

**Child Protection Sub-Working Group**  
**25.01.2021 Minutes of Meeting**

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Monday, 25 January 2021 at 09:30-11:30 a.m., via Webex</b>	
<b>Participants:</b>	Special Secretary for the Protection of Minors (SSPUAM)/ Ministry of Migration and Asylum (MoMA), Ministry of Labor & Social Affairs (MoLSA), PRAKSIS, METAdrasi, NCR, UNICEF, ELIX, Faros, Terre des Hommes, Caritas, Velos Youth, Solidarity Now, IOM, Home Project, Human Rights 360, GCR, Juveniles' Probation office, Arsis Athens, Arsis Thess/niki, IRC, Smile of the Child	
<b>Chair:</b>	<b>UNHCR: Theodora D. Tsovili (<a href="mailto:tsovili@unhcr.org">tsovili@unhcr.org</a>)</b>	
<b>Agenda</b>	<p>- <b>Announcement by the Special Secretary for the Protection of Minors, Ms Agapidaki/ MoMA on the establishment of the National Tracing and Protection mechanism for UAC living in precarious conditions as an alternative to protective custody</b></p> <p>- <b>Updates from participants</b></p> <p>- <b>AOB</b></p>	
<b>Announcement of the National Tracing and Protection mechanism for UAC living in precarious conditions as an alternative to protective custody</b>	<p><b>The Special Secretary for the Protection of Minors, Ms Agapidaki/ MoMA announced the launch of the <i>National Tracing and Protection mechanism for UAC living in precarious conditions as an alternative to protective custody</i> in cooperation with UNHCR and partners (NCR, Arsis Thess/niki and METAdrasi). The SSPUAM underlined the importance of the initiative and clarified that the Mechanism is ready to respond to the first cases, while operational challenges are expected as well and will be dealt accordingly, in the course of implementation.</b></p> <p>The SSPUAM gave the background of the initiative: the idea of the Mechanism stemmed out from the experience of the Relocation exercise for Homeless UAC in the framework of which UNHCR and partners managed to trace 280 UAC in precarious conditions, potentially eligible for Relocation, of whom 70 UAC were finally assessed as eligible and interviewed for the Relocation scheme.</p> <p>According to the SSPUAM, between 4-14 November 170 unaccompanied children were transferred from police departments and Pre-Removal Detention Centres (PRDCs) to care arrangements country-wide, while from that date onwards, all UAC identified in Police departments, PRDCs are referred promptly to care arrangements, the quickest possible. In addition, the SSPUAM is looking into registration of all UAC by RIS and GAS.</p> <p><b>The representative from SSPUAM's office presented the following components of the <i>National Tracing and Protection mechanism for UAC living in precarious conditions as an alternative to protective custody</i>:</b></p> <p>1) Coordination of outreach work by partners on the ground: two Day centres, one Info Desks and two Mobile Units in Athens and Thess/niki will undertake the operational aspect of the Mechanism</p>	<b>Action Points:</b> <b>N/A</b>

- 2) Development of Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs) and operational management protocol designating actions to be taken upon identification of child in precarious conditions
- 3) 24/7 Tracing Line used by all actors, authorities and unaccompanied children
- 4) Representation/Guardianship and accompaniment services
- 5) Interpretation services
- 6) Capacity building activities for the relevant authorities' personnel in the areas of child-friendly administrative procedures, culturally and age-appropriate treatment of children and Best Interest procedures

With regards to the question set by TdH Hellas regarding UAC in Safe Zones, it was clarified that the UAC in Safe Zones do not fall under the scope of the Mechanism as they are hosted in temporary care arrangements, **whereas UAC unofficially residing in accommodation sites and spontaneous arrivals of UAC in mainland sites are considered as in precarious conditions and thus, fall under the scope of protection of the National Mechanism.** On another note the SSPUAM clarified that evaluation efforts of Safe Zones are currently undertaken by the office of SSPUAM while the long-term goal is not to have UAC in Safe Zones but in long-term, age appropriate care arrangements.

**UNHCR noted that the term “precarious conditions” will be clarified in the relevant SOPs,** stipulating on all the sub-categories of UAC found in insecure/precarious conditions as the target group of the Mechanism, including UAC in Pre-Removal Detention Centers, separated children (whose care is not assigned to relative through official procedure), UAC arriving in border locations (not the ones detected, registered and hosted by RIC in islands and Evros).

**According to the SSPUAM there is an ongoing trend of UAC who face mental health issues** and abscond from the shelters finding themselves out of the protection system and re-entering the system later on. This might be a result of shortage in UAC shelters offering advanced services of mental health provision that could possibly attend these cases in a tailored manner. The goal of the SSPUAM is to address this phenomenon as well.

