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5. Youth work and Juvenile Justice Landscape in Greece

Vasiliki KARZI[12]

5.1. The Age of Criminal Responsibility

In Greece there is a constitutional basis for procedural safeguards in the criminal justice system for children. Article 21 of the Hellenic Constitution states that childhood is protected by the State, while Article 96 par. 3 of the Constitution states that special laws shall regulate juvenile courts, which shall derogate from the obligation to hold public hearings under Article 93 par. 2 of the Constitution and to be tried by mixed-jury tribunals.

Since the 1930s the term "juvenile perpetrator" (ανήλικος εγκληματίας) prevailed in Greek handbooks and the legal texts. It took however, a long time for the law to adopt a framework that would not treat child offenders as mere common offenders, subject to repressive measures, but as a group in need of preventative and more favourable measures. In fact, it was only in 2003 when the Greek Criminal Code (hereinafter GCC) replaced the title of the relevant chapter from "juvenile perpetrator" to "special provisions for minors" (ειδικές διατάξεις για ανηλίκους).

Today this Chapter, Chapter 8, which includes Articles 121-133 GCC, constitute the primary engine for defining criminal liability of juveniles in Greece. This section of the criminal code, distinguishes minors from adults, shifting the focus from "punishment" to "protection and education". Furthermore, the criminal code distinguishes between four separate age groups:

- **Children under 12 years old**: Children under 12 years old are not considered "responsible" under Greek criminal law and if they commit a criminal act, the response is strictly social welfare intervention. Their parents however

[12] Attorney at Law and Legal Researcher, Social Empowerment, vassokarzis@gmail.com

may be held criminally responsible under Article 360 GCC which punishes the neglect of a minor (παραμέληση εποπτείας ανηλίκου) with sanctions ranging from 1-3 years imprisonment and a fine up to 10.000 euros for felony grade crimes committed by the child.

- **Children between 12 – 15 years old**: A child between 12 and 15 years of age is also not regarded as being criminally responsible, though Article 126 GCC provides that the child may be subjected to therapeutic or reformative measures thus attributing the commission of the crime to him/her [D. Mouchimoglou & M. Boznou, 2025] (Articles 122 and 123 GCC).
- **Children between 15 – 18 years old**: Article 126 par. 2 GCC states that when a child between the ages of 15 years to 18 years commits a crime, they shall also be subject to reformative or therapeutic measures, and if necessary, to detention within a special youth detention center (ειδικό κατάστημα κράτησης νέων). UNCRC has called for the minimum age of detention to be increased to 16 years of age (see General Comment No. 24 (2019) on children's rights in the child justice system).
- **Young Adults**: In Greece, criminal law recognizes a transitional phase where mitigated adult sentences or specialized youth detention may still apply. The legal basis is included in Article 131 GCC which states that when the offender has not turned yet 21 years old, the Court may a) order their detention in a youth detention centre, if it considers that the commission of the criminal act is due to the underdevelopment linked to their young age and such detention will be sufficient to prevent the commission of other crimes or b) reduce the sentence. The offender in the first case may remain detained in a youth detention centre until the age of 25 years.

The most important changes to the juvenile justice procedure in Greece are linked to the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified by Law 2101/1992, and the European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights, ratified by Law 2502/1997. However, a landmark move towards a "child-friendly" justice system was achieved through the transposition of EU Directive 2016/800 on procedural safeguards for children who are suspects or accused persons in criminal proceedings through Law 4689/2020. The latter, safeguards the right of children to have the holder of parental responsibility informed; to be assisted by a lawyer; to protection of privacy; to be accompanied by the holder of parental responsibility during stages of the proceedings other than court hearings; to legal aid, during criminal proceedings, etc.

5.2. The Key Institutional Actors:

A. Juvenile Prosecutors

Prosecutors of the Misdemeanours Courts are tasked with the prosecution of criminal acts on behalf of the State. Under Article 27 par. 1 of the Greek Criminal Procedure Code (GCPC), juvenile prosecutors and their substitutes are appointed by the Appeals Prosecutor at the First Instance Courts of Athens, Piraeus, Thessaloniki and Patra for the prosecution of crimes perpetrated by children.

B. Juvenile Courts

Article 1 GCPC provides for juvenile criminal courts while Article 6 GCPC clarifies how these courts are set up: each Court of First Instance shall appoint juvenile judges and their substitutes. These judges shall preside over the Single-Member Juvenile Court. Three-Member Juvenile Courts shall comprise of two first-instance judges and one juvenile judge that will preferably preside in Court. Finally, the Appeals Juvenile Court shall have one juvenile appeal judge and two appeal judges.

C. Juvenile Probation Officers

Juvenile probation officers are specialized professionals (social workers, sociologists, psychologists) who report to the Ministry of Justice and work in the courts of first instance, with the primary role of preventing delinquency and promoting the social integration of young people.[13] They conduct social investigations, prepare reports on the family and social environment of juvenile offenders, and recommend reform measures. The Services were established in their current form in 1976 (Law 378/1976), and their operations are governed by Presidential Decree 49/1979. They are considered the backbone of the juvenile criminal justice system and provide the social inquiry reports that judges rely on to understand the child's background.

