>		

<sup>1</sup> Of the beneficiaries reported, 122 were unaccompanied minors (UAMs), while the remainder were women who were either pregnant or accompanied by children

## ***Evaluative overview***

The evaluation of Outcome 1 highlights the significant achievements and challenges of the projects aimed at improving the quality of accommodation and services provided to vulnerable asylum seekers, particularly unaccompanied minors (UAMs). Through innovative housing models, robust partnerships, and a commitment to EU Directive standards, the projects succeeded in establishing safe and supportive living environments while delivering holistic care to beneficiaries.

Key successes included adherence to EU standards for housing and services, ensuring safety, dignity, and tailored support for UAMs and other vulnerable populations. Projects delivered a range of essential services such as legal aid, healthcare, psychosocial counseling, and educational opportunities, fostering autonomy and integration among beneficiaries. Advocacy efforts also led to systemic improvements, including the inclusion of UAMs in Greece's national fostering and adoption frameworks and the promotion of mixed-model accommodation structures.

Despite these achievements, challenges persisted, particularly in maintaining high occupancy rates and ensuring smooth referral processes. Delays in referrals, caused by administrative bottlenecks and the transition of responsibilities from EKKA to the Special Secretariat for UAMs, impacted the projects' ability to meet their full potential. Community resistance in some areas further complicated implementation, though proactive engagement strategies helped mitigate tensions in many cases.

The legacy of Outcome 1 extends beyond immediate outputs, with its emphasis on collaboration, advocacy, and integration setting a strong foundation for future interventions. This evaluation explores the effectiveness, sustainability, and impact of the projects under this outcome, providing insights into their achievements, limitations, and contributions to the broader asylum and migration framework in Greece.

### **Project promoter: ARSIS (project title: DIAPLOUS)**

#### ***Evaluation Findings***

##### **Effectiveness**

##### **1. Service provision:**

The project served 37 non-unaccompanied asylum seekers and 105 unaccompanied minors (UAMs), falling short of its target of 64 and 244, respectively. Beneficiaries included children, young adults, and adults, primarily from Sub-Saharan Africa, Syria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

##### **2. Standards compliance:**

The reception centers met EU Directive minimum standards for vulnerable asylum seekers, including UAMs, ensuring safe and appropriate living conditions.

### **3. Accommodation and occupancy:**

The project provided 79 accommodation places, exceeding the planned 77, with 63 places for UAMs (above the target of 61). Despite delays in referrals due to the transition from EKKA to the Special Secretariat, ARSIS maintained high occupancy rates.

### **4. Collaboration with NGOs and Public entities:**

ARSIS exceeded its target by collaborating with 7 open reception centers, compared to the planned 1. Partnerships with EKKA, IOM, and other social services were pivotal in referring eligible cases to vulnerable asylum seeker apartments.

### **5. Referral system and coordination:**

The referral system's efficiency was critical to the project's success. Delays caused by EKKA's transition to the Special Secretariat impacted referrals for UAMs, women, and children. However, ARSIS adapted to these challenges through proactive communication and advocacy.

- UAM apartments faced delays of up to two weeks per referral due to administrative changes.
- Women's apartments operated smoothly and at full capacity, although referrals were affected by high acceptance rates in the ESTIA 2021 program.
- The "House of ARSIS" successfully managed referrals for UAMs aged 5–18, emphasizing group cohesion and intercultural co-existence.

### **6. Location, accessibility, and safety:**

Apartments were centrally located in cities such as Thessaloniki, Drama, Kavala, and Ioannina, providing access to essential services like schools and hospitals. Despite challenges in securing rental properties and resistance from landlords, ARSIS ensured housing in safe, well-equipped areas with strong local amenities.

### **7. Local community engagement:**

ARSIS proactively engaged with local communities to address xenophobia and promote acceptance. Strategies included neighborhood presence, events, and awareness campaigns to foster positive relationships and enhance integration.

### **8. Professional Staff, Experts, and Volunteers:**

- Recruitment and retention of qualified staff were challenging but mitigated by ARSIS's existing infrastructure and strategic selection of project cities. While no major turnover issues were reported, the project highlighted the importance of continued human resource management.
- Volunteers played a significant role in supporting activities, but funding for volunteer management was not included in the project budget.

## **9. Feedback and monitoring mechanisms:**

ARSIS implemented a robust feedback system, including multilingual complaint boxes, personal meetings with social workers, and team assessments. Although issues related to cash assistance managed by external entities created challenges, ARSIS used its own resources to bridge gaps and maintain support.

## **10. Challenges with Cash Assistance:**

Inconsistent delivery of cash allowances caused anxiety and operational issues. Delays in cash card issuance and policy ambiguities required ARSIS to distribute food and non-food items to adult beneficiaries while advocating with the Ministry for improved support.

## **Sustainability**

### **1. Robust partnership network:**

ARSIS's extensive collaboration with public bodies and NGOs, facilitated by HR360, ensured operational success. Partnerships provided access to resources and strengthened the program's capacity to deliver impactful services.

### **2. Advocacy for mixed-model structures:**

The project's innovative mixed-model approach for housing UAMs alongside local children demonstrated significant potential for sustainability and integration. This model emphasized preventing ghettoization, fostering cultural acceptance, and integrating refugee children into school environments.

### **3. Volunteer contributions and challenges:**

Volunteers were essential to program success but required better management and financial support. Future programs should allocate specific funding for volunteer coordination to ensure long-term sustainability.

### **4. Adaptation to funding challenges:**

While ARSIS used its resources to cover gaps in cash assistance and operational costs, securing sustainable funding remains a critical need. The reliance on self-funding during financial transitions highlighted the importance of stable donor support and contingency planning.

## **Impact**

### **1. Integration and autonomy:**

- The project significantly impacted UAMs and vulnerable asylum seekers by promoting autonomy and social integration. The mixed-model structure for UAMs combined refugee children with local children, fostering mutual respect and cultural understanding.
- As a result, refugee minors integrated more rapidly into school environments and society.

## 2. **Advocacy success:**

ARSIS successfully influenced national policy to include refugee children under 12 in foster care and adoption systems. This marked a critical step in moving children from institutional care to family-based settings.

## 3. **Community engagement and social cohesion:**

ARSIS's proactive efforts to engage local communities reduced xenophobia and fostered acceptance, contributing to broader social cohesion and support for refugees.

## 4. **Systemic influence:**

The program set a precedent for inclusive child protection strategies in Greece, combining immediate care with long-term solutions for integration and autonomy.

## ***Evaluation Conclusions***

### **Effectiveness**

The DIAPLOUS project provided comprehensive care for UAMs and vulnerable asylum seekers, meeting high standards despite falling short of service targets. Strong community engagement, robust partnerships, and proactive advocacy ensured the program's overall success, even amid challenges in referrals and cash assistance.

### **Sustainability**

ARSIS's innovative mixed-model approach and extensive collaboration network highlighted its commitment to sustainable, integrated child protection strategies. However, the absence of dedicated funding for volunteer management and the reliance on self-funding underscored the need for stronger financial planning.

### **Impact**

The project fostered integration, autonomy, and cultural acceptance among beneficiaries while influencing national child protection policies. Its success in promoting social cohesion and setting new standards for child welfare showcased its lasting impact on both beneficiaries and the broader ecosystem.



**Project promoter: Doctors of the World (project title: A step Forward - Accommodation Facility for Women Asylum Seekers at Risk and for Mothers with their Children)**

***Evaluation Findings***

**Effectiveness**

**1. Service provision:**

The project effectively served both asylum seekers and additional vulnerable groups, meeting or exceeding targets for services provided. However, there was a slight shortfall in gender-specific targets for male beneficiaries.

**2. Standards compliance:**

The accommodation facility adhered to EU Directive minimum standards, ensuring safe and suitable living conditions for vulnerable populations, including single women and mothers with children.

**3. Health and psychological services:**

- Extensive healthcare and psychological support were provided, exceeding targets in primary healthcare, dental care, and psychological services. The Polyclinic of Doctors of the World-Greece played a critical role in meeting medical needs, particularly for children, due to the challenges of accessing public healthcare services in Greece.
- Beneficiaries received tailored psychological support, including personalized plans and group sessions, addressing issues such as trauma, autonomy, and empowerment. Group dynamics provided spaces for shared experiences, fostering mutual support and recovery.

**4. Legal and interpretation services:**

Increased legal counseling and interpretation services reflected the complex legal challenges faced by beneficiaries and the diversity of languages spoken. These services were crucial in helping beneficiaries navigate their legal status and access necessary resources.

**5. Education, awareness, and recreational activities:**

- Educational programs, including Greek language lessons and seminars on sexual and reproductive health rights, exceeded targets. Recreational activities such as sightseeing trips, museum visits, and physical activities (e.g., yoga and capoeira) underscored the project's holistic approach.

- School enrollment was a notable success: out of 50 school-age children hosted, 41 were enrolled in public schools, supported by proactive communication with educational authorities.

#### **6. Basic needs and infrastructure:**

Essential services such as food provision, hygiene kits, and clothing were provided, with infrastructure standards ensuring safe and comfortable living environments. Facilities included accessible spaces, free Wi-Fi, and equipped kitchens, while recent renovations improved functionality.

#### **7. Combination of asylum and non-asylum seekers:**

- Initially, the center served asylum seekers; however, Amendment 3 facilitated the inclusion of non-asylum seekers, such as Ukrainian refugees. The center quickly adapted to the needs of Ukrainian beneficiaries, offering culturally sensitive services (e.g., yoga classes led by a Ukrainian professional and collaborations with Ukrainian women's associations).
- While this inclusion showcased the project's flexibility, it required careful management to address potential tensions among beneficiaries from different backgrounds.

#### **8. Occupancy rate:**

The center did not achieve its targeted 90% occupancy rate due to several factors, including:

- Fear among beneficiaries of being recognized by abusers, particularly victims of gender-based violence (GBV).
- Operational suspensions during the COVID-19 pandemic, which delayed intake processes.
- The absence of a national referral system to streamline placements.
- Monetary allowance reductions, which affected beneficiaries' financial independence and deterred some from choosing the center.

#### **9. Holistic integration and empowerment programs:**

The center emphasized fostering integration into the Greek community and labor market. Tailored career orientation sessions, language classes, and partnerships with organizations like "Odyssea" supported beneficiaries in achieving autonomy.

