

**Child Protection Sub-Working Group**  
**31.01.2022 Minutes of Meeting**

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| <b>Date:</b>         | <b>Monday, 31 January 2021 at 10.00-12.00 a.m., via Webex</b>   |                       |
| <b>Participants:</b> | Special Secretary for the Protection of UAM/ MoMA, MoLSA, EKKA, UNICEF, IRC, GCR, SOS Children’s Villages, Caritas Hellas, IOM, DRC, Praksis, Zeyksis, NCR, ELIX, Safe Passage, Velos Youth Center, The Home Project, METAdrasi, Iliaktida AMKE, Equal Rights Beyond Borders, European Expression, RIC & CCAC Directorate, RIS/EUAA, RIS HQ - Directorate of North Greece Facilities, RIS/Directorate of South Facilities, Intersos, DCI  |                       |
| <b>Chair:</b>        | <b>UNHCR: Theodora D. Tsovili (<a href="mailto:tsovili@unhcr.org">tsovili@unhcr.org</a>)</b>  |                       |
| <b>Agenda</b>        | <b>Child Protection Updates</b>   |                       |
|                      | <p><b>SSPUAM: Update on the first year of the National Emergency Response Mechanism for unaccompanied minors in precarious living conditions’ operation.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>SSPUAM: Update on the first year of the National Emergency Response Mechanism for unaccompanied minors in precarious living conditions’ operation.</b></li> <li>➤ <b>IOM: Updates on the CP situation on the mainland (sites, emergency accommodation) &amp; on the islands (safe areas). Update on the HELIOS Junior project.</b></li> <li>➤ <b>UNHCR: Updates from the islands &amp; Evros’ border.</b></li> </ul>   | <b>Action Points:</b> |
|                      | <p><b>SSPUAM: Update on the first year of the National Emergency Response Mechanism for unaccompanied minors in precarious living conditions’ operation (PPP)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>SSPUAM shared some basic information on the first year of NERM’s implementation.</b> During the reporting period, the tracing line received 2.069 incoming communications corresponding to 1.627 unique cases of unaccompanied minors. The majority of the referrals concerned accommodation requests while a large number of referrals were received from RAOs and Police Departments.</li> <li>➤ <b>The majority of the minors could not provide details on their entry point to Greece</b> while a large number claimed that they entered through the land border of Evros. The majority of UAC were traced in Attica, however, the mechanism has been able to trace UAC all over Greece and follow up their cases.</li> <li>➤ <b>The majority of the UAC during the time of the referral were unregistered and living in precarious conditions.</b> All of them, they have gone through the registration procedures with the Police and the Asylum Service and have been placed in the emergency accommodation facilities.</li> </ul> |                       |

- **An important step to be taken is the institutionalization of the mechanism.** The tracing line continues its operation and is supported by METAdrasi's 24/7 interpretation line.
- **Regarding the operational partners for 2022,** NCR and Arsis are running info desks and mobile units in Athens and Thessaloniki respectively while IOM is responsible for the establishment of 200 places in emergency accommodation facilities and for the case management.
- **Monitoring and managing cases of UAC in apartments living in adults is a challenge that SSPUAM is currently working to address.** SSPUAM has created a specific protocol regarding these cases to be followed up by the operational actors. It includes steps such as looking into the living environment of each child, prioritization of cases residing with family members or not, communication to the PP of all these cases, etc. The aim is to determine the best interest of the child and assess if these adults can become custodians otherwise for the UAC to be transferred to emergency and then to long term accommodation facilities. Hopefully, in the awaited draft law for guardianship there will be specific measures included for the protection of this group of children.
- **Actors mentioned that in some instances children who were transferred from emergency accommodation to shelters were quite confused on the rules, obligations, responsibilities of life in a shelter.** They have observed that children who previously lived homeless/in precarious conditions have difficulties adjusting in long term accommodation facilities. There were some cases also of manifestly adults who entered the apartments and then absconded.
- **SSPUAM mentioned that the actors in the field are providing general information for the shelters to the identified children.** Additionally, they are in the process of creating child friendly information material based on the age and the maturity of the child to be shared with the UAC.
- **The first rapid assessments are made from the actors who refer the child to SSPUAM,** when there is doubt concerning the age of a person, any actor as indicated as in the relevant MD can initiate the age assessment procedure. For borderline cases the person can be placed in emergency accommodation and the procedures can be completed there. If a person seems manifestly adult, age assessment should be initiated before the placement. The relevant guidelines have been shared with the working group by SSPAUM; the actors were invited to revisit them in case they have questions.

**IOM: Updates on the CP situation on the mainland (sites, emergency accommodation) & on the islands (safe areas). Update on the HELIOS Junior project.**

- **IOM will proceed with the establishment of 200 Emergency accommodation places;** currently Eleysina kai Doliana are operating as such. The capacity will be increased most probably by end of February. IOM is responsible, with the support

**Action point:** IOM to share the numbers of

of SSPUAM, to conduct the BIAs and complete all medical examinations prior to the referral of the UAC to long term accommodation, as well as, for their registration with the AS.

