

Technical support on the deinstitutionalisation process in Greece
Grant Agreement: SRSS/S2019/02

Roadmap for the consultation with relevant stakeholders

Deliverable 5 (as per the Workplan) under Component 1, Output 1.1

**Activity 1.1.1 “Support the completion of the national DI strategy,
roadmap and action plan”**



Original title according to project Workplan

Roadmap for the consultation with relevant stakeholders. Deliverable 5 under Component 1, Output 1.1 Activity 1.1.1 “Support the completion of the national DI strategy, roadmap and action plan”.

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List of Key Terms and Abbreviations

CSOs: Civil Society Organizations

DI: Deinstitutionalisation

EASPD: European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities

MoLSA: Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation

OAED: Labour Employment Office

PwD: Persons with disabilities

Introduction

The European Association of Services providers for Persons with Disabilities provides technical support to Greece in the area of reform of deinstitutionalisation (DI), under Grant Agreement SRSS/S2019/02, with the aim to develop a national DI strategy and action plan as well as instruments to support their implementation. The strategy focuses on four target groups: children, children with disabilities, persons with disabilities and elderly. Throughout the project's life cycle, multiple stakeholders supporting and/or representing the target groups of the strategy participated in multiple consultative processes.

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Consultation is a process where a formal exchange takes place with a specific target, aiming not only at seeking information, but also at seeking advice and identifying the views of the people and the organizations involved in the process. EASPD throughout the DI project consulted Civil Society organizations (CSOs) representing the individuals impacted by the project. CSOs play an essential role as they are the bridge between the decision-makers and the individuals they support, they represent the interests of their users, they are impacted when a reform is developed and public authorities rely on them for the implementation of their objectives.

The objectives of these consultations were:

- to gather information from grassroots organizations regarding the situation on the ground
- to identify the needs and views of the four target groups of the project
- to inform CSOs regarding the progress of the project
- to generate recommendations for the activities of the DI Strategy
- to encourage public authorities in involving CSOs in the decision-making process
- to empower CSOs by involving them actively in the development of the DI Strategy.

This roadmap first provides information on the methodology used for the consultation in each of the components and deliverables of the Project, and then, under the Analysis section, it presents the reports produced after each consultation. A summary of the main information provided by the stakeholders during the consultations is under the "Conclusion and recommendations" section and an Annex is provided at the end with the templates which were used for the collection of



information. In addition, the minutes of the 5 workshops (1 in person and 4 online) are available in separate documents already shared with the MoLSA and DG REFORM.

Methodology for the consultation with relevant stakeholders

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The first step of the methodology was to identify stakeholders, organizations and individuals, which are expected to be impacted by the DI project and create a **stakeholder's registry** based on the four target groups of the strategy. Stakeholders were identified through:

- exchanges with the MoLSA
- desktop research
- exchanges with the Greek members of EASPD, who were also informed of and involved in the project
- meetings with the first identified stakeholders, who connected us with other interested organizations.

The stakeholder's registry is attached under Annex II.

The development and implementation of a reform on deinstitutionalization in Greece involves the development of numerous instruments, outlined in the description of action of the project and each instrument required the implementation of a different approach to effectively involve stakeholders throughout the project's life cycle. Therefore, EASPD conducted:

- 9 in person meetings,
- On-going weekly meetings with the MoLSA,
- 7 video consultations: 6 with children's organisations and 1 with a disability service provider organisation
- 10 video interviews
- 79 e-mail exchanges,
- 1 in-person workshop
- 4 online workshops with around 50 participants in each
- 6 online working groups with around 20 participants in each

In more detail, the consultation tools used for the development of each instrument were:



