Supplementary report on

**“Sexual Exploitation of Children in Greece**”

to the combined fourth, fifth, and sixth periodic reports of

Greece on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the implementation of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Submitted by

and

**ARSIS and ECPAT International**

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| **ARSIS** Association for the Social Support of YouthExecutive Directors: Mr. Nikolaos Gavalas, Mrs. Aikaterini PoutouAddress: Leontos Sofou 26 street, ThessalonikiTelephone: +30 2310 526 150Email: infothes@arsis.grWebsite: <http://www.arsis.gr> *ARSIS – Association for the Social Support of Youth is a Non-Governmental Organization, specializing in the social support of youth that are in difficulty or danger and in the advocacy of their rights. The main target is the prevention of youth marginalisation, the elaboration of policies which defend youth rights and the active social support towards disadvantaged young people.**ARSIS was established in 1992 and since then it operates in Athens, Thessaloniki, Volos, Alexandroupoli, Kozani, Epirus and Tirana due to the active participation of members, volunteers and young people* | **ECPAT International**Special consultative statusExecutive Director: Mr. Robbert van den BergAddress: 328/1 Phayathai Road, Ratchathewi,Bangkok 10400, ThailandPhone: +66 2 215 3388Email: info@ecpat.orgWebsite: [www.ecpat.org](http://www.ecpat.org/)*ECPAT International is a global network of civil society organisations working for the eradication of all forms of sexual exploitation of children. For the past 29 years, ECPAT has acted as the international watchdog, monitoring States’ response to sexual exploitation of children, and advocating for robust international measures to protect children from sexual exploitation.**ECPAT International currently has 111 network members operating in 97 countries.* |

**Context of this Supplementary Report**

1. In 2008 the Government of Greece (GoG) ratified the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OPSC), thereby explicitly committing itself to combatting the sexual exploitation of children (SEC). Further, through the adoption of the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, the GoG has pledged to eliminate all forms of violence against children, including sexual abuse and exploitation.[[1]](#endnote-1)
2. The present report is supplementary to the combined fourth, fifth, and sixth periodic reports of Greece on the implementation of both the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the OPSC (UN Doc. CRC/C/GRC/4-6). The goals of this report are twofold: first, to serve as an update on SEC in Greece; and second, to offer concrete recommendations to the GoG in order to mobilize political will to combat SEC.
3. This submission is based on desk research conducted by ECPAT International and work and experience of ARSIS. The scope of this submission is limited to SEC and its different manifestations, including exploitation of children in prostitution,[[2]](#endnote-2) online child sexual exploitation (OCSE), child sexual abuse materials (CSAM),[[3]](#endnote-3) child trafficking for sexual purposes, sexual exploitation of children in the context of travel and tourism (SECTT)[[4]](#endnote-4) and child, early and forced marriage (CEFM).

**Status and Developments Regarding Sexual Exploitation of Children in Greece**

*Background of country conditions*

1. The Hellenic Republic of Greece, (herewith Greece) is a constitutional republic and multiparty parliamentary democracy. Greece has an aging population; with 21.8 % of people over the age of 65, Greece also has the second oldest population in the European Union (EU) as of 2019, behind Italy (22.6%) and ahead of Portugal (21.5%).[[5]](#endnote-5) Of Greece’s 10,522,000 people, children number 1,796,000, making up just 17 % of the population.[[6]](#endnote-6)
2. The global financial crisis which began in late 2007 had a catastrophic, painful and protracted effect on Greece’s economy.[[7]](#endnote-7) Greece was left with a crippling debt burden, which also plunged the country into a state of political instability. The fiscal crisis of 2009, evolved into a sovereign debt crisis in 2010-13, followed by years of economic stagnation.[[8]](#endnote-8) Greece entered a period of severe austerity measures and high unemployment, and the country was forced to sign up to a string of international bailouts, only recently exiting this programme in August 2018.[[9]](#endnote-9) The highest unemployment rate in Greece was seen in September 2013 with 27.8% of the population unemployed - to put this in perspective, in May 2008 before the crash, Greece’s unemployment rate was 7.3%.[[10]](#endnote-10)
3. The social costs of the economic crash on children cannot be understated.[[11]](#endnote-11) Child poverty increased significantly.[[12]](#endnote-12) A UNICEF report found that in 2015, 18% of families lived below the threshold of extreme poverty.[[13]](#endnote-13),[[14]](#endnote-14) Poverty risks were highest amongst children aged 12-17, smaller families and jobless households with children (an extreme poverty rate of over 90% was seen in this third group).[[15]](#endnote-15) Globally, poverty and inequality are associated with underlying causes of sexual exploitation of children.[[16]](#endnote-16) And along these lines, evidence suggests that in Greece, the economic crisis purportedly saw an increase in the number of child abuse cases.[[17]](#endnote-17) For example, the Paediatric hospital of Athens – the largest in the country – saw a 209% increase in case admissions from 2011 to 2014.[[18]](#endnote-18)
4. In 2014, the European Commission noted Greece as one of 12 EU Member States in urgent need to implement deinstitutionalization reform.[[19]](#endnote-19) Despite continued advocacy from practitioners and NGOs,[[20]](#endnote-20) gaps still exist in Greece’s child protection services that need urgent redress. Accessing support and care is always difficult for child victims of sexual exploitation,[[21]](#endnote-21) but the added strains on Greek child protection services over the last decade have made this even more of a concern.
5. Minority and marginalized groups were hit particularly hard by the financial crisis. Already marginalized, the Roma in Greece are known to face discrimination,lack of education, inadequate housing conditions, risk of poverty, social exclusion, disproportionate high school dropout rates and police violence.[[22]](#endnote-22)
6. It is widely held that humanitarian situations escalate the risk of sexual exploitation and violence which children are already exposed to during times of peace and stability.[[23]](#endnote-23) In 2015, Greece, became the epicentre of a humanitarian crisis.[[24]](#endnote-24) Following a number of regional political developments including the closing of borders with Greece by key Balkan countries: Austria, Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia, Greece transitioned from a short-term transit country to a long-term host country.[[25]](#endnote-25)
7. Conditions within the many refugee camps have left children vulnerable to all forms of abuse[[26]](#endnote-26) and exploitation.[[27]](#endnote-27) According to statistics from EKKA (the National Centre of Social Solidarity), as of 30th September 2019, there were 4,616 reported unaccompanied minors registered in Greece, 93.6% of these were boys 6.4% of which were girls, 7% were below the ages of 14.[[28]](#endnote-28) This figure clearly shows the gender divide of unaccompanied minors in Greece and explains the high number of SEC-related cases amongst boys noted in this report. Numerous reports of sexual abuse, violent assaults, harassment and humiliation in camps on the Greek islands demonstrate the impact of current living conditions on children’s security and safety.[[29]](#endnote-29) Importantly, out of the 4,210 reported unaccompanied minors in Greece, 1,169 children are reported as “living in informal/insecure housing conditions such as living temporarily in apartments with others, living in squats, being homeless and moving frequently between different types of accommodation”.[[30]](#endnote-30) These children, when homeless and forced to live in the street, are at a heightened risk of abuse and exploitation.[[31]](#endnote-31) Research has widely documented homelessness as a key factor in shaping children’s vulnerability to SEC.[[32]](#endnote-32)

