

Child Protection Sub-Working Group
30.09.2024 Minutes of Meeting

Date:	Monday, 30 September 2024 from 10.00am to 12.00 p.m., hybrid mode (at UNHCR premises and via Webex)	
Participants:	GSVP/MMA, DG Home/EC, IOM, UNICEF, EUAA, UNHCR CO, UNHCR FUA, UNHCR SOL, EKKA, Panteion University, Zeuxis, IRC Hellas, PRAKSIS, Arsis Street work (Thessaloniki), NCR, Solidarity Now, ELIL (Lesvos and Athens Office), Prolepsis Institute, HRC Athens, Intersos Hellas, Velos, Movement on the Ground, SMAN, Kindernothilfe, Lesvos Solidarity, Safe Passage, The Smile of the Child,	
Chair:	UNHCR: Theodora D. Tsovili (tsovili@unhcr.org)	
Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates on the implementation of the guardianship system (GSVP, Institutional Protection Unit) • Situation in the safe areas for UAC on Lesvos and Fylakio RIC (IOM) and in the safe areas for UAC on Chios, Samos, Kos and Leros (Zeuxis) • Presentation of the Hippocrates Program (IOM) 	
Updates on the implementation of the guardianship system (GSVP, Institutional Protection Unit)	<p>The General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection (GSVP), under the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, provided an update to the CPsWG on the implementation progress and current state of the National Guardianship system, which has been operational in Greece since January 2024.</p> <p>As per the latest data from the Secretariat, there are currently 1,892 UAC in Greece, a population that falls within the capacity of the National Guardianship system. The system, designed since 2023, has been structured to support this number of UAC. Link to the GSVP dashboard as of September 2024: https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/SGVP_Statistics-September_EN.pdf</p> <p>The Guardianship system is inclusive, providing protection and assistance to all unaccompanied children, including those who are separated. In the first nine months of implementation, over 3,500 UAC have been appointed a guardian. At the moment, 2,021 children are actively receiving support from guardianship services with a total of 149 guardianship mandated persons being currently deployed across Greece.</p> <p>However, the implementation has faced several challenges. These include delays in the appointment of guardians by Public Prosecutors (PPs), with some cases taking up to three months, impacting not only entry points but regions throughout Greece. Another challenge has been the lack of recognition and understanding of the guardian’s role by other state entities, as well as the continuous movement of UAC between locations (e.g., from the islands to the mainland). Furthermore, recruiting guardians with sufficient experience has proven difficult due to the demanding nature of the role with some newly recruited guardians resigning due to the challenges and lack of prior experience. As a result, the need for ongoing capacity building has grown significantly. Additionally, administrative burdens, such as delays in the formal appointment process, have also been problematic.</p>	

	<p>Although there has been positive impact as well. Through guardianship incidents of neglect or abuse of children are directly reported, BIAs are conducted for all UAC through harmonised procedures, identification of systematic gaps, the protection framework for the separated children has been strengthened.</p> <p>Despite these challenges, the Guardianship system has had a positive impact. Guardianship has led to the timely reporting of cases involving neglect or abuse, and Best Interests Assessments (BIAs) are now conducted for all UAC through a standardized and harmonised procedure. The system has also strengthened the protection framework for separated children, while helping to identify systematic gaps in the child protection system.</p> <p>Please refer to the attached presentation provided by GSVP - available in English - for more detailed information.</p>	
<p>Situation in the safe areas for UAC on Lesbos and Fylakio RIC (IOM)</p>	<p>On the island of Lesbos, IOM continues to provide 24/7 services to the Safe Area located outside the CCAC in a remote area. Currently, the Safe Area hosts 58* UAC, the vast majority of whom are boys from Egypt.</p> <p>At the Fylakio RIC, 24* UAC are hosted in the newly established Safe Area, with majority of them coming from Syria. The Safe Area became operational on July 24th and has the capacity to accommodate up to 72 children. It is managed by Arsis, IOM's implementing partner under the Merimna II project. Starting from October 1st, night-shift coverage and 24/7 services will be initiated.</p> <p>As of July 1st, IOM has also extended its support to the Safe Area at Malakasa RIC, with Vela serving as the implementing partner—continuing its role as the initial operator of this Safe Area. The number of UAC at Malakasa has increased significantly due to recent transfers from Crete and the Peloponnese, bringing the total to 113* UAC, the majority of whom are boys from Egypt.</p> <p><i>*The figures are based on data reported by IOM during the CPsWG meeting on 30.09.2024.</i></p>	<p>Action Points: n/a</p>
<p>Situation in the safe areas for UAC on Chios, Samos, Kos and Leros (Zeuxis)</p>	<p>Zeuxis continues managing the Safe Areas in Chios, Samos, Kos, and Leros since March 2024. The initial estimation was that approximately 1,000 UAC would benefit during the project's duration, which will run until January 2025. As of now, Zeuxis has already surpassed these projections, reaching 2,030 beneficiaries in nearly 8 months, effectively doubling the annual target.</p> <p>In the first eight months of implementation, significant additional achievements have been made, including the completion of 862 BIA Forms to ensure the needs of UAC are prioritized. The program has facilitated 521 psychosocial, legal, and educational/recreational group activities. To address medical needs and assist with administrative procedures, 4,157 accompaniments have been provided. Additionally, 121 visits to private doctors have been arranged to ensure UAC have necessary access to healthcare. The distribution of essential items has also been a priority, with over 2,000 hygiene kits and sets of clothing provided.</p>	<p>Action Points: n/a</p>

