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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL JUSTICE and CONSUMERS

Directorate C: Fundamental rights and Union citizenship
Unit C.1 : Fundamental rights and rights of the child

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JUST.C1

Interservice group on the rights of the child

***Ad hoc* meeting of 19 February 2016**

LX46, A. Vitorino Meeting Room

10h00-13h00

Draft summary record

PARTICIPANTS

Present: DG DEVCO, DG EAC, EASO, EEAS, DG EMPL, DG HOME, DG JUST, DG RTD, DG SANTE, SG, FRA.

Summary:

The aim of the meeting was to discuss planned EU responses to children in migration, taking account of all actions planned by different services and agencies.

As a follow up to the 10.2.2016 [Communication on migration](#), DG JUST has been asked to coordinate with other DGs and prepare a list of actions on children in migration, to be finalised in summer. The list should be updated to include actions agreed recently and should also assess whether there will be any new actions including targeted funding, as set out in the Communication.

The main conclusions of the meeting were as follows:

1. The need to keep both long-term and short-term perspectives in actions by DGs. DG JUST said that even in addressing shorter term humanitarian needs, efforts should be made to bring about system improvements that endure in the longer term.
2. Child protection gaps can be found all along the migration chain: at the entry points, at registration and identification or lack thereof, guardianship, relocation, transit and arrival in destination countries. The phenomenon of unaccompanied children going missing and the risk of children falling prey to traffickers must also be taken into account.
3. Child protection systems need to be strengthened.

4. There is a need to coordinate funding better and to share information on funding plans and grants awarded to IOs, etc., with a view to achieving coherence. Child safeguarding should be a prerequisite for any beneficiaries working directly with children.

1. INVENTORY OF EU ACTIONS

Tour de table

DG EAC (A.2 and C.1):

Ongoing: projects to support access to education institutions addressed to youth workers, NGOs, teachers, schools are underway. DG EAC will share an analysis of the main challenges identified in education, e.g. with regard to identified grey zones – particularly before registration in a host Member State.

Future actions: In April 2016 a peer learning exercise will be conducted in Sweden for the reception classes and skills assessment of pupils. There is a big interest from other Member States. Denmark implements a project which will measure the effects of segregation and language teaching in multilingual platforms. DG EAC plans to tackle the issue of communication in mother tongue and second languages at the EU day of languages. DG EAC may also explore activities on supporting youth workers in the context of Erasmus+ and training on child safeguarding to participants in the European Voluntary Service.

DG RTD:

Ongoing: a research project on child welfare and trafficking in human beings (including data collection) is ongoing. A Task force on migration was established. A conference on how research can support sound migration policies was held on 4-5 February 2016 and the report will be available in 1-2 weeks' time.

Future actions: the Horizon 2020 work programme for 2017 will most likely be revised to include one or two more topics on migration. The Horizon 2018-20 work programme will have a full call dedicated to migration.

DG DEVCO:

Ongoing: Project (Global action to prevent and address trafficking in persons and the smuggling of Migrants) – a global project which covers 13 countries, is implemented in partnership with UNODC, IOM and UNICEF. A project on child labour and on the reintegration part of assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) projects (children under the category of vulnerable migrants) is being developed in cooperation with the ILO.

Future actions: Pilot project with IOM to open one corridor in Africa for return and reintegration.

EASO:

Ongoing: The guidance on family tracing is finalised and will be published in a few weeks' time. A call for experts to work on guidance on the best interests of the child in the context of asylum with a focus on the situation in hotspots and relocation has been launched, first expert's meeting early March, tool to be ready in April 2016. The guidance on age assessments is to be updated, with one working meeting already planned in 2016.

Future actions: EASO has started working on a concept note regarding training in hotspots with integrated child-specific aspects (interviewing children, child-sensitive

procedures and processes, etc.). An awareness raising training tool on THB is being developed and will be ready by Q4.

FRA:

Ongoing: research on the use of biometric data in the asylum, border, migration and visa procedures (SIS, VIS, EURODAC) and registration is underway. FRA underlined the importance of linking child protection policies in MS with missing children. First results on research on immigration detention of children will be available in the coming months..

Future actions: [Monthly updates on the situation in MS – the next one to be published mid-March \(covering February\) will focus on children in migration.](#)

FRONTEX: will extend the VEGA handbook to land and sea borders.

