

The quality of lives of unaccompanied minors migrating to Europe

M. Jackulikova (Maria Jackulikova)^{1,2}, E. Vrankova (Emília Vrankova)², M. Bartkovjak (Mario Bartkovjak)^{1,2}, G. Mikolasova (Gertie Mikolasova)^{1,2}, V. Kozon (Vlastimil Kozon)^{1,3}, M. Olah (Michal Olah)², M. Mikloskova (Monika Mikloskova)²

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¹ Refugee Medical Care, Lesbos camp, Greece.

² John Paul II School of Missiology, Bratislava, Slovakia.

³ General Hospital (AKH), Vienna Austria.

E-mail address:

maria.jackulikova@gmail.com

Reprint address:

Maria Jackulikova
NPHO Support Mission Lesbos Greece and John Paul II School of Missiology
Bratislava
Slovakia

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Abstract:

Migration of minors has a lot in common with the migration of adults as well as a few features related to the vulnerability of the underage. The principal subject of the thesis is a comparison of official statistical documents concerning the asylum system and the quality of lives of unaccompanied minors in the process of their admission into Greece and Italy which are at the forefront of the migrant influx. The period analysed is the year 2018. Based on the principles of the UN Charter, international organizations deal with the minors' needs and emphasize the universality of children's rights. The analysis of the children's protection services available in both countries uncovers inefficiencies of the systems currently in place.

Introduction

The number of arrivals of unaccompanied underage migrants continues to rise. This phenomenon is becoming increasingly complex due to the high number of underage migrants looking for asylum in Greece and Italy, which are the two countries that are affected by migration the most. Just like adults, children face horrible roads and experiences, which occur during the three stages of the escape. The initial stage is in the country of their origin, followed by their passage to safety, with the final stage being the arrival and reception in the host country. The conditions under which they are received are unfortunately very humiliating and inhuman. The migration of minors has a lot in common with the migration of adults as well as a few additional characteristics which are related to the vulnerability of minors.¹⁻⁸

Methods

The principal subject of the thesis is a comparison of official statistical documents concerning the asylum system and the quality of lives of unaccompanied minors in the process of their admission into Greece and Italy which are at the forefront of the migrant influx. The period analysed is the year 2018. The work is complemented by studies which are illustrated on cases from a similar period.

Results and Discussion

The quality standard or in this case, the poor quality standard of life the unaccompanied minors

experience is due to sudden disruption of their everyday lives as well as the influence of pathological conditions in the reception centres of both countries. The unaccompanied underage migrants have damaged health affected by psychosocial as well as social suffering.

The decisive factors for the health of migrants are largely determined by the availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of services in the host country.

Based on the principles of the UN Charter, international organizations deal with the minors' needs and emphasize the universality of children's rights. However, the reality at the reception facilities of the host countries is different. Therefore, a change of how host countries deal with migrants must be initiated by the UNHCR and EU.

The influence of the EU on health / social care of migrants can be analyzed with regard of the health issues associated with the countries of origin of the migrants living at reception centers in Italy and Greece. Social suffering of children is comparable, in many cases, to the suffering of adults.

The comparative analysis renders information regarding the situation of unaccompanied minors during 2018. In our research we highlight the way the asylum system works, how it causes the social exclusion of children, and how this social exclusion can transform to serious mental as well as physical problems.

The analysis of the children's protection services available in both countries uncovers inefficiencies of the systems currently in place. For in-



Self-harm



Living conditions in Moria camp

stance children do not have access to protection and safety.

Children also have to face separation from their families, detention, limited access to education and leisure activities. Other problems they often encounter include human trafficking and safety issues.

Nowadays, more than half of the refugee children in Greece are on the waiting list for accommodation due to the insufficient capacity of the shelters. Many of the children remain in closed reception facilities or police cells, accommodated alongside adults or even in the aisles of the facilities. In order to deal with the unfavourable life situation they often take drugs, drink alcohol, try to self-harm or even commit demonstrative suicides.

Under international, European, Greek as well as Italian law, it is defined that an unaccompanied minor is a minor who is a third-country citizen and has the same protection as a minor of European nationality.

In fact, children in refugee camps are affected by social inequalities, instability and they are exposed to high amounts of stress caused by the migration process which in turn is affecting their physical, mental and psychological health.

One of the major differences between the migrant arrivals to Greece and Italy are the nationalities of the migrants. Syrians and Iraqi Afghans,

are present almost exclusively in Greece but are absent in Italy. Nationals from Nigeria, Senegal, Ukraine, Mali, Gambia are represented in Italy but are missing in Greece. Pakistanis are present in large numbers in both Greece and Italy however, it is important to stress that the presence of Pakistanis was far from standard.

During 2018, the asylum service received 2,639 applications from unaccompanied children, where the prevalence of applications received were from young boys (2 455) compared to the number of applications from girls (194). The asylum process at the end of 2018 was carried out in 23 places in Greece. Asylum applications for unaccompanied minors in Italy amounted to 3,676 children in 2018.

Overall, in Greece the asylum service registered 66 969 asylum applications, accounting for 11% of the total number of applications submitted in the EU, making Greece the third largest Member State after Germany (28%) and France (19%).

In 2018, Syrians were repeatedly the largest group of asylum seekers with 13 390 asylum applications, 4834 applications from Turkish nationals were also received.

Italy received 7368 asylum applications for 2018 of which 818 were citizens of Eritrea and 838 asylum seekers from Iraq. 1589 asylum applications were received from Pakistan.

Tab. 1 Arrivals to Europe in 2018, broken down by country of origin: Greece and Italy

Greece		Italy	
Syria	13 390	Pakistan	7 368
Afghanistan	11 926	Nigeria	6 336
Iraq	9 731	Bangladesh	5 026
Pakistan	7 743	Senegal	2 867
Turkey	4 834	Ukraine	2 517
Albania	3 319	Mali	2 266
Iran	1 763	Gambia	2 101
Bangladesh	1 552	El Salvador	1 735
Palestine	1 519	Morocco	1 734
Georgia	1 460	Ivory Coast	1 668
		Guinea	1 421
		Ghana	1 171
		Georgia	1 086

Source: AIDA report 2018

Conclusion

Based on the principles of the UN Charter, international organizations deal with the minors' needs and emphasize the universality of children's rights. However, the reality at the reception facilities of the host countries is different. Therefore, a change of how host countries deal with migrants must be initiated by the UNHCR and EU.

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