5.3. Measures for Juvenile Offenders

Following the reform of the Greek Criminal Code in 2019, and subsequent amendments thereof, the following measures are included:

A. Reform Measures (Article 122 GCC)

a) Reprimand of the child

[13] The official website for the Union of Juvenile Probation Officers is available in Greek here: http://www.epimelitesanilikon.gr/

b) Assignment of the custody of the child to the parents or guardians

c) Assignment of the custody of the child to a foster family

d) Assignment of the custody of the child to protection agencies or child institutions or juvenile probation officers

e) Reconciliation between the child offender and the victim to apologise and reach an extra-judicial settlement

f) Compensation of the victim or through any other means restitution of the victim by the child offender

g) Attending social or psychological programmes of the State, municipal, community or private authorities

h) Attending study programmes at professional, educational or training schools

i) Attending special programmes for traffic education

j) Attending special educative, artistic or cultural programmes at State, municipal, community or private authorities

k) Attending sports programmes and participating in sports' unions

l) Provision of community work

m) Assignment of the child's custody and supervision to protection agencies or child institutions or juvenile probation officers, and

n) Placement in a suitable State, municipal, community or private educational institution.

In any case, the Court may impose as additional reformative measures, further obligations related the child's way of life or overall education. The selection of the reform measures must follow the principle of subsidiarity, meaning that the measures under a) to k) shall take precedence in relation to the remaining measures (Article 122 par. 3) [see also D. Mouchimoglou & M. Boznou, 2025, p. 56]. Ministerial Decisions by law were issued for the imposition and execution of the above measures, such as Joint Ministerial Decision No. 2083/2025 on the Framework for the implementation of the reform measure regarding the attendance of special educational, artistic, or cultural programs at state, municipal, or private institutions; Joint Ministerial Decision No. 6288/2024 on the Framework for the implementation of the reform measure regarding the participation of minors and young people in sports programs and sports clubs; and Joint Ministerial Decision No. 73461/9-10-

2017 on the Framework for the implementation of the reform measure regarding community service for minors and list of agencies involved in the implementation of the measure.

Finally, the court decision must include the maximum duration of the imposed measure. Pursuant to Article 125 par. 1 GCC the measures automatically expire when the child turns 18 years. However, the court may through a specifically justified judgement extend the measures until the offender turns 21 years.

B. Therapeutic Measures (Article 123 GCC)

a) Assignment of the custody of the child to the parents or guardians or a foster family

b) Assignment of the custody of the child to protection agencies or juvenile probation officers

c) Attending therapy counselling

d) Placement in a therapy or other suitable institution

The above measures are introduced when the child's situation requires special treatment, and especially when they suffer from mental illness, or an organic disease or when the child is in a situation of serious bodily disfunction or suffers from computer, alcohol or drug addiction that they cannot overcome on their own, or when the child is morally and intellectually under-developed. Prior diagnosis and medical opinion are required for the imposition of such measures.

5.4. Division of Criminal Proceedings and Work Engagement

In Greece, the law allows for the diversion of criminal proceedings. The reform measures and therapy measures mentioned above may be applied by the Prosecutor (pre-trial phase) according to Article 283 GCPC or by the Court.

This means that during the pre-trial phase the Prosecutor may decide to impose one of the extra-institutional reformative measures of Article 122 par. 1 GCC (in misdemeanour crimes). When the child has conformed to the measures, the Prosecutor may choose to archive the case and not proceed with a formal indictment (Article 46 GCPC) [see also A. Chaidou, 2025, p. 170]. In case of an indictment, the Court may impose reformative measures Article 122 par. 1 CC or therapeutical measures of Article 123 par. 1 CC (ages 12-18).

Community service is one of the measures that can be imposed either by the Prosecutor or the Court. The provision of community service is regulated specifically by Common Ministerial Decision No. 73461/9-10-2017) and needs the explicit consent of the child otherwise it will be considered forced labour which is prohibited under Greek law [D. Mouchimoglou & M. Boznou, 2025, p. 71 et seq; A. Chaidou, 2025, p. 187 et seq].

It is offered to public or municipal NGOs and must be linked to the child's relevant capabilities. Work is offered daily or on certain days of the week, outside school, educational or work hours and in manner that does not disrupt his/her educational or work responsibilities. The maximum duration is 4 hours a day or 12 hours a week (15-20 years) and 15 hours a week (21-25 years). The total duration must not exceed 9 months starting from the issuance of the court judgement, the prosecutor's or investigative judge's order. The child or young adult must be insured for accidents. Community service may not exceed the total of 150 hours. In cases where the offence committed by the child would be a felony if committed by an adult, or in cases where a child has committed multiple or repeated criminal offences, the maximum duration should not exceed 180 hours in total.