#### **10. Feedback and monitoring mechanisms:**

Robust feedback systems included multilingual complaint forms, weekly meetings, and exit questionnaires. These mechanisms ensured that beneficiary input informed service adjustments and highlighted the center's commitment to accountability and improvement.

### **Sustainability**

### **1. Organizational expertise and funding challenges:**

Doctors of the World-Greece leveraged its 30 years of experience and diverse donor network to support the center. However, securing adequate funds for continuation proved challenging, with liquidity issues and reliance on ongoing resource mobilization efforts.

### **2. Engagement with institutional partners:**

MDM engaged with institutional donors, exploring bilateral agreements and CSR initiatives to address sustainability gaps. Discussions with potential donors continued, but specific fundraising outcomes were unclear.

### **3. Flexibility and adaptation:**

The inclusion of non-asylum seekers, facilitated by Amendment 3, demonstrated the program's adaptability to evolving crises, such as the arrival of Ukrainian refugees. This flexibility highlighted the importance of donor-supported initiatives in responding to emerging needs.

## **Impact**

### **1. Health and psychological support:**

Comprehensive healthcare and psychological services were critical in fostering autonomy and well-being among beneficiaries, particularly survivors of GBV and trauma.

### **2. Integration and empowerment:**

- The center's tailored services, including education, employability training, and recreational activities, contributed significantly to beneficiaries' autonomy and integration into the local community.
- Encouraging women to share responsibilities within the center and prioritize their children's education empowered them to take active roles in their recovery.

### **3. Holistic development:**

The center's emphasis on providing safe, comfortable accommodation while promoting personal growth, education, and career development demonstrated its commitment to holistic support.

### **4. Cultural sensitivity:**

Tailored services for Ukrainian beneficiaries, including collaborations with cultural associations and the inclusion of Ukrainian professionals, reflected the program's cultural sensitivity and ability to foster inclusivity.

## ***Evaluation Conclusions***

## **Effectiveness**

The "A Step Forward" project exceeded targets in health, psychological, and educational services, demonstrating its comprehensive support for vulnerable women and children. Despite challenges such as lower-than-targeted occupancy rates and complex beneficiary profiles, the center adapted effectively to evolving needs, including the integration of non-asylum seekers.

## **Sustainability**

MDM leveraged its expertise and donor network to ensure the center's operational success. However, long-term sustainability remains a challenge, with liquidity issues and an unclear funding strategy highlighting the need for stronger financial planning and resource mobilization.

## **Impact**

The project had a profound impact on its beneficiaries, fostering autonomy, integration, and holistic development. Its flexibility in addressing emerging crises and cultural sensitivities further underscored its value in supporting vulnerable populations.

## **Project promoter: IRC (project title: FUTURA - Fostering the Transition of Unaccompanied Children to Adulthood)**

### ***Evaluation Findings***

#### **Effectiveness**

##### **1. Service provision:**

- The project fell short of its target for the total number of asylum seekers served, reaching 104 out of the planned 120. It supported 25 non-unaccompanied asylum seekers and 82 unaccompanied minors (UAMs), with the majority coming from Sub-Saharan Africa.
- While only 18% of UAMs reported being able to meet basic needs through cash assistance (below the 70% target), all participants reported improvements in self-reliance and independent living skills, and 85% expressed high satisfaction with placements.

##### **2. Standards compliance:**

Reception centers adhered to EU Directive minimum standards, ensuring appropriate conditions for vulnerable groups, including UAMs. However, limitations in cash assistance policies significantly impacted beneficiaries' ability to meet survival needs.

##### **3. Accommodation and occupancy:**

The project offered 36 accommodation places, including 20 for UAMs, but achieved an annual average monthly occupancy rate of only 39%, far below the 90% target. Contributing factors included:

- Decreasing UAM numbers,
- Alternative accommodations becoming available,
- Inefficiencies in the referral system managed by the Special Secretariat for UAMs.

As an IRC representative noted:

*“The referral system was not effective! The referrals were not direct but through the Special Secretariat for UAM (MOMA). So, the occupancy rate was affected. It was the process itself the problem, not the demand. Also, other facilities did not refer children to the SILs because they considered SILs inappropriate, and shelters were receiving AMIF funds paid by unit cost, so they wanted to have full occupancy all the time!”*

#### **4. Quality services for UAMs:**

Although the project served fewer UAMs than planned, 100% of those served reported improved self-reliance and independent living skills.

#### **5. Feedback mechanisms:**

Only 61% of beneficiaries found feedback mechanisms accessible, effective, and safe, falling short of the 70% target.

#### **6. Support for vulnerable women and children:**

The project supported 25 vulnerable women and children (below the target of 55), but satisfaction among these beneficiaries was 100%, reflecting the quality of services provided.

#### **7. Infrastructure and privacy:**

The SIL apartments were well-equipped, providing private rooms for each beneficiary, functional facilities, and adequate safety measures. Accessibility for children with disabilities remained a challenge due to costs and landlord resistance to making modifications.

#### **8. Diverse beneficiary needs and challenges:**

While expanding eligibility to include vulnerable women helped address low occupancy rates, challenges included seasonal staff absences in NGOs and a lack of awareness among potential beneficiaries. The absence of a 24/7 staff presence complicated the management of medical and psychological needs.

#### **9. Multi-stakeholder engagement and partnerships:**

- Partnerships with entities such as EKKA and MSF facilitated training, medical services, and financial support. However, engagement with the National Employment Agency (OAED) for vocational training did not progress as expected.
- As COVID-19 posed barriers to establishing new collaborations and conducting in-person training sessions, broader engagement efforts were hindered.

#### 10. **Safe exit and accommodation:**

- The SIL model allowed for stays of up to 36 months, with extensions for those turning 18. While the program fostered independence among older UAMs, finding suitable shelters for families upon their departure remained a challenge.
- Prepaid cash cards supported families' transitions to independent living.

### **Sustainability**

#### 1. **Funding challenges:**

- Despite IRC's robust sustainability plan, which included creating a multi-annual SIL Fund and exploring private and institutional donors, long-term funding proved challenging.
- Initial public funding from the Ministry of Migration and Asylum for SILs was limited, and private donors considered the program too costly without state support.

#### 2. **Integration with state programs:**

While the Ministry eventually supported one SIL unit, decreased UAM numbers and existing SIL spaces limited the feasibility of expanding the model.

#### 3. **Advocacy efforts:**

IRC advocated for SIL to become a central element of Greece's child protection system, but shifts in state priorities reduced policy and funding support for SIL accommodations.

### **Impact**

#### 1. **Beneficiary outcomes:**

The program had a significant impact on beneficiaries, fostering independence and self-reliance among UAMs. As shared by one beneficiary during the FUTURA closing event: *"Because of a health issue I have had since I arrived in Greece, I needed constant monitoring, by the same doctor and specific treatment. Hara, my social worker in the apartment, helped me from the beginning to find the right doctor, so that I could make my own appointments and not treat it as a problem. The support in the flat from the whole team, my lawyer, the caretakers, and my social worker helped me to see what I wanted for my life and work to make it happen."*

## 2. Policy and advocacy influence:

Advocacy efforts highlighted the SIL model as a sustainable and effective accommodation solution for UAMs. While significant progress was made in promoting SIL within national child protection policies, state priorities shifted, reducing support for the model.

## 3. Systemic challenges and innovations:

The program demonstrated the value of multi-stakeholder partnerships in providing holistic services, but systemic challenges, such as referral inefficiencies and cash assistance inconsistencies, underscored the need for structural reforms.

## ***Evaluation Conclusions***

### **Effectiveness**

The FUTURA project provided high-quality services that significantly improved self-reliance and independence among UAMs, despite falling short of overall service targets. Challenges with referral systems and occupancy rates limited its reach but did not compromise the quality of care delivered.

### **Sustainability**

IRC's sustainability plan emphasized multi-annual funding and integration with state programs. However, limited state support and donor disinterest posed significant barriers to ensuring the long-term viability of the SIL model.

### **Impact**

The project fostered independence and provided tailored support for UAMs and vulnerable women. While systemic challenges hindered broader implementation, FUTURA's advocacy efforts and holistic approach demonstrated the potential of SIL as a transformative model in child protection.

## **Project promoter: SMAN (Project title: HOUSE2)**

### ***Evaluation findings***

#### **Effectiveness**

##### 1. Service provision:

The project fell short of its target for unaccompanied asylum (UMA) beneficiaries, serving 49 out of the planned 96. This discrepancy was noted across all age and nationality categories.

## 2. **Standards compliance:**

The reception centers adhered to EU Directive minimum standards, ensuring suitable conditions for vulnerable asylum seekers, including unaccompanied minors (UAMs).

## 3. **Additional vulnerable groups:**

The number of additional vulnerable groups provided with services was 17, representing 35% of the initial target for unaccompanied asylum seekers. This included a mix of undocumented individuals, recognized refugees, and those with other legal statuses. The majority were children, with the highest concentration in the 5–12 age group, and originated from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

## 4. **Accommodation and occupancy:**

The project provided 16 accommodation places for UMAs, including specific places for boys aged 6–12 and underage mothers with children. The average monthly occupancy rate was 50%, below the target, due to longer-than-expected stays. Many children remained in the shelter beyond the planned six months due to delays in family reunification and the absence of alternative options.

## 5. **Collaboration and community engagement:**

- Collaboration with NGOs, public entities, and civil society far exceeded expectations. HOUSE2 established formal and informal cooperation agreements with 15 reception centers (against the planned 8) and partnered with 25 local organizations (exceeding the planned 10).
- The innovative “House 2 Lab,” an open living room space, served as a community interface while preserving the privacy of beneficiaries. This lab hosted events, exchanges, and gatherings with local groups, fostering trust and mutual support.
- Prioritizing local suppliers and small businesses positively impacted the local economy, further enhancing trust and support.

## 6. **Location and facilities:**

- Although the initial proposal planned for a city-center location, COVID-19 delays led to the relocation to Nea Ionia. Despite being a forced decision, this change proved highly beneficial. As SMAN’s Director reflected: “If we had the choice today, we would definitely go for Nea Ionia.” The new location offered proximity to public services, a welcoming community, and better alignment with the project’s needs, demonstrating how external challenges were effectively turned into an opportunity.
- The building met all intended standards, including separate sanitation facilities for girls, accessibility to public services, and a welcoming community.

