

Meeting Homeless UAC Task Force – 03.06.2021

Participants: Representatives from the *Special Secretary for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors* of MoMA: Relocation department, National Emergency Response Mechanism for UAC in Precarious conditions, Homeless task force actors: Network for Children’s Rights (NCR), Greek Council for Refugees (GCR), Faros, Solidarity Now, Caritas, Arsis, UNHCR, METAdrasi, Praksis.

➤ **Relocation scheme for unaccompanied children**

The representative of the Special Secretary for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors (SSPUAM) informed the task force that the relocation scheme targeting- among others- UAC in precarious conditions is gradually reaching its completion. There are at the moment 44 remaining pledges which will be covered through ongoing BIAs (including cases of homeless/in precarious conditions UAC). By the end of July it will become clear whether additional BIAs need to be conducted in order to fulfill the remaining pledges.

The EUMSs for whom relocation is still ongoing are Portugal, with an unfilled pledge of 250 slots and Bulgaria with a pledge of 49 slots.

With regards to Portugal, 100 UAC have been already relocated while 400 slots remaining unfilled. Since Portugal is facing difficulties with reception capacity, it is uncertain whether they will proceed with the agreed pledge.

Overall, 250 cases of UAC whose BIAs have been concluded are not matched yet while another 349 UAC are matched with EUMSs and their pre-acceptance letters are pending. In total 599 UAC are to be relocated.

Taking into consideration the above, the SSPUAM representative advised the Homeless task force actors to convey the message of gradual phase out of the ongoing relocation scheme to unaccompanied children in order not to further raise expectations.

Another 48 eligible UAC are in the process of being re-traced for their potential inclusion in the Relocation scheme.

As envisioned by UNHCR and CP actors in the beginning of the exercise, the tracing process has multiple positive effects, such as the updating of the National Registry for UAC “Helidon”, inactivation of cases who appear as homeless but their status has changed, timely issuance of new placements for UAC with active homelessness status and other important actions.

So far, 83 BIAs of homeless/in precarious conditions have been submitted to EASO/SSPUAM of whom:

- 28 UAC departed (Portugal, Bulgaria, Germany, Finland, Switzerland)
- 3 departures cancelled – UAC refused to be relocated (2 to Portugal and 1 Belgium)
- 35 matched pending transfer of whom 7 already accepted by MS and 27 pending reply by MS
- 1 UAC is rejected by Finland- pending re-matching

The SSPUAM representative highlighted that acceptances/rejections of UAC in the Relocation scheme should be notified exclusively by GAS directly to the child and his/her guardian.

Action point: Solidarity Now to share list with pending cases for SSPUAM to provide update.

UNHCR noted that cases of rejected UAC are going into re-matching process with other potential EUMSs. As such the matching process is lengthy and thus notifications of acceptances/rejections may face significant delays.

GCR mentioned that in cases of UAC in Safe Zones that are accepted in SIL, the latter may lose their opportunity to be included in the Relocation scheme. The SSPUAM representative advised that BIAs should be conducted the soonest possible, prior to the placement of the child. On a general note, all UAC are eligible for the relocation scheme however UAC deprived from long-term accommodation are prioritized for protection reasons in the context of the relocation exercise.

NCR raised their concerns over the fact that raising expectations to UAC is inevitable, despite actors' efforts to provide accurate information on the limited character of the relocation scheme. NCR observes UAC refusing their placement option on the basis of potential inclusion to the relocation scheme. The SSPUAM representative noted that they try to mitigate rumors and inaccurate information disseminated to children, however, this is not always feasible.

Another concern raised by NCR is the postponement of the asylum interview of the child, while the notification of relocation decision is pending, which leads to further delays.

According to SSPUAM representative the IOM relocation transit hubs are gradually phasing out, while limited remaining places are still available. Numerous COVID 19 and chickenpox cases identified among eligible UAC often delay the process.

The SSPUAM representative advised that partners should avoid referrals of 17+ UAC since it is highly probable that these children will reach adulthood during the lengthy procedures required for the relocation and thus the matching process will be challenging.

The SSPUAM representative encouraged actors who accompany UAC in their procedures before local RAOs to ensure that the phrase "*BIA conducted in the framework of the relocation scheme*" is mentioned in the file of the child, so as to prevent GAS from issuing first instance decisions in those cases.

It is also recommended that actors indicate whether asylum registration of the child is completed or not, at the stage of the referral to the SSPUAM for inclusion in the relocation scheme.

The SSPUAM representative also clarified that in case the BIA is completed before the child reaches adulthood, then the latter is still eligible. UAC who are assessed as not eligible for Relocation are back on track with their asylum process in Greece.

UNHCR reiterated that the SSPUAM is actively advocating with EUMSs in order for the latter to accept young adults whose BIAs have been concluded, in order to fill all the pledges.

Both UNHCR and the SSPUAM mentioned that the ultimate goal is a long term, institutionalized Relocation program.

➤ **National Emergency Response Mechanism for UAC in Precarious conditions Mechanism**

The SSPUAM Tracing and Protection expert informed the task force in the ongoing operationalization of the Mechanism since the beginning of 2021.

Since the launch of the 24/7 Tracing line the Central team of experts at the Special Secretariat of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum receive numerous referrals for UAC in precarious conditions from citizens, unaccompanied children, local authorities, hospitals, police and other important actors.

The Tracing Line has received wide attention and is actively promoted by the team of experts through continuous advocacy. Information leaflets addressed to citizens, authorities as well as children themselves are in the pipeline, ready to be issued and disseminated soon.

Between 5 April and 23 May the Tracing line received 144 new referrals for UAC in precarious conditions, not taking into consideration duplicate calls (35) as well as queries not related to UAC in precarious conditions.

The Mobile units play an important role as they intervene immediately upon identification of UAC in precarious conditions in Athens and Thess/niki.

At this point the approximate time of inclusion of UAC in care arrangements is 10 days from identification point but the aim is to manage to minimize this to a few only days. The establishment of emergency accommodation facilities in Athens and Thess/niki is still pending and as such placements are materialized through the existing referral mechanism of UAC to temporary care arrangements.

In the framework of the smooth roll out of the Mechanism, the Central team of experts is planning capacity building interventions to Police authorities, covering among others the thematic of child-friendly administrative treatment.

GCR recommended the inclusion of a reference to the obligation of the Police to provide interpretation to the children during the planned trainings.

The SSPUAM Tracing and Protection expert informed about the 24/7 interpretation provided by METAdrasi to police departments and the Tracing line, in six languages, as well as additional languages upon request.

Faros offered to contribute with recreational activities when the emergency accommodation is up and running.

Action point: The Homeless Task force will explore the possibility of reaching out to additional actors who provide services to UAC in precarious conditions such as Safe Passage and Equal Rights Beyond Borders, in order to ensure optimal coordination.

Action point: online Referral Pathway reflecting all services for UAC in precarious conditions will be circulated among actors for updating.