

Regional Conference: Quality Mechanisms in Child Protection December 5-6 2017, Tirana, Albania, Conference Notes



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Introduction

The **purpose** of the conference was to **map out the different, existing mechanisms**, by which governments **monitor the quality of the services provided** to children and families and to exchange on how these systems can be improved. The conference was grounded on national research papers that described the national child protection systems, any standards of operations of services and quality control mechanisms.

The **research papers** can be found on the following link:

<https://childhub.org/en/child-protection-online-library/reviewing-existing-quality-mechanisms-child-protection-serbian>

Given, that the conference also marked the end of the implementation period of the ChildHub Phase I, participants were also asked to provide their inputs towards the final evaluation of the project through focus group discussions.

Day 1.



The conference was opened by **Ms. Ina Verzivolli, the head of Albania's State Agency for Child Protection**. She shortly described the long way Albania has gone since 2014, in setting up and improving its child protection system. „Back in 2014, when I started the job, child protection was a strange word” – Ms. Verzivolli explained. In 2015 they published a White Paper on Integrated Child Protection, a vision document on one system that responds to the child's needs with all agencies involved.

In 2016 a new law was passed, reinforcing CPU's (Child Protection Units) and minimum standards: these standards provided clear mandates, and designated at least one social worker for 3000 children in the territory. It also addressed the issue of poverty which should not be seen as a child protection issue. The law also included reporting obligation for all agencies concerned, unfortunately this is not being enforced.

The Agenda for Children 2020 set out the government's strategy, planned activities and allocated budget.

Currently there are 219 CPUs in 61 municipalities, 47 of them are full time and only 67 of them are trained social workers. In 2016 there were 1400 cases identified, 900 of them were victims of abuse, violence, neglect or exploitation. This number also indicates an increase in the quality of protection provided, a result of capacity building efforts and inter-agency cooperation.

Challenges of course remain: the State Agency has the mandate for coordination among different entities, but there are no stable focal points, and those do not respond in time. Also, the Agency needs to coordinate with non-state actors and 61 municipalities.

Same standards need to be enforced and ensured across all municipalities and putting sanctions in place in case of non-compliance.

Also, the accreditation of social workers needs to come into place.

Jezerca Tigani, Country Representative for Albania & Kosovo, and Joseph Aguetant, Head of Eastern Europe Region, greeted participants in the name of Terre des hommes, the host of the current conference. Ms Tigani mentioned that Terre des hommes has been supporting the stabilisation and strengthening of the child protection system in Albania for almost 2 decades now, and is committed to continue this work. There is a need for improve the critical elements that would help the system effectively, important parts of which are the quality assurance mechanisms.

Mr. Aguetant mentioned that for ChildHub the next steps are to continue for another three years, opening up towards Ukraine, Montenegro and Macedonia, while innovation will be a key element in the project. He repeated the point that only independent institutions can do adequate monitoring of the child protection system, and that children and families need to be involved in the evaluation of services.



A team of Bulgarian experts, Valentina Simeonova, Galina Markova, Steli Peteva and Lyubomir Djalev representing the Know-How Center for the Alternative Care of Children provided a thorough overview of their recently completed initiative, "Child-Centered Monitoring" of child protection services.

First Ms. Galina Markova presented the work of the Know-How Center generally. Its mission is to support child care reform, especially de-institutionalisation with knowledge and recommendations. In Bulgaria there are 2000 children in care homes right now, down from

the original 35,000. The Center contributes to changing mindsets that maintain an institutional style of working with children. It promotes a child-centered approach and encourages an investment into training and support rather than into building construction. She then went on to explain that action research is research focusing on processes rather than on results. Data was collected from professionals and they participated in analyzing it to improve their practice (please see the ppt for details)

Next, Professor Lzubomir Djalev made a presentation about monitoring and evaluation – clarifying definitions. He pointed out differences between exercising control (like the state) and monitoring (which has a learning and feedback function). He also described how to set indicators. He finally went on to describe the child-center monitoring process of the Center, and its structure and phases. They have defined the concept with the help of focus groups, then defined indicators during a special conference with specialists. Phase 3 was the in-depth analysis, Phase 4 came up with an initial version of the monitoring system which was then piloted in some municipalities in Phase 5, while at the end the indicator system was adjusted based on the experiences in the pilot.