	<p>Since August, there has been a significant increase in the number of UAC arriving in Greece, with 381 new arrivals. This surge has led to severe overcrowding in the Safe Areas especially on Leros and Samos, where the capacity is being exceeded, placing immense pressure on personnel and deteriorating living conditions for the present population of UAC. Gaps in the medical staff of the local public Hospitals, particularly the lack of child psychiatrists, dermatologists, gastroenterologists, and dentists, are causing delays in addressing urgent health needs. Additionally, there are prolonged delays in transferring UAC to long-term accommodation facilities in the mainland, with some children waiting over two months like on Leros. Age assessment procedures are also facing significant backlogs, such as in Kos, where the procedures may take up to two months, and the appointment of guardians is similarly delayed, with over a month and a half wait on Leros.</p> <p>It should be noted separately that a significant number of unaccompanied children in the Safe Areas, particularly those with extreme vulnerabilities—such as acute mental health issues, serious medical conditions, and shipwreck survivors—are in urgent need of specialized care. This critical need further intensifies the challenges already being faced in managing their care and well-being.</p> <p>For more detailed information and references to best practices, please refer to the attached presentation provided by Zeuxis, which is available in English.</p>	
<p>Hippocrates Program (IOM)</p>	<p>The goal of the Hippocrates Project is to provide primary health care and psychosocial support to asylum seekers, including children, residing in CCACs, RICs, and CFTAASs on both the islands and the mainland. For unaccompanied children, the standard operating procedures are still being clarified in collaboration with RIS and GSVP, depending on location and context in order to avoid duplication in the provision of services with other actors.</p> <p>For children accompanied by families, the program will provide medical and psychosocial support throughout Greece. The Hippocrates Project has already completed the necessary vaccinations for refugee children attending schools in several areas. However, there are still pending regions where IOM is coordinating with Regional Education Coordinators (RECs) to receive lists of children in need of vaccinations, ensuring the process is completed.</p> <p>One ongoing challenge is the lack of interpretation services, which hampers not only medical support but also psychosocial assessments with IOM covering only emergency medical cases. The Hippocrates Project does not provide interpretation services to avoid duplicating funding with resources from the Ministry of Migration and Asylum (MMA).</p> <p>Another challenge lies in the recruitment of medical personnel, particularly on the islands, where only nurses and midwives have been successfully deployed so far. While a doctor has been recruited for Lesvos, the recruitment of doctors for the other islands remains ongoing due to a lack of interested candidates. To address the issue of medical services with regards to the situation of UAC on Leros, a Task Force team will visit the island in the coming days to assess the situation. The visit will aim to identify bottlenecks in completing UAC files and streamline referral processes.</p>	<p>Action Points: n/a</p>

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The next CPsWG meeting will take place in November 2024. The exact date and time will be confirmed.

Action Points:

n/a