Παιδί με 2 Γονείς Αστική Μη Κερδοσκοπική Εταιρεία
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Piraeus, 26 November 2026

To: Eurochild

Subject: Proposal for cooperation on the effective protection of children's right to family life in Greece

Dear Madam or Sir,

The non-profit civil society organization "A Child Needs 2 Parents" (Παιδί με 2 Γονείς) works in Greece to protect children's rights and family life. We are writing to Eurochild to explore the possibility of institutional cooperation in support of children involved in parental separation proceedings.

Our initiative does not seek preferential treatment for one parent over the other, nor does it ask Eurochild to endorse any custody model. It focuses on the conditions that every family justice system must meet to identify and protect, in a timely and effective way, the best interests of each individual child.

1. Why this issue directly concerns children's rights

Children's family life is not protected merely by the formal recognition of rights or the issuing of court decisions. The case law of the European Court of Human Rights sets out positive obligations on the competent authorities to take practical and effective measures, so that family ties do not become a theoretical right because the authorities have failed to act.

The international and European framework reinforces this approach. Articles 3, 5, 9, 12 and 18 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 24 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2025)4 all stress the best interests of the child, the child's right to be heard, shared parental responsibilities, and the need for child-friendly proceedings free from undue delay.

2. Time as an essential dimension of protection

In cases involving children, time is not neutral. Prolonged proceedings, a delayed expert assessment or the poor enforcement of a decision can entrench de facto situations, weaken or break a family bond, and leave a later court ruling with little practical effect. Two or three years in a child's life do not carry the same weight as they might in an ordinary civil dispute.

For this reason, speed should not be treated simply as an indicator of administrative efficiency. It is an integral part of the real protection of children's rights and must go hand in hand with high-quality, safe decision-making tailored to the individual child.

3. The child's participation and safety

The child's views must be sought and taken into account in a manner appropriate to the child's age and maturity, without placing on the child the burden of the final choice between the parents. Proceedings should examine the context in which the child's views were formed and ensure appropriate professional support.

At the same time, maintaining family ties is not an absolute requirement. Where substantiated allegations of violence, abuse or serious risk are made, an independent, individualized and thorough risk assessment is needed and, where appropriate, a protected setting for contact. A child-centered approach requires both the protection of family relationships and a genuine guarantee of the child's safety and psychological integrity.

4. Recurring signs of functional weaknesses in Greece

Our organization's comparative study examines 39 judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, including both violation and non-violation judgments, to identify cases of state failure as well as the criteria for compliant practice. The Greek cases, which span more than two decades, consistently raise issues concerning:

- the excessive length of proceedings and the need for exceptional diligence;
- the enforcement of court decisions;
- the protection or restoration of the relationship between child and parent;

- the non-completion, or inadequate judicial supervision, of social and psychological assessments;
- access to key reports and procedural safeguards;
- the meaningful hearing of the child and individualized risk assessment.

These cases are not identical and do not, on their own, establish a generalized violation. However, their recurrence over time and thematic convergence justify a systematic examination of whether these weaknesses are structural and call for broader measures of prevention, compliance and institutional support.

5. The identified gap in data and evaluation

In its document No. 238 of 14 October 2026, the Greek Ministry of Justice acknowledged that, although statistical data on court caseloads are collected through the JustStat system, it is not currently possible to extract aggregated and separate data on decisions concerning parental responsibility, day-to-day care and contact, by year and by court. This information is contained in the text of the judgments but is not recorded as structured data fields. The same document refers to 73,582 family law decisions for the period 2021-2025.

This gap is not merely statistical. It limits the ability to measure objectively the length of proceedings, compliance with decisions, the hearing of the child, the use of social and psychological reports, and the actual outcomes for children. It also creates the risk that new substantive legislative changes may be proposed without first establishing which problems stem from the legal rule itself and which from its application by the courts, from delays or from inadequate institutional support.

6. The need for specialized, interdisciplinary family justice

Effective protection does not depend on legislation alone. It requires specialized court formations, functioning social services, properly trained professionals, timely expert assessments, clear protocols for hearing the child, and mechanisms to monitor the enforcement of decisions.

This need has been institutionally recognized in Greece since Law 2447/1996, which provided for specialized family law sections and social services at the Courts of First Instance. Similar observations were made by the Greek National Commission for Human Rights in 2008. The extent to which these structures operate, and the adequacy of interdisciplinary support, should therefore be assessed.

7. The added value of cooperation with Eurochild

Eurochild can play a decisive role in moving the debate away from a dispute over "parents' rights" towards a rights-based, evidence-based framework centered on the child. Its Europe-wide experience and its network of organizations and experts can support a comparative European approach to the issue.

The Greek case could serve as a case study for a wider European question: how can states demonstrate, through reliable data and the participation of children, that family justice safeguards work not only on paper but also in practice?

8. Proposed areas of cooperation

We propose exploring cooperation in the following areas:

- A European dialogue on time in family proceedings as a distinct dimension of children's rights.
- Exchange of good practice on specialized family courts or sections, social services, early intervention and interdisciplinary assessment.
- Development of comparable, fully anonymized indicators on the length of proceedings, interim measures, the hearing of the child, expert assessments and the enforcement of decisions.
- Participation of children and young people, with appropriate ethical and protective safeguards, in shaping criteria for child-friendly family justice.
- Scientific and institutional dialogue between children's rights organizations, independent authorities, academics, judges, and mental health and social care professionals.
- An independent evaluation of the implementation of Law 4800/2021 on parental responsibility before any new legislative change (see Section 5).

9. Specific proposal

We would like to explore with you the possibility of an initial online working meeting, followed by the development of a joint European-level initiative with the provisional title: "Family justice through the eyes of the child: timely, effective and child-centered protection after parental separation".

The aim would be to map good practice and formulate actionable proposals covering all of the safeguards described above, from the timely issuing of a decision through to its full implementation.

10. Our organization's contribution

"A Child Needs 2 Parents" can make the following available to Eurochild:

- our comparative study of 39 judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, with a specific record of the Greek cases;
- a thematic analysis of the common issues and the criteria for compliant practice that emerge from the case law;
- documentation of the structured data gap in Greece;
- empirical and institutional material on the application of the Greek framework;
- proposals for measurable indicators, specialized structures and mechanisms for timely protection.

We would be glad to send you the full documentation and to present the issues in detail at the proposed meeting. We believe that a joint initiative can help ensure that the protection of children's family life is judged by the measurable results it achieves for each child.

Yours faithfully,

The Board of Directors of the non-profit organisation "A Child Needs 2 Parents"

Yiannis Zacharatos, President of the Board

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References and supporting sources

1. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 3, 5, 9, 12 and 18.

2. Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Articles 7, 21, 24 and 47.

3. Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Recommendation CM/Rec(2025)4 on protecting the rights and best interests of the child in parental separation proceedings.

4. Regulation (EU) 2019/1111 (Brussels IIb).

5. "A Child Needs 2 Parents", "ECtHR and the protection of family life", comparative case-law study, 2026.

6. Greek Ministry of Justice, document No. 238 of 14 October 2026.

7. Law 2447/1996, Articles 48-50 on specialised family law sections and social services.

8. Law 4800/2021 and Law 4622/2019, regarding the evaluation of regulations and better law-making.

9. Greek National Commission for Human Rights, Observations on Greece's 3rd Periodic Report under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2008.