- A workshop for the development of the DI Strategy with representatives from 12 Civil Society Organizations, the MoLSA, the General Secretariat for the Coordination of Internal Policies, the Church of Greece and the Social Welfare Centers of Attica and Western Greece.
- E-mail exchanges after the workshop, with participants sending their contributions for the working document of the DI Strategy.
- Online and in person meetings with the MoLSA for the development of the DI Strategy.
- One-on-one video consultations with organizations in Greece representing at least one of the four target groups of the Strategy for the development of the Action Plan on the implementation of the national DI Strategy. The agenda which was used for the consultations is under the Annex I, as “Template 1. Consultations with organizations in Greece”. The inputs of the consultations are on the Analysis chapter of this document, “Reports from the consultations with organizations in Greece”.
- E-mail exchanges with representatives of organizations in Greece and other European Countries for the identification of best practices on community-based living for the development of the Factsheets on Best Practices on community-based living.
- Video interviews for the development of the Factsheets on Best Practices on community-based living.
- Video consultations for the identification of existing training materials for the development of the training for trainers of social care workers and their managers in community-based services.
- 6 online working groups focusing on Deinstitutionalisation Action Plan with representatives from the MoLSA, the Social welfare Centres of Attica and Western Greece and 10 civil society organisations.



Analysis

1. Reports from the consultations with organizations in Greece.

1.1 Consultations with organizations in child protection services

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1.1.1 Report of the consultation with Roots Research Center NGO

Date: 28/07/2020

Participants:

- Mary Theodoropoulou, Roots Research Center NGO
- Konstantina Leventi, EASPD

General information about Roots:

- Roots offers training to foster care families via educational seminars. In cooperation with Eurochild they will train juvenile probation officers in September from the Municipalities of Athens and Piraeus and they hope to provide this training to the officers all around Greece, but they do not receive any funding for the training.
- Roots works together with Eurochild, Institute of Health, Child's Ombudsman.

Step by step the separation of the child from the family:

- The child is separated from the family, based on an accusation, complaint, without the notification of the social services of the region or municipality and without a prior investigation process.
- The police notifies [Smile of the Child](#), an organization offering support services in Greece for children and families in need. The "Smile of the Child" offers prevention services, a National Helpline for addressing situations of violence against children, Homes for children victims of any form of violence, Day Care Centres for children whose families face serious problems and services for the prevention and intervention in cases of children trafficking and smuggling.
- The district attorney gives permission to the Smile of the Child, for the removal of the child.
- The Smile of the child removes with an ambulance the child, without waiting and without notifying first the social services to investigate the case. There have been incidents in which the child had been separated for minor reasons which didn't justify the need for the removal, but they moved forward with removing the child.



- The child is transferred to the hospital for examination, the mother has the right to be with the child, but nobody supports her.
- The child might stay in the hospital for a minimum of 3 months and even 6 months before being placed in an institution.
- In Greece, in most cases, they do not investigate the possibility of the child to return to the biological family, children are placed straight in institutions and in the registry for adoption or foster care.

Issues and gaps identified:

- In some cases, the lack of guardianship over the child for foster parents may lead to accountability issues and impossibility to take decisions or implement actions. This is particularly problematic when parents are not willing to let their children being put under foster care. The lack of formal guardianship hampers therefore the possibility to sign documents and take decisions (e.g. give permission for a medical procedure if this shall be needed).
- There is an Immediate Social Assistance Line which the individuals and the police can call in case of domestic violence/ individuals going through a crisis or even in a state of emergency, but most of the citizens and services are not familiar with this line and they often call the Smile of the Child. (The line is from EKKA-National Centre of Social Solidarity, phone number: 197)
- Social workers are not trained on how to handle these cases and they do not carry out random visits in families, where there is suspected neglect or abuse of a child.
- There is no service provision/support offered to the family of the child who is being removed.
- Also, they do not investigate if the child can later return to its biological family, and there is no service provision for these families. For example, if the child could later return to the family with the appropriate support services in place, this child could be registered to the foster care registry and be with a foster family for a specific time, rather than be adopted, as the child can return to the biological family later on.
- Foster care in Greece is not well developed, most people want to adopt but very few are available to act as foster parents.
- We do not exactly know how many children are in institutions. 2015 mapping done by Roots/ Eurochild indicates 2800 children live in institutions, 1000 of them are children with disabilities, many adolescents over 12 years old and around 500 children of smaller age.

