

Dear Ms. A. Broekers-Knol,

I would like to share some thoughts concerning the announcement about the Dutch Government's planned response to Greece's refugee crisis regarding unaccompanied children. You will remember from our discussions, on the occasion of your visit to Greece in October, during the working dinner at the Dutch embassy, that I have long been a strong supporter of the Dutch Model as an optimal example of Guardianship system in Europe, and we have held close ties with your country in this regard. Indeed, after METAdrasi pioneered the activity for guardianship in Greece in 2014 (and has provided invaluable assistance and individualized services to more than 6,500 unaccompanied children since then) the Dutch Embassy in Greece generously funded the first Conference on Guardianship in Greece in July 2018. Moreover, as a member of the European Guardianship Network (EGN), METAdrasi has been in close collaboration with NIDOS during the last six years, developing a guardianship system in the footsteps of NIDOS's model. What is more, based on NIDO'S valuable expertise, in 2016 METAdrasi managed to successfully develop and implement the Foster Care for Unaccompanied and Separated Children program, providing a safe and optimal family environment to over 90 children to date.

As far as the Guardianship Program is concerned, from 2017, the project was implemented through a Partnership Agreement with UNHCR, and funded by the European Commission (DG Home), and reached a high point of 80 guardians at the end of that year. In the law 4554/2018 on Guardianship, it was decided that the State would assume responsibility for the guardianship needs of all unaccompanied and separated minors in Greece by the end of December 2019. When this transfer was delayed, METAdrasi strived for and continued to provide services to 1,400 unaccompanied minors in various locations across Greece (at entry points and in the mainland), financed entirely by its own resources, and we continue to fund the provision of its Guardianship services on the islands.

With regards to the urgent relocation program, METAdrasi considers this initiative as a substantive act of support to children as well as an act of solidarity towards Greece. We have been in partnership with both UNHCR and EASO, providing assistance for the recently completed relocations to Germany and Luxembourg. More specifically, METAdrasi's team of Guardians were all mobilized to provide their skills and knowledge in conducting Best Interest Determinations (BID) reports of high quality and under extremely tight deadlines, while they also provided assistance in locating the minors and collecting necessary documents in collaboration with the competent authorities. Their role has therefore been critical.

Based on our experience since 2010 in protection of unaccompanied children, I strongly believe that adequate Guardianship services can only be delivered through a local organization with substantial experience in the field of child protection. We read in the Dutch press that there may be thought to involve a Dutch organization called *Movement on the Ground* but believe this would be a mistake. *Movement on the Ground* has implemented many important projects on the islands of Lesbos and, very recently, Samos, and has provided valuable humanitarian assistance, without, however in our knowledge having been actively involved in a demanding child protection program such as Guardianship. METAdrasi, on the other hand, has acquired six years of experience in guardianship child protection and developed excellent collaboration with local Public Prosecutors (who have given the necessary powers to all our guardians to act in the interest of unaccompanied children in all islands and the mainland), the Asylum Service, Reception and identification Centers (RICs), and other NGOs who are referring their cases to METAdrasi's guardians. We are concerned that involving new actors at this critical stage may lead to further delays, leaving unaccompanied children without the protection they need and prolonging their stay in precarious conditions.

In closing, therefore, METAdrasi has been an ardent supporter of the concept of a mixed guardianship system based on the Dutch model, in which the operational part will be carried out entirely by a civil society organization with expertise in child protection, while the supervision and evaluation will be the responsibility of the competent state authority. We believe however that Dutch experience can best be transferred by a cooperation with a Dutch organization such as NIDOS with all the relevant experience, while implementation on the ground continues to be by METAdrasi, a leading, internationally acknowledged local organization that knows and understands local sensitivities and relationships, and will be here in the long-term.

Sincerely,

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