

Mr. Koumoutsakos
Alternate Minister of Citizen Protection

22 April 2020

Dear minister Koumoutsakos, dear Giorgos,

First of all, please allow me to reiterate my personal admiration for the tremendous efforts you, the Government of the Hellenic Republic, and above all the Greek people, are making to deal with the continuous high number of refugees and migrants that have entered and are still entering your country. During my visit in October 2019, I got a first-hand view of the challenges Greece is facing, which has made a lasting impression on me.

Secondly, I would like to thank you for the constructive discussions we had over the past couple of days, in which we discussed your efforts to improve the situation on the Greek islands and in what manner the Netherlands could provide additional support, in particular to improve the situation for unaccompanied minors. While the Netherlands does not support *ad hoc* relocation for reasons we discussed earlier, we are concerned for the situation of these children, all the more in these times of COVID-19, and stand ready to support you in your efforts to find solutions that cater to the needs of this vulnerable group.

In my opinion, our talks reflect the good and constructive relationship between Greece and the Netherlands on the very important issue of asylum and migration. Irregular migration is a common European challenge, requiring joint solutions. The Netherlands has therefore continuously supported Greece in dealing with irregular arrivals from Turkey and protecting our European border. Together, we have pushed for structural improvements in the field of asylum, reception and returns.

Within this tradition, I would like to confirm our readiness to support your goal of strengthening the Greek system for the guardianship of unaccompanied minors. As discussed, our common assignment would be to bring together representatives of the competent Greek and Dutch authorities to develop and implement **a three-year programme to build-up the Greek guardianship system** so that it can cater to the specific needs of these vulnerable young people.

Through an **extensive training programme**, Dutch and Greek experts would exchange best practices, in particular through train-the-trainer courses on matters related to the guardianship and reception of unaccompanied minors. To put the skills of guardians to the test, I propose to link the programme to a multi-disciplinary centre specialised in the reception of unaccompanied minors. Such a centre of excellence would combine the actual provision of shelter places with a training ground for guardians and would set the standards for the support system - educational, psycho-social, legal - that these children need for building a successful future. Involvement of municipalities and local authorities is of course crucial. Such a centre can furthermore bring together experts of the various agencies and organisations involved, promoting multi-disciplinary learning and co-operation.

Following up on your suggestion, I can confirm that NIDOS, the independent Dutch Guardianship organisation for unaccompanied minors and member of the European Guardianship Network, would be the main actor from our side and stands ready to work with its counterpart E.K.K.A. and other relevant Greek partners. Furthermore, for setting-up and (co-)managing the shelter, we would like to involve the Dutch organisation Movement on the Ground, which has a long-standing and solid reputation in providing reception to unaccompanied minors. For the realisation of this Greek-Dutch programme, the government of the Netherlands will finance both NIDOS and Movement on the Ground, as well as other possible Dutch partners, for a period of three years.

I intend to present this proposal to the Prime minister and my other colleagues during the weekly Ministerial Council this Friday to ascertain full and enduring support of our four party coalition.

In the meantime, I would appreciate your earliest reply so that we can finalise the proposal without delay and can make it public before the weekend, as discussed yesterday.

I would like to express my appreciation once more for your leadership and personal involvement in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Ankie Broekers-Knol

Minister for Migration