

**Question for written answer
to the Commission**

Rule 130

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Subject: Detention of unaccompanied children in police station cells in Greece

Human Rights Watch reports that in Greece, as of late December, 54 unaccompanied children were detained in police station cells or in immigrant detention centres¹. Their research found that these children lived in “unsanitary conditions, often with unrelated adults” and could be “subject to abuse and ill-treatment by police”.

Detention of children is contrary to international human rights law², as stated also by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

Article 6 of Regulation 604/2013 states that Member States shall closely cooperate with each other, shall take due account of family reunification possibilities and, in the case of unaccompanied minors, shall “as soon as possible take appropriate action to identify the family members, siblings or relatives of the unaccompanied minor on the territory of Member States.”

Is the Commission aware of the situation and, if so, which steps will it take to support alternative measures to detention, to speed up family reunification from Greece with relatives and the safe relocation of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children even if they lack family ties?

¹ According to HRW and several studies, among which a report drawn up at the Commission's request, detention has a serious long-term impact on children, including “harm to their development, anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and memory loss”.<http://odysseus-network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/FINAL-REPORT-Alternatives-to-detention-in-the-EU.pdf><https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/23/asylum-seeking-kids-locked-greece><http://www.unhcr.org/58a458eb4>

² UN General Assembly, New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 3 October 2016, A/RES/71/1, “We, the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives (...) will also pursue alternatives to detention while these assessments are under way.”<http://www.refworld.org/docid/57ceb74a.html>- General Comment No 21 (2017) of the UN Committee on the rights of the child on children in street situations – see paragraph 44 “Deprivation of liberty, for example, in detention cells or closed centres, is never a form of protection.”