*Exploitation of children in prostitution*

1. Reports of exploitation of children in prostitution have increased in Greece since the migration crisis in 2015. International organizations, NGOs and volunteers have raised concerns of the number of unaccompanied migrant boys and girls who are now actively engaging in their own exploitation by using prostitution as a means to survive.[[33]](#endnote-33) Criminal gangs are also allegedly operating in some of the camps and have forced children into prostitution.[[34]](#endnote-34) Related to the much larger proportion of boy refugees found in Greece, research suggests that in Greece, exploitation of children in prostitution disproportionately affects unaccompanied migrant boys who are forced to engage in transactional sex – viewing it as the only way to continue their journey through Europe.[[35]](#endnote-35) Many of these boys are from Afghani origin.[[36]](#endnote-36) Examinations into similar contexts suggest that Afghani boys may be particularly vulnerable to engaging in transactional sex due to the greater social tolerance of the sexual exploitation of young boys rather than girls in some areas of Afghanistan.**[[37]](#endnote-37)** Anecdotal evidence shows that a smaller number of unaccompanied migrants forced to engage in prostitution come from Iran, Iraq, Syria and Bangladesh.[[38]](#endnote-38) Research is urgently needed to better understand this form of exploitation.
2. According to one report many are lured into the sex trade with promises of high fees, although in reality, transactions rarely exceed 15 euros per exchange.[[39]](#endnote-39) This amount of money makes it very unlikely that they will raise sufficient funds to leave Greece via people smugglers. Reports suggest that other migrants (the age of whom is not specified), often act as intermediaries between children and perpetrators, facilitating their transaction.[[40]](#endnote-40) Mobile phones allow for plans to be made efficiently and undetected[[41]](#endnote-41) and dating apps have reportedly made the process easier for children to engage in their own exploitation through prostitution.[[42]](#endnote-42) Reportedly, perpetrators are often older men or sex tourists who visit Athens with the intent of meeting young boys, having already connected with them through the Internet.[[43]](#endnote-43)
3. Although the extent and prevalence of child sexual exploitation in Greece is difficult to ascertain, informants noted that exploitation of children in prostitution occurs in both rural and urban settings[[44]](#endnote-44), with most instances occurring in Thessaloniki and Athens.[[45]](#endnote-45) Strikingly, in a report conducted by CARE on unaccompanied migrants in refugee contexts, all the young boy refugees interviewed in Greece testified that they had either been directly approached or know friends who had been asked by men for sexual favours.[[46]](#endnote-46)

## *Online child sexual exploitation (OCSE)*

1. Globally, although conducive to innovation and development, the increase in Internet availability can also lead to heightened risks of OCSE.[[47]](#endnote-47) Misuse of technology has radically altered the ways in which children are exploited as the presence of millions of children online has made it easier for offenders to groom victims. As of 2018, over 72.9 % of the population was using the Internet in Greece[[48]](#endnote-48) and there was a recorded 115.67 mobile phones per 100 people.[[49]](#endnote-49) Being a highly connected country, it can be assumed that Greek children are at risk of online child sexual exploitation.
2. Unfortunately, the exact scale of OCSE is unknown in Greece. An analysis of the phone calls received by Safe Line, a reporting hotline for illegal material on the Internet operating since 2003, shows that over the period 2011-2018 the number of calls reporting CSAM that were able to be translated into actionable reports, increased at an average annual rate of 2.3% per year.[[50]](#endnote-50)
3. A 2018 study conducted by the Greek Safer Internet Centre raises a number of concerns for parents, educators and decision makers. The survey involved 14,000 pupils aged 10-17 years in 400 schools in Athens, Thessaloniki, Hereaklion Crete, Patras and Larissa. Particularly noteworthy figures include: 41% of students accepted friendship requests from strangers online; 21% of children have physically met someone they met online; and 14% of students shared personal and intimate content online; 61% have encountered inappropriate content online.[[51]](#endnote-51) The report further highlighted the lack of understanding amongst parents of the risks that can exist to children online. Fortunately, Greece has taken some significant steps to educate both parents and children on the dangers of OCSE and has engaged in a number of regional initiatives.
4. Recent research has focused on the interplay between technology and migration, sparked in particular during the 2015 migrant influx.[[52]](#endnote-52) For the most part, technology has positively led to interconnectivity and opportunity, however, there is also a darker side where technology is used to prey on their vulnerabilities and fuel exploitation, placing unaccompanied minors in particular at greater risk of abuse.[[53]](#endnote-53) Reports suggest that technology has played a crucial role in the recruitment of migrant children into the sex trade in Greece.[[54]](#endnote-54) Mobile phones have allowed for easier channels of communication between human traffickers and smugglers.[[55]](#endnote-55) Interestingly, one study conducted in Greece showed that male migrants are more likely to own a mobile phone than their female counterparts. [[56]](#endnote-56) This increased access to technology that boys enjoy could be an increased risk factor for vulnerability to exploitation through prostitution.

##  *Sale and trafficking of children for sexual purposes*

1. Greece is a Tier 2 country, as defined by the 2019 US State Department’s Trafficking in Persons report (TIP), which means the country does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so.[[57]](#endnote-57) It is predominantly a country of destination and transit of victims of trafficking in human beings, but to a certain degree, also a country of origin.[[58]](#endnote-58)
2. Family financial hardships increased children’s vulnerability and susceptibility to exploitation,[[59]](#endnote-59) particularly those from minority, migrant[[60]](#endnote-60) and marginalised groups.[[61]](#endnote-61) This has been further exacerbated by the migrant crisis; the number of unaccompanied child migrants in Greece has increased the number of children susceptible to being trafficked.[[62]](#endnote-62) Most migrants and asylum seekers are believed to rely on smugglers at some point during their journey and in some instances are forced into exploitation upon arrival in Greece.[[63]](#endnote-63)
3. The 2019 U.S State Department’s TIP report highlights the phenomenon of children, mainly of Roma origin, from Albania, Bulgaria and Romania who have been trafficked into Greece.[[64]](#endnote-64) Due to a number of interconnected socio-economic factors Roma children are particularly vulnerable to trafficking.[[65]](#endnote-65) Whilst, mostly these cases involve forced begging and engagement in petty crime there have also been reports of the sale and trafficking of Roma boys and girls for the purposes of sexual exploitation.[[66]](#endnote-66) Sometimes, family members are complicit in this form of abuse and exploitation.[[67]](#endnote-67) Furthermore, a lack of birth/civil registration amongst Roma communities makes children particularly vulnerable as it makes it difficult for authorities to identify if an accompanying adult is their parent or guardian.[[68]](#endnote-68)
4. Available information points towards a higher proportion of Roma girls than boys that have been identified as victims.[[69]](#endnote-69) However, limited data or reporting on forms of trafficking, particularly in relation to sexual exploitation of boys, should not be taken as an indication that the issue does not exist in Greece but should more be seen in a context where the sexual exploitation of boys is an under-researched phenomenon.[[70]](#endnote-70)