## 7. **Staffing challenges:**



Staff faced fatigue due to financial uncertainty, the pressure of maintaining high standards during COVID-19, and occasional resistance from community members. In response to these challenges, SMAN management implemented measures to sustain staff motivation and well-being. They provided indefinite contracts instead of project-based ones to offer job security, introduced psychological support during the final project year, and maintained transparent communication regarding financial uncertainties. As the Director explained:

*“We are still open! Persistence was the solution and passion! Fatigue is part of the job and COVID-19 made it worse. We supported as much as we could the staff to motivate them, e.g., contracts with employees are indefinite, not project-based. In the last year of the project, we also tried to provide psychological support for staff. Regarding the liquidity issue, we tried to create an open information process, so that staff is aware of the crisis, and when we had the dilemma to stop or continue, we consulted the staff and got a joint decision to remain open.”*

#### **8. Feedback and monitoring:**

Mechanisms such as incident reporting and beneficiary feedback collection allowed for prompt responses to issues and continuous service improvement.

### **Sustainability**

#### **1. Funding continuity:**

SMAN transitioned the project to government funding through the Ministry of Immigration & Asylum, co-financed by the EU Migration and Home Affairs Funds (2021–2027).

#### **2. Proactive strategies:**

- During a two-month funding gap, SMAN secured unearmarked funds from the Bodossakis Foundation and private donors, alongside in-kind food coupons, to ensure continuity.
- A private donor contributed €5,000 monthly during this period, helping to sustain operations.

#### **3. Community and volunteer support:**

HOUSE2 engaged local communities and volunteers from the outset. A robust volunteer network provided in-kind support, including services from local hairdressers, pharmacists, and bookstores. The project manager remarked:

*“We haven’t bought a single toy for the kids. We receive all donations with gratitude, even if the condition of the items isn’t ideal, and we screen them. Every four months, we conduct a seminar to train our staff on how to accept without rejecting and how to manage relationships with donors.”*

#### **4. Challenges with the model:**

At the proposal stage, SMAN acknowledged that the small-scale shelter model might be less cost-effective and less attractive to donors. However, the project's integration into the national funding system demonstrates its success in overcoming this challenge.

## **Impact**

### **1. Beneficiary integration:**

- Beneficiaries learned Greek within six months, attended schools, and participated in community activities. Some were elected to student councils, reflecting their integration and empowerment.
- As noted by management:  
*“Since we started the process with the fostering and adaptation period for the older children, they found it very difficult to leave the structure... They call it HOME!”*

### **2. Advocacy and policy influence:**

- SMAN's advocacy contributed to UAM inclusion in Greece's fostering and adoption system, marking a significant policy milestone.
- SMAN's incident reporting system was adopted as a model by the Ministry of Immigration & Asylum, showcasing the organization's systemic impact.

### **3. Institutional contributions:**

The EEA Grants' flexibility allowed HOUSE2 to test mixed accommodation structures, which have since been adopted in government funding schemes.

## ***Evaluation Conclusions***

### **Effectiveness**

The SMAN HOUSE2 project successfully met EU standards and exceeded collaboration targets with local stakeholders. While the project served fewer UMAs than planned, it provided comprehensive and high-quality care, overcoming challenges related to location changes, staffing, and longer-than-expected stays.

### **Sustainability**

EEA funding was essential for program stability, enabling SMAN to establish robust community networks and secure government funding. Proactive measures during funding gaps ensured uninterrupted services, and the project's integration into national funding frameworks demonstrates its sustainability.

## **Impact**

HOUSE2 significantly impacted beneficiaries by fostering integration, providing educational opportunities, and supporting personal development. Its systemic influence is evident in policy advancements and the adoption of its practices by state mechanisms.

## **Project promoter: MetaDRASI (Project title: Transit Accommodation Facilities for Unaccompanied Minors in Samos and Chios)**

### ***Evaluation Findings***

#### **Effectiveness**

##### **1. Service provision:**

The project aimed to serve 280 unaccompanied minors (UMAs) but reached 114 asylum seekers, predominantly older minors aged 16–18, from Sub-Saharan Africa, Syria, and Afghanistan.

##### **2. Standards compliance:**

Reception centers adhered to EU Directives' minimum standards for vulnerable asylum seekers, including UMAs.

##### **3. Additional vulnerable groups:**

An additional 85 vulnerable individuals, all classified as UMAs, received services. This group was largely undocumented or recognized refugees, with a majority being older minors aged 16–17 from Sub-Saharan Africa, Syria, and Afghanistan.

##### **4. Accommodation and occupancy:**

The accommodation provision met the planned target of 40 places specifically for UMAs, though the average monthly occupancy rate was 73%, below the target of 90%.

##### **5. Psychosocial and educational care services:**

While individual care plans exceeded the target (319 UMAs versus the planned 280), other areas fell short:

- 188 UMAs received psychosocial support,
- 196 participated in recreational activities,
- 164 received life skills training,
- 173 received legal support,
- Formal and non-formal education reached 164 and 187 UMAs, respectively.

##### **6. Medical and basic needs services:**

Delays in medical screenings, caused by a lack of specialized personnel and bureaucratic hurdles, posed risks to beneficiaries' health and delayed placements:

- In Samos, there was no allocated doctor in the Closed Controlled Access Center.
- In Chios, unaccompanied minors with potential health concerns faced prolonged waiting times for further examinations.
- Tuberculosis testing processes took up to two months, significantly delaying placements. METAdrasi sought private medical services but faced limitations due to systemic constraints.

#### **7. Collaboration and community engagement:**

Collaboration with NGOs and public entities met expectations, with two reception centers engaging in joint activities. However, local community engagement fell short, with only 10 activities conducted against the planned 40.

#### **8. Community integration and local dynamics:**

METAdrasi fostered integration through school attendance, participation in local events (e.g., the Christmas village and music festival), and intercultural activities. These efforts helped mitigate tensions and build trust with local communities:

As METAdrasi's program manager assistant noted:

*"I think the support to the integration of beneficiaries in the community, be it through school attendance or participating in other activities together with local children, for example, football lessons or other activities. We took part in several activities supported by the municipality, like the Christmas village, let's say, or the music festival of Chios. So, trying to make the presence of the beneficiaries more evident, more apparent in everyday life, so that they could be more easily accepted by the local community."*

#### **9. Staffing challenges:**

Recruitment and retention of qualified staff on the islands were difficult due to low salaries and competition from international NGOs. METAdrasi managed to maintain a team of professionals by leveraging its long-standing presence and local networks.

#### **10. Feedback and monitoring:**

Mechanisms like the Critical Incident Report and complaint system effectively tracked issues such as physical violence, security breaches, and self-harm, allowing child protection experts to take prompt action.

### **Sustainability**

#### **1. Role of EEA funding:**

The EEA Grants ensured program stability, allowing METAdrasi to maintain consistent staffing, develop transition plans for beneficiaries, and extend program durations.

## **2. Transition challenges:**

The transition to a new co-financing framework starting in August 2023 introduced challenges such as increased bureaucratic requirements, including maintaining a minimum number of staff. Reduced financial support further constrained activities.

## **3. Adaptability and innovation:**

Initiatives like 'Stepping Stones' supported beneficiaries in securing employment, with some becoming interpreters or staff members within METAdrasi itself. These initiatives highlight METAdrasi's focus on sustainability through capacity building and long-term integration strategies.

## **4. Impact of reduced funding:**

Recent funding limitations reduced the program's flexibility to offer holistic activities like water sports and escape rooms, which were central to comprehensive beneficiary support.

## **Impact**

### **1. Beneficiary outcomes:**

- Beneficiaries quickly learned Greek, attended schools, and participated in local community activities. Some were elected to student councils, reflecting successful integration and empowerment.
- As management noted: *"They call it HOME!"*

### **2. Advocacy and policy contributions:**

- METAdrasi's reporting and monitoring practices influenced national funding frameworks. The flexibility provided by EEA Grants enabled the piloting of innovative mixed accommodation models, which have since been adopted by the state.

### **3. Organizational contributions:**

- The program's ability to integrate former beneficiaries into its workforce through 'Stepping Stones' demonstrates its focus on building both individual and organizational capacity.

## ***Evaluation Conclusions***

### **Effectiveness**

The METAdrasi project effectively adhered to EU standards for UAM accommodation and provided essential psychosocial and educational support. While medical screening delays and systemic bottlenecks limited service delivery, strong community engagement and innovative solutions ensured overall effectiveness.

### **Sustainability**

EEA funding played a crucial role in the program’s stability, but the transition to new funding frameworks presented operational and financial challenges. Despite reduced flexibility, METAdrasi’s proactive strategies, such as 'Stepping Stones,' supported sustainability through community engagement and beneficiary empowerment.

### **Impact**

The project had a significant impact on beneficiaries by fostering integration, enabling educational success, and supporting personal development. Its systemic influence is evident in the adoption of its practices by state mechanisms and its role in shaping national funding frameworks.

## **OUTCOME 2: “Capacity of key institutions to ensure protection of vulnerable asylum seekers, particularly UAMs, is strengthened”**

**Project promoter: NORCP (project title: Capacity development for dignified reception and protection of the rights of migrants and asylum seekers in Greece)**

Project period: Feb2019-Feb2022 (1<sup>st</sup> extension to Dec2022, 2<sup>nd</sup> extension to March2023)

### ***Numeric overview of results***

	<b>Expected program results</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Overall result</b>
<b>Outcome 2 (NORCAP)</b>	Capacity of key institutions to ensure protection of vulnerable asylum seekers, particularly UAMs, is strengthened	Number of decentralised sites operated by Reception and Identification Service (RIS) that implement national standard operating procedures (SOPs) for reception centres	6	<b>33</b>
Output 2.1	Expert support provided to key Reception and Identification Service (RIS) departments, to critical Reception and Identification Centres (RICs), to Ministry of Migration Policy (MoMP) and to the National	Number of NORCAP staff seconded to RIS and MoMP	14	<b>22</b>
		Number of NORCAP staff seconded to EKKA	3	<b>4</b>
		Number of months of secondment from NORCAP	522	<b>829</b>

	Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA)			
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### ***Evaluative overview***

The NORCAP project under Outcome 2 played a crucial role in addressing critical gaps in Greece’s asylum and migration management systems through capacity development, training, and strategic guidance. It successfully deployed a cadre of highly skilled experts who not only provided on-site support to critical institutions but also contributed to high-level decision-making and policy formulation. The development and institutionalization of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), training materials, and practical guides have left a lasting legacy, ensuring that Greece’s refugee response is underpinned by structured and consistent practices.

