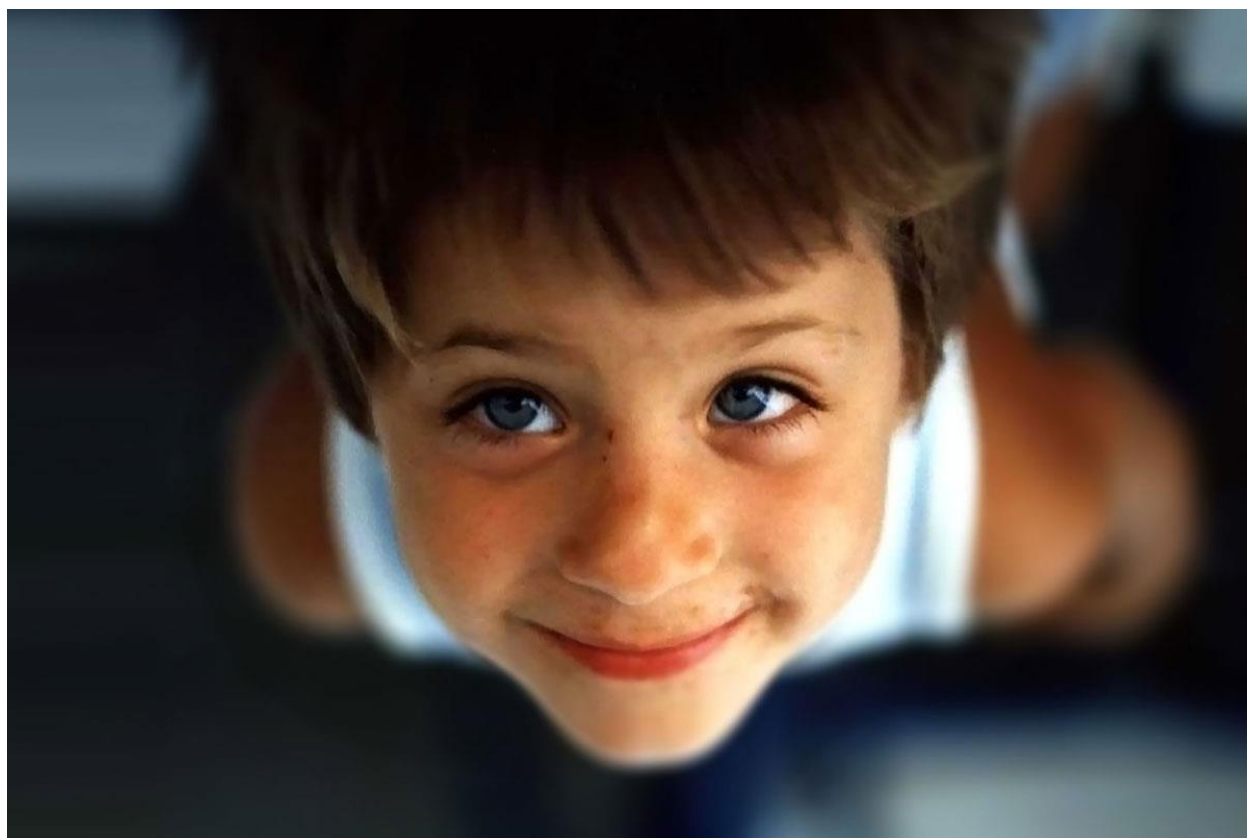


# Fighting hidden poverty in Greece



*Andreas Giannopoulos was diagnosed with cancer at the age of 9. He passed in 1995. Photo: [The Smile of the Child](#)*

The staggering beauty of Greece is world-renown, attracting tourists from all over the world. Most associate Greece with white sand beaches and stunning historical sites; very few, if any would guess the scale of the country's poverty crisis.

According to a report written by the European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN) in 2022, nearly 30 percent of the population is at risk of poverty and almost 18 percent are making wages below the poverty line. The statistics for children are even worse. A third of Greek children are at risk of poverty, a quarter living in a household that is at risk of poverty.

## **The Smile of the Child**

There are many organizations working to help the poverty crisis in Greece. Some of those organizations focus on children specifically. The Smile of the Child is one of them. Founded in 1995, it began as the dream of a 10-year-old boy named Andreas Giannopoulos. His dream of "a world where all children live with dignity, hope, love and a smile on their face," was brought to life by his father after Andreas' passing.

The Smile of the Child operates across Greece, offering its numerous services for free to families in or threatened by poverty. They operate independently of government, instead they “complement the institutions”, according to president Konstantinos Giannopoulos.

### The Numbers

- **3** “Day Care Homes” for children after school. With the support of specialized scientific staff, they study, attend extracurricular activities, play, eat, and bathe before returning home.
- **5** The Smile of the Child operates 5 different helplines which provide free support to a number of demographics.
- **7** Medical Intensive Care Units (MICUs) providing the possibility of pediatric life support during the transport of a child. The MICUs are staffed by 29 specialized rescuers.
- **14** support centers that provide families with material aid, medical, support, psychological support, and “whatever else the family in crisis needs to get back on its feet with dignity.”
- **16** dedicated and trained professionals staffing “The Childrens House”, providing mental health services for children and adolescents. Counselors, medical practitioners, therapists, and psychologists work full time from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. to provide invaluable care to children in need.
- **24** Families with children in states of long-term hospitalization given accommodation near hospitals in Attica and Thessaloniki. This program began in 2018, and is finally growing once again post-pandemic.

### What’s next?

The Smile of the Child now looks to now expand the scale of its current programming. The organization relies on crowdsourced donations and cooperation from government institutions. Additionally, without aid from its donors and dedicated volunteers, The Smile of the Child cannot complete its goal, to have every child smile.

If you want to support The Smile of the Child, you can contribute in multiple ways on their site. You can purchase a variety of products from [the shop](#), donate to specific goals on the [crowdfunding site](#), or donate directly through the [website](#).

- William Shoukri

### Sources

[Andy Okay - The Smile of the Child](#)

[Deep Dive on Child Poverty and Social Exclusion in Greece - UNICEF](#)

[EAPN poverty watch 2022: Greece](#)

[EAPN poverty watch 2019 - Greece](#)  
[The Smile of the Child website](#)