##  *Sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism (SECTT)*

1. Even during the adversity of the economic crash and the humanitarian crisis, Greece has continued to be one of Europe’s major tourist destinations. In 2018, tourism represented 20.9% of the GDP and 25.9% of employment within the country.[[71]](#endnote-71)
2. Despite the centrality of tourism to Greece’s economy, there is a scarcity of data and lack of understanding of the scale of SECTT. Whilst the media has noted tourists employing the services of adult sex workers in Greece, [[72]](#endnote-72) information on the sexual exploitation of children in this context is limited. Concerns of SECTT rose to prominence during the 2004 Athens Olympic games, marking one of the first instance of a major international sporting event which invoked public concern about the dangers of exploitation and trafficking that can accompany such mega-events. [[73]](#endnote-73) However, despite the unprecedented attention this attracted internationally, there is still insufficient evidence gathered to draw conclusions as to the scale and scope of how children may be affected by SECTT.[[74]](#endnote-74)
3. In 2016, the ECPAT Global Study on Sexual Exploitation of children in Travel and Tourism identified Greece and Montenegro as potential destinations for SECTT within the Balkan region.[[75]](#endnote-75) However, only a few incidences of child sexual offences committed by tourists and travellers have been reported or identified. As previously mentioned, following interviews conducted by CARE, evidence suggested that some tourists travelled to Greece specifically to sexually exploit young migrant boys.[[76]](#endnote-76)
4. In 2013 Greece introduced the Golden Visa System,[[77]](#endnote-77) a policy whereby investors can obtain a residence permit, which reportedly led to an exponential growth in investors from Russia, Turkey, the Middle East and China.[[78]](#endnote-78) Whilst investment on this scale and growth in the tourism industry is undoubtedly beneficial to the Greek economy; rapid growth in the tourism sector without commensurate regulation can facilitate increased instances of sexual exploitation of children.[[79]](#endnote-79) The onus on the government to implement a prevention strategy to mitigate the risk of SEC becomes even more important when contextualized within the current migrant crisis and the high numbers of unaccompanied minors who may be exploited through prostitution.
5. The rise of the “sharing economy”, which allows travellers to share or exchange accommodation and other services online, largely unregulated by government, may offer unmonitored channels for perpetrating sex crimes against vulnerable children.[[80]](#endnote-80)
6. This overview did not identify any concrete measures taken by the government to protect children from the threats to sexual exploitation that may be present in the travel and tourism context. As of August 2019, no Greek companies have become members of the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from SECTT (although several international private companies operating in Greece are members).[[81]](#endnote-81) The Code is a multisector initiative to provide awareness, tools and support to companies in the tourism industry to prevent the sexual exploitation of children.[[82]](#endnote-82)

## *Child, early and forced marriage (CEFM)*

1. There is no publically available data on CEFM in Greece. Despite the government’s commitment to eliminate the practice by 2030 in line with target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, very little is known about the issue. In the 2019 UNICEF monitoring of countries’ effectiveness in implementing the SDGs’ related to child rights, no data was available for Greece stating the proportion of women aged 18-29 years who were married or in a union before 18.[[83]](#endnote-83) Whilst child marriage is believed to occur within the Greek Muslim Roma communities, determining the number of cases proves difficult as these marriages are unregistered, thus are not part of any standard data collection system.[[84]](#endnote-84) A 2014 report showed that around 2% of Roma girls aged 10-15 were traditionally married or cohabiting with a partner across 11 European Union member states, including Greece.[[85]](#endnote-85) A 2011 report also identified the practice occurring in Thessaloniki.[[86]](#endnote-86)
2. Greek law operates under a dual judicial system whereby the Muslim minority in Greece, are allowed to apply *Shariah* law in some circumstances and can be subject to the judicial and religious competence of the Mufti.[[87]](#endnote-87) In these conditions, child marriage is allowed under cases where the girl is pregnant and both families agree to the marriage. Although Greek Law forbids child marriage, in these areas the practice is allowed to continue. CEFM marriages reportedly occur among Roma communities and the Muslim community of Thrace for reasons including virginity, family/clan relationships and poverty.[[88]](#endnote-88) Often, heavily rooted in traditional patriarchal and paternalistic values, the issue of marriage can depend on a collective decision rather than an individual one, due to the embedded beliefs around family.[[89]](#endnote-89) In some cases, there have been prosecutions against those involved in CEFM but these are few.[[90]](#endnote-90) Limited already by social inequality and their poor socioeconomic status, girls’ rights are further hindered when they are forced to marry.[[91]](#endnote-91)
3. Research suggests that children on the move are increasingly vulnerable to CEFM. This can be attributed to the absence of regular supportive networks when moving and an increase in sexual violence in unstable contexts. Child marriage can also be perceived as a protective measure by families concerned with social norms around morality. [[92]](#endnote-92) In regards to the migrant crisis in Greece, inconclusive evidence exists documenting CEFM, although some NGO workers and medical staff have raised concerns of its occurrence.[[93]](#endnote-93) Similarly, although contextually different, available studies also show that child marriage is a factor in driving migration to Greece.

**General measures of implementation**

1. At present, Greece does not have a national plan of action or coordinating body specifically addressing the sexual exploitation of children highlighting a key failure in Greece’s response. In 2016, a National Action Plan on the Rights of the Child was reportedly being drafted under the coordination of the General Secretariat of Transparency and Human Rights although this plan has yet to be implemented despite continued pressure from the Children’s Ombudsman.[[94]](#endnote-94)
2. Greece has established the following institutions designed to tackle issues and questions related to children. Firstly, The National Observatory on the Rights of the Child[[95]](#endnote-95) which was created to ensure effective implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, despite being established in 2001, the National Observatory for the Rights of Children as a body has reportedly been largely inactive.[[96]](#endnote-96) Secondly, the Department of Children’s Rights was established in 2003 by the office of the Greek Ombudsman, with a mandate to investigate actions, omissions or any complaints about individuals and legal entities that violate the rights of children or endanger their welling.[[97]](#endnote-97) Thirdly, there is the Institute of Child Health[[98]](#endnote-98) and finally the National Human Rights Committee.[[99]](#endnote-99) Whilst the first three bodies focus specifically on children’s rights, the jurisdiction of the fourth is broader and includes anyone whose human rights are infringed upon. The Department of Children’s Rights and the Institute of Child Health are without doubt, the most proactive of these bodies in working towards furthering child rights.
3. A key issue highlighted was the failure of successive governments in accepting the Institute of Child Health Protocol for Child Abuse and Neglect. This protocol aims to unify procedures by outlining recommendations for networking the disparate services and proposes the development of a digital records system for incidents of abuse.[[100]](#endnote-100) As it stands, the Institute of Child Health has also developed a comprehensive protocol, for an Integrated Investigation Approach, Diagnosis and Management Incidents of Child Abuse & Neglect[[101]](#endnote-101) and a Trafficking protocol for victims.[[102]](#endnote-102) As of 2019, no governmental body has taken ownership of the coordination and implementation of these protocols.[[103]](#endnote-103)
4. Much of Greece’s efforts to address SEC has been implemented in the context of anti-trafficking. The Office of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings,[[104]](#endnote-104) situated within the Hellenic Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been particularly active in this respect.[[105]](#endnote-105) The Office is designated as the national coordinating body in the fight against trafficking in human beings and is tasked with “the co-ordination of the activities of competent authorities and civil society actors as regards prevention of trafficking in human beings, protection of victims of trafficking and prosecution of the perpetrators, as well as representing Greece at international fora”.[[106]](#endnote-106) Whilst the work of the Office of the National Rapporteur on Human Trafficking is commendable, it has faced criticism that results from its lack of sufficient resources.[[107]](#endnote-107) A permanent consultation has been created as a framework for exchange between the Office of the National Rapporteur and representatives of 11 NGOs specialized in the field of combatting human trafficking. In recent years, Greece has been without a National Action Plan on Trafficking in Human Beings, however a new plan developed in participation with public agencies, NGOs, civil society and grassroots organizations has now been drafted. [[108]](#endnote-108) The plan’s timeline encompasses the years 2019-2023.[[109]](#endnote-109) As of September 2019, this plan has yet to be implemented.[[110]](#endnote-110)
5. Nationally, the mandate of the Hellenic Police, under the auspices of the Ministry of Citizen Protection, includes enforcing laws on the trafficking of children for sexual purposes and other forms of SEC. This focus has been retained through the anti-crime policy programme 2015-2019, of the Hellenic Police Headquarters which constitutes the reference point of initiatives taken by each and every Hellenic Police Unit.[[111]](#endnote-111) In addition, a specialised cyber-crime division exists within the Hellenic Police department.[[112]](#endnote-112) Within this division, the Unit of Minors Internet Protection and Digital Investigation is responsible for the detection and prosecution of criminal offences committed against minors through the Internet.[[113]](#endnote-113) The Cyber Crime Division works nationally with NGOs such as Safeline and Smile of the Child and it cooperates with Internet Service Providers as well as other enterprises active in Internet provision throughout the country.[[114]](#endnote-114) The Cyber Crime Division also cooperates internationally with Europol and Interpol. Furthermore, they also receive complaints related to Greek jurisdiction from organizations such as the NCMEC (National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children) in the USA, and the NCEEC (National Centre for Missing and Exploitation Coordination Center) in Canada, that are responsible for the collection and distribution of complaints on the sexual abuse of children from technology companies and social media platforms, amongst others.[[115]](#endnote-115)
6. Engagement with the private sector on the issue of SEC is limited. Indirect support has been given through foundations aligned to companies, such as funding by Ryanair and Athens Airport Support through The Smile of the Child Christmas Initiative.[[116]](#endnote-116)