The project’s emphasis on capacity building rather than direct service delivery ensured long-term impact by equipping public servants with the tools and knowledge to sustain improvements independently. Through strengthened inter-agency coordination and partnerships with key stakeholders, including RIS, EKKA, and MoH, the project fostered a more integrated and cooperative ecosystem for asylum management. These efforts not only addressed immediate needs but also laid the groundwork for systemic reforms, such as the establishment of the National Referral Mechanism for trafficking victims and improved coordination between ministries.

Despite its significant achievements, the project encountered challenges that underscored systemic gaps in Greece’s refugee response. Delays in referrals, funding constraints, and limited healthcare access for asylum seekers presented hurdles that required ongoing advocacy and adaptation. The reliance on NORCAP experts for high-level tasks also raised questions about the sustainability of these roles once the project ended.

Nonetheless, the capacity-building initiatives under Outcome 2 marked a turning point in Greece’s approach to managing migration and asylum, embedding humanitarian principles into public administration practices and establishing a legacy of expertise, tools, and frameworks. These accomplishments reflect the strategic importance of Outcome 2 in enhancing dignified reception and protection for migrants and asylum seekers.

### ***Evaluation Findings***

#### **Effectiveness**

##### **1. Deployment of experts:**

The project exceeded expectations by deploying 26 experts across various government bodies, surpassing the initial target of 17. This included:

- 22 experts seconded to the Reception and Identification Service (RIS) and Ministry of Migration Policy (MoMP).
- 4 experts supporting anti-trafficking activities at the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA).
- 1 expert redeployed to the Ministry of Health (MoH) to address emerging healthcare needs.
- On-site capacity building was provided to key reception centers, with 7 site management advisors deployed to sites across mainland Greece and the islands.

## 2. **Strategic guidance and high-level engagement:**

- NORCAP experts worked at both operational and higher management levels, providing strategic input and acting as representatives for key officials in national and international forums.
- Their contributions included drafting operational frameworks like the General Regulation of Mainland Hosting Facilities, which established minimum standards for reception services and was embedded into policy through a Ministerial Decision.

## 3. **Flexibility and adaptation:**

The project demonstrated adaptability by reallocating resources to address unplanned needs. For example:

- Experts were reassigned to support the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors (SSPUM) and the Ministry of Health (MoH) during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Experts extended their roles during emergencies, such as site planning after the Moria fire, ensuring continuity in service delivery.

## 4. **Capacity building and training:**

- Training outcomes significantly exceeded targets:
  - RIS staff: 187 trained through formal sessions (vs. 100 targeted) and 228 benefited from on-the-job training.
  - Anti-trafficking at EKKA: 989 participants trained (vs. 600 targeted) across 53 sessions (vs. 30 targeted).
- Experts developed 12 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and guiding tools (vs. 6 targeted), all of which were successfully implemented in 33 RIS facilities.

A senior program advisor reflected:

*“When I joined, there were only six employees in MoMA and three in EKKA, although there should have been 17. I joined with a double hat—coordinator of local employees and senior program advisor in MoMA. This double role was tricky, but we didn’t substitute MoMA; our project was capacity building.”*

## 5. **On-site support and coordination:**



- Site management advisors provided day-to-day support at critical reception centers, enhancing operational efficiency and mainstreaming protection principles.
- The presence of experts in camps and administrative offices bridged gaps between various stakeholders, including ministries, NGOs, and public agencies.

#### **6. Support to EKKA and Anti-trafficking initiatives:**

- The anti-trafficking component successfully established the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) framework, with 925 trafficking cases referred (vs. 100 targeted).
- EKKA staff were trained to deliver NRM sessions independently, ensuring sustainability.
- Practical guides and training modules developed by experts were approved by EKKA, providing long-term tools for trafficking identification and referral.

An advisor noted:

*“We included not only humanitarian arguments but also financial ones to ensure acceptance. In the end, this was OUR document.”*

#### **7. Support to the Ministry of Health:**

- The inclusion of MoH as a third component addressed critical gaps in healthcare access for asylum seekers, particularly unaccompanied minors.
- The expert’s role in supporting the "Health for All" project and liaising with municipal services enhanced coordination. However, challenges in access to quality healthcare services persisted, especially in Reception and Identification Centers (RICs).

### **Sustainability**

#### **1. Institutionalization of knowledge:**

- NORCAP experts developed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and practical guides for areas such as trafficking victim identification and refugee care, which were handed over to relevant authorities (EKKA, RIS, MoH). These documents provided clear guidelines for improving day-to-day operations and maintaining consistency across systems.
- Training materials were produced and tailored to address gaps in operational capacity, ensuring knowledge transfer to local staff.

#### **2. Partnerships and resource sustainability:**

- NORCAP established Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with RIS, EKKA, and MoH, formalizing partnerships that emphasized long-term collaboration and shared objectives.
- Equipment purchased under the project was donated to RIS and EKKA, reinforcing resource sustainability by ensuring continued access to essential tools.

### 3. **On-site capacity building:**

- Experts provided day-to-day training and mentoring to RIS and EKKA staff, instilling a humanitarian-oriented working culture and improving operational capacity.
- Staff were trained on ethics, codes of conduct, and technical processes, ensuring that the knowledge imparted during the project could be sustained after NORCAP's withdrawal.

### 4. **Challenges to sustainability:**

- While partnerships and institutionalization efforts were strong, systemic gaps such as insufficient funding mechanisms and fragmented healthcare access posed challenges to ensuring long-term sustainability of improvements.
- The transition of experts out of key roles left some gaps in continuity, emphasizing the need for further integration of NORCAP approaches within state-run systems.

## **Impact**

### 1. **Systems and processes improved:**

- NORCAP's deployment of experts resulted in the development of key frameworks, such as the SOPs for trafficking victim identification and reception conditions. These frameworks were institutionalized within Greece's national systems, ensuring continuity of best practices.
- The establishment of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for trafficking victims, supported by NORCAP's legal advisors, significantly enhanced Greece's ability to identify and protect vulnerable populations.

### 2. **Training and knowledge transfer:**

- The project's training programs equipped RIS, EKKA, and MoH staff with the skills needed to handle complex cases and implement humanitarian principles in their work.
- Experts not only shared knowledge but also co-created tools and procedures with local authorities, ensuring that these were practical, relevant, and likely to be used after the project's conclusion.

### 3. **Advocacy and policy influence:**

- NORCAP experts played a crucial role in advocating for systemic changes, such as improved inter-agency coordination and inclusion of trafficking survivors in the national framework.

- Their high-level involvement in decision-making and strategic planning contributed to legislative advancements, such as incorporating humanitarian and financial arguments into official policy documents.

#### 4. **Community and stakeholder engagement:**

- Experts facilitated improved collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including ministries, NGOs, and public agencies. This enhanced coordination contributed to the effective delivery of services and created a more cohesive ecosystem for managing asylum and migration issues.

#### 5. **Challenges to Impact:**

- While the project achieved significant milestones, challenges such as limited healthcare access for asylum seekers and difficulties in sustaining SIL programs highlight areas where systemic reforms are still needed.
- The withdrawal of NORCAP experts raised questions about maintaining the same level of strategic input and operational effectiveness in their absence.

### ***Evaluation Conclusions***

#### **Effectiveness**

The NORCAP project effectively addressed critical gaps in Greece’s asylum and migration management systems by deploying highly skilled experts to key institutions, including RIS, EKKA, and MoH. The project surpassed its targets in expert deployments, providing both on-site and strategic support.

#### 1. **Strategic support and adaptability:**

- Experts provided tailored support at both operational and high-management levels, enhancing coordination among stakeholders and strengthening institutional frameworks.
- The project demonstrated flexibility by reallocating resources to emerging needs, such as supporting healthcare gaps in the Ministry of Health during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### 2. **Enhanced operational efficiency:**

- By focusing on on-the-job capacity building, NORCAP experts improved site management and operational coordination at decentralized reception centers and RIS headquarters.
- Practical measures, such as training RIS staff and creating coordination mechanisms, helped ensure the dignified reception and protection of asylum seekers.

### 3. **Capacity development across institutions:**

- Experts delivered 28 targeted trainings and engaged 187 RIS staff, significantly surpassing initial goals.
- Training and mentoring sessions addressed crucial themes such as site planning, child protection, and trafficking victim identification, equipping local staff with essential skills for sustained implementation.

### 4. **Concrete deliverables:**

- The project contributed to drafting essential documents, including the General Regulation for Mainland Hosting Facilities, which set minimum standards for dignified reception conditions.
- SOPs, guiding tools, and training materials were developed and implemented across various institutions, creating a framework for consistent and effective asylum management practices.

While the project significantly enhanced institutional capacity and operational effectiveness, systemic inefficiencies and delays, such as in referrals and healthcare provision, indicate ongoing challenges that require further structural improvements.

## **Sustainability**

The project achieved sustainability through several key mechanisms:

### 1. **Institutionalization of knowledge:**

- Experts developed and transferred **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)** for key processes, ensuring that essential knowledge and guidelines would remain accessible to stakeholders beyond the project's duration.
- Practical guides, training materials, and legal frameworks were handed over to national authorities, embedding NORCAP's approaches within institutional structures.

### 2. **Strengthened capacity:**

- On-the-job training and mentoring of local staff instilled a culture of humanitarian principles and strengthened administrative competencies within RIS, EKKA, and MoH. This capacity-building focus ensured that staff could sustain and build upon the project's achievements independently.

### 3. **Strategic partnerships:**

- Memorandums of Understanding with RIS, EKKA, and MoH established durable relationships that can support ongoing collaboration and resource-sharing. These partnerships created a foundation for continued improvements in asylum management.

#### 4. **Resource sustainability:**

- Equipment procured during the project was donated to RIS and EKKA, ensuring that essential tools for implementation remained available after the project ended. This resource management approach reinforced the sustainability of operational improvements.

Despite these achievements, long-term sustainability was hindered by systemic challenges, including limited funding and gaps in healthcare access for asylum seekers. These issues underscore the need for continued donor and government support.

