

Child Protection Sub-Working Group
26.05.2021 Minutes of Meeting

Date:	Wednesday, 26 May 2021 at 10.00-12.00 a.m., via Webex	
Participants:	Special Secretary for the Protection of UAMs/ MoMA, Ministry of Health, MoLSSSA, EKKA, GCR, SOS Children’s Villages, Solidarity Now, Caritas Hellas, IOM, Babel Day Centre, DRC, Faros, NCR, Terre des Hommes, Velos Youth Center, The Home Project, Synyparxis, METAdrasi, The Smile of the Child, MdM, Arsis	
Chair:	UNHCR: Theodora D. Tsovili (tsovili@unhcr.org)	
Agenda	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for children and youth, with special focus to unaccompanied children - International Missing Children's Day.	
	<p style="text-align: center;">Updates on actions for the mental health of children in Greece, Ministry of Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mr. Tsingkanos, Chief of Cabinet of the Deputy Minister of Health Office presented the challenges faced in Greece in the field of mental health and psychosocial support for children and youth as well as the three main focus areas to be improved. ➤ The three main challenges identified are the lack of primary health care infrastructure for children and adults, the lack of beds in psychiatric clinics and the gap in ages 16 to 18 years old coupled with the lack of infrastructure for the young adults (18+). The mental health infrastructure for children in Greece is relatively poor. ➤ The three main areas that the Ministry is focusing their efforts are early prevention of crisis, secondary health care and provision of digitalized services. ➤ Regarding the crisis’ early prevention there has been a gap in legislation which Deputy Minister addressed. As a result, since January, Hospitals, NGOs and Universities have the possibility to create early prevention units and receive funding. Planning to create seven units around the country in the seven different health areas, namely Attica, Larissa, Patras, Thessaloniki, Alexandroupolis, Crete and Ioannina. It will be the first unit of its kind that will be created in the South Mediterranean area. ➤ In the secondary healthcare there is lack of beds in the psychiatric clinics; there are only 69 beds in the whole country. Less than half of them are in Attica. There are daily requests from peripheral hospitals for patients to be transferred to Athens; in many occasions due to lack of beds, these cases are sent to Dromokaitio Psychiatric Hospital of Athens. The mental health system in Greece for children is poor and there is lack of specialized institutions, such as institutions for eating disorders or abused children. MoH in collaboration with Stavros Niarchos foundation will focus on the creation of a control tower in Agia Sophia Hospital , a unit which will be connected to all public health institutions and NGOs where 	<p>Action Points: N/A</p>

doctors, psychiatrists and other health staff will be able to connect and seek advice. The project has a 15 million euros budget, it will be funded by the Niarchos foundation for 5 years and afterwards will pass under the control of the MoH and the national health system. The agreement which is already signed between MoH and the Foundation will soon be forwarded to the parliament for ratification. The aim is to align the public and the private sector in order to provide a more holistic mental health system of high quality and accessible to everyone.

- **Another gap identified is the lack of specialized personnel for children**, especially on the islands and remote areas of the country. To tackle this issue, MoH is creating a platform (GDPR issues to be resolved) where all the psychiatric clinics and state-owned daycentres state will be connected. Initially, they will be providing electronic prescriptions and appointments; due to its complexity, there is no possibility for interpretation in the initiation of the project, however it will be explored at a later stage.
- **In parallel, another platform already started operating as the first digital ‘office’** that provides services for both adults and children, using telepsychiatry. They are planning medical mobile units and digital units for both adults and children all around the country in an effort to provide access to mental health services all over Greece, especially in the remote areas. MoH is looking into investing in mobile units as it is easier in terms of funding and faster in terms of services provision. There is a gap in the provision of mental health services for refugees and the MoH in collaboration with the MoMA is trying to support this area. These units created will be focusing on refugees only, mainly children and will not be addressing the general population. Hopefully by September the setting of mental health services provided in Greece will be improved.

After a relevant question on any referral system in place and prioritization criteria, the MoH clarified that these units will be working fully in a digital mode, providing digital prescriptions, teleservices, etc. The mobile units will be in a position to link the cases with further services.