- There is a benefit given to the foster care parents, but only if the child is placed in foster care through a public hospital of Athens. If the child is placed from a hospital outside of the region of Athens, foster care parents do not receive a benefit.
- Foster care parents with children with disabilities do not receive support for the modification of their environment, to offer support to the child based on its individual needs.
- Foster care mothers are not offered parental leave or days off to care for their foster child, as biological mothers.
- Juvenile probation officers are included in the Ministry of Justice, they support children with previous criminal activity and there is a specialized registry for foster parents of children with criminal background. These foster parents do not receive benefits.
- Many of the care leavers, because of the lack in support systems, might get in prostitution or drug addiction contexts – sometimes becoming drug sellers - so they can support themselves financially.
- There is no service provision for adopted children/ adolescents whose adopted family suddenly stops to be their parents. Parents have the right to terminate adoption in court, but after the adoption is terminated the former adopted individuals are left without support, not even holding a family name.

Identified Positive process:

- In Greece there is a very good evaluation process of the foster families, so when the children are placed in foster families, they will receive appropriate care from their foster parents.

Overall Suggestions:

- Before the removal of the child the case needs to be investigated by the social services, except from cases where the need is imminent, and the child is in danger.
- There is the need of a different law scheme, between the institution, the region/ municipality overseeing the transition to foster care and the foster parents for maybe a joint guardianship. Or foster care parents to have a temporarily guardianship, which can be supervised by an organization/authority.
- The mapping of children who live in institutions needs to be a priority.
- Foster care awareness raising/incentives provided to foster care parents

- All foster care parents should receive the benefit for their foster child, regardless from which institution/hospital the child is transferred, and which service oversees the transition of the child into foster care. The Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Justice need to cooperate as both supervise services which put children in foster care.
- There is a need for the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Justice to work together, as the services provided by these 3 ministries overlap but are not well connected.
- The ministry of Education should be included in this cooperation-memorandum, as care leavers should be supported through the services provided by OAED. [OAED](#) is the public authority, which promotes employment, provides unemployment insurance and benefits, social protection benefits and allowances, such as the maternity allowance, as well as vocational training and education. OAED may provide care leavers not only a benefit to support them financially but also should include them in their training programs for free, so they can advance their knowledge and find a job that will support them financially.
- Private universities/colleges/training centres may offer at least one place for free each, for individuals without parental support, as part of their corporate social responsibility.
- Foster care mothers should receive parental leave or days off to care for their foster children, as biological mothers.
- Develop supported living apartments for adolescents with prior criminal backgrounds or adolescents who unfortunately will not be adopted or adolescents for whom the adoption has been terminated.
- Development of training for social workers, district attorneys and juvenile probation officers.
- Development of advocacy groups, peer to peer groups to support care leavers.
- Development of a network of support and cooperation between services providers, from public and private organizations/services.

1.1.2 Report of the Consultation with SOS-Villages

Date: 29/07/2020

Participants:

- Stergios Sifnios - SOS Villages



- Mary Xanthopoulou – SOS Villages
- Konstantina Leventi – EASPD

Notes from our discussion:

- SOS Villages have implemented different actions in institutions for the support of DI, such as development and delivery of training to the staff.
- From 2017 SOS Villages, have supported 10 different public services, such as the Child Care Service Anarrotirio Pentelis. They advocate through the media to support the change in the mindset of the Greek community. They cooperate closely with Municipalities and Regions.

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Issues and gaps identified:

- 85% of children who have been removed from their families go to institutions and the solution does not lie only in adoption and foster care.
- Foster care remains still very problematic as the matching of a child to a foster family is not always working. This is a problem recognised internationally as 40% of children in foster care children return to institutions. Siblings are often separated, not only being put in different families, but also in different cities/regions.
- There are problems with the proper implementation of the new law on adoption/foster care, as data on institutions run by the Church are less available.
- The development of a good quality framework and establishment of quality regulations for the basic operating standards of institutions and out-of-home care should have been developed before the development of the new law for adoption/foster care, but unfortunately this did not happen.

Overall Suggestions:

- Need for a systemic change in Greece, for a change in mindset, as there is a deep-rooted/consolidated situation in Greece.
- DI is a dynamic process, which needs knowledge, strong political will and proper implementation.
- For a good DI process, it is essential to ensure a proper allocation of funds and the development of a good communication strategy.
- It's important before the development and implementation of a legal framework to prepare and design it properly.



