

**Child Protection Sub-Working Group**  
**23.04.2021 Minutes of Meeting**

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Wednesday, 23 April 2021 at 09.30-12.00 a.m., via Webex</b>	
<b>Participants:</b>	Special Secretary for the Protection of UAMs/ MoMA, RVRN, UNICEF, Terre des Hommes, IRC, , Faros, METAdrasi, Arsis, NCR, SOS Children’s Villages, the Home Project, Safe Passage, DRC, Europaiki Ekfrasi,	
<b>Chair:</b>	<b>UNHCR: Theodora D. Tsovili (<a href="mailto:tsovili@unhcr.org">tsovili@unhcr.org</a>)</b>	
<b>Agenda</b>	<b><i>Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN) - 10<sup>th</sup> annual report on the 2020 racist violence recordings - special focus on racist violence incidents against refugee children</i></b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Mrs Garyfallia Anastasopoulou, RVRN assistant coordinator presented the establishment and function of the <i>Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN)</i>, operated by UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Greece (UNHCR) and the National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) since 2011</b></li> <li>➤ <b>RVRN consists of 51 agencies</b> which provide services, among other targeted groups, to refugees/asylum seekers, many of whom run Child protection programs and are part of the Child Protection sub-Working group</li> <li>➤ <b>The RVRN assistant coordinator highlighted the importance of increased actors’ commitment in reporting incidents of racist violence</b> which is safeguarded by the anonymity and confidentiality of the process. UNHCR stressed the importance that the timely reporting of these incidents has on the further development of UAC victims and particularly on their self-esteem which is traumatized by racist behaviors.</li> <li>➤ <b>As regards the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of 2020, in total 107 incidents of racist violence were recorded</b> – an almost equal number with the 100 reported incidents of 2019. The number is considered high taking into consideration the COVID 19 pandemic which creates conditions of under-reporting.</li> <li>➤ <b>Amidst the COVID 19 pandemic refugees and migrants are discriminated on grounds of public health threat.</b> However, the restriction of movement negatively affected the number of incidents reported. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the closure, or limited operation of public services due to the lockdown led to the decreased reporting of incidents of micro-racism usually encountered in the refugee’s interactions with Greek public sector.</li> <li>● Increased use of telecommunication tools throughout the pandemic era increased incidents of cyber racist violence i.e bullying in school environment.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Action Points:</b> N/A</p>

- Another trend observed during the COVID 19 confinement is the labelling of LGBTQI+ persons who became more exposed to racist violence in the internet environment.
- In many cases, police officers use the pretext of restriction of movement and tend to exercise movement controls mainly to refugees/asylum seekers leading to racial profiling practices. For instance, a minor was waiting for the social worker in a square and the police fined him 300 euros for illegal movement amidst the lockdown, although the child demonstrated all relevant documentation. The fine was revoked at later stage following relevant application.

- **Looking at the geographical dispersion of racist violence incidents for 2020, it seems that the organized, collective violence has shifted towards border locations.** The increased number of incidents during the first trimester of 2020 were further triggered by the Moria fire and Evros' incidents (imminent large influx of asylum seekers portrayed by local media as manipulated threat).
  - Victims of racist violence during the incidents in Evros were supported by RVRN members, but the majority of them and particularly the UASC victims did not wish to report on the violence they underwent.
  - The increased incidents of racist violence recorded in Lesvos - 25 out of 107 – are partially explained by the local misconnect expressed towards the governmental policies, addressed through law enforcement in February – March 2020.
  - Organized attacks collective and racist action towards refugees and asylum seekers on the islands took place with the use of improvised weapons, roadblocks and arson attacks. Local communities' racist enclaves started attracting international extremist groups. In response to the organized violence pro-refugee supportive networks started developing in local communities.
  - In an indicative incident, in Evros, one heavily wounded asylum-seeker who was attacked by a group of 10-15 people was detained on administrative grounds following discharge from the hospital. Based on relevant legal framework victims or witnesses of hate crimes are protected by detention and deportation, while in cases that they do not have legal status, following a relevant decision by the prosecutor, a residence permit for humanitarian reasons should be addressed to them by the component authorities.
- **The underreporting phenomenon is mainly attributed to fear of identity disclosure as well as limited staffing resources of the 51 RVRN member organizations.** Particularly unaccompanied children seem to rarely report racist violence incidents occurring against them, especially in cases they are deprived from care arrangements and as such they lack supportive networks i.e homeless UAC. The latter are even more afraid to report especially in occasions where the perpetrator is the Police.
- **As regards the profile of perpetrators of racist violence,** it seems that more citizens (59 in total) are responsible for racist attacks in 2020, compared to 2019. One incident out of the 59 cases involved an attack against a minor in Lesvos who was allegedly exercising in the yard of a local Greek citizen. Law enforcement officers' attacks against refugees and asylum seekers seem increased compared to data of 2018.

- **According to the RVRN assistant coordinator there is an observed pattern of increased attacks against unaccompanied children between 13-17 years old.** In fact, out of 107 recorded incidents, 25 cases occurred against asylum seeking and refugee children.
  - In a relevant incident which occurred in Chios island, one minor was found by mistake in the yard of a local Greek citizen. The latter called the police who allegedly battered the child and kept him in police custody for two days. The victim did not pursue legal action but provided his testimony to RVRV.
- **NCRI is responsible for combating intolerance and racism at national level, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice.** NCRI is a collective body responsible for designing policies to prevent and combat racism and intolerance and supervising the implementation of the laws against racism and the compliance with the relevant international and European laws. The members of the NCRI are nominated by the competent Ministers and bodies on the basis of their expertise in matters relating to racism. RVRN participates in the NCRI.
- **RVRN assistant coordinator encouraged CP professionals to step up the reporting of racist violence incidents targeting UAC, especially once the child has been included in safe care arrangements** and is thus less exposed to risks related to protective custody/detention as retaliation (in cases where law enforcement officers are involved in the reported incidents)
- **There are currently two specialized police departments responsible to receive complaints of racist violence in Attica (Athens, Piraeus) and one Thessaloniki established since 2014,** operating in cooperation with the RVRN. They also refer the victims of racist violence to relevant services. Although this does not constitute a holistic approach some basic responsiveness in this area observed.
- **An important initiative is that the Ministry of Justice is preparing to issue an awareness raising leaflet in nine languages for victims of racist violence**