The juvenile probation officer (επιμελητής ανηλίκων) appointed in each case, who proposes the imposition of community service, chooses the most suitable authority included in a catalogue. Preference is reserved for those closer to the child or youth's residence, and the authority and type of work must be linked to their knowledge and skills, or even to the offence, and the work should be of an educational and reformative character [D. Mouchimoglou & M. Boznou, 2025, p. 71 et seq; A. Chaidou, 2025, p. 187 et seq]. Development of social skills and positive experiences should be included in the overall community work provided.

The law does not provide explicitly for a gender sensitive approach in choosing/assigning the work activities. However, body build, health and overall skills/capabilities of the child play a determining part in selecting the type of community work.

There is an Annex to Joint Ministerial Decision No. 73461/2017 with a list of stakeholders that include Municipalities, Local Administration Bodies and NGOs. The juvenile probation officer and prosecutor uses this Annex to select where the child/youth may carry out the community service, whilst the nature of the crime should be taken into account when selecting the type of community service (Article 5 of Joint Ministerial Decision No. 73461/2017).

The Joint Ministerial Decision does state that the one of the purposes of community service work is the facilitation of learning procedures for obtaining knowledge, skills and capabilities. However, there is no clear provision for combining the provision of community work with vocational training [A. Chaidou, 2025, p. 187 et seq]. Nor is there any reference to receiving certification. This would be up to the stakeholders selected for the receiving the community work. It should be noted though, that one of the reformative measures included in the law, is the attendance at vocational schools, or other education or training institutions. Furthermore, Article 12 of Common Ministerial Decision No. 73461/2017 states that children or young people must be insured for accidents. There is no reference to full health or social security, possibly because as minors/dependents they are covered by their parents' health insurance.

Finally, Joint Ministerial Decision No. 73461/2017 contains instructions for the supervision of the community service provided by the child/young adult. The juvenile probation officer works closely with the designated supervisor at the selected organization, who is jointly responsible for overseeing the performance of the community service. During the implementation of the measure, under the responsibility of the organization where the community service is provided, an appropriate support framework for the child/young adult is established within the organization where the community service is carried out [A. Chaidou, 2025, p. 187 et seq]. The probation officer supports the child so that they can take responsibility for developing social relationships and gain knowledge and experience regarding work-related issues and the institutions and networks of the social environment in which they live. He/she visits the child/young adult at the site where the community service is performed at regular intervals, as well as on an *ad hoc* basis at his/her discretion or when deemed necessary following a request from the implementing agency or the child. The agency implementing the measure, through the designated supervisor, informs the probation officer in writing once a month regarding compliance with the terms of the reformative measure, by sending a relevant attendance record. In supervising the reformatory measure, the juvenile probation officer may be assisted by volunteers who have previously been trained and briefed on the specific issues related to the provision of community service by children and young people.

When the child/young adult does not carry out the community service, or does so partially, or inadequately, Article 124 GCC is triggered regarding the modification or revocation of the imposed reformative measure and the replacement of the community service measure, if deemed necessary.

- ***Brief commentary***

In June 2023, CORAM International in collaboration with UNICEF and Terres des Hommes, issued an assessment of the of the child friendliness of the Justice System in Greece. It found that where non-custodial measures are applied, statistical trends from juvenile probation services show that the **informal reprimand** and **victim-offender mediation** are the two **most frequently utilized alternative pathways**. The Juvenile Probation and Social Welfare Service—described as the "backbone" responsible for evaluating children and administering these non-custodial measures—is acutely understaffed and financially constrained. Probation officers carry an overwhelming workload, which restricts the deep, individualized attention needed to sustain effective community supervision. It should be added that according to CORAM International specialized reformative infrastructure, such as socio-psychological programmes, educational projects, or substance rehabilitation clinics, are primarily centralized in major urban hubs like Athens, Thessaloniki, and Patras. Children residing in rural areas or outside these main cities rarely have access to these diversionary alternatives.

CORAM International also noted that there is an absolute lack of centrally managed data and follow-up research. The state does not monitor long-term recidivism or perform regular evaluations to verify if these alternative measures are successful in preventing re-offending and fostering social reintegration. This was verified by research for the present reporting. Finally, the CORAM International report notes that while the law allows children to be detained at the age 15, this age limit counters the UNCRC Committee position, which strongly recommends that the absolute minimum baseline age for any form of carceral detention should be raised to 16 years.

Overall, the existing legal framework is notably complex, characterized by a fragmented array of administrative bodies and significant resource demands. This complexity imposes a substantial burden on the judiciary, most acutely affecting the Juvenile Probation and Social Welfare Service. Consequently, to achieve comprehensive compliance with international and regional benchmarks, it is essential to consolidate disparate regulations into a unified and cohesive Child Justice Law.

5.5. Penal Sanctions and Measures and Work Engagement

In Greece, while the system does not impose "forced labour" as a criminal sanction, it does recognize and utilise community service and vocational engagement both as standalone reformative measures and as modern substitutes for custodial detention.