- Interconnection and alliances should be built between all actors of the child protection services, from the Ministry of Justice and the prosecutors, services supporting the prevention of separation of the child, services which support the family and prepare the family for the separation of their child, as well as the preparation of the unit that will welcome the child after the separation.
- Development of programs to support a change in the mindset of the community towards foster care → For the implementation of the new law in adoption/ foster care. Not enough knowledge in the Greek community on what foster care is, many people want to adopt and not to foster.
- Development of a training program for foster care parents.
- Development of a training for staff in institutions on how to work with the biological family of the child/ how to build relationships. (The staff in institutions are not well trained, insufficient number of staff, they do not work with the biological family of the child and they do not support relationships between the child and its biological family.)
 - Regarding the training of the staff, it's not only about the training material or delivery but also on how we will ensure that the staff will implement the strategies/ approaches in which they were trained in their day to day activities.
- Development of services for the after care of children. Development of a preparation program for adolescents (care leavers) to live independently and be included in the society.
- Development of services for children who will not transition to foster care/ adoption.

1.1.3 Report of the Consultation with LUMOS

Date: 7/7/2020

Participants:

- Konstantina Kintoni (Lumos)
- Vasilis Kalopisis (EASPD)

Notes from the discussion:

- Vasilis Kalopisis presented the progress made on the DI Strategy and the Action Plan
- Konstantina Kintoni shared specific recommendations relevant to the part of the Strategy and the Action Plan concerning Children's rights:
 - Need for realistic mapping of services



- Concerns about the progress of the DI in Lechaina and Voula Institutions
 - Need for coherent protocol dealing with child abuse and neglect
 - Need for an integrated way to monitor children going through the system of institutionalisation
- Konstantina Kintoni recommended training materials to include in the development of the training for trainers deliverable and shared good practices from abroad.
 - She is also willing to participate as trainer in the staff training which will be developed by EASPD in collaboration with MoLSA
 - She was invited in the second round of consultations in September 2020

1.1.4 Report of the Consultation with the Child’s Ombudsperson

Date: 7/7/2020

Participants:

- Theoni Koufonikolakou (Children’s Ombudswoman from Greece)
- Vasilis Kalopisis (EASPD)

Notes from the discussion:

- Vasilis Kalopisis provided an overall picture of the DI project undertaken by EASPD. Ms. Koufonikolakou described the actions of the Ombudswoman and the important consultation initiatives she has undertaken with stakeholders in the field of child protection. The content of the discussion is summarized in the table below.

Need/Lack	Required action	Objective	Implementing Body	Supervisory Body
Incomplete provisions for prevention of institutionalisation. Insufficient interventions supporting natural families at risk. Understaffing, under-training of municipal	Development of social services for identification - support of families at risk at the level of local government	Strengthen prevention services in the community, support to the natural family and avoid institutionalisation. Further involvement in the natural family in order to bring back to the latter a child who went to an Institution.	Private law bodies of social services to be set up at the level of municipalities with contracts of a duration of at least 5 years which will operate on a subsidiary basis with the existing	Supervision by a central body, for example?

social services. Impossibility for the municipalities to recruit new employees			social services of the municipalities.	
Inconsistency and heterogeneity in the management of abuse and neglect of children in social services	Establishment of a protocol for the management of abuse and neglect of children, common to all child protection services. Use of the relevant material produced in the framework of the cooperation between the IIOs, SKLE and EKKA.	Establish a common and science-based approach to abuse and neglect.	Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Interior	Ministry of Labour
Inconsistency and heterogeneity in the management of abuse and neglect of children in social services	Training of workers in social services in the use of the protocol on the management of abuse and neglect of children.	Proper implementation of the protocol on the management of abuse and neglect of children		
Initial placement of children removed from their families into hospitals. Inability of the hospitals' social services to support	Facilitation, activation of emergency foster care so that children who move from their families do not need to go through a	Avoiding institutionalisation at source		

children and accompany their transition to non-institutional environments	hospital or institution but can go directly to foster care families (whether professionals or not)			
Initial placement of children removed from their families into hospitals. Inability of the hospitals' social services to support children and accompany their transition to non-institutional environments	Review of Article 16 of the Law on adoption and foster care in order to promote, facilitate professional foster care			
Small number of people interested to undertake the role of foster parents	Actions to raise awareness and inform the wider community about foster care	Increase the number of persons interested to undertake the role of foster parents		
Lack of awareness of candidate foster parents	Training of foster families	Support for foster families		
Lack of specifications for the authorisation, certification and operation of residential childcare services. In the private sector, the situation is	Development of Initial minimum quality standards for the operation of residential childcare services. Establishment of a timetable	Align residential services with international conventions on children's rights	Ministry of Labour	

