ΣΥΝΗΓΟΡΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΠΟΛΙΤΗ
ΑΝΕΞΑΡΤΗΤΗ ΑΡΧΗ

Safeguards for the Protection of the Fundamental Rights of Children in Conflict with the Law-Greece

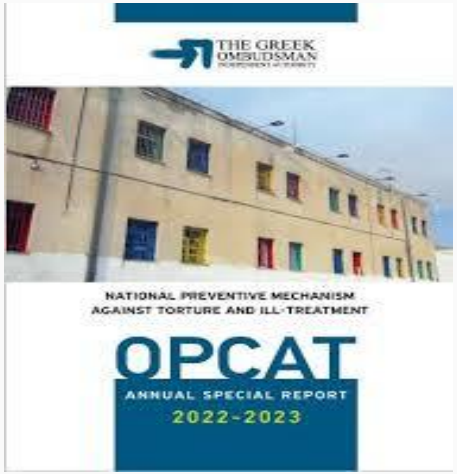
Sofia, 11-10-2026

Vasiliki Saini

Safeguarding Mechanism matrix

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The Greek Ombudsman



National Preventive Mechanism



Children Ombudsperson

Actions

1. Initiatives- Interventions
2. Legislation recommendations
3. Policy recommendations
4. Specialised reports
5. Monitor visits



Initiatives-Intervetions

Initiative

Guide: “Have You Had Contact with the Police? Get to Know Your Rights!”

(with the cooperation UNICEF-Association of Juvenile Court Guardians)

Intervention

Contribution to the contributed to the creation and drafting of the operating regulations for the **Volos Juvenile Detention Center for Boys** (Ministerial Decision No. 15461/2025).

Legislative recommendations

Call to the Ministry of Citizen Protection to establish and implement **individualized assessment protocols** of the needs of children involved in the criminal justice system, either as(potential) victims or as suspects or defendants, in accordance with the provisions of Directives 2011/93/EU (Art. 19), 2016/800/EU (Art. 7), and 2012/29/EU(Article 22)

Request of clear **guidelines be issued regarding the treatment** of minors, taking into account the constitutional **mandate to protect childhood** (Article 21 of the Constitution) and the obligation to prioritize the best interests of the child in all proceedings(Article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Law 2101/1992): immediate notification of a guardian, ensuring the right to a hearing in the presence of a guardian or counsel (see also the standards of the Committee for the Prevention of Torture / CPT of the Council of Europe, paras. 23–24), informing the arrested person in a simple and clear manner of their rights and obligations, using handcuffs only when absolutely necessary, avoiding all forms of violence or intimidation, and, in general, treating minors who engage in delinquent behavior with the utmost respect and sensitivity.

Legislative recommendations

Immediate response to Article 74 of Law 4763/ 2020, the wording of an earlier law from 2018 was amended to provide that in every correctional facility and at the Volos Juvenile Detention Center for Boys, primary and secondary schools may be established and Greek language learning programs; whereas in the past, the wording explicitly stated “may be established,” which potentially undermines the establishment of them.

Addition of a special chapter on juvenile detainees to the Correctional Code, as well as the drafting and implementation of separate operating regulations

Proposals to amend the Penal Code reform to ensure the necessary procedural safeguards (2019)

- Examination of a minor witness exclusively by **specially trained personnel**
- Notifying the minor's guardian(s) prior to the commencement of any proceedings and allowing them to communicate with the child
- The option for the minor to be accompanied by the person exercising parental care or another appropriate person during all proceedings
- Application of the safeguards provided for in Article 227 of the Code of Criminal Procedure in all cases where children are involved in preliminary investigation and investigative proceedings, regardless of the capacity in which they are involved, e.g., preparation by a specialized mental health professional, a prior assessment of their mental state and capacity to understand, accompaniment by a legal representative, and recording of the testimony using an appropriate medium to avoid, as much as possible, their physical presence at a subsequent stage
- Repeated emphasis on the establishment and **effective operation** of "Children's Homes"

Continuous demands

- for a **coherent system** focused on **the prevention of delinquency** with adequately staffed support services for schools, family, and the child within the community to enable timely intervention, as well as personalized assessment of the needs of minors at risk and/or in conflict with the law (as provided for in Directive(EU) 2016/800 of the European Parliament and of the Council of May 11,2016, on procedural safeguards for children who are suspects or accused in criminal proceedings).
- to strengthen and **implement rehabilitative measures** and to provide practical support to juvenile probation officers became evident, especially following the tightening of the Penal Code (Law 4619/2019).
- to systematically organize and strengthen the framework for implementing **rehabilitative measures** as effective alternatives to the punishment of confining a minor to a detention facility, and to promote regulations governing Juvenile Care Units
- Need for family-style facilities oriented to support children who have been involved in delinquent behavior, due to operational inadequacy of juvenile detention facilities, to serve the purpose of the rehabilitation of minors

Education

- Introduction of a coherent sex education inclusive curriculum for children from an early age on the Action Plan for the Protection of Children from Sexual Abuse, 2022–2027
- Tailor-made services to the actual needs of vulnerable populations, such as the implementation of differentiated instruction and the operation of small-group classes to deal with drop out (in relation to juvenile delinquency)
- systematic and ongoing training and capacity-building for educators regarding the management of incidents of violence
- Training on cyber-bullying
- interconnection and coordination between the school and community organizations for the prevention, early detection, and effective management of cases of domestic violence or vulnerability

Policy Recommendations

Trainings

Police:Educational Programmes in Police Academy

Prison officers on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and child sensitive approach in detention



Specialised report

- Providing standardized specialized training to social workers, psychologists, and other relevant professionals
- Strengthening community-based social services to support and provide ongoing monitoring of vulnerable families, as well as to expand the implementation of the foster care system
- Establishment of a Juvenile Prosecutor's Office in every Court of First Instance (currently in operation in Athens, Piraeus, Thessaloniki, Patras)
- Strengthening community-based mental health services for children and families and establishing more specialized services for the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of children and adolescents with mental health, behavioral, or social adjustment problems
- Direct access of children to mental health and social services even without the knowledge or consent of their guardians, and, consequently, the recognition of this possibility by mental health agencies (implemented)

"From Institutions to the Community: Alternative Care for Vulnerable Children and Families Support" (2020)

Monitor Visits
(case study)

Special Juvenile Detention Center-Kassavetia (Volos)

(15-18y)

April 2026



Findings

1. Lack of shared spaces
2. Deficit of training and recreational programmes
3. Limited opportunities into participating in psychological support activities
4. **Lack of appropriate and individualized support**

Risk factors for violence

Findings

1 **Overpopulation**
93 detainees

2 **Unsuitability** of the building's infrastructure

- Poor Maintenance-insufficient levels of cleanliness

3 **Mental Health**

- intent emotional distress, anxiety about their safety, sense of entrapment, panic attacks, depression, feelings of terror and withdrawal, suicide attempts

4 **Violence management**

- Cooperation with Volo's District Attorney Office to initiate expedited procedure in cases of violent incidents which needed hospitalization due to lack of provision on the transfer procedure

Findings

- Lack of training for prison officers
- Limited communication with family members
- Lack of a child-friendly visiting area
- No separation between defendants and convicts



Recommendations

- Operation of family-type structures designed to support children who have become involved in delinquency
- Relocation
- Continuous training of the prison staff
- Educational and recreational activities
- Training activities on respect principle, acceptance, conflict management
- Examination of the possibility of extending the hours during which the prison remains open
- Guaranteeing the fundamental right of all minors to education
- Development of a referral management protocol



Thank you