As noted above, the Greek criminal justice system recognises the provision of community service (κοινωφελής εργασία) as a "reform measure" (αναμορφωτικό μέτρο). Under Article 122 par. 1 GCC, the court may order a child or young adult to perform work for the public benefit. This measure is not legally a punitive sanction, but a pedagogical measure aimed at social reintegration and the development of a sense of social responsibility. It involves unpaid work in public services, local government organizations, or non-profit entities.

A significant development introduced **by Law 5090/2024 concerns Article 127 GCC**, which governs the "restriction in a special youth detention facility" (i.e. detention). This is the only measure for juveniles that has a strictly punitive/custodial character, reserved for those aged 15–18 years, who commit serious felonies. Under this new development, the court now has the explicit authority to replace the execution of a detention sentence (either in whole or in part) with **community service** or house arrest (electronic monitoring through an ankle bracelet). In this context, the "work engagement" acts as a **substitute for a custodial sanction**. It is used as a less restrictive alternative to imprisonment for serious offenders, provided the court deems that it suffices for the child's or young adult's reform.

Beyond community service, the law recognises another form of "work engagement": **vocational training and education** (Article 122, par. 1 GCC). The court can mandate attendance at **vocational schools or training centres**. While not "work" in the sense of employment, it is a formal "measure" that forces the juvenile offender into a professional path as a means of crime prevention [D. Mouchimoglou & M. Boznou, 2025, p. 68 et seq; A. Chaidou, 2025, p. 181].

Under the recent reforms to the Greek Criminal Code through **Law 5090/2024**, **Law 5151/2024 and Law 5172/2025**, "work engagement" for juveniles serves **both** as a primary alternative to detention and as a core component of "treatment" during detention.

The Greek legal system maintains a dual-track approach to work-related measures for children:

A. Main Alternative/The Standalone Measure

In this role, community service is the **primary outcome** of the criminal proceedings, used to entirely avoid placing the juvenile in a detention facility.

- **Direct Substitute for Detention (Art. 127 GCC):** Through Article 127 GCC, juveniles aged 15–18 who would otherwise face "restriction in a special youth detention facility" for committing felony crimes, now grants the court broader discretion to **replace the execution of that detention** with community service, if it deems it appropriate and sufficient: "… *Based on the circumstances, the court may replace in total or in part, the confinement in a special youth detention centre with house arrest or community work, by applying mutatis mutandis Article 104A and 105..*". In this scenario, community service acts as a **substantive alternative sanction**, effectively keeping the minor out of a correctional institution. This alternative was recently added to the above provision by Law 5090/2024 and was considered a positive development by the Greek Ombudsman, who also highlighted that there are application obstacles that need to be addressed, such as the lack of infrastructure for community work throughout Greece.
- **Standalone Reformative Measure (Art. 122 GCC):** The court can impose community service (unpaid work for public benefit) as the sole "sanction" for a crime. It is considered a "main" measure in the sense that it closes the case without a custodial sentence.

B. Work provided during Detention

According to Article 54 GCC, which was recently amended by Article 7 of Law 5090/2024, the duration of confinement at a Special Youth Detention Centre may not exceed five (5) years and may not be lower than six (6) months, if the foreseen sanction for the relevant crime is by law a maximum prison term of ten (10) years. If the foreseen sanction is life-imprisonment or a prison term exceeding 10 years, the duration of the confinement shall not exceed ten (10) years maximum nor be less than two (2) years minimum.

It is important to highlight that **Law 5090/2024 introduced a stricter framework**. The maximum confinement duration used to be eight (8) years and was increased to ten (10) years. In fact, the Greek Ombudsman had expressed its concern in a letter it sent to the President of the Permanent Parliamentary Committee for Public Administration, Public Order and Justice when the draft law (Law 5090/2024) was

being debated in the relevant committee. The Greek Ombudsman stated that by "*crucially broadening instances of juvenile confinement in detention centres troubles the Ombudsman, given the existing system and detention conditions in our country as well as the principles governing the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Rules for the protection of children deprived of their personal freedom, which require that the deprivation of freedom be a last resort social reaction. It should be noted that the attempted broadening allows for detention in a detention centre even for crimes of lesser ethical-social disdain (e.g. aggravated theft) … the Authority also expresses its concern regarding the increase in the duration of detention at a special youth detention centre from eight (8) to ten (10) years…*" (Prot. No. 8097/15.2.2024 Letter of the Greek Ombudsman). The Ombudsman went on to stress that a basic principle of criminal law is the *education* and not punishment of the child and the avoidance of measures that limit the child's personal freedom.