Answering a question from the audience the Bulgarian colleagues explained that the Center always contextualizes Western knowledge, and so the instruments used in this research were also adapted. The process was undertaken in cooperation with Agencies, but the financing was provided by both donors and government, and the monitoring was not integrated into the system (not at this point).

Finally Valentina Simeonova presented the research itself which aimed at bringing objective evidence about what is happening in the child protection system. Professionals expressed during the research that they perceive monitoring as control, and had long discussions about the meaning of quality. At the end of the process indicators have become standards of quality.

The main characteristics of the approach is that the care provided for the child should be holistic, that the child is considered as integral part of the family system, that the child is included in the change and has a leading role, that he/she is cared for by qualified specialists, that the care is individualised, in the best interests of the child, it is strength- and rights-based and the care is supported by society.

Monitoring teams were created at the Child Protection Departments by the State Agency and in large municipalities. .

Ms.Simeonova presented examples of the indicators used. The indicators were not a checklist, it was rather a discussion with the child and family, and this had to be analysed. Photos, audio files, diaries, pictures were all basis of analysis. The example indicators can be found in the enclosed power point.

The piloting took place with 20 teams, 68 child services, 10 child protection departments. They randomly chose 10 cases of children from each service.

Conference participants wanted to know how this could be replicated elsewhere:

The methodology used in Bulgaria itself is copyrighted, and the Bulgarian colleagues recommended that in fact the process of developing indicators is a crucial one that can only be done locally using a bottom-up approach. In this preparation phase local professionals need to reach a common understanding of what child centered monitoring means for them, while this forms groups who speak the same language about monitoring. This way the system itself will be recognised and accepted by professionals, not viewed as brought from the outside, foreign, and instrument of control. The system can only be sustainable through this process.

Answering a question from the audience Bulgarian colleagues explained that the research lead to a recognition that indicators are indeed required to see the quality of work, it helped structure the work of professionals better, and identified gaps and deficiencies of the work done. Professionals for example realised they needed help in involving children- they recognised they do not have tools for this.

At the moment the Ministry of labour and Social Policy is developing a new law on social services and M and E is an important part of this.

The **second part of the day was an interactive 'world cafe'** providing an opportunity to participants to discuss the findings of national reports in small groups (each participant could get a briefing of three different reports).



After these lively discussions, country teams were formed in order to put together a national action plan, based on their own country's current situation. These action plans included many common action points, such as building an inter-sectorial quality review mechanism, improving all documents of standards related to child protection services, developing capacities of inspection and monitoring actors, developing a centralized data base on children at state level, etc. The action plans are in Annex of this report.

Day 2

Evgenia Generalova provided a short recap of Day 1, including the summary of the Bulgarian presentation, the key points of country reports on existing quality mechanisms and action planning (see the ppt attached).

The morning divided participants into three groups: 2 groups were formed in order to discuss the ChildHub, what it has achieved, and what is still outstanding. These groups were facilitated by consultants of InFocus, the company contracted



to conduct the final evaluation of the project. The third group worked with Ms. Galina Markova, discussing child participation:

It became quite obvious that child participation meant different things for different professionals. Obviously, participation is different for different age-groups of children, or children with special needs. Adults however should be ready to transfer real control over to children in order to make their own decisions. If done right, participation also brings parents on board to get involved in child protection. Children on the other hand should be able to express what their expectations are, and adults should make it very clear as to who was responsible to fulfill those expectations.

In terms of the forms of participation consultation, cooperation and child-led participation were discussed. For each form participants discussed how the issues surface, who takes a decision on actions, who takes action, how actions are evaluated and how the next steps are defined and implemented.

Participants agreed that professionals involved should be well trained and should be clear as to the benefits of child participation: participation should not be viewed as just a task, but should have a purpose that furthers the rights of children.

In closing the conference Ms. Jezerca Tigani, Delegate of Tdh in Albania and Kosovo, mentioned that after these intensive two days discussing quality mechanisms, the next step will be to put the national action plans into practice and move the issue forward in each country.

