**PRESS RELEASE**

Athens, June 29, 2022

**A big "Smile" on the faces of refugee children from Ukraine**

**"The Smile of the Child" presented the project \*"Immediate and holistic support to refugee families from Ukraine" lasting from 01.06.2022 to 31.05.2023. The Organization implements actions aimed at the nationwide offer of services for children and families of refugees from Ukraine.**

The presentation of the project "Immediate and holistic support to refugee families from Ukraine" took place at the **Panhellenic Coordination Operational Center for Immediate Social and Medical Intervention "ANDREAS YANNOPOULOS",** during which the integrated package undertaken by the Organization, was discussed.

During the presentation, a detailed analysis of the project and all the services offered was made by the Chairman of the Board of the **Organization Costas Yannopoulos,** while the event attended, among others, the Deputy Minister of Immigration and Asylum Sofia Voultepsi, representatives of the Embassies of Ukraine and Norway, as well as of the Ministry of Development and Investment, which operates as the Managing Authority of the project in Greece. The event was also attended by Anastasios Babas, Head of the Monitoring & Evaluation Unit of Hospitality Centers, Othon Kaisaris EV XM EEA - National Contact Point and Dimitris Stathis from the Unaccompanied Children Hostels, IOM.

On behalf of the **Ministry of Immigration and Asylum, the Undersecretary,** after personally thanking the Chairman of the Board of the Organization,pointing out the everlasting and excellent cooperation of the Ministry with "The Smile", also stating: "*We simultaneously fight on the fronts of both housing and job seeking. Our hospitality structures are quite busy and only one of the three, concerns the refugee populations in the Attica region. The mechanisms of "The Smile" were activated from the first moment of the crisis in Ukraine, contributing towards its resolution. We stand by your side, so that you may continue your admirable work*".

**The Consul of the Embassy of Ukraine, Anna Tyshenko**, referred to the valuable contribution of "The Smile of the Child" in the struggle of refugee children and their families, both in Ukraine and in Greece. At the same time, she pointed out: "*The needs that we currently face are many, mainly in terms of the integration of refugees in Greece. ”The Smile” has helped us a lot, both in Ukraine by sending aid and also in Greece. Refugees need to learn to speak the language, find jobs and they have children who need togo to school. "The support of the Organization is continuous and makes us feel that we have a common conscience with the Greeks*."

On behalf of the **Norwegian Embassy, ​​Christian Grotnes Halvorsen,** Deputy Head of the Diplomatic Mission to Greece, said about the war and the refugee crisis in Ukraine that "*it is one of the most critical and unpredictable challenges Europe has to face. Norway stands by all those who forcibly left their homes and our mission in Greece sides with the Organization in its important effort to relieve the children and families of refugees of the terrible outcomes of war*."

Representing **the Ministry of Development and Investment, Anastasia Panopoulou**, Head of EHM EEA - National Contact Point, stressed the importance of implementing the project and the positive impact it has on the lives of child victims of war. "*The implementation of this project is of exceptional importance, of humanitarian, social and geopolitical importance. I completely agree with Mr. Yannopoulos that this aid is not humanitarian, but the debt that we have as a society towards our children and our fellow human beings*".

The Chairman of the Board of the Organization **Costas Yannopoulos referred to the important offer of "The Smile" by sending 30 tons of humanitarian aid** to the border of Ukraine, in cooperation with the Ministry of Climate Crisis and Civil Protection and the Embassy of Ukraine, but also to the constant efforts of "The Smile", which continues to provide support to refugee children and their families, stating: "*As in any humanitarian crisis, so in Ukraine we are here from the beginning. We carried out two missions, one with the transport of 30 tons of humanitarian material and then the most difficult part followed, with the transport of the families by buses. The children and their families are housed in our fully equipped homes and we remain by their side providing them with medical care and support in all their needs. The people of "The Smile" visit the houses on a weekly basis, in order to assist in every way in achieving the optimal living conditions as well as to make sure of their safety. The contribution of our Organization is not extraordinary. We will continue to support the children and families of the refugees even after the end of the Project because we do not see our aid only as humanitarian, but as our debt to society*."

The projects’ services have already started to be implemented both with the provision of housing and humanitarian holistic support in the Houses of "The Smile" as well as with many more valuable services offered to the children and their families.

**The project includes in detail the following free services:**

**1.** Material support (food, basic necessities and personal care, etc.)

**2.** Support in legal and administrative documents issuance

**3.** Liaison with other services - providing information & assistance on various issues - directions - social support

**4**. Facilitate the educational integration of children and their integration into extracurricular activities

**5.** Information - support - for children and mothers victims of violence

**6.** Psychological Support from specialized psychologists and social workers of the Organization

**7.** Interpretation & cultural mediation

**Calling the European Child and Adolescents Support Hotline**

**116111 (daily, 24 hours a day, free of charge)**

**8**. Information - support - protection - for child victims of trafficking (illegal trafficking)

**9**. Information - support - for missing children

**Calling the European Hotline for Missing Children 116000 (daily, 24 hours a day, free of charge, anonymously or by name, from landline or mobile)**

**10**. Information - support - for missing adults

\*The services are provided in the framework of the implementation of the Project "Immediate and holistic support of refugee families from Ukraine" lasting **from 01.06.2022 to 31.05.2023.**

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"The Smile of the Child"

Press office

Tel. 210-3306140, 11040 (local charge)

press@hamogelo.gr