In **Greece,** there are **special facilities for the detention of juveniles** located in **Avlona**, **Volos** and **Thiva**. There are two closed-type institutions for male detainees, one in the town Avlona (Avlona Special Facility for Youth Detention - Ειδικό Κατάστημα Κράτησης Νέων Αυλώνα), about 50 km from Athens, and the other in the city of Volos (Volos Special Correctional Youth Facility - Ειδικό Σωφρονιστικό Κατάστημα Νέων Βόλου), in central Greece. An Educational Youth Institution for Male Juveniles (Ίδρυμα Αγωγής Ανηλίκων Αρρένων Βόλου) is also located in Volos, however it is not detention centre *per se*. Child offenders (ages 15-18) used to be held in the Corinth detention facility, however they were transferred pursuant to Decision No. 12053/10.08.2022 of the Ministry of Citizen Protection to a prison farm for young offenders which today exists in the area of Kassavetia (Kassavetia Special Farm Correctional Youth Facility - Ειδικό Αγροτικό Σωφρονιστικό Κατάστημα Νέων Κασσαβέτειας), about 30 km from the city of Volos. Finally, there is a small number of young women, detained in the sole independent women's institution for closed detention, near Thiva, about 95 km from Athens.

Below is a chart with the number of juvenile detainees by age category and year, starting from January 2020 to January 2026:[14]

[14] Greek Ministry of Citizen Protection, General Secretariat of Counter-Criminal Policy, Statistical Data on Detainees, Summary Table of Detainees – Sentences as of January 1 of each year (2015-2020)(Συγκεντρωτικός Πίνακας Κρατουμένων – Ποινών κατά την 1η Ιανουαρίου Εκάστου Έτους (2015-2026)), available at: https://sofron.gov.gr/sofronistika-katastimata/statistika-stoixeia-kratoumenon/.

	1/2020	1/2021	1/2022	1/2023	1/2024	1/2025	1/2026
Ages 15-18	30	33	32	36	30	80	104
Ages 18-25	1.086	1177	957	843	1094	1.382	1.928

Based on statistical data published by the General Secretariat for Counter-Criminal Policy of the Ministry of Citizen Protection, as of May 2026, there was a total of 95 minors (15-18 years old) and 67 young adults (18-25 years) at the Kassavetia facility, 3 minors (15-18 years old) and 36 young adults (18-25 years) at the Thiva Women's Correctional Facility, and two minors held in two separate mental health correctional facilities (both located in Korydallos in Athens). The Avlona and Volos facilities did not have any juvenile detainees, however there were 414 and 127, respectively, young adult detainees**. In total, as of May 2026 there were 103 juvenile detainees and 1,713 young adult detainees throughout Greece**.[15] For comparison reasons, at the same time, the overall number of detainees in Greece was 13,548.

All the above youth detention facilities are subject to specific internal regulations included in the Greek Ministry of Justice Decision No. 47503/21.6.2005 (Official Gazette, B' 889/30.6.2005). Based on this document, it is evident that **in Greece,** if a juvenile is ordered to be restricted to a youth detention facility, work engagement takes on a different legal character. This is why it is crucial to set out the key points of Article 20 of the decision, broken down by category:

-***Educational & Training Framework:***

- Special Juvenile Detention Facilities must operate a 3-grade elementary school and a junior high school (with senior high classes) under the Ministry of Education.
- Facilities must provide vocational training targeted at labour market access, alongside legal support, rehabilitation, counselling, and health education.
- General education takes place in dedicated facility schools, while vocational/support programmes use specially designated areas. **At least one**

[15] *Ibid,* Statistical Chart of the 1st and 16th of each month for 2026 (Στατιστικός Πίνακας 1ης και 16ης εκάστου μήνα έτους 2026).

guard must always escort and supervise the inmates during these programmes.

-Role of the Prison Council

The Prison Council is responsible for:

- Creating educational, athletic, cultural, and vocational programmes (including specific classes for illiteracy, second-chance schools, and foreign languages).
- Recommending that inmates who turn 21years stay at the facility to finish their educational or training programmes.
- Organizing individual or group artistic events with inmate participation.

- ***Studies Outside the Facility***

- Inmates can continue their education outside the facility at accredited institutions.
- This is enabled through **educational leave** (εκπαιδευτική άδεια) which is closely monitored by specialized academic staff and the supervising prosecutor.

- Inmate Labor & Employment

- Sentence Reduction: Inmates work in approved operational areas of the facility, and this work counts as credit toward reducing their sentence (ευεργετικός υπολογισμός ημερών ποινής).

- **Strict Assignments:** Prisoners can only perform the specific job they have been officially assigned to and cannot start working before an official decision is made.
- **Oversight & Rotation:** The supervising prosecutor monitors the priority list for auxiliary work, ensuring a **three-month rotation** of inmates (unless a continued stay in a position is explicitly justified). Daily work logs are strictly maintained.

The above ministerial decision in fact specifies provisions already included in Law 2776/1999 (Greek Penitentiary Code - GPC). Article 12 GPC explicitly refers to “young detainees” (ages 15-21) and foresees in paragraph 2 the establishment of specialized educational, professional and vocational programmes.

Article 35 GPC regulates the education and vocational or professional training of inmates. Paragraph 2 of the Article was amended by Law 4985/2022 and now

foresees the establishment of primary and secondary education units, i.e. primary schools, high-schools, second chance schools or high schools, general or professional upper-level high-schools; **and post-secondary education units**, i.e. Public Vocational Training Institutes, Vocational Training Schools, Public Lifelong Learning Centres, and Greek Language Learning Departments. Finally, the Prison Council organizes, in cooperation with relevant agencies, vocational education and training programmes, including internships or apprenticeships. Under paragraph 3 of the same article, **diplomas issued for concluding the above educational levels shall not mention that the detention facility (where possible) and are equivalent to those diplomas awarded outside the detention facility**.