- **Regarding the Helios Junior scheme, there are no concrete details to be shared at least for the time being.** It is a scheme under development between IOM and MoMA and it concerns the provision of support to those reaching 18 for a period of one year in order to have the necessary skills for the smooth transition to adulthood. It needs to be clarified whether it will target only recognised refugees and/or also asylum seekers.
- **IOM has been operating safe areas in the RICs on the islands either directly or through partners for the last years;** the project was supposed to finish in December 2021 but got extended until March 2022. IOM supports RIS for the provision of assistance to UAC while in transit to the islands before their transfer to long term accommodation. IOM teams in 4 out of 5 islands, excluding Leros as there are currently no UAC. In Lesvos, there will be a change in the funding and teams since 01 February, as IOM will most probably take over from Iliaktida. On the rest of the three islands IOM will continue under the Merimna project. Discussions with the Greek authorities on the future plans of safe areas are ongoing. There is a possibility of IOM either handing over to the state or continuing the program under a different funding. More updates will be available in late March.
- **In the mainland IOM has undertaken, as of November 2021, from Solidarity now and Terre des homes, the child protection component** in all sites besides three in Epirus. CP teams are deployed in the sites which undertake the support of vulnerable children regardless of their registration status.
- **IOM does not provide legal support, Solidarity Now and GCR are acting as referral points receiving cases that are in need of legal aid.**
- **Since METAdrasi has stopped undertaking the accompaniments from the sites to the shelters, the situation is quite challenging** and often IOM is stepping in covering the gap.

**UNHCR: Updates from the islands & Evros' border.**

**Lesvos:** 69 UAC in RIC Safe area and 161 UAC in Iliaktida's Safe shelter.

children residing on sites and the number of cases of abused children.

- **A major challenge is the potential closure of the Safe Area (run by IOM), as funds end on 31 March.** The authorities are trying to identify a new suitable location for the Safe Area while SG Logothethis indicated, during a meeting with actors working in RIC Mavrovouni, that the Ministry is considering a SA inside RIC, with a maximum capacity of 30 places.
- **Currently the SA is located outside the RIC in a hotel setting and hosts more than 69 children.** It operates over capacity due to high number of UAC between arrivals, and lack of transfer to mainland in recent days/weeks due to severe weather conditions.
- **Additionally, there are challenges to legally represent all UAC in the relevant procedures due to lack of available legal aid support/ guardianship.** Praxis is filling the gap temporarily until other solutions are identified.
- **In light of a Safe Area inside RIC, several concerns arise regarding:**
  - **Safety and Security:** Safety and Security remains a concern in RIC Mavrovouni. Severe incidents of psychological and physical violence have been registered in the past as well as exploitation, abuse and substance abuse.
  - **GBV:** potential exposure of unaccompanied children to severe forms of GBV, e.g. sexual violence.
  - **Shelter/WASH:** No appropriate shelter for a SA has been identified on site, yet. Separated WASH facilities by area are provided, but adjustments for a Safe Area are needed (location, access).
  - **Integration and Peaceful Coexistence:** UAC might have to remain inside the Safe Area for longer time if no transfers are possible, current practice is a bit more than two weeks. Controlled exits and therefore limited access to host community, no leisure time can be spent in a child-friendly environment.
  - **According to the above, a Safe Area inside the RIC does not seem to be suitable/ child friendly for the time being**

**Samos:** 48 UAC in total; 10 departed last week and 11 will depart for mainland on Tuesday. Their majority are from Somalia and African origin countries.

- **The unaccompanied children are attending classes twice per week outside and twice inside the RIC.** Their activities outside are very limited. UNHCR offered in coordination with RIS and PP to arrange various excursions and visits to museums.
- **The relocation interviews started on 31 January** and UNHCR along with the authorised Representative of METAdrasi are trying to make sure that the children are prepared. Up until now, 12 UAC are eligible with no open Dublin cases.
- **UAC from the Safe area have been referred to age assessment, however, EODY could not undertake the procedure (no doctor available).** There are discussions for referral of UAC directly to the local hospital.
- **EPAPSY, in coordination with IOM, is offering peer mentoring activities and skills' trainings to UAC in the Safe area.**

**Chios:** the number of children has dropped significantly, low number of arrivals as of 15 March 2020, a high number of transfers to the mainland and a swift transfer of UAC to shelters in the mainland.

- **Asylum interviews of UAC are conducted on the island** as of October 2021, while the reduction of staff of CP actors as well interpretation staff creates challenges on the daily field work. Relevant PPP attached for further information.

**Dodecanese:** 60 accompanied children at the moment and no UAC.

- **EODY and RIS are the sole Child Protection Case Management actors for Kos and Leros** for separated and accompanied children. There are concerns with regards to the future of EODY units after February 2022. Relevant PPP attached for further information.

**Evros:** 44 UASC at the RIC, five under 15 years old. A mission of a METAdrasi ARUAM is expected within February for their registration.

- **Due to absence of EODY doctor,** the vulnerability documents for 22 UACs' minority are not signed, thus no accommodation request can be initiated.
- **METAdrasi currently covers transportation and Authorized Representative services with own means** and has informed RIC that they will regroup transfers in larger groups.
- **UNHCR occasionally observes, evidently UASC, registered as adults at pre-RIC detention.**

#### AoB

- **UNHCR informed the participants that the national strategy for the protection of unaccompanied children is under public consultation** and urged the actors to share any comments through the platform.
- **METAdrasi informed the working group that there will be an interim accompaniments' project soon.**