**Prevention of the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (art. 9 (para. 1 and 2) OPSC)**

1. Most Greek SEC prevention measures and activities are developed and carried out by the Office of the National Rapporteur, usually in partnership with civil society actors. One of the most successful awareness raising campaigns operating in Greece, has been the two-day festival: Break the Chain.[[117]](#endnote-117) Following the first festival in 2015, the Hellenic Police reported an increase in the number of calls received from members of the public[[118]](#endnote-118), highlighting the importance of targeted awareness campaigns in the prevention of SEC.
2. In regards to OCSE, a number of initiatives are in place to improve online safety and raise awareness on the risks children may encounter online such as the Safer Internet Day, an Online Gaming Guide for Parents, Google Family Link, online educational games and videos for children and lesson plans for teachers. Though it is important to note that often these focus primarily on the risks of cyberbullying as opposed to addressing SEC specifically.[[119]](#endnote-119) The Cyber Crime Division of the Hellenic Police, has also developed a number of awareness-raising and educational activities focusing on the responsible use of new technologies and online risks.
3. An Anti-Crime Policy Programme has been implemented on Greek legislation by the Public Security Directorate and the Directorate of Prosecution of Cyber-crimes of the Ministry of Interior.[[120]](#endnote-120) Specific training on child abuse and registration of child abuse related complaints at the National level has been carried out by local NGO Eliza.[[121]](#endnote-121) The project aims by 2020 to provide training to 1,500 police officers.[[122]](#endnote-122) In addition, over the course of seven years ARSIS (the ECPAT member in Greece) has carried out training to over 200 professionals including to judges, public prosecutors, police, schools and social services.[[123]](#endnote-123)
4. The work done to address SEC by local NGOs in Greece is particularly commendable.[[124]](#endnote-124) Notable groups include ARSIS, Greek Council for Refugees, Hopespot, KMOP (Family and Childcare Centre), METRADASI, PRAKSIS, Solidarity Now and the Smile of the Child. However, in 2017 the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) noted that the focus of outreach work and prevention measures focuses on women and girls, with little or no attention being paid to detecting victims of trafficking amongst men and boys who may be exploited through prostitution.[[125]](#endnote-125) A 2017 article also highlights the lack of supportive structures in place for boy victims of child sexual abuse.[[126]](#endnote-126) As of 2019 this sentiment can still be applied, with much of the work conducted by NGOs and EKKA focused on women and girls.[[127]](#endnote-127)

**Prohibition of the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (arts. 3, 4 (2) and (3) and 5-7 OPSC)**

1. Greece has adopted a number of laws regarding domestic violence, child sexual exploitation, child sexual abuse materials and trafficking, however, a comprehensive law dedicated to child abuse and neglect is missing from Greece’s legislation – the attempts to address this entirely under the provisions of the Penal Code mean that there are fundamental gaps in Greece’s approach to targeting the sexual exploitation of children. Whilst some attempts have been made in recent years, Greece’s approach still falls short on a number of issues.
2. To provide further context, it is worth mentioning that in 2019, the Greek Penal Code was amended and has been effective since 1st July 2019.[[128]](#endnote-128) A number of policy concerns had been outlined after the initial public consultation of the bill, some of which have now been addressed.[[129]](#endnote-129) In relation to SEC, following lobbying and advocacy from human rights groups and NGOs, the new Penal Code now recognizes that a sexual act without consent is criminal, with imprisonment of up to 10 years.[[130]](#endnote-130) This definition will now meet the standards of the Council of Europe Convention and this success is important in relation to SEC, as it demonstrates a shifting narrative in the country on sexual violence which will help to prevent rape and tackle impunity.

*Exploitation of children in prostitution*

1. Under Greek law, exploitation of children in prostitution is illegal and criminalized by the revised Penal Code. Article 349 paragraphs 1 and 2 deal directly with the solicitation of minors. According to Article 349 (1) of the new Penal Code, the exploitation of children in prostitution includes anyone who induces, urges, procures or facilitates the prostitution or lewd acts of minors for prostitution.[[131]](#endnote-131) Penalties are up to 10 years of imprisonment plus a financial penalty, which is determined by Article 57 of the Penal Code. Article 349 (2) contains six aggravating circumstances. In these cases,[[132]](#endnote-132) imprisonment increases to minimum of five up to 20 years’ imprisonment plus a fine.
2. Moreover, Article 351 A forbids sexual acts between an adult and a child in exchange of a fee or other material consideration by the offender or another person, or if two children are “forced” to engage in sexual acts by an adult in the same way while he/she or any other adult is present.[[133]](#endnote-133) If the child is over 14, the penalty applied is 3 to 5 years imprisonment plus a fine.[[134]](#endnote-134) When the child is between 12 and 14 years of age the prescribed penalty is imprisonment from 5 to 20 years plus a fine.[[135]](#endnote-135) An aggravating circumstance exists when the child is below 12 years old, the prescribed penalty is extended to 10 to 20 years imprisonment plus fine.[[136]](#endnote-136) If the acts result in the death of the victim a more stringent penalty is applied, 10 to 20 years imprisonment or life imprisonment plus fine. No cases of children being held criminally liable for being exploited in prostitution have been identified in the research for this report.
3. Lastly, Article 339 (2) sets 15 as the age of consent but provides for a close-in-age exemption that allows children below 15 years old to have sexual acts with peers as long as the gap between them is not greater than three years.[[137]](#endnote-137) In such a case, no penalty can be imposed, but only reformative or therapeutic measures for minors (as described in Articles 122 and 123 of Penal Code respectively). [[138]](#endnote-138)