#### **Impact**

The NORCAP project has had a significant and lasting impact on Greece's asylum and migration management systems. Reflecting on its importance, the former General Secretary of the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum emphasized: *"We want to equip our frontline professionals with best practices and the ability to implement and take ownership of the obligations and legal instruments that we have signed and ratified."* The deployment of experts under the project directly supported these objectives, contributing to several enduring outcomes, including:

##### 1. **Standard Operating Procedures and frameworks:**

- Experts drafted SOPs for various operational areas, such as identifying trafficking victims and improving reception conditions, which have been institutionalized as part of Greece's official regulations. These documents provide a roadmap for consistent and effective practices across the sector.

##### 2. **Capacity building and knowledge transfer:**

- Through systematic training and mentoring, experts equipped public servants with the skills and tools needed to sustain and improve refugee response systems. This knowledge transfer was a cornerstone of the project's long-term impact.

##### 3. **Advocacy for systemic change:**

- The project's focus on integrating humanitarian, financial, and political arguments into policy advocacy resulted in significant advancements, such as the establishment of the National Referral Mechanism for trafficking victims and improved coordination between ministries.

##### 4. **Enhanced coordination and relationships:**

- NORCAP experts fostered stronger relationships between various stakeholders, including ministries, NGOs, and local authorities, creating a more integrated and cooperative ecosystem for asylum management.

**5. Legacy of expertise:**

- The deployment of highly skilled individuals to key decision-making and operational roles elevated the standards of practice within Greece’s refugee response. Their contributions, particularly in drafting strategic plans and guiding high-level decision-making, set a precedent for future capacity-building initiatives.

**6. Tangible tools and resources:**

- Beyond SOPs and training materials, NORCAP left behind practical tools, such as operational templates, guides, and documented best practices, ensuring that institutional knowledge is preserved and accessible for future use.

**OUTCOME 3: “Operational procedures and capacity of the Greek Asylum Service and Appeal Committees improved”**

**Project promoter: UNHCR (project title: Quality assurance of asylum procedures and free legal aid to vulnerable asylum seekers)**

Project period: 13 months (20.2.2019-20.2.2020)

***Numeric overview of results***

	<b>Expected program results</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Overall result</b>
<b>Outcome 3 (UNHCR)</b>	Operational procedures and capacity of the Greek Asylum Service and Appeal Committees improved	Number of beneficiaries of legal aid services (aggregated by gender)	4500	<b>7415</b> (2393 women 5022 men)
Output 3.1	Expert support provided to the Greek Asylum Service	Number of Associate Asylum Experts deployed to the Asylum Service all over Greece	18	<b>18</b>
		Number of staff deployed to the Asylum Service centrally (e.g. Legal Advisor, Legal Liaison Officers, Documentation Experts)	5	<b>5</b>
Output 3.2	Free legal aid provided to vulnerable asylum seekers related to first instance asylum procedures	Number of lawyers that have been involved in the free legal aid component	40	<b>41</b>

***Evaluative overview***

The UNHCR project under Outcome 3 made significant strides in enhancing the operational capacity and procedural fairness of the Greek asylum system. With a dual focus on quality assurance within the Asylum Service (AS) and legal aid for vulnerable asylum seekers, the project addressed systemic gaps and introduced sustainable mechanisms for improved

asylum management. Its success is underscored by the project's ability to exceed most quantitative targets while demonstrating adaptability to legislative and operational challenges.

One of the project's defining achievements was the development of a robust quality assurance framework within the AS. Through the deployment of Associate Asylum Experts (AAEs) and targeted training programs, UNHCR empowered the AS to institutionalize high-quality standards in asylum procedures. The establishment of Quality Focal Points within the AS and the adoption of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) ensured that the improvements introduced under the project would endure beyond its duration. These measures strengthened the capacity of caseworkers and decision-makers, providing a foundation for fairness and consistency in asylum determinations.

Simultaneously, the project expanded access to legal aid for vulnerable asylum seekers, addressing critical gaps in representation and procedural safeguards. By providing legal aid to over 7,400 individuals—far exceeding the initial target—the project demonstrated its responsiveness to the pressing needs of asylum seekers, including detainees and those at risk of systemic exclusion. The inclusion of strategic litigation efforts further amplified the project's impact, securing legal precedents that continue to influence asylum practices and policies in Greece.

Despite these successes, the project faced challenges related to the sustainability of legal aid mechanisms and the impact of restrictive legislative changes. The reliance on external funding for legal aid, combined with the introduction of laws prioritizing speed over quality in asylum decisions, highlighted ongoing vulnerabilities within the asylum system. Nonetheless, UNHCR's proactive measures, including reallocation of resources and targeted advocacy, mitigated these risks and ensured the continuation of critical services.

The project's collaborative approach, involving partnerships with the Greek state, civil society organizations, and international actors, further enhanced its effectiveness and reach. However, the potential phasing out of civil society organizations (CSOs) from key project areas poses risks to the continuity of services, emphasizing the need for sustainable solutions and stronger state ownership.

In summary, the UNHCR project under Outcome 3 represents a comprehensive and impactful intervention that significantly advanced the protection and support of vulnerable asylum seekers in Greece. Its emphasis on institutional capacity building, procedural quality, and legal representation not only addressed immediate needs but also laid the groundwork for long-term improvements in the Greek asylum system. Moving forward, addressing gaps in sustainability and adapting to evolving legislative landscapes will be critical to maintaining and building upon these achievements.

## ***Evaluation findings***

### **Effectiveness**

The UNHCR project demonstrated substantial effectiveness in improving operational procedures and capacity within the Greek Asylum Service and Appeals Committees. Key achievements and areas of performance are outlined below:

### **1. Legal aid services**

- The project exceeded its planned target of 4,500 beneficiaries, reaching 7,415 asylum seekers (2,393 female, 5,022 male).
- Legal aid was extended to 853 asylum seekers in detention facilities, addressing complex cases involving pushbacks, detention orders, and extraditions.
- Support was provided to 215 individuals in civil and penal proceedings, and 156 objections against detention orders were filed—surpassing the planned target of 100.
- Legal representation at the second instance covered 275 cases, slightly below the planned 300, while 770 beneficiaries of international protection received legal support.
- The project also supported family reunification cases under the Dublin III Regulation, complementing state mechanisms that lacked capacity.

An example of UNHCR’s interventions is the following:

In November 2019, UNHCR lawyers intervened in Lesvos RAO to halt the practice of serving negative asylum decisions to Sub-Saharan African asylum seekers without conducting mandatory interviews due to the unavailability of interpreters. The intervention ensured that these cases were referred back to the first instance for proper interviews, safeguarding the right to a fair asylum process.

### **2. Expert deployment and quality assurance**

- 18 Associate Asylum Experts (AAEs) and 5 central staff were deployed across key locations, including Attica, Thessaloniki, and Lesvos, as planned.
- Consultation instances significantly exceeded the target, with 12,490 instances achieved, corresponding to 10,201 cases examined by the Asylum Service—representing 32% of total decisions issued during the project period.
- The team provided 200 case reviews, meeting the planned target, and responded to 153 Country of Origin Information (COI) queries, exceeding the planned 130.
- The project conducted 59 quality assurance missions to various locations, slightly below the planned 70. However, the extended duration of missions allowed for more comprehensive support.
- 69 days of refresher training were delivered, covering critical topics such as credibility assessment, interview techniques, and exclusion criteria. Targeted sessions ensured practical, on-the-job training for caseworkers.



- Key reports, including human rights analyses of ‘safe countries of origin’ and security updates for Iraq and Afghanistan, were developed to inform asylum procedures.

### **3. Strategic litigation and advocacy**

- UNHCR pursued strategic litigation to address systemic deficiencies in detention practices and asylum procedures. Legal representation in landmark cases at the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) resulted in systemic changes, such as adjustments to detention periods and practices.
- Cases of procedural deficiencies—such as the failure to conduct interviews due to a lack of interpreters—were rectified through UNHCR’s legal interventions, ensuring adherence to fair asylum procedures.

### **4. Multi-Stakeholder engagement and partnerships**

- Partnerships with ICMC, GCR, and METAdrasi were critical in delivering legal aid, social support, and interpretation services. These organizations demonstrated robust capacity and expertise, ensuring the effective implementation of project activities.
- Collaboration with the Asylum Service, Appeals Committees, and other official authorities facilitated the successful deployment of experts and the integration of legal aid services.
- UNHCR’s engagement extended to civil society organizations and government stakeholders, including the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and police authorities, fostering a collaborative environment for project implementation.

### **5. Broader social support services**

- Beyond legal aid, the project provided 3,620 beneficiaries with additional social support through social workers, demonstrating a holistic approach to addressing asylum seekers’ needs.

## **Sustainability**

### **1. Institutional capacity building:**

- The project facilitated the gradual handover of quality assurance processes to the AS. Quality Focal Points were capacitated to act as advisors, enabling the AS to locally implement and monitor quality standards independently.
- UNHCR supported the AS in developing operational tools, ensuring these mechanisms were embedded within AS’s systems.

### **2. Legal aid challenges:**

- While legal aid provision met immediate needs, long-term sustainability was limited by inadequate state-run legal aid schemes and dependence on external funding. Amendments to the legal framework for broader legal aid provision remained pending.

### 3. **Continued partnership with AS:**

- A Memorandum of Cooperation (2013–2019) and subsequent Letters of Agreement (2020) formalized the partnership between UNHCR and the AS. However, the shift from a MoC to Letters of Agreement raises questions about the long-term binding commitment of the collaboration.

## **Impact**

### 1. **Systems improvement:**

- SOPs for asylum and legal procedures, including trafficking victim identification and quality assurance, were institutionalized, enabling systemic improvements.
- Training activities enhanced caseworker capacity, with themes such as credibility assessment and exclusion techniques contributing to more consistent decision-making.

### 2. **Legal outcomes:**

- Successful strategic litigation informed procedural reforms, including adjustments to detention practices following ECHR rulings.
- Pilot cases provided legal precedents, addressing systemic gaps in access to asylum and procedural rights.

### 3. **Advocacy for systemic change:**

- UNHCR's advocacy efforts influenced legislative amendments and procedural safeguards. However, restrictive asylum policies introduced in 2019 posed significant challenges to quality standards and procedural fairness.
- UNHCR's advocacy led to significant policy shifts, such as the suspension of practices that endangered asylum seekers' rights. For example, in late 2019, police authorities halted the inclusion of asylum seekers in returns to Turkey under the EU-TUR statement after UNHCR intervened to prevent deportation during pending annulment applications. This intervention preserved judicial protection and established a legal precedent.