entirely uncontrollable and there are services that operate without even authorisation.	for compliance with these specifications and sanctions in case of non-compliance (closing services and financial penalties in the accounting officers)			
Lack of supervision of residential childcare services	Establishment of a mechanism for the supervision of closed childcare structures and compliance with specific operational requirements. Legislation defining the extension of the powers of the SEYYP (Body of health and welfare service inspectors) to services supervised by MoLSA	Effective supervision of closed childcare structures		
Initial placement of children removed from their families into hospitals. Inability of the hospitals' social services to support children and	Create transitional services of short-term accommodation (up to 2 months) to provide appropriate support for children who	Adequate support and accompaniment of children removed from their families in non-institutional environments		

accompany their transition to non-institutional environments	move away from their families and search for urgent community-based solutions			
Lack of preparation for adolescents living in institutions to integrate into community life	Establishment of structures for supported living (up to 6 persons) for adolescents with and without disabilities operating in preparation for a transition to community life	Prepare young people residing in a residential institution for their transition to the community		

1.2 Consultations with organizations supporting Persons with Disabilities

1.2.1. Report of the consultation with ESAMEA (National Confederation of Disabled Persons)

Date: 7/9/2020

Participants:

- Mr Vardakastanis, Mr Limvaivos, Mr Logaras (ESAMEA)
- Vasilis Kalopisis (EASPD)

Notes from the discussion:

Mr. Kalopisis presented the progress that has been achieved in the deinstitutionalization project in recent months. Reference was made to all the outputs that have been developed, i.e. the reporting of good practices, the development of the needs assessment protocol, the development of training material for employees and managers in the field of social care, the annex of relevant legislation and the state of play reports concerning the institutions of Lechaina and Pikpa Voulas. Detailed steps of the consultation with the Ministry were presented as well as the main elements of the Deinstitutionalization Strategy and the draft of the relevant Action Plan.

Key points:



Mr. Vardakastanis expressed the intention of ESAMEA to have a more active role throughout the consultation process.

Mr Logaras highlighted the importance of a clear mapping of existing services and settings and the need of having disaggregated data regarding numbers of persons now living in institutions.

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Mr Limvaivos suggested to include in the Strategy and the Action Plan actions related with the Roma population where there is significant lack of reliable data and provisions.

1.3 Working groups on Deinstitutionalisation Action Plan

Two separate working groups were formed to thoroughly discuss the development of DI Action Plan. The first group focused on the parts of the Action Plan addressing the needs of adults with disabilities and elderly and the second working group focused on children with and without disabilities.

The first group met online 3 times (23.10.20, 30.10.20, 4.11.20) with the participation of 2 representatives from the following stakeholders:

- EASPD
- Representative from Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
- National Confederation on Disabled Persons
- i-living
- Network of service providers in the field of disability
- 50+
- Representative from Social Welfare Center of Attica

The second group focusing on the parts of the Action Plan concerning children and children with disabilities also met online 3 times (21.10.20, 26.10.20, 2.11.20) with the participation of 2 representatives from the following stakeholders:

- EASPD
- Representative from Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
- Greek Ombudsperson for children
- POSGAMEA
- Unicef
- Lumos
- AMIMONI, Alma
- SOS children's villages
- Representative from Social Welfare Center of Attica

1.3.1 Main points emerging from the working groups on DI Action Plan

- It is very important that the DI Action Plan is in line with the National Strategy for disability that has been recently adopted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.



- In the mapping process which is included in the Action Plan it is very important to highlight the need to collect not only quantitative but also qualitative data
- Care should be taken so that all project target groups (children with and without disabilities, adults with disabilities and the elderly) are more actively involved in the co-design of the DI process.
- Legislation on the operation of supported living accommodation needs to be reformed and qualitative standards should be developed for these services.
- There is a large gap in the training of employees in all welfare services
- The value of early childhood intervention (ECI) is of great importance and in order for it to work properly, the Ministries of Health, Justice, Interior and Finance must also be involved.
- Community centres should be remodelled to provide also direct services to beneficiaries.
- Independent living centres are a new service that can be added to the existing ones and facilitate the social inclusion of people with support needs.
- Professional and emergency foster care must be strengthened
- The age limits for foster parents in the existing legal framework should be abolished as this creates obstacles to the development of foster care.