DG SANTE:

Ongoing: Four projects and one direct grant with IOM to support MS in their need to guarantee health care to refugees and migrants, especially children and other vulnerable groups.

Future actions: For 2016 integration is the objective, with projects to guarantee integration in primary health care systems of children and vulnerable populations. A study and data base on access to health care for children, including children in migration, and pregnant women, under Article. 24 of the Convention on the rights of the child is being developed.

DG HOME.C.2 (hotspot team): **The actions already mentioned are still valid.** The issue of registration of children is followed up closely as age assessment is often upon self-declaration, in particular in Italian hotspots. Relocation of unaccompanied children is very limited so far. DG HOME stressed the importance of securing the proper guardianship procedures and the need to improve reception conditions.

EU.ATC:

Ongoing: AMIF call for proposals on integration and safe return of victims of trafficking in the context of migration, one of the priorities being "early identification and protection of children victims of trafficking and unaccompanied children at risk of trafficking". The call will be closed on 25 February so the award phase is expected in the second half of 2016. It is important to include child safeguarding and the 10 Principles on integrated child protection systems as requirements in calls for proposals.

2. CHILD PROTECTION /SAFEGUARDING

As discussed at previous ISG meetings, grant applicants with direct contacts with children are required to submit child protection/safeguarding policy documents ([Child safeguarding standards as a reference](#)). This practice is followed also by EU.ATC and to some extent by DG DEVCO.

FRA stressed the need to provide training on the ground, particularly on child protection. Together with EASO, FRA will also support HOME asylum unit in the upcoming contact committee meeting in April where guardianship and best interests of the child will be on the agenda.

Europol published on 18.02.2016 a [situation report about trafficking in human beings in the EU](#), where the current crisis is mentioned as a major threat.

DG JUST.D2 noted that the gender aspect should be emphasized more. UNHCR published [a study](#) on the situation of migrant women and girls suffering from violence. The study references useful standards and guidelines to be adhered to (Guidelines for integrating gender-based violence interventions in humanitarian action).

3. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

3.1. Coordination on funding

Better coordination and exchange of information between DGs regarding grants, e.g. a list of IO and NGOs funded by DGs would help. Direct grants are given to IOs by different DGs and all participants considered it important to maintain an overview of who funds what.

DG EMPL: MS prefer to use [AMIF](#) to the ESF and [the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprive \(FEAD\)](#), while the latter ones could work to address current needs. ESF can act immediately upon arrival, e.g. for children in the areas of education, access to the labour market, to healthcare. It can cover the costs of housing and education. FEAD can be used at the reception points, in particular for material aid.

3.2. External dimension

EEAS: [EU guidelines on promotion and protection of the right of the child](#) and child protection systems in third countries were discussed with MS on 27 January 2016.

3.3. Integration:

Awareness-raising activities in MS are needed for the better inclusion and integration of migrant children.

DG EMPL: an action plan on integration which would stress the situation of women and children is needed.

DG JUST.D2: there are not enough childcare facilities – preventing parents from benefiting from integration programmes e.g. courses and training.

3.4. Relevance of COM response

DG HOME.D.2 stressed the need for appropriate responses to the situation and emphasised that there was a need for real situation analysis and needs assessments.

3.5. Informal expert group on rights of the child

DG JUST.C1 informed participants that the informal MS expert group will take place on 7 March 2016 and will focus on children in migration.

ISG actions in follow-up to the meeting

1. All DGs to update the inventory (attached) and to ensure that all funding to IOs is recorded and shared. All DGs should also consider whether there will be any new targeted funding for children in migration (see 10.2.2016 Communication page 16).
2. All DGs to share information on challenges in their area with regard to children in migration.
3. DG JUST.C1 to contact ISG participants individually for follow-up

Useful information and links

1. [Data compilation on children in migration](#) – regular updates. All DGs are invited to send any information that could be usefully included to JUST-CHILDREN-RIGHTS@ec.europa.eu.
2. [Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence interventions in humanitarian action](#) and thematic area: [child](#)
3. UNHCR- [Initial assessment report: Protection Risks for women and girls in the European refugee and migrant crisis.](#)
4. [Communication on migration 10.2.2016](#)
5. [Annex 6 to 10.2.2016 Communication](#)
6. [List of actions by the Commission to advance LGBTI equality](#)
7. [Child safeguarding standards](#)
8. [Situation report about trafficking in human beings in the EU](#)
9. [FRA monthly data collection on the migration-related fundamental rights concerns](#)