### 4. **Broader stakeholder engagement:**

- Effective collaboration with CSOs and government entities, including ICMC, GCR, and METAdrasi, strengthened service delivery and multi-stakeholder coordination.

## ***Evaluation Conclusions***

## **Effectiveness**

The UNHCR project achieved its primary objectives, surpassing most of its planned targets and significantly enhancing the operational capacity of the Greek Asylum Service (AS) and Independent Appeals Committees (IACs). By providing robust legal aid services, deploying experts, and implementing quality assurance mechanisms, the project delivered notable improvements across multiple dimensions:

1. **Enhanced legal aid access:** The provision of legal aid to over 7,400 vulnerable asylum seekers, including detainees and individuals facing systemic barriers, highlighted the program's ability to respond effectively to unmet needs. This achievement is particularly notable given the restrictive legislative environment and the increasing demand for legal support.
2. **Strategic use of experts:** The deployment of Associate Asylum Experts (AAEs) and central staff provided targeted support to Regional Asylum Offices (RAOs) and Asylum Application Units (AAUs). The experts' contributions went beyond casework, extending to strategic planning, SOP development, and training delivery, thereby institutionalizing quality practices within the AS.
3. **Proactive adaptation:** The project demonstrated adaptability in addressing unforeseen challenges, such as changes in government policies and legislative frameworks. By reallocating resources to critical areas like detention facilities and appeals cases, the project maintained its relevance and effectiveness under shifting conditions.
4. **Capacity building:** Targeted training on credibility assessments, exclusion criteria, and interview techniques not only improved the immediate skills of caseworkers but also strengthened the institutional knowledge base of the AS. This approach ensured that the project's impact would extend beyond its duration.

## **Sustainability**

The project's sustainability was reinforced through its emphasis on capacity building and the institutionalization of quality assurance processes:

1. **Institutional legacy:** The establishment of Quality Focal Points within the AS marked a significant step toward embedding quality assurance into everyday operations. These focal points, trained and mentored by UNHCR experts, now serve as internal advisors, ensuring continuity in high standards of decision-making and procedural fairness.
2. **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs):** The development and handover of SOPs for asylum procedures, legal representation, and quality assurance created a durable framework for consistent and fair practices within the AS and IACs.
3. **Challenges in legal aid sustainability:** Despite these advances, the project's reliance on external funding for legal aid highlighted a critical gap in state capacity. UNHCR's efforts to complement the state-led legal aid scheme underscored the need for sustainable mechanisms to support vulnerable populations, particularly in appeals cases and family reunifications.

4. **Collaboration and transition:** The transition from a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) to Letters of Agreement raised questions about the binding nature of the partnership. Ensuring that the AS fully assumes the quality assurance functions developed under the project will require continued advocacy and support.

**Impact**

The project’s long-term impact is evident in the systemic changes it facilitated within Greece's asylum system:

1. **Systemic reforms:** The introduction of SOPs, targeted training, and strategic litigation efforts have influenced procedural standards and legislative interpretations. These contributions have reinforced the rights of asylum seekers while addressing systemic deficiencies.
2. **Strategic litigation:** By advancing cases to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), the project achieved landmark rulings that compelled adjustments in detention practices and procedural safeguards. These legal precedents will continue to shape the rights and protections afforded to asylum seekers in Greece.
3. **Advocacy for vulnerable populations:** The project’s emphasis on supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC), survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and detainees demonstrated its commitment to prioritizing the most vulnerable. This focus not only addressed immediate needs but also set a precedent for inclusive and rights-based approaches in future programming.
4. **Knowledge transfer:** The capacity-building efforts extended beyond immediate project activities, fostering a culture of continuous improvement within the AS. By empowering local caseworkers and embedding quality assurance mechanisms, the project ensured that its contributions would endure.

**OUTCOME 4: “Orderly and human voluntary return of migrants or vulnerable groups is secured”**

**Project promoter: IOM (project title: Assisted voluntary return and reintegration of vulnerable groups)**

Project period: 7 months (1/9/2022-31/3/2023) + 3 months extension (end date 30/6/2023)

***Numeric overview of results***

	<b>Expected results</b>	<b>program</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Overall result</b>
<b>Outcome 4 (IOM)</b>	Orderly and humane return of	voluntary return of	Reduced waiting time from application to voluntary return achieved	Yes	<b>Yes</b>

	migrants or vulnerable groups is secured			
Output 4.1	Financial reintegration support system established, with differentiated levels of support	Number of migrants departed through IOM for voluntary return	200	<b>229</b> (152 women, 77 men)

### ***Evaluative overview***

The IOM’s Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) program aimed to facilitate the voluntary return of migrants in vulnerable situations, ensuring safe travel and sustainable reintegration in their countries of origin. Over the project period, the program supported 229 migrants, surpassing the initial target of 200. Beneficiaries included 63 children and 118 family members, with tailored assistance addressing diverse needs.

The project achieved high satisfaction rates, particularly for pre-departure counseling (99%) and travel arrangements (100%). Reintegration assistance reached 221 returnees, with support tailored to economic, social, and psychosocial dimensions. However, systemic gaps, such as insufficient qualitative data collection and limited focus on structural factors in home countries, raised questions about the long-term sustainability of reintegration outcomes.

Despite challenges, such as logistical hurdles during transit and the absence of a comprehensive evaluation stage, the program demonstrated adaptability and responsiveness to emergent needs, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. Collaborations with embassies, local authorities, and IOM offices were instrumental in delivering individualized support, although the depth and impact of these partnerships require further exploration.

### ***Evaluation findings***

#### **Effectiveness**

The AVRR program demonstrated significant effectiveness in its efforts to ensure safe and humane voluntary returns while exceeding its targets for key outputs. However, certain areas require further development to maximize impact and operational efficiency.

#### **1. Program delivery and beneficiary support:**

- **Return Facilitation:**
  - 229 migrants, including 111 individual migrants and 118 family members, were successfully returned to their home countries, exceeding the target of 200. Satisfaction rates for return assistance reached 100%.
  - Pre-departure counseling and tailored assistance enabled 99% of beneficiaries to make informed decisions, highlighting the program's focus on personalized support. An interviewee – a Georgian single mother- who voluntarily approached IOM to receive assistance to return to her home country, she highlighted that it

took her only one month from the time she expressed her interest to the time she travelled back to Georgia with her two children.

- **Reintegration assistance:**

- Of the 229 returnees (vast majority returned to Georgia), 221 received reintegration support, which included vocational training, microbusiness assistance, medical aid, and temporary accommodation.
- Satisfaction with reintegration assistance was 100% among surveyed beneficiaries, demonstrating the perceived value of the program's holistic approach. One interviewed beneficiary noted that the financial assistance provided enabled her to establish a stable foundation for her family's economic future by setting up a small business for her daughter, demonstrating the program's adaptability to individual circumstances: *"They gave me €3,000, which I used to set up a business for my daughter. Now she works as a makeup artist, and we feel more secure"*.

## **2. Adaptability and flexibility:**

- The project adapted to COVID-19-related disruptions by providing tailored support to 18 stranded migrants. While these interventions demonstrated responsiveness, logistical challenges and inconsistencies in transit support were identified. Only 42% of respondents expressed satisfaction with transit arrangements, primarily due to a lack of clarity in survey methodologies for those with direct flights versus transit routes.

## **3. Limitations in data and monitoring:**

- The project relied heavily on satisfaction surveys, which lacked qualitative depth to explain or contextualize the high approval ratings. The absence of a dedicated evaluation stage limited insights into factors influencing project outcomes and potential areas for improvement.

## **Sustainability**

The AVRR program laid the groundwork for sustainable reintegration through tailored plans and extensive stakeholder collaboration. However, systemic limitations in countries of origin and the absence of long-term monitoring constrained the program's impact.

### **1. Tailored reintegration plans:**

- According to reporting reintegration initiatives addressed economic, social, and psychosocial needs through measures like vocational training, financial assistance, and access to public services. In the evaluator's view, the program disproportionately focused on facilitating voluntary departures rather than adequately preparing beneficiaries for reintegration upon their return. The interviewed returnee expressed uncertainty about the depth of pre-departure orientation concerning conditions in their home country prior to leaving.

## **2. Collaboration with stakeholders:**

- Partnerships with embassies, local authorities, and organizations in countries of origin enabled the program to provide targeted support. However, detailed reporting on these collaborations is limited, reducing the ability to assess their contributions to sustainability. The interviewed beneficiary mentioned that neither the home country's embassy in Greece nor the Greek embassy in home country had any involvement in the project.

## **3. Gaps in monitoring:**

- The lack of long-term follow-up evaluations restricted the ability to measure the sustainability of reintegration outcomes. Approximately 20% of beneficiaries did not complete the reintegration process due to factors such as remigration, disengagement, or documentation issues.

## **Impact**

The AVRR program delivered significant short-term impacts but faced challenges in ensuring long-term effectiveness.

### **1. Enhanced beneficiary outcomes:**

- The program enabled vulnerable migrants to return safely and provided comprehensive reintegration assistance, fostering economic stability and social reintegration.
- Tailored interventions empowered beneficiaries to rebuild their lives, although structural barriers in origin countries remained a challenge.

### **2. Contributions to migration management:**

- Collaborations with stakeholders facilitated improved service delivery, but systemic limitations in addressing root causes of migration reduced the program's broader impact.

### **3. Advocacy for voluntariness and dignity:**

- The program upheld the principle of voluntariness in return decisions, though critics argue that systemic pressures in host countries might undermine this principle.

## ***Evaluation conclusions***

### **Effectiveness**

The AVRR program effectively supported vulnerable migrants in making informed decisions, facilitating safe travel, and providing reintegration assistance. Satisfaction rates for key services were exceptionally high, reflecting the program's focus on individualized support and its responsiveness to challenges like COVID-19 restrictions. However, systemic gaps in data collection and qualitative analysis limited the ability to evaluate the full scope of effectiveness.

## **Sustainability**

The program demonstrated a comprehensive approach to reintegration, addressing economic, social, and psychosocial dimensions. However, the lack of long-term monitoring and limited consideration of structural challenges in countries of origin constrained the sustainability of reintegration outcomes.

