

Child Protection Sub-Working Group
08.06.2023 Minutes of Meeting

Date:	Thursday, 08 June 2023 at 10.00-12.00 a.m., via Webex	
Participants:	Special Secretariat for the Protection of UAM/ MoMA, RIS/MoMA, MoLSA (UAM Unit), EKKA, EC – DG Home, UNHCR CO, UNHCR FO Thessaloniki, UNHCR SOL, UNHCR FU Athens, UNICEF, IOM, Metadrasi, IRC Hellas, Solidarity Now, GCR, Faros, ICSD Ioannina, SOS Children’s Villages Greece, MdM Athens, Prolepsis Institute, Zeuxis, TdH Hellas	
Chair:	UNHCR: Theodora D. Tsovili (tsovili@unhcr.org)	
Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mentorship project (SSPUAM) • Child Guarantee Project results and recommendations of Phase III (UNICEF) • Refugee, asylum seeking and migrant children residing in the urban settings of Athens and Thessaloniki in Greece (UNHCR) 	
The Mentorship project (SSPUAM)	<p>The progress of the first National Mentorship project was presented in the CPsWG. The Mentorship project has been implemented by SSPUAM for the first time in Greece for the past two years with the support and funding of EUAA. As part of the project 6 mentors (including a female mentor), former unaccompanied refugee children, have been hired and are working as staff within the SSPUAM. The project’s objective is aligned with SSPUAM's National Strategy for the protection of UAC in Greece. The Mentorship project aims to provide support to UAC during their stay in Greece and facilitate their integration into the host society.</p> <p>The mentor's role entails serving as a role model, offering peer-to-peer support, providing advice, while motivating and supporting the children’s transition to adulthood. To fulfil their role, the mentors are engaging in various activities with the UAC, including establishing a teens’ network, conducting art workshops, arranging guided visits to museums, organizing sports activities, coordinating school visits, and facilitating informative awareness sessions.</p> <p>Since the initiation of the project, 1.018 children (888 boys and 133 girls) of 18 different nationalities have participated in the field visits of the mentors and organised activities with them.</p> <p>Please refer to the attached presentation for more information regarding the mentors’ role, the organised activities, the benefit of the project and the faced challenges. For anything further feel free to reach out the mentors at mentors@migration.gov.gr .</p>	Action Points: n/a

<p>Child Guarantee Project results and recommendations of Phase III (UNICEF)</p>	<p>From August 2020 until its conclusion in April 2023, UNICEF implemented the Phase III of the Child Guarantee Project funded by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion (DG EMPL). The primary objective of this project, implemented in seven countries including Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, and Spain, was to address child poverty and social exclusion, aiming to break the cycle of these challenges.</p> <p>In Greece, the Child Guarantee activities focused on deinstitutionalisation efforts, aligning with the state priorities. These efforts entailed strengthening social services and implementing alternative care models such as foster care, professional foster care and semi-independent living.</p> <p>The main activities and outcomes of Phase III of the European Child Guarantee are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Supporting governments in developing a comprehensive national action plan to tackle child poverty and social exclusion. In Greece, an initial draft of the plan was submitted in March 2021, followed by the submission of the final national action plan in September 2021. b) Piloting and assessing innovative and evidence-based service models and interventions. c) Developing concrete strategies to effectively combat child poverty and social exclusion. d) Contributing valuable insights to the implementation of the EU-wide Child Guarantee initiative. <p>Please refer to the attached relevant presentation for more information on the results of the different areas of Child Guarantee Activities, the milestones of the project and the support provided to the authorities by UNICEF.</p> <p>For further details on the outcomes of different areas of the Child Guarantee Activities (De-institutionalisation, foster care, SIL with a view to deinstitutionalisation, inclusive integration, integrated skills development, deep dive analysis), the project's milestones, the support offered to authorities by UNICEF and the provided recommendations, please consult the attached presentation. It contains relevant information that will provide a comprehensive overview of these subjects including the challenges encountered throughout the implementation of the project.</p>	<p>Action Points: n/a</p>
<p>Refugee, asylum seeking and migrant children residing in the urban settings of Athens and Thessaloniki in Greece (UNHCR)</p>	<p>It is estimated that approximately 81% of the overall population of refugee, asylum seeking and migrant children in Greece are currently residing in the urban settings of Athens and Thessaloniki in Greece. For this reason, UNHCR colleagues from Field Unit Athens and Field Office Thessaloniki have provided updates on the situation and its challenges.</p>	<p>Action Points: n/a</p>

Athens

Since the beginning of 2023, the Protection Helpdesk has received **1,161 communications** directly from asylum-seekers and refugees including phone calls, emails, and WhatsApp messages. This averages to approximately 230 communications per month. Among these communications, the Protection Helpdesk has received inquiries from **233 families**, which include both **single female and male households** and **17 unaccompanied children**, with ten of them currently residing in Urban Athens.

The following main challenges have been reported:

- i) limited number of actors provide free legal assistance considering the rising demands for family reunification,
- ii) limited accommodation options, especially since the closure of ESTIA, leading to difficulties in finding suitable housing,
- iii) lack of financial support resulting in a growing need for cash assistance,
- iv) limited access to material support, such as food and basic items like diapers and clothes,
- v) limited actors provide day care services for children, which is essential for parents who work or attend classes/trainings,
- vi) refugee children face difficulties enrolling in schools due to the shortage of available school places in densely populated areas of Athens,
- vii) limited knowledge on free vaccination services for children,
- viii) limited knowledge on children enrollment process for kindergarten and schools, including required documentation and timeframes,
- ix) risk of refugee children dropping out of school due to difficulties in obtaining the necessary documentation.

Thessaloniki

The living conditions in the urban of Thessaloniki present various challenges for families with children. Most families with children are recognized refugees, including beneficiaries of Temporary Protection, with only a few asylum seekers remaining after the closure of ESTIA. Many families are self-accommodated, facing a lack of accommodation options. Some families are homeless or living in precarious conditions, making it difficult to reach them. Families with rejections face even greater difficulties. As for the UAC identified homeless or in precarious living conditions are referred to the National Emergency Response Mechanism (NERM).

	<p>UNHCR in Thessaloniki has been actively engaging in efforts to reach out to refugees and provide support. These efforts include collaborations with community centers, Municipalities, and other actors, such as the Regional Asylum Office (RAO), Refugee Led Organizations (RLOs). The Help Desk receives numerous requests from the urban population, highlighting the importance of this resource.</p> <p>The main challenges and needs identified in the field are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) need for necessities such as food and children's diapers, ii) limited accommodation options – especially after the closure of ESTIA, iii) lack of day care services/centers for children, the provision of such services will enable parents to engage in employment or educational activities, iv) meaningful access of children to education. <p>Please refer to the attached presentations for more information.</p>	
<p>AOB</p>	<p>The next CPsWG will take place in September2023. The date and time will be confirmed.</p>	<p>Action Points: n/a</p>