**The representative of the SSPUAM office presented the gradual steps that are undertaken upon identification of UAC in precarious conditions, until final inclusion in emergency accommodation and minimum support provided therein:**

Initial tracing and referral of UAC identified as living in precarious conditions => Notification of SSPUAM through 24h Tracing line, (or Day Center/info desk) and provision of guidance on the actions to be taken by each actor => Notification of the Police and Public Prosecutor on the tracing of the child/ mobilization of Mobile Units where necessary/ referral to emergency accommodation => Accompaniment by the Mobile Unit/ Police of the child to the Police station of reference for registration /identification => accompaniment of UAC in emergency accommodation => Specialized services provided to the child while in emergency accommodation, including Best Interest Procedures and case management.

Distances and proximity of operational components with the Police Departments will be taken into consideration during the roll out of the Mechanism.

**UNHCR introduced the team of Tracing and Protection Experts and Coordinator appointed at the office of SSPUAM**, in order to support the operationalization of the Tracing and Protection Mechanism for UAC in precarious conditions. The multi-disciplinary team is comprised by an expert on detention/legal matters, an expert on social services, an expert on mental health, an expert of Children's Rights and one coordinator. The team will be managing the 24/7 tracing line, liaising with competent authorities for the materialization of the Mechanism, undertaking capacity building activities with the authorities, supporting the SSPUAM in the designation of focal points in relevant authorities/actors such as the Asylum Service, support in coordination with Public Prosecutors, in consultation with Mrs Agapidaki.

**UNHCR also highlighted the importance of the gradual institutionalization and long-term establishment of National mechanism** through national funds. On this note, the SSPUAM underlined that the National Mechanism is inserted in the national strategy for the protection of Minors adopted by SSPUAM/MoMA and there are ongoing discussions with European Commission on issues of potential long-term establishment of the Mechanism in order to ensure continuity and feasibility irrespective of political change

**The Child Protection actors who will undertake the operational implementation of the Mechanism are Arsis Thess/niki, METAdrasi and NCR.** Arsis Thess/niki noted that their street-work team is already familiar with this target group and is well acquainted with the over all situation of UAC in precarious conditions.

**UNHCR experts and implementation partners have put in place the operational components of the Mechanism and are ready to respond to the first incoming cases.** The 24/7 Tracing Line will be operational the soonest possible by the SSPUAM while monitoring tools and protocols are currently being developed by the experts and partners.

**Concerns raised by the actors with regards to alleged unaccompanied children will be dealt in accordance with the new JMD JMD no. 9889/2020 (GG B' 3390) on age assessment procedures as in force since August 2020.** Relevant tools and forms also apply in this framework as well. The partners who will undertake case management of UAC in emergency accommodation will look into issues of age assessment and support UAC in all relevant procedures. One expected challenge that is considered and should be dealt with is that alleged unaccompanied minors who are registered as adults and are detained in PRDCs/Police departments should be reachable in order to be channelled through the Mechanism.

IOM highlighted that there is already an ongoing partnership with the SSPUAM on the transit Hubs in the framework of the Relocation scheme. **According to IOM there are ongoing discussions with the SSPUAM about the referral and accommodation of UAC to emergency accommodation, in the framework of the mechanism.** Once all parties reach relevant agreement, emergency accommodation run by IOM will be implemented through distinct temporary facilities (not existing structures) that will be established for this purpose.

In response to the point raised by TdH Hellas regarding the length of stay of UAC in emergency accommodation and envisioned capacity, **the SSPUAM clarified that the goal is 200 places of UAC in emergency accommodation and that the planned length of stay of UAC in emergency accommodation will be as short as possible, given the capacity in long term care arrangements has increased, unless there is surprisingly large influx in 2021.** According to UNHCR the ideal scenario is that the child stays is

	<p>emergency accommodation for as long as needed for the individual file of the child to be developed including registration, eligibility check, medical checks etc in order to facilitate further channelling to long-term care arrangements.</p> <p><b>The SSPUAM noted her intention to adopt an accreditation system for Best Interest procedures</b> in order to ensure quality of BI procedures applied throughout Greece and through tailored capacity building.</p>	
<p><b>Updates on interim Guardianship scheme / MoLSA</b></p>	<p><b>The representative of MoLSA informed the WG on the interim Guardianship scheme initiated in the beginning of the year, through METAdrasi as contractor.</b> The scheme as in force foresees the deployment of 40 Minors’ Representatives targeting approximately 800 UAC based on prioritization criteria (UAC below 15 years old, girls and vulnerable UAC). The locations where Minors’ Representatives will be deployed are the following: Athens, Thess/ki, Kavala, Evros, Kozani, Ioannina, Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Kos and neighbouring locations. The training of the Minors’ Representatives initiated on 25/1 with expected duration of seven days.</p>	<p><b>Action Points:</b> <b>N/A</b></p>