Annexes:

1. Agenda of the Conference
2. Participant list
3. Country action plans



Annex 1. Agenda of the Conference

December 5, 2017 Tuesday

9.00-9.30	Welcome and Keynote speech Welcome from ChildHub	Jezerca Tigani, Delegate, Albania, Kosovo, Tdh Ina Verzivoli, State Agency for Child Protection Joseph Aguetant, Head of Eastern Europe region, Terre des hommes
9.30-10.30	Experience of Serbia introducing minimum standards when working with refugees and migrants	Marko Milanovic IDEAS
10.30-10.45	Coffee break	
10.45-12.15	Child centered monitoring - Bulgaria's response to raising the quality of childcare. Q and A	Valentina Simeonova, Galina Markova, Steli Peteva and Lyubomir Djalev Know-How Center for the Alternative Care of Children, Bulgaria
12.30-13.30	Lunch	
13.30-15.00	World Café: presenting and discussing the country reports on existing quality mechanisms	Researchers from each country presenting their report
15.00-15.30	Coffee break	
15.30-17.00	In country groups: sharing and action planning: 1 slide to be produced by each	Sharing information gained in world café, identifying highlights, identifying what can be done in their own country
17.00	Conclusion	Terrence Jantzi (Tdh)

December 6, 2017 Wednesday

9.00-9.20	Recap of Day 1: presentation of the slides	Evgenia Generalova (Tdh)
9.20-10.50	Workshops: Focus groups on evaluating ChildHub and Child participation and use of the monitoring system for ethical inclusion of children - challenges and good practices	Know-How Center for the Alternative Care of Children, Bulgaria, InFocus
10.50-11.00	Coffee break	
11.00-12.30	Workshops: Focus groups on evaluating ChildHub and Child participation and use of the monitoring system for ethical inclusion of children - challenges and good practices	Know-How Center for the Alternative Care of Children, Bulgaria, InFocus
12.30-13.00	Conclusion of the conference	Jezerca Tigani Delegate, Albania, Kosovo, Terre des hommes
13.00-14.00	Lunch	

Annex 2. Participant list

Name	Position and Organization
ALBANIA	
Arjana Pellumbi	Director of the State Inspectoriat for the Social Services
Ina Verzivolli	Head of State Agency for the Protection of Children's Rights
Luneda Sufali	Head of State Social Services
Merita Xhafa	Ministry of Health and Social Protection
Denada Dibra	Ministry of Health and Social Protection
Anisa Ruseti	Director of Social Inclusion and Protection, Tirana Municipality
Izela Tahsini	Faculty of Social Sciences, Study Expert for Albania
Ditmir Lita	Case Manager, ARSIS
Nadire Kreka	CPU Worker, Elbasan Municipality
Bosnia-Herzegovina	
Ivana Zečević	Professor assistant at the University of Banjaluka, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Psychology and Teacher Education
Sanja Skenderija	Research analyst associate, Department of social, family and child protection - Ministry of Health and Social Welfare Republika Srpska
Eledin Muratbegović	Profesor at the University of Sarajevo, Faculty for Criminology and Security studies
Aida Ivković	B-H coordinator, Save the Children
Bulgaria	
Galina Markova	Director Know-How Center for the Alternative Care of Children (KHC)
Valentina Simeonova	Program manager, KHC
Rositsa Dimitrova	Ministry of Labor and Social Policy
Greta Gancheva	Ministry of Education

Steli Peteva	Institute for Community-based Social Services Foundation (ICSS)
Natalia Myhailova	National researcher
Radostin Georgiev	Ministry of education
Croatia	
Sanja Orešković	Director of Children First Association
Milena Koren	Service for Social Policy, Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy
Vesna Katalinić	National coordinator, Brave Phone
Marina Trbus	Korak po korak, researcher for Brave Phone
Ljiljana Bubnić	Psychologist
Anica Ježić	Head of Sector for International Cooperation, , Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy
Kosovo	
Bajram Kelmendi	The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare
Igballe Rrahmani	Ombudsperson for Children's Rights
Fatmir Fazliu	National Researcher
Kushtrim Islami	National coordinator
Abaz.M. Xhigoli	Center for Social Work, Fushe Kosove
Alketa Lasku	Deputy Country Representative
Albulena Shabani	Program Officer on Child Protection
Fitore Rexhaj	The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare
Moldova	
Maia Bănărescu	Ombudsperson for Children's Rights
Marcela Țirdea	Senior Consultant. Permanent Secretariat of the National Council for