- **During the pandemic there was a helpline** created in an effort to provide services and support to the citizens. As it has proven to be successful, the MoH is considering its extension. The line is 10306 while the extension 3 directly links to the The Smile of the Child’s helpline (SOS 1056) for children and adolescents where they and their families can get support. There is also a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education to provide support and prevent the suicide attempt cases for children and adolescents. The TSOTC helpline provides interpretation in Arabic and Farsi. <https://covid19.gov.gr/tilefoniki-grammi-psychokinonikis-yp/>
- **In June a Ministerial Decision will be published, clarifying all the above-mentioned issues.**
- In a relevant question if these services will be connected to PAYPA or AMKA, as most of the UAC do not possess such a number, the MoH has identified already the gap and trying to figure out solutions. UNHCR suggested that the issue could be resolved if the temporary PAYPA is extended, especially for children.

- **EKKA mentioned that there are 2 helplines operating on a 24h basis:** 197 for the general public and 1107 for children. Psychologists and social workers respond and assist.

Program for psychosocial intervention to teenagers, PLOES – EPSYME

- **Mrs. Gkousiari, Scientific Manager and Mr. Ganimas, Labs Coordinator of Ploes presented their programme on psychosocial intervention for teenagers.**
- **The programme includes** 1 Day Center, 1 transitional shelter for boys and one for girls while the target group is teenagers (12-18yo) who face the peril of social exclusion and institutionalization.
- **Referrals are being made by** General Hospitals, Juvenile Public Prosecutor’s Office, Court - appointed advocates for juvenile offenders, Mental health units (Day centers, clinics, other shelters), schools, community.
- **Their fields of intervention include** Individual PPSI, cultural interventions and community-based work.
- **Ploes are collaborating with freelancers’ translators/cultural mediators** or with the interpreters of the shelters where their beneficiaries residing. The interpretation needs are explored on a case by case basis. In cases where more specialized interpretation is needed for example in cases of individual sessions, they collaborate with certified/specialized interpreters.
- **For referrals to Ploes the following numbers can be used: 210-9930433 (Day Centre) & 210-9813277(Shelters)**
- **The emergency shelters have accommodated two refugee teenagers who after few months have been referred to shelters.** Both cases were hospitalized, one was homeless and the other abused, were referred to Ploes from the Children’s hospital. The day centre is now supporting a small number of asylum-seeking children, in families.
- **Regarding the treatment of the mental health issues of refugee children, Ploes are taking into account the individual’s experiences, their health, cultural background and have an interdisciplinary approach.** They promote participation of children to activities as pathway to socialization, acceptance, integration & social inclusion. Lastly, they are looking into having a duration in their interventions, a holistic approach and not just to temporarily cover housing needs.

25th May- International Day for Missing Children, The Smile of the Child

- **The Smile of the Child (TSOTC) has in the past presented the Organization’s activities in the CPsWG** and is in close collaboration with UNHCR on the issue of missing refugee and migrant children, having issued a joint Guidance Note last year and currently in the process of organizing joint trainings on the issue.
- **Ms. Protopsaltis, Coordinator of International Cooperation, presented in detail the European Hotline for Missing Children 116000** which The Smile of the Child operates in Greece, and which operates as a single common number across Europe.
- **The presentation focused on commemorating the 25th May, International Missing Children’s Day.** Every year TSOTC holds a special event on this day, during which it shares European and global statistics, as well as its own statistics and actions in Greece. Missing children is one of the main groups of children that the TSOC assists.
- **More than 18.000 migrant children are estimated to have gone missing in Europe between 2018-2020** (Lost in Europe, data collected in 30 countries). In more than half the cases, the child was not found.
- **In 2020, the TSOTC received 10.421 calls and dealt with 101 cases of missing children, while for the first quarter of 2021 they received 4.718 calls and dealt with 21 cases of missing children.** The majority of cases are teenage girls. The number of cases related to missing migrant children is still small, which reflects that cases are not well reported.
- **The largest category is runaway children and the second one is parental abductions.** Missing children in migration follow. Unfortunately, there are no updated research findings – the existing ones are 10 years’ old- to depict the most updated figures on missing children in Europe.
- **Ms. Protopsaltis also presented very briefly some of the statistics of the Hellenic Police,** as they were showcased during TSOTC’s event on 25/05: 992 cases of missing migrant children were reported in 2020, of which 414 were found, hence 578 are still missing.