## **Impact**

The program achieved significant short-term impact by ensuring dignified return processes and promoting reintegration. Yet, the absence of qualitative data and systemic evaluations limits insights into its broader and long-term impact. Addressing structural challenges and enhancing data collection methods are critical for maximizing future impact.

## **E. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter consolidates and organizes the key recommendations derived from the evaluation findings across all outcomes, aiming to guide future programming and improve the implementation of similar interventions.

### ***Outcome 1: Improved Quality of Accommodation and Services***

#### **For Future Programs:**

- **Adopt a holistic approach:** Design programs that integrate comprehensive services, including psychosocial support, legal aid, education, and empowerment activities, to address the multifaceted needs of beneficiaries effectively.
- **Promote Supported Independent Living (SIL) models:** Expand the adoption of SILs as a sustainable alternative to institutional care for unaccompanied minors (UAMs), fostering autonomy and smoother transitions to independent living.
- **Promote Mixed-Model Housing:** Expand mixed-model structures to prevent ghettoisation, foster cultural acceptance, and promote integration, especially for unaccompanied minors (UAMs).
- **Foster cross-sectoral collaboration:** Strengthen partnerships across public entities, NGOs, and private sector stakeholders to ensure coordinated efforts and resource sharing for effective service delivery.
- **Strengthen referral systems:** Advocate for more efficient, streamlined referral processes to reduce delays and optimize occupancy rates in accommodation facilities.

#### **For Donors:**

- **Flexible and long-Term funding:** Provide adaptable funding mechanisms to address operational gaps, cash assistance needs, and emerging crises during program transitions.



- **Support capacity building:** Allocate funding to build the capacity of implementing organizations in areas such as management, advocacy, and technical expertise, ensuring that they are equipped to deliver high-quality services and influence systemic reforms effectively.
- **Invest in innovative models:** Prioritize funding for pilot projects like mixed housing structures and foster care systems to encourage systemic change.

#### **For Implementing Organizations:**

- **Invest in staff capacity building and retention:** Prioritise the recruitment, training, and retention of qualified staff to ensure high-quality service delivery and operational continuity. Staff development should include both technical and soft skills, with measures to prevent burnout.
- **Enhance volunteer management:** Allocate resources to effectively manage and support volunteers, ensuring their contributions align with program goals and add value without overburdening staff.
- **Strengthen advocacy efforts:** Elevate advocacy as a core strategy to influence policy reforms and embed successful program models, such as fostering frameworks for UAMs, into national systems.
- **Deepen community engagement:** Promote trust-building activities, awareness campaigns, and partnerships with local entities to foster integration and mitigate xenophobia.
- **Focus on sustainability:** Develop co-financing agreements, diversify funding streams, and establish contingency plans to maintain operations during transitional periods.

### ***Outcome 2: Strengthened Institutional Capacity***

#### **For Future Programs:**

- **Institutionalize capacity building:** Integrate training outcomes into national standard operating procedures (SOPs) and administrative frameworks to enhance institutional resilience.
- **Develop decentralized systems:** Support regional offices and local institutions to ensure wider geographic coverage and efficiency.

#### **For Donors:**

- **Support technical expertise:** Continue funding expert secondments to address gaps in capacity, especially in high-priority areas like anti-trafficking and healthcare access.
- **Expand cross-sector partnerships:** Encourage collaborations between government agencies, NGOs, and international bodies to foster innovation and shared resources.

### **For Implementing Organizations:**

- **Strengthen capacity building efforts:** Focus on embedding skills and knowledge transfer within host institutions to ensure that expertise remains accessible after the project ends. Invest in tailored training programs for public sector staff to promote the institutionalization of best practices.
- **Enhance stakeholder engagement:** Deepen collaboration with state authorities, civil society organizations, and other relevant actors to align interventions with national priorities and foster ownership of program outcomes.
- **Promote strategic and policy advocacy:** Advocate for the adoption of program outputs—such as Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and quality assurance mechanisms—into national policies to ensure sustainable, long-term impacts.
- **Prioritize flexibility and responsiveness:** Adapt operational strategies to respond to emerging needs, such as changes in migration flows or policy shifts, while maintaining the focus on program objectives.

### ***Outcome 3: Improved Asylum Procedures and Legal Aid***

#### **For Future Programs:**

- **Expand and tailor legal aid services:** Ensure comprehensive support for gender-specific needs, second-instance appeals, and family reunification under the Dublin III Regulation to meet growing demand.
- **Embed advocacy as a core component:** Use strategic litigation and case studies to influence national policies and strengthen procedural safeguards.
- **Promote sustainable capacity-building initiatives:** Integrate training and quality assurance mechanisms directly into national systems to reduce reliance on external actors and ensure long-term effectiveness.

#### **For the Greek Government and Asylum Service (AS):**

- **Expand state-led legal aid mechanisms:** Provide consistent and timely support, particularly at the second-instance appeals stage and for family reunification under the Dublin III Regulation.
- **Strengthen procedural safeguards:** Revise restrictive legislative amendments to ensure compliance with EU and international law, addressing systemic issues such as pushbacks, prolonged detention, and denial of procedural rights.
- **Institutionalize training and quality assurance frameworks:** Embed ongoing training programs in areas such as credibility assessment, interview techniques, and decision reviews, with dedicated quality assurance focal points at regional and national levels to monitor and maintain procedural standards.

- **Promote sustainable partnerships:** Foster long-term collaboration with stakeholders by renewing agreements like Memorandums of Cooperation and leveraging the expertise of CSOs and international bodies to address service delivery gaps.

#### **For Donors and International Partners:**

- **Prioritize funding for capacity building:** Focus on institutionalizing training programs, quality assurance mechanisms, and procedural safeguards within national asylum systems.
- **Ensure sustained support for legal aid programs:** Address increasing demand and challenges posed by legislative restrictions by providing reliable resources.
- **Promote systemic evaluations:** Fund initiatives to monitor the sustainability and impact of quality assurance systems, legal aid services, and training efforts, creating a strong evidence base for future programming.
- **Facilitate multi-stakeholder collaboration:** Support joint capacity-building initiatives and platforms for knowledge-sharing among government authorities, CSOs, and international organizations.

#### **For UNHCR as the Project Promoter:**

- **Formalize and scale training initiatives:** Address advanced thematic areas, such as family reunification, exclusion clauses, and case law updates, to fill capacity gaps identified during the project.
- **Sustain and expand strategic litigation efforts:** Prioritize systemic deficiencies, such as detention practices and procedural inefficiencies, while advocating for legislative reforms to enhance fairness and safeguard asylum seekers' rights.
- **Develop structured handover plans:** Enable the AS to fully sustain and integrate quality assurance and legal aid functions, reducing reliance on external actors and minimizing service disruptions.
- **Enhance beneficiary feedback mechanisms:** Implement systems that capture both quantitative and qualitative insights to inform future programming and advocacy.
- **Monitor the long-term impact of legal aid programs:** Produce evidence-based reports that strengthen partnerships and guide resource allocation decisions.

### ***Outcome 4: Orderly and Humane Voluntary Return***

#### **For Future Programs:**

- **Strengthen monitoring and evaluation frameworks:** Include qualitative data collection in satisfaction surveys to capture beneficiaries' experiences more

comprehensively and conduct follow-up evaluations to assess the long-term sustainability of reintegration outcomes.

- **Address structural challenges in origin countries:** Collaborate with local governments and organizations to address systemic barriers such as economic instability, inadequate services, and social stigmatization, while complementing individualized support with community-based reintegration initiatives.

#### **For IOM:**

- **Prioritize pre-departure counselling:** Enhance pre-departure orientation to set realistic expectations and prepare returnees for reintegration challenges.
- **Expand community-based reintegration initiatives:** Work closely with local governments and stakeholders in origin countries to provide collective reintegration programs alongside individual support, strengthening returnees' ability to reintegrate socially and economically.
- **Advance advocacy efforts for systemic improvements:** Use lessons learned from reintegration challenges to influence origin country policies, advocating for enhanced social support and economic opportunities for returnees.

#### **For Donors and International Partners:**

- **Support long-term evaluations:** Fund comprehensive follow-up evaluations to assess sustained impacts, refine reintegration strategies, and guide future interventions.
- **Facilitate multi-stakeholder collaboration:** Promote partnerships between IOM, local NGOs, and international organizations to create a more integrated and resourceful ecosystem for reintegration support, addressing both individual and systemic challenges.

#### **For Host and Origin Country Authorities:**

- **Strengthen collaborative frameworks:** Enhance coordination with IOM and other stakeholders to ensure seamless service delivery, timely referrals, and robust reintegration programs for returnees.
- **Promote community acceptance of returnees:** Implement awareness campaigns, community integration programs, and economic opportunities to reduce social stigmatization and foster acceptance.

### ***Cross-Cutting Recommendations***

#### **For Future Programs:**

- **Promote equitable integration:** Develop programs that prioritize the integration of beneficiaries by addressing their specific needs through access to education,

vocational training, and employment opportunities. This approach helps to foster inclusion while also mitigating risks of violence, criminality, and radicalization, as emphasized by the General Secretary of the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum: *“To shift the emphasis more on integration, which means jobs, basically, and education. And also, to avoid violence and criminality and radicalization.”*

- **Embed accountability mechanisms:** Strengthen beneficiary feedback systems to ensure programs remain responsive and centered on their needs.
- **Promote policy alignment:** Advocate for integrating successful pilot models into national systems to ensure scalability and sustainability.

#### **For Donors:**

- **Reduce the time gap between design and implementation:** Minimize delays between program inception and execution to ensure alignment with current realities and priorities, while maintaining flexibility to adapt to evolving needs and emerging challenges.
- **Invest in data systems:** Fund comprehensive data collection and impact evaluation frameworks to measure program outcomes and inform future interventions.

#### **For Implementing Organizations:**

- **Strengthen staff support:** Invest in training, psychological support, and retention strategies for staff to maintain high-quality service delivery.
- **Expand advocacy campaigns:** Leverage evidence from program success to influence policy and secure institutional support for long-term solutions.

## F. Evaluation Summary of EEA Bilateral Projects

### **Overview**

The EEA Bilateral Projects aimed to enhance collaboration between beneficiary and donor state entities, focusing on asylum, migration, and integration through capacity building, knowledge sharing, and innovative partnerships. The following evaluation synthesizes key activities, outcomes, challenges, and recommendations from the seven evaluated projects.