*Online child sexual exploitation (OCSE)*

1. Greece has almost entirely domesticated into law the entire Directive 2011/93/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography.[[139]](#endnote-139)
2. Article 348A (1) of the Penal Code prohibits ‘child pornography’ as provided by Article 3 (1)(c) of the OPSC.[[140]](#endnote-140) Distributing, disseminating, or advertising CSAM along with disseminating information to solicit children into CSAM are punishable by imprisonment of up to two years (five years at the maximum) and a fine, the amount of which is established on a case by case bases according to Articles 57 and 80.[[141]](#endnote-141) Furthermore, both the intent to acquire or possess CSAM offline as well as through information and communication technology, is punishable.[[142]](#endnote-142) Unfortunately, the mere possession of CSAM is not criminalised under the new Penal Code, neither is the use of children in audio child sexual abuse. Article 348 A (3) also applies to cases where materials depicting children are “in electronic or any other form of material, of the body of or part of the body of a minor, aimed at causing sexual stimulation, as well as a recording or depiction of an actual or virtual carnal act that arises sexual stimulation.”
3. Positively, it is worth mentioning that the Greek legislation, following the Lanzarote Convention, also bans live streaming of child sexual abuse through a number of different provisions. According to Article 348C of the Penal Code, pornographic representations of children are illegal. [[143]](#endnote-143)
4. In regards to online grooming of children for sexual purposes, Greece has taken a more progressive approach as criminalization is covered even with no meeting under Article 348B.[[144]](#endnote-144) Importantly, online grooming is criminalized not only when the adult suggests to the minor to meet but also when he/she proposes to meet in conjunction with a third person. Moreover, the article covers online grooming not only for the purposes of engagement in sexual activity with the child and accessing CSAM, but also for committing other offences that abuse the sexual freedom of the minor. Article 348 B of the Penal Code establishes a minimum of two years up to a maximum of five years imprisonment for anyone who proposes, through information systems, to a child below 15 to meet with or with another person with a view to commit a sexual act.[[145]](#endnote-145)
5. Moreover, Article 337 par.3 states that ‘Any adult, who through Internet or other means of communication, builds contact with a person under the age of fifteen and offences the genital respectability of the latter using lecherous gestures or proposals, is sentenced to an imprisonment of at least two years with a maximum of five years. In case of this activity rehearsed repeatedly or an encounter has taken place, this shall entail a sentence of at least three years’ imprisonment for the adult.’ Article 337(3) criminalises the solicitation of children under 15 years of age through ‘the Internet, or other information and communication technologies’.[[146]](#endnote-146)The intention to meet the child is not required for it to constitute a crime and all acts conducted in order to build a relationship of trust/ “contact” with the intention of committing a sexual offence are criminalised.[[147]](#endnote-147) The latter sentence of this section applies an aggravating circumstance if the perpetrator habitually continues to meet with the child following this initial interaction through ICT facilitated contact.[[148]](#endnote-148)
6. Because the Lanzarote Convention sets the age of consent as that provided for in national legislation for the applicability of grooming provisions, Greek law is compliant in protecting all children below the age of 15. However, Greece should consider a wider application in order to protect all minors from exploitation.
7. In 2016, the Hellenic Police reportedly arrested 28 individuals for CSAM-related conducts – statistics on the number of convictions are unavailable.[[149]](#endnote-149) In 2017, 164 cases related to CSAM and violence of sexual integrity proceedings began. 14 child sexual offenders were arrested in Greece and one case referred to possession and distribution of CSAM for professionals reasons.[[150]](#endnote-150) It is unclear what is meant by professional reasons.
8. Gaps persist in Greece’s legal framework to comprehensively address OCSE. In regards to sexual extortion, Greek legislation fails in providing a comprehensive definition. Article 348C paragraph 2 addresses the coercion part but it is not specific for ICT.[[151]](#endnote-151)
9. In relation to ISP regulations, the Public Prosecutor is able to order the ‘taking down’ of a website hosted in Greece, if CSAM content is found. In cases where the website is neither hosted in Greece, nor belonging to a domain name assigned in Greece, the Prosecutor may order the block of access to such websites. This order must be individually justified, and is addressed to the owner of the website and the National Telecommunications and Post Commission. They then must notify all access providers registered in Greece as per Greek Telecommunications Law.[[152]](#endnote-152) After seeking compliance, the National Telecommunications and Post Commission may demand the provider takes awareness measures for the users. [[153]](#endnote-153)

*Sale and trafficking of children for sexual purposes*

1. The Greek legal framework relating to the sale and trafficking of children for sexual purposes is comprehensive and in compliance with relevant international instruments.
2. The offence of trafficking in human beings was first introduced in Law 3064/2002.[[154]](#endnote-154) Additional articles include – Article 323A of the Penal Code which is in line with the Palermo Protocol and criminalizes all forms of exploitation.[[155]](#endnote-155) Importantly, the Article does not require evidence of coercion – the means – when the trafficking involves a child. Interestingly, Article 323A paragraph 8 does not criminalize victims for violations of migration legislation.[[156]](#endnote-156)
3. Trafficking offences are often committed either through or under the cover of legal entities. These may be either companies or fake charitable organizations.[[157]](#endnote-157) Article 10, paragraph 1 of the Organized Crime Convention requires states to adopt measures that establish ‘the liability of legal persons for participation in serious crimes involving an organized criminal group’.[[158]](#endnote-158) Greece establishes liability of legal persons for trafficking under Article 4 of the Law 3625/2007.[[159]](#endnote-159) Complex criminal structures can often hide the true ownership, clients or particular transactions related to trafficking. [[160]](#endnote-160) Therefore, by ensuring the liability of legal persons for trafficking Greece offers additional protection for children.

*Sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism (SECTT)*

1. Legislation on SECTT is covered in the Penal Code, under Article 348 (2) which: “punishes any person who organizes, finances, directs, supervises, advertises, or mediates in making trips for the purpose of committing sexual acts with a child”. This article further specifies that participating in such travel is illegal. This provision, prescribes a penalty of at least one year for anyone “regardless of his responsibility for committing other offences”. In addressing liability no matter their responsibility, this reflects a key strength in Greece’s provisions against SECTT. Similarly to trafficking, in regards to corporate liability, Law 3625/2007 also covers SECTT violations.[[161]](#endnote-161)