Conclusions and recommendations

- Deinstitutionalisation needs to be accompanied by thoughtful planning and sufficient resource-coverage to envisage a range of support for individuals and their families at all levels.
- Social services for identification and support of families at risk need further development at the level of local government. A network of support services needs to be established to support biological families, prevent abuse/neglect occurrences and institutionalization of children and encourage reunification of the children with their biological families. Interconnection and alliances should be built between all actors of child protection services.
- The procedures for foster care adoption are to be improved as there seems to be a general lack of coordination and poor support provision foreseen in all the phases linked to the placement of children in foster care. Before, during and after foster care placement, as well as in the case of interruption of foster care very often the child is left without protective and safety mechanisms that make him/her very fragile and vulnerable.
- Proper procedures need to be established for the placement of children directly into alternative care instead of hospitals and /or institutions. Raising awareness activities need to be undertaken to increase the availability of foster care families, as well as emergency foster care, professional foster care, transitional services of short-term accommodations (up to 2 months) need to be activated.
- The development of supported living arrangements for adolescents living care needs to be foreseen with the simultaneous development of a preparation program in independent living.
- Community-based services need to be developed for children who will not transition neither to adoption nor to foster care.
- High quality framework and quality regulations aligned with international conventions on children's rights need to be developed for the operation of residential childcare services. Mechanisms for the supervision of closed childcare structures and compliance with specific operational requirements need to be established. Proper implementation and sufficient training on a coherent and common protocol on the management of abuse and neglect of children in social services need to be undertaken.
- The staff working in social services need not only to be properly trained but also supported in implementing the knowledge they gained in their day to day activities.

- The development of support services needs to be in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and specifically with Article 19 on the right for living independently and being included in the community, but attention should be paid also to all other articles that are key for the participation in society, such as Article 24 on Education, Article 27 on Employment, Article 25 on Health.
- An individualized plan needs to be developed for each and every individual with a disability, to meet their specific needs. It is essential that people have the flexibility to choose the services they need.
- The preparation for the transition of persons with disabilities is equally important as the transition itself. Planning and preparation for the integration of these individuals in vocational training, employment, education needs to be foreseen.
- Deinstitutionalisation cannot happen if support services are not developed and made available to individuals. Support needs to be a key element to promote inclusion and participation.
- Access to education will support the competency development of persons with disabilities and will equip them with a more solid basis to enter the labour market. Employment of person with disabilities is a key priority, as deinstitutionalisation cannot be foreseen without the integration of persons with disabilities in employment.
- Personal assistance schemes may also support the employment of persons with disabilities.
- Legal capacity of persons with disabilities is equally important and services promoting supported decision-making approaches should be developed.

Annex I: Template 1. Consultations with representatives from organizations in Greece

1.1 Children's organizations

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Objective: Exchange views, gather information which are missing, take their input into consideration, an informal exchange from grassroots organizations based in Greece

Proposed Agenda:

- Information about the DI project
- Identify gaps/issues:
 - a. Policy level
 - b. Services for children protection (παιδική προστασία)
- General Recommendations on issues relevant:
 - a. Policy level
 - b. Services for children protection
- Training materials to recommend
- Invite them in the September's meeting

Examples of Questions to ask:

1. What has been done so far, in terms of DI in Greece for children?
2. What are the changes on a policy level that have been done recently? How that has affected the provision of services for children?
3. What services or initiatives have been developed from the new foster care law? What is the situation on the ground?
4. What type of services exist in Greece to support children and families, to avoid separation and promote reunification?
5. What happens once a child has been removed from the family? What is the process before, during, after? Foster care-adoption?
6. What are the main gaps in services in Greece now and what type of services/ initiatives should be developed? (problem-solution)
7. Are there any models of good practices in services in Greece now, which shall be further developed and promoted?
8. Give information on the training we are developing. Do you know of any training materials which have been used in Greece or other countries recently to train professionals working with children?
9. Identify their interest in participating in a meeting in September

