

**Child Protection Sub-Working Group**  
**30.01.2025 Minutes of Meeting**

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Thursday, 30 January 2025 from 10.00 a.m. to 11.30 p.m., via Webex</b>	
<b>Participants:</b>	GSVPIP/MMA, MoSCF, DG Home, UNICEF, IOM, UNHCR CO, UNHCR Evros, UNHCR FUA, METAdrasi, NCR, Arsis, Velos Youth Center, The Smile of the Child, The Home Project, CRS, Zeuxis, Solidarity Now, Terre des Hommes Greece, KMOP, Junior Achievement Greece, MdM Greece, ICSD, Prolepsis, Intersos	
<b>Chair:</b>	<b>UNHCR: Theodora D. Tsovili (<a href="mailto:tsovili@unhcr.org">tsovili@unhcr.org</a>)</b>	
<b>Agenda</b>	<p><b>CP &amp; Youth Policy Interventions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best Interests Procedures’ Policy Brief (<b>GSVPIP</b>)</li> <li>• DG Reform Technical Support Instrument project: an effort of the State to support the unaccompanied youth (15-23 years old) (<b>UNHCR</b>)</li> <li>• UNICEF’s current interventions in the CP sector: national programs that can include refugee and migrant children (<b>UNICEF</b>)</li> </ul>	
<b>Best Interests Procedures’ Policy Brief (GSVPIP)</b>	<p>The GSVPIP presented the Policy Brief developed under the program "<i>Harmonisation, Establishment, and Certification of Best Interest Procedures</i>". It is implemented by the GSVPIP’s Institutional Protection Unit since November 2022, with the support of UNHCR and EUAA, and aims to strengthen child protection systems in Greece.</p> <p>GSVPIP presented an overview of the program and its structured implementation strategy. This included the development and pilot phase of a Best Interest Procedures (BIP) toolkit, followed by a series of trainings (Trainings of Trainers-ToTs and secondary trainings) for professionals conducting Best Interest Assessments (BIAs). After the pilot phase, the toolkit is under the process of adjustment towards its finalized.</p> <p>In June 2024, a Roundtable on BIPs was held to inform key state stakeholders about the program’s progress. Representatives from the Reception &amp; Identification Service (RIS), Greek Asylum Service (GAS/Dublin Unit), Ministry of Justice, University of West Attica, Institute of Child Health, and various NGOs participated in discussions assessing the findings from the first nine months of implementation. A key outcome of this roundtable was the development of a Policy Brief, summarizing the discussions, key findings, and proposed recommendations for enhancing the program’s effectiveness.</p> <p>The pilot phase demonstrated several important achievements. The BIP toolkit is now in use across Greece and has been established as a standard practice. Child participation in decision-making has increased, while collaboration among child</p>	<b>Action Points:</b> UNHCR will share the Policy Brief with the members of the CPsWG, along with GSVPIP’s presentation and the minutes from the CPsWG meeting held in January 2025.

	<p>protection actors has been significantly strengthened. Additionally, professionals working in the field have enhanced their technical expertise, improving overall case management.</p> <p>Despite these successes, challenges remain, particularly concerning limited human resources and bureaucracy. Strengthening partnerships and cooperation between stakeholders is essential to better address children's needs, ensuring their active participation in decisions affecting them. Continuous and specialized training for professionals is also crucial for maintaining high standards and keeping up with sector developments.</p> <p>To ensure the long-term sustainability of the program, efforts are being made to integrate its processes into the legal framework, expand training to include additional professionals such as caregivers and interpreters, extend BIP procedures to children at risk, and digitalize the BIA tool to enhance efficiency.</p> <p>The Policy Brief was shared by GSVP with all involved actors in December 2024, and the General Secretariat is planning to publish it on the Ministry's website to ensure wider accessibility.</p> <p>For further details, please refer to the accompanying presentation of GSVPIP.</p>	
<p><b>DG Reform Technical Support Instrument project: an effort of the State to support the unaccompanied youth (15-23 years old) (UNHCR)</b></p>	<p>UNHCR presented the Technical Support Instrument (TSI) "<b>Reception and Integration Reforms for Migrants, Especially Unaccompanied Youth,</b>" assigned by DG Reform to UNHCR as the technical expert. The project focuses on three key areas—<b>legal reforms, vocational training and employment, and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)</b>, to address critical gaps in the current system towards establishing a holistic framework to support unaccompanied youth, aged 15 to 23, in Greece.</p> <p>The project's implementation is based on close collaboration with GSVPIP, as the proposed reforms are initiated at the request of the General Secretariat and must be both realistic and sustainable. Given that stakeholder engagement is crucial to the project's success, UNHCR will actively engage with the members of the CPSWG and child protection actors to ensure a coordinated and impactful approach.</p>	<p><b>Action Points:</b> n/a</p>
<p><b>UNICEF's current interventions in the CP sector: national programs that can include refugee and migrant children (UNICEF)</b></p>	<p>UNICEF provided a comprehensive presentation on its interventions in Greece with a focus on strengthening the national child protection system. UNICEF highlighted that child protection in Greece is characterized by fragmented responsibilities and services, with understaffed and unspecialized social services. A key challenge is the absence of clear guidelines on the ratio of social workers to the population, as well as the number of cases each social worker should handle. Additionally, child protection is not a high priority on the social and political agenda.</p> <p>During the pilot phase of the Child Guarantee, UNICEF supported national reforms to establish and expand Supported Independent Living (SIL) programs, extending them to children in national institutional care and orphanages, as well as Professional Foster Care systems for children with disabilities. UNICEF is also collaborating with the Municipality of</p>	<p><b>Action Points:</b> n/a</p>

	<p>Athens to pilot a model of child protection social services model at the local level, aiming also to enhance the cooperation between the Public Prosecutors and the Social Services.</p> <p>Child Rights Centres: In partnership with five universities across Greece (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Democritus University of Thrace, University of Patras, University of Crete, and the Mediterranean University), UNICEF has signed memorandums of understanding for the establishment of the Child Rights Centres to promote child-friendly practices. On the latter, UNICEF is also collaborating with the National Association of Social Workers. Additionally, it is implementing a Technical Support Instrument for the National Action Plan on the EU Child Guarantee and advocating for its expansion.</p> <p>UNICEF is also supporting the GSVPIP in the Guardianship of unaccompanied children through a seconded expert responsible for monitoring and implementation. Recently, another expert has been seconded to RIS to build the capacity of RIS staff on child protection.</p> <p>In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, UNICEF is implementing a national initiative to combat child obesity, identifying gaps and addressing them through both preventive and response measures at institutional and social levels. These interventions span multiple systems, including health, education, and nutrition.</p> <p>Finally, UNICEF is investing in mental health initiatives to promote family and child well-being, addressing systemic challenges in the early identification of parental behavioural disorders and developmental issues in children. It is also working to destigmatize menstruation for adolescent girls and tackle non-suicidal self-harm among young people.</p> <p>For further details, please refer to the accompanying presentation of UNICEF.</p>	
<p><b>AOB</b></p>	<p>The next CPsWG meeting will take place in March 2025. The exact date and time will be confirmed.</p>	<p><b>Action Points:</b> n/a</p>