*Child, early and forced marriage (CEFM)*

1. According to the Civil Code, the minimum legal age of marriage in Greece is 18.[[162]](#endnote-162) However, judges can allow marriage of children below the age of 18 if there is a “significant reason”. Non-respect of these condition will lead to the invalidity of the marriage.[[163]](#endnote-163) However, the Civil Code does not specify what those reasons might be, and this could lead to disguised child marriages. The “significant reasons” are to be interpreted by the judge in each case separately.[[164]](#endnote-164) Article 93 paragraph 3 of the Greek Constitution obliges the judges to issue justified judicial decisions in each case. Article 3 of the CRC on the best interest of the child, is often applied in cases where situations of child marriage are found.[[165]](#endnote-165) A marriage would be invalid according to Article 1372 of the Civil Code if the license of the court for the marriage of the minor had not been asked or given and yet the marriage was realised.[[166]](#endnote-166)
2. In order to understand child marriage legislation within Greece, it is first important to understand and clarify the history of its dual legal system. Following the Treaty of Lausanne of 24th July 1923,[[167]](#endnote-167) between Turkey and Greece. Greece codified the Treaty into two domestic Greek Laws[[168]](#endnote-168) which permitted Greek Muslims in Western Thrace to choose *Shariah* Law as a parallel legal system for specific areas of private law. As a result, Greece was the only country in Europe which applied *Shariah* Law to a section of its citizens.
3. *Mufti’s,* appointed by the Greek State had jurisdiction over some areas of private law, marriage being one.[[169]](#endnote-169) Whilst, *Shariah* law was supposed to be applied only to the Muslim community Thrace, reports of Muftis extending their jurisdiction over marriages outside of the community exist.[[170]](#endnote-170)
4. In relation to marriage, according to *Hanaf*i law, [[171]](#endnote-171) a person must reach puberty before they marry. In marital circumstances where girls are under 15, they can marry if their parents have granted consent.[[172]](#endnote-172) Due to the Greek Civil Code allowing for exceptions in some cases of marriage,[[173]](#endnote-173) *Hanafi*’ marriage is still legal under Greek and civil law. Lack of required attorneys at these religious marriages in Greece and the illiteracy of girls, but also boys, allows for a situation of coercion; the lack of representation means that those who are being married do not know their legal rights in either the religious or civil sphere.[[174]](#endnote-174) This can lead to situations of child, early and forced marriage. Despite, *de jure* stipulations under Law No 1920/1991,[[175]](#endnote-175) that decisions made by *muftis* on marriage can only be made legal by a Greek Court of First instance, in practice this acts as “a mere façade of review”. [[176]](#endnote-176) According to a report from the Council of Europe, courts ratify 99% of the decisions on marriage they receive.[[177]](#endnote-177)
5. However, in January 2018, the government of Greece, passed Law 4511 which made the application of *Shariah* law in civil and inheritance matters optional rather than obligatory.[[178]](#endnote-178) The impact this has had on preventing child, early and forced marriage is still unclear. Many of the issues still remain in terms of illiteracy and lack of oversight on these cases.[[179]](#endnote-179) Furthermore implementation and lack of clarity surrounding national jurisprudence and case law in respect to the application of *Shariah* law still remains, as demonstrated by the case of Mola Sali Vs Greece.[[180]](#endnote-180)
6. Additional legislation concerning child marriage includes Greece’s ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in April 2018. Steps have been taken to address the issue of forced marriage; under Article 2323 A 5) g) on human trafficking.[[181]](#endnote-181) In case of forced marriage, the offender shall be punished by an imprisonment of at least 10 years if the victim is a child.[[182]](#endnote-182)

*Extraterritorial jurisdiction and extradition*

1. In order for Greek jurisdiction to be established in case of an offence committed outside its territory by one of its nationals, extraterritorial provisions are needed.
2. Article 6 of the Penal Code provides for active personality jurisdiction over all “misdemeanours” and “felonies”, and applies even when the perpetrator was Greek when he or she committed a crime and now is a foreigner, or when the perpetrator acquired Greek citizenship after the offence took place.[[183]](#endnote-183)
3. Article 7 of the Penal Code states that Greek penal laws apply to foreigners for acts committed abroad that are characterized as a felony or misdemeanour, if the act is directed against Greek citizens and is punishable under the laws of the country where it was committed or if it was committed in a country under constitutional turmoil.[[184]](#endnote-184)
4. Article 8 of the Penal Code states that Greek penal laws apply to nationals and foreigners regardless of the laws of the place of commission, for the trafficking in human beings and any other crime for which special provisions or international conventions signed and validated by the Greek state provide for their implementation Greek criminal laws.[[185]](#endnote-185) This means that in relation to SEC only the crime of trafficking has universal application under Greek law.
5. Moreover, extraterritorial jurisdiction applies to offences related to SECTT, OCSE and sexual acts in exchange of a fee. Indeed, Article 348 D of the Penal Code[[186]](#endnote-186) specifies that provisions under these crimes apply to acts, which have been committed abroad by a Greek citizen. It further states that crimes are punishable “regardless of whether they are illegal according to the legislation of the country where they took place”.
6. Double criminality is required for the exercise of active personality and passive personality jurisdiction under Articles 6 and 7 of the Penal Code, but is not required for universal jurisdiction under Article 8 of the same Code.[[187]](#endnote-187) This means that the offence must be prohibited both in the perpetrator’s country of origin and in the country where the offence was committed. This could hinder the prosecution of SEC cases.
7. In regards to extradition, the Code of Penal Procedure (Art.437) maintains the double criminality principle if there is no bilateral agreement or convention in place.[[188]](#endnote-188) However, it is worth noting that Article 438 of the Code of Penal Procedure states that extradition is prohibited if the person for which extradition is requested was Greek when the acts was committed.[[189]](#endnote-189)
8. An important exception to the dual criminality principle is provided for with regard to European Union Member States in Law 3251/2004. This refers to the execution of the European Arrest Warrant, which is allowed, without verification of dual criminality, for a catalogue of 32 offences (Art.10) – including sexual exploitation of children - if they are punishable in the issuing Member State by a custodial sentence or a detention order for a maximum period of at least three years.[[190]](#endnote-190)

**Protection of the rights of child victims (art. 8 and 9 (3) and (4) OPSC)**

*National complaint mechanisms*

1. Greece’s national complaint mechanisms and referral pathways in relation to SEC have been described as disjointed, disparate and slow.[[191]](#endnote-191) There is not one sole coordinating body nor a systematic procedure to report crimes of SEC.
2. In terms of legal obligations, any citizen,[[192]](#endnote-192) public official and personnel of public services[[193]](#endnote-193) who are aware of any situation or information that may amount to a crime being committed must report it to the authorities or relevant body (District Attorney or Police). This covers SEC related crimes. However, there is no legal sanction in place if the person is found to have failed in their duty to report.[[194]](#endnote-194) Any front line professional who is bound by confidentiality rules is legally able to waive these if they encounter reasonable grounds that a child is a victim of sexual exploitation.[[195]](#endnote-195) In addition, Public Prosecutors have the duty to initiate investigations *ex officio* on the basis of information obtained by any source if the victim is a child and a victim of sexual exploitation. All crimes related to sexual abuse or sexual exploitation against children are prosecuted even if the victim does not report the incident or withdraws his/her statement.[[196]](#endnote-196)
3. In Greece, all victims including children can initiate civil, judicial review or criminal proceedings in domestic courts to challenge violations of their rights. If the age of the child victim is below 12 years of age, the right to submit a complaint falls to the parent or legal guardian.[[197]](#endnote-197) Any person, including children, can also present a complaint for violations of children’s rights to the Children’s Rights Ombudsman.[[198]](#endnote-198) Minors have recourse to the Ombudsman through the free of charge helpline for children, email and through the website.[[199]](#endnote-199) Limitations exists, as the service is not anonymous, which may prevent some victims coming forward.[[200]](#endnote-200) The only available reports concerning violations of children’s rights from the Ombudsman date back to 2011. Up to that date, they received 3,448 calls. Publicly accessible data does not detail if these cases relate to the sexual exploitation of children.[[201]](#endnote-201)
4. Unfortunately, as Greece has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure, children are unable to bring complaints for the violations of their rights to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. However, Greek children can also send individual complaints to the European Court of Human Rights but as of 2019, no SEC related complaints have been submitted.