### **Key Findings**

- **Improved bilateral relations:** Projects fostered collaborations between Greek and Norwegian entities, highlighting shared expertise and best practices in areas such as refugee integration, health equity, voluntary returns and capacity building.
- **Enhanced capacity:** Initiatives like SPIRAL and "Building Capacity for Preparedness" strengthened institutional knowledge and service delivery for vulnerable populations, particularly unaccompanied minors (UAMs).
- **Community engagement:** Projects such as "Female Forward" and "Music Embracing Cultures" prioritized inclusivity and empowerment, creating safe spaces and fostering intercultural dialogue.
- **Innovative communication:** Joint advocacy and communication strategies, as in "One Center – One Voice," highlighted the importance of cohesive messaging to amplify impact.

### **Challenges Across Projects**

- **Logistical barriers:** Difficulty in recruiting participants and accessing resources.
- **Sustainability issues:** Limited funding affected the continuity of some initiatives.
- **Cultural and language barriers:** Interpreters and cultural facilitators were critical for success but not always readily available.

### **Recommendations**

1. **Strengthen sustainability:** Secure multi-year funding to ensure continuity of services and long-term impact.
2. **Improve inclusivity:** Integrate language and cultural facilitation in all initiatives.
3. **Enhance monitoring:** Develop robust tools for tracking progress and aligning with bilateral objectives.
4. **Leverage digital platforms:** Expand digital outreach for advocacy and awareness campaigns.
5. **Scale proven models:** Replicate successful initiatives across other regions to maximize impact.

## G. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The EEA and Norway Grants-funded “Asylum and Migration Programme” in Greece has made substantial contributions to improving the reception, protection, and integration of asylum seekers and vulnerable populations in Greece, with a specific focus on unaccompanied minors, women, and families. This program, executed in a complex and evolving migration context, was structured around four critical outcomes: enhancing accommodation and services in open reception centres, strengthening institutional capacity, improving asylum procedures, facilitating voluntary returns; and one outcome fostering bilateral initiatives. The conclusions herein consolidate findings from all programmatic interventions, linking achievements, challenges, and recommendations to shape a comprehensive understanding of its legacy.

Across all outcomes, the program demonstrated remarkable adaptability and commitment to its goals despite external disruptions, including shifts in migration policies and the COVID-19 pandemic. By fostering collaboration between NGOs, public entities, and local communities, it addressed critical gaps in service delivery, capacity building, and systemic reforms. The projects under the first outcome provided safe, dignified housing and comprehensive services to unaccompanied minors, women, and other vulnerable groups. Innovative housing models emphasized autonomy and integration, moving beyond institutional care. Services such as psychosocial support, legal aid, education, and health care were delivered holistically, addressing immediate needs while fostering long-term empowerment. Advocacy efforts under this outcome also led to policy advancements, including the inclusion of unaccompanied minors in Greece’s fostering and adoption frameworks, which set a precedent for systemic child protection reforms. Despite these successes, challenges such as referral delays and community resistance highlighted the need for enhanced administrative efficiency and local engagement strategies.

The capacity-building efforts of NORCAP, under the second outcome, were instrumental in equipping key institutions with the tools, knowledge, and operational frameworks needed to enhance asylum management. By institutionalizing Standard Operating Procedures and delivering extensive training, the program ensured that humanitarian principles were embedded in public administration practices. The establishment of the National Referral Mechanism for trafficking victims exemplified the program’s systemic impact, though long-term sustainability will require reducing reliance on external expertise.

The third outcome focused on enhancing the quality of asylum procedures. UNHCR’s interventions exceeded expectations by providing free legal aid to thousands of asylum seekers and refugees while addressing procedural inefficiencies through strategic litigation and capacity building. These efforts not only safeguarded the rights of asylum seekers but also enhanced decision-making transparency and fairness within the Greek Asylum Service. However, ensuring the sustainability of these services remains a critical challenge that requires diversified funding strategies and strengthened state ownership.

The voluntary return and reintegration program, implemented under the fourth outcome, demonstrated a tailored approach, addressing the unique needs of vulnerable individuals. Reintegration support and pre-departure counselling contributed to high satisfaction rates among beneficiaries. Nonetheless, limited data on long-term reintegration outcomes suggests a need for enhanced monitoring mechanisms to evaluate and sustain the program's impact.

The bilateral initiatives fostered enhanced collaboration and mutual learning between Greece and the donor states. By encouraging partnerships and exchange of best practices, these initiatives strengthened relationships and provided additional platforms for addressing shared challenges in migration management. The bilateral dimension of the program not only highlighted the importance of cross-border cooperation but also enriched the overall impact of the interventions.

The program's design and implementation reveal valuable lessons about aligning civil society efforts with broader policy frameworks. By integrating grassroots initiatives into national and EU-level migration strategies, the EEA Grants demonstrated how community-led approaches can complement state-driven mechanisms, maximizing their impact while fostering long-term sustainability. As one project promoter noted, *"The EEA and Norway Grants allowed us to build innovative models that the state could not prioritize, giving us the tools to advocate for systemic changes."* This ability to innovate and advocate underscores the value of donor-funded civil society initiatives in addressing systemic migration challenges.

While the program's achievements are noteworthy, several systemic and operational challenges emerged that underscore the complexity of migration management in Greece. Delays in referral processes and inefficient coordination among stakeholders often hindered service delivery, particularly under the first outcome. Addressing these challenges will require streamlined administrative procedures and robust inter-agency collaboration. Reliance on project-based funding created vulnerabilities during transitional periods, impacting service continuity. Future initiatives should prioritize diversified and multi-annual funding frameworks to mitigate such risks. The reliance on external expertise also highlighted the importance of investing in local capacity-building initiatives to ensure long-term sustainability. Resistance from local communities occasionally posed challenges to the successful implementation of projects, but proactive engagement strategies, including awareness campaigns and collaborative activities, proved effective in fostering social cohesion and reducing xenophobia.

Building on the insights gained from this evaluation, the program's legacy underscores the importance of integrating its achievements into national frameworks to ensure continuity and scalability. This includes embedding operational frameworks, legal aid mechanisms, and child protection models into state-led systems. Comprehensive monitoring frameworks should be developed to assess the long-term impact of interventions, particularly in areas like voluntary return and reintegration. Diversified funding sources, partnerships with institutional donors, and support from the private sector are critical to creating resilient funding models. Transitioning from reliance on external expertise to building the capacity of local actors will ensure that institutional knowledge and skills are retained within Greece's



asylum management ecosystem. Furthermore, expanding initiatives that foster integration at the community level will build inclusive societies through intercultural dialogue, education, and economic participation.

The EEA and Norway Grants-funded “Asylum and Migration Programme” has left a profound legacy, demonstrating the potential of collaborative, adaptive, and rights-based approaches to migration management. By balancing immediate humanitarian needs with long-term systemic reforms, the program not only addressed the vulnerabilities of asylum seekers but also contributed to the resilience and sustainability of Greece’s migration systems. As Heracles Moskoff, the Secretary General for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection at the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, aptly stated: *“Our partnership with Norway, EEA Grants, was instrumental in some very basic deliverables that we want to achieve... the highest asset that we are receiving.”* This sentiment reflects the transformative impact of the EEA Grants, not only as a funding mechanism for civil society but as a catalyst for collaboration and capacity building across key sectors.

Last but not least, the Fund Operator played a crucial role in enabling the program’s success. Interviews with project promoters highlighted the Fund Operator’s role as more than a manager—it was an active partner, building capacity, sharing expertise, and demonstrating flexibility in adapting to emerging needs. This supportive relationship was seen as an added value, fostering trust and strengthening the program’s overall effectiveness.

Moving forward, the program’s emphasis on partnership among government bodies, civil society, and international organizations underscores the value of shared responsibility in tackling complex migration challenges. The lessons learned, coupled with the collaborative spirit fostered by the EEA Grants, will be instrumental in shaping effective, inclusive, and sustainable migration policies in Greece and beyond.

## ANNEX I: LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Date	Name	Title	Project Promoter
15/7/2024	Chrysanthi Tsolaki	Programme Manager Assistant	METAdrasi
15/7/2024	Nikolas Kortesis		METAdrasi
16/7/2024	Pantelis Chalkias	Finance project manager	ARSIS
18/7/2024	Aimilios Klimis	Project coordinator	Doctors of the World (MDM)
18/7/2024	Artemis Lianou	Financial Services	Doctors of the World (MDM)
19/7/2024	Christos Dimopoulos	Ex- Advisor	NORCAP
19/7/2024	Chrysanthi Argyrou		IOM
19/7/2024	Christina Outsika		IOM
19/7/2024	Panagiota Ferentinou	National Officer Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Project	IOM
23/7/2024	Sofia Koutsou	Associate Program Officer	UNHCR
23/7/2024	Kalliopi Stefanaki	Senior Project Officer	UNHCR
23/7/2024	Giota Moschou	Donor relations Associate	UNHCR
24/7/2024	Dimitra Adamntidou	Director	SMAN
25/7/2024	Theofano Mantzaki	Sponsorship manager	IRC
25/7/2024	Theodoros Blanas	Program Development	IRC
25/7/2024	Elena Giga	Child Protection manager	IRC
18/9/2024	Eirini Chazapi	Project manager HOUSE2	SMAN
18/9/2024	Aliki Tzanedaki	Coordinator of “A Step Forward”	Doctors of the World (MDM)
20/9/2024	Marianna Kolovou	Coordinator of Arsis Shelter	ARSIS
20/11/2024	Heracles Moskoff	Secretary General for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection	Ministry of Migration & Asylum
6/12/2024	Single mother (anonymous)	Returnee to Georgia	IOM

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of September the lead evaluator conducted a field visit to the MDM’s Open Accommodation Centre “A Step Forward”.

## **ANNEX II: LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AMIF: Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

AS: Asylum Service

CSO: Civil Society Organization

EEA: European Economic Area

EKKA: National Centre for Social Solidarity (Greek abbreviation)

IRC: International Rescue Committee

MDM: Médecins du Monde (Doctors of the World)

MoH: Ministry of Health

MoMP: Ministry of Migration Policy

NRM: National Referral Mechanism

RIS: Reception and Identification Service

SIL: Supported Independent Living

SMAN: Society for the Care of Minors and Youth

SSPUM: Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors

UAM: Unaccompanied Minor