Gheorghe Trofin	Child Rights Protection
Veronica Pelivan	Senior consultant. Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection
	National coordinator, Q&A officer, Tdh Modlova
Romania	
Delia Nita	Researcher, author of national research
Dana Corina Marinescu	Counselor, The National Authority for Child protection
Mihai Enache	Project Manager at Tdh Craiova office in place of Raluca, national associate
Mariana Arnautu	Program Manager at Advocacy & Operations, World Vision Romania
Serbia	
Slavica Milojevic	Head of Department for Information, Communication and Promotion - Republic Institute for Social Protection
Sasa Stefanovic	Director of Network of children's organizations of Serbia
Dragana Vuckovic	Center for Youth Integration
Marko Milanovic	IDEAS
Myroslava Kharchenko	Ombudsman's office Ukraine
Joseph Aguetant	Head of Europe Region, Terre des hommes
Evgenia Generalova	Communications and Knowledge Manager, Terre des hommes
Judit Nemeth-Almasi	Deputy Delegate, Terre des hommes

Albania

- Building an inter-sectorial quality review mechanism/body in relation to quality review of child protection services (including health, education, justice for children and social services)
- Reviewing and improving all documents of standards related to child protection services, based on new relevant laws
- Increasing the capacities of inspection and monitoring actors to conduct child-sensitive quality monitoring processes

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- ❖ Fostering has great potential focusing on strengthening the system of foster care families with excluding placing children in institutions; development of specialized foster care
- ❖ Inspectors – increase number and quality of their engagement/work
- ❖ There is no centralized data base on children at state level; data base at entity level and Brcko DC; adjustment of existing data base on children;
- ❖ Initiate special department for monitoring and evaluation at entity and Brcko DC level
- ❖ Professionals in child protection area – increase number of professionals and support professional development

Bulgaria

- Establishment of a national information system/research agency which would integrate existing systems or replace them.
- Needs to include all systems of child well-being (health, education and social);
- Needs to be an independent agency/body to monitor and create reports – quantitative research which would be used for qualitative research (integrating public access and objectivity);
- Emphasis on the education and training of staff for the agency.

Croatia

- Joined educations of centers for social welfare and NGO-s to develop sustainable and long term cooperation in child protection based on child centered approach
- Developing data base of evidence based good practices of integrated family support social services
- Developing system of mentorship for young unexperienced professionals in child care

Kosovo

- The inspection team should be acting as an independent body
- Increase the human resources in the current inspection team
- The connection between the inspection findings from the field with the policy-making level (local and central level)
- Increase the competition between the NGOs which provide social services
- The profession of social worker to be recognized as such

Moldova

- Further development and implementation of the data collection automated information system (the process is started);

- Completion of the development and implementation of the initial and in-service professional training system for the social assistance professionals by the National Social Assistance Agency;
- Increase the functional authority of the system for accrediting and inspecting the quality of child care services (by providing the necessary competences by law).

Romania

- Political commitment for financing the child protection system based on multi-annual budgets and clear estimations followed by actual allocations, in Strategies and Action plans;
- Reorganizing the system based on the philosophy of rights and zero tolerance to abuse/violence;
- Financing and implementing services at local level, as provided by the law and strengthening the capacity of local public services;
- Effective mechanisms to immediately stop child abuse and treat violence appropriately (criminal, not simply administrative) including by reforming the Ombudsman institution;
- Adequate investment in prevention services at local level (adequate # of staff, and training including on children's rights and on how to implement existing working methodologies – a specific focus on best interest determination and child participation);
- Adequate investment in order to ensure sufficient staff at all levels (also in the field of social inspection) as well as needs-based professional training, particularly continuous training, and professional supervision;
- Better supervision of the situation of each child from an inter-disciplinary/holistic perspective;
- Clarify child monitoring at local/county level and grant additional sanctioning power to child protection agencies.

Serbia

National level

- Standardize counseling-therapeutic and socio-educational services as a precondition for licensing and future monitoring
- Ensure capacities (department) within the Ministry to implement monitoring of quality of professional work on all service providers, including centers for social work and residential care institutions
- Develop master plan for transformation of residential institutions

Local government level

- Raise capacities of local self governments for planning community based services
- Raise accountability and capacities within local self governments for monitoring local social and child care services

