**Committee:** UNICEF (Junior)

**Country:** Greece

**Agenda Item(s):** Fighting against social exclusion and child poverty, providing education during emergencies

Hellenic Republic known as Greece is a Southern Europe country bordering the Aegean Sea, Ionian Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, between the countries Albania, Turkey, Bulgaria and Macedonia with a population of nearly 10 million people whose 25% are regarded as young. The country is ruled by parliamentary republic.

Greece’s poverty rate is the third highest within the European Union because of the economic crisis in the country mainly resulting from refugee crisis and Covid-19. The dramatic deterioration of children’s living conditions in Greece has been detailed in a report recently published by UNICEF. The report states that half a million children in Greece were living in poor families for some time between 2009 and 2014. In addition, child poverty has surged in the EU from 22.6% in 2008 to 55.1% in 2014, with Greece recording the third-highest child poverty rate of the 14 earlier Member States. That is why this is a prominent issue in Greece. Although, state education is free until university and education is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 15 in our country, approximately 11.4% of students dropped out of school in 2010. Moreover, an average of 30,000 students never enter high school. With the assistance of Together for Children- an NGO that supports young people and their families, a child helpline that provides free counseling services and emotional support for children and their families has been established. Additionally, the organization ensures access to free education through various programs such as a nursery school for children with cerebral palsy, a development playgroup for children with other disabilities, a special primary school for children also has activities and programs to support unaccompanied minors who are refugees. For tackling with the child poverty and social exclusion UNICEF collaborated with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and started the “Child Guarantee” Programme in November, 2020. This programme will undertake innovative approaches for prioritizing children in national budgets and planning processes with the aim of ensuring that children in need have access to the quality services they need for their wellbeing and development. According to UNICEF, more than 65 per cent of the refugee and migrant children, aged between 5 and 17 years old, have successfully enrolled in schools for the current school year. The enrolment and participation of the children in formal education and extracurricular activities has contributed to their return to normalcy, their development and ultimately their successful integration into the Greek society.

Education is currently one of the largest gaps in the humanitarian response. Whilst several small initiatives exist, coverage is limited, no systematic registration of students has taken place, and many sites do not have designated learning spaces especially for the refugees in Greece. The amount of time that children have been without learning ranges from one month to seven years. Forty five percent of Syrian children, for example, surveyed have been out of school for more than three years. For Afghan children, the average is just under eleven months. More than one in five of the school-age children surveyed have never been to school, including girls and boys as old as 11, 12 and 13 years. There are some campaigns aiming to raise awareness about the refugee and migrant children’s efforts, progress and resilience, highlighting the significance of formal and non-formal education as an enabling platform that allows them to quickly and successfully integrate into the Greek society.

However, we should prioritize access to family and community-based care, support relevant services and strengthen inclusive education for every child. We call the Member States for urgent financial assistance for non-formal education on the Greek islands, support for a more comprehensive refugee education plan across Greece and greater investment in the region to tackle the refugee problem closer to home.

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