



International Development Committee: 13 December evidence session

Follow-up information from the International Rescue Committee

This note covers:

- 1) Information on IRC UK's private funders
- 2) Best practice examples from the Greek context
- 3) Information on IRC's engagement with Government departments

1) Information on IRC UK's private funders

The private funding for IRC UK's programming in integration is from the following:

- IRC's Afghanistan appeal
- IRC's Ukraine Appeal
- Verizon
- Coca Cola
- Khalsa Aid International

2) Examples from the Greek context

The International Rescue Committee has been working with asylum seekers and refugees in Greece since 2015, assisting over 30,000 people. IRC's programming covers economic recovery and development, women's protection, child protection, mental health, supporting accommodation on Lesbos. For more information on IRC's programming, please see [here](#). This programming experience has enabled IRC to identify learnings and best practices.

Greece: Supported Independent Living¹

Supported independent living apartments offer an alternative, non-institutional type of accommodation and provision of care to unaccompanied adolescents over 16 years old. Their framework in Greece was established in 2018 and the rules for their operation were defined in 2020.

SIL apartments must be in residential areas, with easy access to public transport, schools, health facilities and recreational activities. Each apartment may accommodate up to four children and no more than two children per bedroom. Boys and girls are placed in different apartments but, if in their best interests, as in the case of siblings, exceptionally, children of different sexes may be accommodated together. SILs can be operated by national authorities, legal entities providing social care services and civil society organisations. As of 15 October 2021, there were 122 SIL apartments across Greece. Teenagers referred to SILs must be either applicants or beneficiaries of international protection. They must be able to take care of themselves and take on responsibilities inside the apartment. Children with severe mental health issues who may put

¹ IRC Greece, [A chance for a better future: Supported independent Living and the Protection of Unaccompanied Children in Greece](#), November 2021.

themselves or other persons at risk, or children who use substances, such as drugs and alcohol, are not eligible for SILs. In this context, other proper care arrangements must be developed for the protection and well-being of these children.

The teenagers in the SILs are supported by a team of professionals, including social workers, caretakers, educators, interpreters, and lawyers. The social workers monitor the situation of the children, encourage their active participation in the preparation of their individual action plan and initiatives that will help their gradual empowerment and integration. The caretakers act as the daily reference person for the children and visit the SILs every day to support and encourage peaceful co-existence. They provide psychosocial support, help children develop the necessary skills to take care of themselves and to handle the challenges in their daily life, and provide various recreational activities. The educators provide lessons of Greek or other languages, according to specific needs and wants of the children, and support them with their homework, if needed. The interpreters facilitate the communication with team members and public services, while the lawyers undertake the legal representation and assistance of the children, when needed. The lawyers are also in direct communication with the guardians, where they have been appointed, and the social workers, to avoid conflicting actions, overlapping or omissions before judicial, administrative, or other authorities.

The main objective of the SILs is to ensure an adequate framework of protection and personalised care, the smooth transition into adulthood and the integration of unaccompanied children into society, considering the needs and strengths of each child. These objectives are achieved by providing accommodation and care services to the children, in a way that respects and enhances freedom of movement and expression, respect for dignity, recognition of individual worth, the safeguarding of independence, the best interest of the child and the provision of opportunities for the development of skills. **You can read more about the SIL example, it's benefits and learnings from implementation in IRC's report: [A chance for a better future: Supported independent living and the protection of unaccompanied children in Greece](#)**

Greece: early integration of asylum seekers²

Supporting the integration of refugees has become an issue of priority for Greece. The International Rescue Committee (IRC), with longstanding experience in supporting refugees and asylum-seekers in many countries around the world, believes that integration is a pathway that, in order to be successful, should begin as soon as possible.

It is vital that increased investment at the reception stage includes core integration support for asylum-seekers, irrespective of nationality, while they await a decision on their claim. Such support should include access to interpretation, case management services, cultural orientation classes and intensive survival language classes, as well as information and support to obtain the documents and services required in order to access accommodation, employment, education and healthcare. Given the length of asylum procedures in Greece, withholding these integration support measures until status determination could set people on a path towards social exclusion and lead to a deterioration in mental health, which is clearly counterproductive. The positive effect of employment on social inclusion and personal well-being is undeniable and numerous studies

² IRC Greece, [The time is now: A plan to realise the potential of refugees in Greece An analysis of the benefits of integration support from the reception stage](#), September 2020.

have shown that early interventions for integration benefit both refugees and asylum-seekers and the receiving society.

The IRC's labour market integration programming in Greece focuses on interventions to support vulnerable people, whether refugees, migrants or Greeks, to attain financial independence and stability. Since 2017, directly or in cooperation with partners, the IRC provided employment and self employment services and training to over 2,100 people. Over 1,800 people have benefited from our employment services in Athens, which include one-on-one career counselling, job readiness training seminars, weekly business Greek classes and group job search sessions. Through outreach the IRC team effectively develops and maintains relationships with prospective employers that facilitates job placement for the participants of the programme. An average 18% of career counseling beneficiaries find employment in the duration of our programme in the following sectors: tourism and hospitality, the humanitarian sector, production, facility management and household support services. 7 out of 10 report working formally and in full time jobs, while the majority (59%) are asylum seekers. At the same time, we have provided business education to over 380 young people, as preparation for self-employment. Through business plan competitions, the IRC provides mentoring and small grants for the support of business ideas.³

Please find more information on the case for early integration of asylum seekers and IRC's programming in relation to this in: [The time is now: A plan to realise the potential of refugees in Greece An analysis of the benefits of integration support from the reception stage](#)

3)Engagement with government departments

- IRC UK has regularly engaged with the Home Office, both from a policy and programmatic perspective.
- IRC UK has engaged from a policy perspective with the Department for Levelling Up e.g. through meeting the Minister for Refugees whose portfolio sat between the Department for Levelling Up and the Home Office.

³ Please note these figures represent programming between 2017 – 2020.