Paragraph 5 of the same article states that **primary education is mandatory for young detainees**, while under par. 6, those that have concluded their primary education, may attend secondary and tertiary education outside the facility after being granted educational leave.

Paragraph 8 refers to **merit days** and states that after completing a minimum of three-months education or training, the inmate may use it as credit for the reduction of their sentence, for early release pursuant to Article 46 GPC.

Article 41 GPC regulates the provision of work by inmates within the detention facility, while Article 42 foresees the provision of work by inmates outside the detention facility, namely at industrial, agro-industrial, manufacturing or farm units or entities belonging to the public or private sector, or at Vocational Training Centres. In the latter case, inmates may also apply for semi-free-living conditions, in order to continue working in the above sectors. A Five-Member Employment Council operates at each detention facility which decides on the type of work, distribution and supervision of inmates, work hours and other terms of work and employment. The Employment Council maintains a list of inmates that have applied for work, and in chronological order places them in work positions, depending on specialization and existing skills.

Under Article 46 GPC, every day of **work offered at a youth farm correctional facility** is equivalent to **two extra days** of the total sentence served, which will lead to a reduction of the sentence and opportunity for early release. The same article foresees various daily credits towards reduced sentence depending on the type of work offered (nurses, cooks, canteen, cleaner, etc). **Attendance at school or programmes for educational, vocational or professional training also counts for the reduction of sentence and is equivalent to one extra day of the total sentence served**.

It should be added that Article 47 GPC also foresees mandatory insurance of inmate workers for work related accidents.

C. Reintegration

Reintegration assistance is provided through programmes led by **EPANODOS**[16] (ΕΠΑΝΟΔΟΣ), the national reintegration body, which focus on soft skills, conflict resolution, communication, and professional ethics. The body was established through Presidential Decree No. 300/2003 as a private-law legal entity, while Ministerial Decision 867/2024 (Official Gazette B 3357/06/13/2024) established a total of eight (8) branches in eight different cities across the Greece, namely in Thessaloniki, Chania, Patras, Komotini, Chalkida, Amfissa, Kos, and Volos, for the purpose of vocational training, rehabilitation, financial assistance, and the preparation, support, and promotion of the general social reintegration of prisoners and those released from prison.

According to the EPANODOS activity report for 2025,[17] the body which now operates under the Greek Ministry for Citizen Protection, during the year 2025 (01/01/2025–31/12/2025), EPANODOS developed systematic and multi-level initiatives, **providing specialized support services both in person and remotely to a total of 308 beneficiaries**. The counselling included individual counselling, family counselling, interdisciplinary team meetings, and referrals to other agencies. At the same time, the organization continued to operate as a small Community Centre offering citizen services (telephone assistance with administrative matters, sending emails, facilitating the issuance of certificates, etc.) and providing supermarket coupons or short-term housing (in 2025 1,311 supermarket coupons were awarded and 1,145 nights of short-term stay were provided). **EPANODOS states that in 2025 younger age groups (16–21 years: 3%, 22–25 years: 5%) were underrepresented among beneficiaries, which is likely linked to special detention regimes for minors or to different support structures.** Of these beneficiaries 26 were male (16-21 years: 10 and 22-25 years: 16), while there were no females in the same younger age groups.

[16] Official website for EPANODOS is availble in English here: https://epanodos.org.gr/en/home_page/.

[17] EPANODOS, 2025 Report of Events, available in English at: https://epanodos.org.gr/en/reports/.

D. Social Work as an alternative to detention

As analysed above, the recent Greek legal reforms, specifically **Law 5090/2024**, have significantly reinforced the use of work engagement, i.e. community work or as a non-custodial alternative for juvenile offenders.

For juveniles, the duration is dictated by the **principle of proportionality** with special provisions in place to regulate the duration of the community work provided, namely Article 125 GCC and Joint Ministerial Decision No. 73461/9-10-2017.

Article 125 GCC regulates the duration of reformative measures and therapy measures. Specifically, reformative measures that have been imposed by the court shall **automatically expire once the minor reaches maturity,** i.e. turns 18 years old. **The court may, by providing reasoned justification, extend the duration of the measures to the age of 21 years**.

Unlike the strict "100–720 hours" rule for adults (Article 55 GCC), the court has more pedagogical flexibility, regarding the **reformative measure – community work (Article 122 GCC).** The court defines the number of hours and the time frame for completion based on the minor's educational needs and school schedule. Pursuant to the provision of the Joint Ministerial Decision 73461/2017, it may not exceed 4 hours/day, 12 hours/week for juveniles ages 15-20 years and 15 hours/week for young adults ages 21-25 years. The duration of the sanction may not exceed the duration of 9 months starting from the time the court decision was delivered, or 150 hours in total (except for repeat crimes where the limit is 180 hours).

