

## **Relocation of unaccompanied children from Greece**

### **FRA input on the initiative of the European Commission and a group of Member States to relocate unaccompanied children**

**17 March 2020**

The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) urges Member States to agree on a simple and practical workflow as soon as possible, to avoid lack of clarity and delays in the relocation process. This paper provides practical suggestions on relocation of unaccompanied children from Greece, building on lessons learned from previous mandatory and voluntary relocation schemes.

The paper provides FRA input on the initiative of the European Commission and a group of Member States to relocate unaccompanied children.

The suggestions are based on desk research and almost 50 interviews with national authorities and civil society organisations. FRA conducted the interviews between November 2019 and March 2020 in 10 EU Member States: Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands and Portugal.

FRA will publish a full report on relocation of unaccompanied children in May 2020.

#### **Identifying children for relocation**

- ✓ Assess the child's family links first. If children qualify for family reunification under the [Dublin Regulation](#), facilitate and accelerate that procedure, and avoid putting children through the relocation procedure.
- ✓ Use the help of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the European Asylum Office (EASO), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other actors to identify eligible children from the hotspots or mainland. But overall, national authorities should remain responsible.
- ✓ Integrate child protection expertise in the relocation process. A stronger role for the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA) could help ensure that.
- ✓ Do not make eligibility criteria so stringent (e.g. limiting eligibility to specific nationalities, date of arrival or certain ages) as to make the identification of eligible children impossible in practice.
- ✓ Ensure sufficient resources to allow for a speedy assessment in cases of doubt about children's age. To avoid unnecessary delays, consider the age assessment provided by the Greek authorities as legally valid.
- ✓ Take into account the needs of especially vulnerable children, such as those who are sick, married or separated. When relocation of those children is not possible, special procedures are needed in Greece to protect them.

#### **Appointing a guardian**

- ✓ As the Greek guardianship system is undergoing a reform, establish a temporary pool of guardians exclusively for the relocation scheme. Experienced

organisations, such as Metadrasí, could play a key role in this process, under the supervision of the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA).

- ✓ All actors should consult the temporary guardian during the different relocation stages, such as during registration, age and best interests' assessment. The guardians should accompany and support the child in important interactions with other actors.

### **Assessing the child's best interests and providing information**

- ✓ Make sure that decisions to relocate children are based on an assessment confirming that it is in the best interests of that particular child. Use existing tools from the Greek Asylum Service, EASO and UNHCR to assess best interests for relocation purposes.
- ✓ Hear and consider the views of the child in important phases of the process, making sure the child and the guardian provide a full written consent to relocate.
- ✓ Avoid repetitive questioning of the child. Coordinate the work of different actors and share information, in accordance with confidentiality and data protection rules.
- ✓ Security assessments should prioritise checks based on the data on file. If a security interview with the child is necessary, ensure the presence of the guardian or a person of trust. Make sure that interviews are child-appropriate.
- ✓ Ensure effective information that is age appropriate, timely and given in all the different phases of the relocation process.
- ✓ Provide information on changing daily realities orally, also through help lines and cultural mediators.

### **Preparing the departure and transfer**

- ✓ Provide child-appropriate information and preparation to ensure the child knows what to expect in the transfer process and in the Member State of relocation, including cultural awareness, reception conditions and asylum procedures.
- ✓ Use the expertise of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) for the pre-departure preparation, transfer and escort.
- ✓ Apply safety measures to prevent the spread of the Corona COVID-19 virus, such as hygiene measures, possible testing and a quarantine period as required by national authorities.

### **Funding relocation of unaccompanied children**

- ✓ Ensure that the state of relocation as well as Greece receive sufficient funding to adequately respond to the special protection needs of unaccompanied children. Funding should also cover their adequate reception and any follow up to their protection needs. Given the protection needs, the amount given in previous schemes (EUR 6,000 to the Member State to which the child was relocated and EUR 500 to the Member State of departure) should be increased.
- ✓ Consider limiting the administrative requirements for the use of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) when relocating unaccompanied children.