

## The Federal Foundation Mother and Child for pregnant women in emergency situations

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Greek State has recognized the problems that single mothers, and especially those below poverty level, face and has put a number of measures into action. Nevertheless, efficiency of the measures is insufficient, due to low funding. Therefore our aim is the further improvement of the applied measures.

The measures taken by the Greek State are:

- Free medical care (including preventive examinations) during pregnancy and delivery
- Priority in public nursery schools
- Bonus when applying for a job
- Free occupational training that meets market demands
- Increased annual leave for working single mothers
- Financial support (Allowances)
  - To uninsured working mothers before and after delivery
  - To single mothers for the nutrition of the children
  - To families after the birth of a third child and for each next child
  - To single mothers that rent a house
  - Low cost loans for housing
  - In the appearance of an urgent need

Two State institutions which provide home for single mothers or mothers with financial problems and their children operate: "METERA" and "PAEDOPOLIS".

These institutions are funded by the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity. Their aim is to take care of these women for short period of time. Users of their services are promoted to them by the Social Services Departments of the hospitals.

Furthermore, a number of Non Government Organizations that support poor children providing food and shelter exists. (i.e. "SOS villages", "Children Smile" and Orthodox Church Foundations)

A good example of Non Government Organization that aims at providing help to mothers and children is the "Centre for the Protection of Mother and Child". This NGO is situated in Athens and provides necessary commodities and shelter to mothers and children of Athens. Additionally, it provides psychological and economic help (allowances) to residents of both the Capital and the Region.

When addressing the issue, the demographic problem that Southern European States face, due to low fertility rates, should be taken into account. This situation is expected to put a pressure on Social Security and Health Systems that will maximize in about 25 years.

In this context, aiding single mothers and especially those under poverty level might be critical. In parallel, attention should be drawn to satisfying the needs of families during the whole period of bringing up their children, and not only at its early stages. Fundamental steps that should be taken by each country are defining poverty level, population that the measures should aim at and the position of illegal immigrants to the system.

Our comments on the German approach are the following:

- Do Non Government Organizations hold a key role in supporting single mothers?
- Have all the people in need access to the help provided?
- Is the access limited to those informed?
- Are illegal immigrants included and do they receive any help?
- Are people who don't speak German included and do they receive any help?
- Have any indexes been developed, in order to measure the outputs and outcomes of the actions taken? (For example number of completed pregnancies, weight of the newborns and school performance of the children)
- Is there any monitoring of the disposal of the food supplies inside single mother families? Is the access of the child to the supplied help (food) ensured?

One of the solutions proposed is that of the "Guardians" or "Sponsors" of children.

"Guardians" are volunteers selected out of respectful persons of each community. Their role is to identify people in need (in our case pregnant women, poor children families). Then, they bring affiliated foundations in contact with the target groups of people, they report on the implementation of the program, and they define the parameters that should be monitored. This approach has the benefits of continuation, sufficient supervision and evaluation of the implemented programs.