### Child-sensitive justice

1. In 2017, Greek legislation in regards to victims’ and specifically child victims’ rights were strengthened through the enactment and publication of Law 4478/2017 (Part 4).[[202]](#endnote-202) The law harmonized the European Directive 2012/29/EU (hereinafter Victims’ Directive)[[203]](#endnote-203) and established a minimum standards on rights, support and protection of victims of crime.[[204]](#endnote-204)
2. The aforementioned law includes special provisions for the protection of child victims who testify in cases concerning sexual exploitation both before and during criminal proceedings. However, notable gaps have been identified.
3. Firstly, in regards to specialized protective measures including psychosocial support, article 69 states that when a child victim is interviewed, a psychologist or a psychiatrist is appointed as an expert in order to prepare and evaluate the child victim and his/her perceptual ability and mental state. [[205]](#endnote-205) The evaluation should be conducted in specialized protection offices, avoiding delays and requiring a limited number of interviews.[[206]](#endnote-206) Furthermore, electronic audio visual means may be used to negate re-traumatization that might occur through the child’s physical presence in court proceedings. [[207]](#endnote-207) The Smile of the Child, first pioneered these specialized protection methods in 2014, through their establishment of a Child Advocacy Centre.[[208]](#endnote-208) The center aimed to mitigate the risks of re-traumatization and offer full psychosocial support for the child. The government, seeking to replicate this model plans to establish five similar Independent Child Victims Protection Offices called ‘Houses of the Child’. However, these have yet to be created.[[209]](#endnote-209)
4. In terms of practical applications of the above provisions, criticism has been directed at the Greek courts’ lack of ability to deploy audio-visual means, with some Judges even disallowing their use.[[210]](#endnote-210) In some cases judges have demonstrated unsophisticated understanding of re-traumatization and the impact of psychological trauma on victims of trafficking.[[211]](#endnote-211) In addition, gaps in police knowledge of child-sensitive interviewing skills have been identified, perhaps the result of funding for training, personnel or other resources.[[212]](#endnote-212) The Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings notes that in some trafficking cases, experts reported a lack of victim-centered approaches, including cases of law enforcement conducting interviews described by victims as ‘interrogations’.[[213]](#endnote-213) Indeed in some cases, police have been reported to act discriminatorily and prejudiced in their response to victims, depending on their nationality or ethnicity.[[214]](#endnote-214) However, attempts have been made recently following the implementation of the Victim Directive to improve police knowledge of victim support procedures.
5. The law also provides for non-disclosure of witness’ personal information.[[215]](#endnote-215) Anyone who discloses information which could lead to the disclosure of the identity of child victim of sexual exploitation can risk two years imprisonment.[[216]](#endnote-216) Reportedly no child victims of trafficking have received full witness protection as of 2019.[[217]](#endnote-217)
6. In order to tackle some of the above issues, civil society has engaged in a number of preventative and training measures. For example, ARSIS has delivered training to 30-40 judges on how to use a victim-centered approach with child victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation.[[218]](#endnote-218) However, due to the frequency in which judges are rotated in different courts within the judicial system, those that have been trained are often not in post long enough to implement their training in practice. This rotation makes it difficult to train all judges.[[219]](#endnote-219) It was also reported that non-specialized judicial personnel do not have a good understand of trafficking, particularly in rural areas and the islands.[[220]](#endnote-220)
7. Children who are victims of crimes of child sexual exploitation are legally entitled to receive support and representation by the public legal aid system.[[221]](#endnote-221) Support is offered through the State and victim support services.[[222]](#endnote-222) However, in practice, free legal representation is rarely offered with aid mostly limited to legal advice.[[223]](#endnote-223) Additionally, NGOs have reported that a limited number of cases receive legal aid due to bureaucratic procedures and an overburdened system.[[224]](#endnote-224) Furthermore, pro bono lawyers are appointed only a few days before the case goes in front of the court and do not have enough time to prepare.[[225]](#endnote-225)
8. Since the National referral mechanism has been established, victims of trafficking are provided with free legal assistance in criminal proceedings and no fee is required to file a claim.[[226]](#endnote-226) However, key challenges exist for SEC victims in the refugee community. Lack of translation services [[227]](#endnote-227) and a lack of awareness of the legal system make it particularly difficult for children and unaccompanied minors to access legal services.[[228]](#endnote-228) Fortunately, some bar associations in Greece have undertaken steps towards the legal support of child refugees and migrants.[[229]](#endnote-229)

## *Access to recovery and reintegration*

1. Greece’s approach to recovery and reintegration of victims of child sexual exploitation is fragmented.[[230]](#endnote-230) Recovery and reintegration programmes are generally under-resourced and under-supported. There is no systematic protocol for recovery and rehabilitation.[[231]](#endnote-231) Co-operation between the competent authorities and NGOs that provide services is often done through informal means.[[232]](#endnote-232) A lack of an effective information system and framework for exchanging data and for making referral of victims to services, has been identified as a key weakness in Greece’s response.[[233]](#endnote-233) Furthermore, the 2019 TIP report notes that the government was unable to ascertain how much funding was spent on victim protection, highlighting an oversight in coordination and response.[[234]](#endnote-234)
2. EKKA is the main government body supporting SEC victims, overseeing two long-term shelters, an emergency shelter, and two Social Support Centres for vulnerable populations in need of assistance.[[235]](#endnote-235) EKKA also manages the formal national identification and referral system for victims and presumed victims of trafficking.[[236]](#endnote-236) NGOs lead the majority of support services, with some support from the government; ARSIS, PRAXIS, Eliza, Smile of the Child and the A21 are particularly active in this respect.[[237]](#endnote-237) Support services run by NGOs in Greece offer protection for minority children, including Roma, unaccompanied minors, trafficking victims and child victims of abuse and neglect including sexual exploitation. No specialized service is offered specifically for SEC victims. These centres offer psycho-social support, counselling, liaison with social services and educational and leisure activities.[[238]](#endnote-238) Notable gaps include provision of services for child victims in rural areas and for boys. Often they are unable to access either state or NGO services.[[239]](#endnote-239)
3. In relation to child victims of trafficking and unaccompanied migrant children, Greek law provides that unaccompanied minors shall be referred to accommodation centres where these are suitably adapted for this purpose, for as long as they stay in the country, or until they are placed with a foster family or in supervised lodgings.[[240]](#endnote-240) However, in reality these laws have not been fully implemented. Greece has faced criticism from the Commissioner of Europe[[241]](#endnote-241) for this failure and for the common practice of registering unaccompanied children as adults.[[242]](#endnote-242) As of 30 September 2019, there were 4,616 unaccompanied minors registered in Greece, however EKKA reports that there are only 1,196 available spaces in long-term dedicated shelters or supported independent living accommodation.[[243]](#endnote-243) Among the 3,447 children registered in different types of accommodation, as of 30 September 2019, 238 were under the regime of ‘protective custody’; 1,416 were hosted in Reception and Identification Centres; 153 in open temporary accommodation facilities; 275 in ‘safe zones’; 349 in hotels.[[244]](#endnote-244)
4. The government reports that child victims of trafficking in Greece receive psycho-social support, psychotherapy, medical care, vocational guidance and legal representation of assistance for voluntary repatriation until they are socially reintegrated.[[245]](#endnote-245) NGOs have reported that despite improved cooperation and increased referrals from law enforcement, some police officers have remained reluctant to refer victims to NGO-run support services. In 2018, the International Commission of Jurists and the European Council for Refugees and Exiles filed a legal challenge for the violations of migrant children’s social rights on mainland Greece and Greece’s failure to meet its child care and protection obligations.[[246]](#endnote-246) The complaint highlighted reports of sexual abuse and exploitation occurring within camp facilities. In May 2019, this complaint was deemed admissible by the European Committee of Social Rights.

