



**Athens, 31 July 2017**

**Press release**

**Unacceptable conditions for the detention of unaccompanied minors in Northern Greece**

During a series of inspections in Northern Greece, from 17 to 19 July 2017, the Ombudsman was faced with unacceptable detention conditions of unaccompanied minors in Northern Greece, as a significant number of them are subject to unfavourable conditions of deprivation of liberty. A group of Investigators led by the Deputy Ombudsman for Children's Rights of the Independent Authority, carried out on-the-spot checks in police stations and in structures and hosting facilities for immigrants and refugees, where minors are accommodated, in Diavata, Lagadikia, Volvi, Serres, Kavala and Drama. The checks showed, inter alia, that many minors remain in police stations up to several weeks in completely unsuitable facilities and without the right to go outdoors.

The Ombudsman [reaffirmed](#) that the stay of unaccompanied children in detention facilities, such as police stations and pre-removal centres, constitutes a flagrant violation of their rights and poses a direct risk to their smooth unobstructed development. In compliance with our country's obligations to international conventions, it is necessary to create special accommodation facilities for minors, effectively guaranteeing the protection of their rights, where children will be safely placed immediately after they are located.

As an example, the Ombudsman mentioned having located unaccompanied minors in the detention facilities of the Department of Illegal Immigration in Mygdonia, where 17 minors, most of them aged around 15, were in one cell of 25 s.m., on mattresses without sheets covering almost the whole of the floor area. According to information provided to the Greek Ombudsman by the police, since the beginning of June 2017, the Police Directorate of Thessaloniki has placed 77 minors in 'protective custody', while only 13 of them have been transported in accommodation centres, as the existing facilities are full.

During his visits as well as the communication with the Regional Office of the Ministry of Migration Policy in Northern Greece, the Ombudsman was also updated on the living conditions, rate of transfer to European countries

according to the prescribed procedures and the preparation of children to attend school in the next school year.

The Ombudsman's visit to Northern Greece took place within the framework of the monitoring mechanism for the rights of children on the move, supported by the United Nations Children's Fund/UNICEF.

Information: TEL 213 1306 712, [press@synigoros.gr](mailto:press@synigoros.gr)