As noted earlier above, the work must be of a **social, cultural, or scientific nature**, such as garden work, forest firefighting, tree planting, cleaning coastal shores, work at hospital organisations or retirement homes. There is no absolute legal requirement that the work *must* be identical to the crime (e.g., "arsonists must plant trees"), however, it is **highly encouraged**.

Judges and Juvenile Probation Officers (Επιμελητές Ανηλίκων) usually select work that provides a "moral lesson" related to the offense to help the minor understand the social impact of their actions [D. Mouchimoglou & M. Boznou, 2025, p. 71 et seq; A. Chaidou, 2025, p. 187 et seq]. The ultimate choice of community work is primarily dictated by the **child's personality** and the goal of preventing recidivism rather than simple punishment.

Because community service is **unpaid** and not a standard employment contract, the juvenile does not receive a salary or full pension-based social security. However, under the current Joint Ministerial Decision (73461/2017), the **Host Organization is**

legally obligated to provide insurance against **work accidents**. The **Juvenile Probation Service** provides social oversight to ensure the minor's health and dignity are respected during the work. It should be clarified that basic health coverage is typically maintained through the existing family insurance or state provisions for uninsured minors, as the community service does not override their status as a student or dependent.

E. Brief commentary

The CORAM International 2023 report highlights that the physical incarceration of children in Greece remains low (for example, only 23 children were held in the Corinth detention facility as of May 2021). This indicates that, structurally, the system avoids severe institutional carceral sentences for the vast majority of cases. On the other hand, a 2023 report on accessibility of restorative justice practices in Greece as part of the 2023 Joint Rapid Needs Assessments, noted that while structural laws are active, there is a prominent lack of specialized expertise and child-friendly restorative approaches among working judicial professionals [A. Wolthuis & I. Stentoumi, 2023]. Continuous training and clinical supervision are heavily lacking given the highly complex nature of juvenile cases. The treatment a child offender receives is dangerously arbitrary. The report also notes that the application of restorative justice largely depends on the individual temperament of the assigned professional. In one tracked case, a prosecutor acted rigidly, treated a minor as an adult, and completely ignored RJ principles. Finally, the assessment explicitly critiques professionals (including some NGO lawyers and prosecutors) for perpetuating stereotypes. Minors are often blamed for "manipulating the system" or being uncooperative, rather than the system acknowledging that juvenile offenders are almost always deeply traumatized victims of systemic deficiencies themselves.

5.6. Youth Work in the Context of Post Penal Care

The transition from institutional detention back into the community is managed through a "dual-track" system that begins well before the juvenile's release. This involves both internal institutional mechanisms and external state-supervised reintegration plans.

5.6.1. The Transitional Mechanisms

Under **Law 4985/2022**, which amended provisions of the Greek Penitentiary Code (Law 2776/1999), and the broader reform spirit of **Law 5090/2024**, the transition is structured as a "phased release" rather than a sudden exit. Long before final release, juveniles are granted **educational or vocational leave** (Articles 35 and 58 GPC), which is included in the time served. This allows them to attend school or work in the community during the day and return to the facility at night, acting as a "stress test" for their reintegration.

Most juveniles do not serve their full sentence in a detention facility. Under **Art. 129 GCC**, they may qualify for early release (after serving half (1/2) of the total term and for special reasons after serving a third (1/3) of the total term) also on the condition that they follow a specific programme of supervision and support in the community (probation).

The responsibility for developing and monitoring this plan is shared between two primary "pillars": **the Social Service of the Detention Facility,** which is staffed by social workers, psychologists, and sociologists (Articles 51-53 of Ministerial Decision No. 47503/21.6.2005 - this team is responsible for drafting the initial "Individual Progress and Reintegration Report") and **the Prison Board,** which includes the Prosecutor and the Director of the facility, reviews the juvenile's behaviour and vocational progress to decide if they are ready for the transitional phase (Article 10 GPC).

Once the minor is released, the **Juvenile Probation Service** takes the lead. They are the "guardians" of the transition plan. They monitor the juvenile's attendance at school/work and act as a bridge between the court and the minor's family.

5.6.2. Reintegration Mechanisms

According to Article 61 of Ministerial Decision No. 62367/21.6.2005 state that the former inmate shall receive a copy of the release order and, if they wish, shall be informed by specialized staff about the organizations and services that provide post-release support and shall be referred accordingly. As noter earlier above, this will be a referral to **EPANODOS,** the national body that provides reintegration services for newly released prisoners. It focuses on providing overall *support* including:

- Counselling and psychological support.

- Job placement assistance.
- Temporary housing if the minor cannot return to their family environment.

5.6.3. Monitoring and Oversight

In Greece, **the Juvenile Judge (Δικαστής Ανηλίκων),** who originally sentenced the minor remains by law the ultimate overseer. They receive regular reports from the Probation Officers and can modify the transition plan (e.g., changing the community service hours) if the juvenile is struggling or showing exceptional progress.