### Access to compensation

1. Victims can claim compensation through the penal prosecution of the accused person.[[247]](#endnote-247) The Code of Penal Procedure further ensures victims of trafficking can make a claim for compensation by their offender. The victim, in joining the criminal proceedings as a civil party, can seek compensation for financial damages.[[248]](#endnote-248) Up to 2019, no victims of trafficking have received compensation from their offender.[[249]](#endnote-249) Victims of sexual abuse and exploitation can seek redress from the perpetrator according to Article 932 of the Civil Code for moral damages.[[250]](#endnote-250) In cases where compensation will be paid by the offender, but the offender has no financial resources, the State will advance payment of the compensation.[[251]](#endnote-251)
2. ARSIS has noted gaps between policies and practice. Whilst legislation states child victims should receive compensation, in reality this does not occur due to bureaucratic mechanisms and significant resource gaps.[[252]](#endnote-252)

*Child, victim and survivor participation*

1. Greece’s recent implementation of the Hellenic National Strategy for Youth 2017 -2027[[253]](#endnote-253) marks a concerted effort by the Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research, and Religious Affairs, to improve youth participation in advocacy, awareness raising and policy making.[[254]](#endnote-254) The strategy is structured through seven main objectives, aligned with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals.[[255]](#endnote-255) Factored into this strategy is a monitoring and evaluation process,[[256]](#endnote-256) however as of 2019 no update on the progress of the plan has been published. Whilst not clearly outlining explicit actions that will be taken in regards to SEC, the National Strategy does reference vulnerable youth and the importance of addressing vulnerabilities that can facilitate SEC, such as poverty[[257]](#endnote-257) and lack of education.[[258]](#endnote-258)
2. The Hellenic National Youth Council (ESYN), founded in July 1998 is the official body representing Greek youth in Greece and abroad.[[259]](#endnote-259) Its membership consists of fifty nine youth organizations, six political youth parties and numerous non-government youth organizations. Nationally, the council participates in the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Youth, the Organizing Committee of the Youth Parliament, the National Committee on Volunteering, among others. ESYN, was consulted during the drafting process of the National Strategy for Youth 2017-2027.[[260]](#endnote-260) Notable campaigns organized by the ESYN in relation to SEC, include the Hellenic National Youth Council 2019 festival for International Day against drug abuse and trafficking.[[261]](#endnote-261)
3. In regards to OCSE, an active body of 27 students from different parts of Greece have created the Youth Panel of the Greek Safer Internet Centre. They engaged in the Safer Internet Day Celebration, receive training from events organized at a European level between the youth panels and collaborate with members of the Insafe network.[[262]](#endnote-262)
4. In relation to victim and survivor’s participation it is non-governmental organisations that take the role of coordinating victim and survivor participation activities. Non-governmental organizations such as ARSIS are involved in coordinating and developing new methods and tools for youth support and participation in youth solidarity networks. ARSIS works predominantly with children and youth aged 15-24.[[263]](#endnote-263)

**International assistance and cooperation (art. 10 OPSC)**

1. In terms of international cooperation and commitments, it is worth mentioning that Greece submitted its Voluntary National Report on the implementation of the SDGs in July 2018.[[264]](#endnote-264) The report presents the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Greece and the setting of national priorities.  Whilst the report explains how different stakeholders collaborated to combat human trafficking and makes mention of CSAM and child exploitation, it does not present a new strategy to combat SEC in all its manifestations.[[265]](#endnote-265)
2. Greece is involved in several European and International SEC-related initiatives, especially with regards to online child sexual exploitation. Greece has committed to the WePROTECT Global Alliance to End Child Sexual Exploitation and will enhance its efforts to identify and safeguard victims of online sexual exploitation, and to apprehend offenders.[[266]](#endnote-266) Supported by the EU, the government has established the Greek Safer Internet Centre, which implements a comprehensive programme comprising a hotline to report illegal content, a helpline to access support services and a resource portal with training and awareness materials.[[267]](#endnote-267) The centre is a member of the International Association of Internet Hotlines[[268]](#endnote-268) and works in conjunction with the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol),[[269]](#endnote-269) making it possible to report cases and take action on an international level if needed. Furthermore, Greece is connected to the International Child Sexual Exploitation database, a platform hosted by Interpol which enables specialist officers to use sophisticated image and video comparison software to make connections between victims, abusers and locations.[[270]](#endnote-270)
3. At a regional level, Greece cooperates with the European Judicial Cooperation Unit and is able to establish joint investigations for trafficking cases when countries have a mutual investigatory interest.[[271]](#endnote-271)

**Recommendations**

*General measures of implementation*

* Create, fund and implement a National Plan of Action against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children. This should be run through a centralised coordinated body;
* National standard operating procedures should be established and implemented which include introducing a cohesive data collection system and national victim identification protocol for reporting victims of sexual exploitation;
* Consider adopting the recommendations from the CONVEY project. Specifically, the Ministry of Education Science and Religion should implement a National Strategy against Sexual Abuse or Assault in schools from Kindergarten to secondary education in order to address attitudes that blame victims, the culture of victim blaming and improve education around the topic of sexual violence and consent;
* Provide guidelines and training to law enforcement to increase their knowledge and skills to better identify child victims of trafficking for sexual purposes and other forms of sexual exploitation. This could include, rolling out the ARSIS child-sensitive justice training to all court personnel and continuing with PROTASIS’s training programme in line with the Victim Directive;
* Improve awareness raising campaigns by specifically targeting issues of sexual exploitation of children, particularly online child sexual exploitation and sexual exploitation in travel and tourism.

*Prevention*

* Expand preventative measures and programmes to cover children in rural communities;
* Ensure that preventative measures address underlying root causes of sexual exploitation of children, such as poverty and unemployment;
* Expand preventative measures and programmes, such as safeguarding initiatives, comprehensive sexual education in schools and community-based initiatives, to cover all manifestations of sexual exploitation of children;
* Implement a prevention campaign focused on the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism;
* Implement a prevention campaign focused on refugee children and unaccompanied refugee minors both in the camps and the urban area;
* Raise awareness on issues related to the sexual exploitations of boys.

*Prohibition*

* Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure;
* Ratify the UNWTO Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics;
* Improve regulations and monitoring of child, early and forced marriage by removing exceptions allowing children to get married below 18. This should also include a systematic collection of data on child marriage;
* Remove the application of double criminality principle for extraterritoriality and extradition provisions.

*Protection*

* Improve access and implementation procedures to ensure child victims actually receive legal aid;
* Improve victim-sensitive justice by taking measures to systematically facilitate in-camera proceedings through provision of equipment and training of judges;
* Ensure anonymity of trafficking victims in cases of sexual exploitation of children;
* Encourage travel agents and tourism agencies to sign the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism.

*International assistance and cooperation*

* Strengthen existing international police and judicial cooperation through multilateral, regional and bilateral arrangements to improve prevention, investigation, prosecution and punishment of SEC. Develop mechanisms to co-ordinate the implementation of such arrangements.
1. Sustainable Development Goal Targets 5.2, 8.7 and 16.2. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. In line with the recently and widely adopted Terminology Guidelines, ECPAT prefers the term “exploitation of children in prostitution” instead of “child prostitution.” ECPAT International. (2016). “[Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, Adopted by the Interagency Working Group in Luxembourg, 28 January 2016](http://luxembourgguidelines.org/english-version/)”, Bangkok: ECPAT. 29. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. In line with the recently and widely adopted Terminology Guidelines, ECPAT prefers the term “child sexual exploitation material” or “child sexual abuse material” instead of “child pornography.” Ibid., 39. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid., 54. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
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