It should be highlighted that an important aspect of reintegration is the state's priority to ensure that the certificates the juvenile earned during detention are indistinguishable from those earned by peers in the community, removing a major hurdle to employment.

In any case, supporting recently released juveniles in Greece involves a coordinated network of state agencies and specialized non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These services focus on overcoming the "re-entry gap" by providing financial aid, vocational training, and direct links to the labour market. These include *inter alia*:

- **State-Established Support Services** through the Public Employment Service (ΔΥΠΑ - DYPA) and specialized reintegration bodies (EPANODOS).
- **Special Subsidy for Released Prisoners:** Joint Ministerial Decision No. 113582/ 29.12.2023 (OG B' 7469/2023) sets forth the terms and conditions for granting the special allowance to vulnerable population groups, including recently released individuals from a custodial sentence (of at least 2 months), who are entitled to a **one-off financial aid** equivalent to 37.5 daily unemployment benefits (718,5€). This acts as immediate "bridge" funding.
- **Targeted Employment Programmes (2024–2026):** DYPA currently runs programmes specifically for "Vulnerable Social Groups" which explicitly includes **juvenile offenders** and **young people at social risk**.
- **Employer Subsidies:** The state provides significant financial incentives (subsidies up to **€1,200/month**) to private businesses that hire young ex-offenders. These programs often cover 75% to 100% of wage and social security costs for the first 12–24 months.

- **Youth Entrepreneurship Grants:** For those looking to self-employ, DYPA offers grants (often up to **€14,800 or €17,500**) to help young people aged 18–29 start their own businesses.

NGOs often fill the gaps in personalized, long-term care and "soft skill" development. For instance:

- **IASIS NGO (Connect Your City):**[18] Operates "Youth Centres" that offer free **career coaching** and vocational training courses. They focus heavily on "Social Entrepreneurship," helping young people from marginalized backgrounds create community-based businesses.
- **SolidarityNow / UNICEF (All Children in Education - ACE):** While often focused on refugees, their "Youth Achieve" program[19] provides vocational guidance and labour market integration tools that are increasingly being adapted for all vulnerable youth in Greece, including those leaving the justice system.
- **Terre des Hommes (Tdh) Hellas:**[20] Actively promotes **Restorative Justice** and works to empower young offenders by teaching them their labour rights and assisting them in advocating for fair treatment by potential employers.

Released juveniles are typically referred to these services by their **Juvenile Probation Officer** before or immediately after release. Registration in the **"Special Register of Unemployed Vulnerable Social Groups"** at a local DYPA office is a mandatory first step to unlock most state subsidies and grants/benefits.

- ***Brief commentary***

It should be noted that there is a significant lack of quantitative and qualitative data regarding the release procedure and the reintegration of child inmates. As noted above, this limits any form of evaluation to verify if the above analysed measures are successful in preventing re-offending and fostering social reintegration.

[18] The IASIS Connect Your City website is available in English here: https://www.iasismed.eu/iasis/connect-your-city/?lang=en.

[19] The Youth Achieve programme is available in English here: https://youthachieve.jagreece.org/en/.

[20] A list of Projects by Terres Des Hommes Greece for child-friendly justice is available in English here: https://tdh.gr/en/projects-child-friendly-justice.

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Legal instruments:

- The Constitution of Greece
- Law 4619/2019 "Greek Criminal Code" (Official Gazette A' 95/11.06.2019) (*Νόμος 4619/2019 Κύρωση Ποινικού Κώδικα, ΦΕΚ Α' 95/11.06.2019)*

- Law 4620/2019 "Greek Code of Criminal Procedure" (Official Gazette A' 96/11.06.2019) (*Νόμος 4620/2019 Κύρωση Κώδικα Ποινικής Δικονομίας, ΦΕΚ Α' 96/11.06.2019)*
- Law 2776/1999 "Greek Penitentiary Code" (Official Gazette A' 291/24.12.1999) (*Νόμος 2776/1999 Σωφρονιστικός Κώδικας, ΦΕΚ Α' 291/24.12.1999)*
- Joint Ministerial Decision No. 73461/2017 "Framework for the implementation of the reform measure regarding community service for minors and a list of agencies involved in the implementation of the measure" (Official Gazette B' 3647/16.10.2017) (*Κοινή Υπουργική Απόφαση 73461/2017, Πλαίσιο εφαρμογής του αναμορφωτικού μέτρου της παροχής κοινωφελούς εργασίας ανηλίκων και πίνα*κας φορέων που συμμετέχουν στην εφαρμογή του μέτρου, ΦΕΚ Β' 3647/16.10.2017).
- Greek Ministry of Justice Decision No. 62367/21.6.2005 "Internal Operating Regulations for Special Juvenile Detention Facilities" (Official Gazette, B' 889/30.6.2005)(*Υπουργική απόφαση 47503/21.6.2005 Εσωτερικός κανονισμός λειτουργίας των ειδικών καταστημάτων κράτησης νέων*, ΦΕΚ Β' 889/30.06.2005)