

Questionnaire on the impact of COVID-19 on intercountry adoptions under the 1993 Adoption Convention

<i>Identification for follow-up purposes:</i>	
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I. OVERARCHING QUESTIONS	
	<u>Both States of origin and receiving States</u>
1.	<p>In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, has your State modified intercountry adoption procedures under the 1993 Adoption Convention? If so, what has your State done to ensure that the safeguards and procedures of the Convention have been, and continue to be, respected?</p> <p>Sweden has not modified any laws or regulations regarding the Adoption Convention in response to the pandemic. The pandemic has, however, affected MFoFs supervisory work to some extent. E.g. planned supervisory trips to states of origin could not be carried out due to travel restrictions. The same applied to physical supervisory meetings with the AABs. Having to cancel planned supervisory trips and visits has not been ideal. However, despite the limited opportunities for travel in 2020, MFoF believes that the supervisory assignment has been carried out in a satisfactory manner. To a greater extent than in the previous year, the authority has chosen to obtain information from the AABs and country of origin in writing. This has also been supplemented with longer supervisory meetings on video link with the AABs. Even though remote supervision has been a way of being able to fulfil the supervision assignment during this year, MFoF still hopes to be able to carry out physical supervision visits and travels during 2021.</p>
II. OUTBREAK OF COVID-19 (cases in transition only)	
	<u>Both States of origin and receiving States</u>
2.	<p>What measures, if any, did your State take to deal with cases where the child had already been matched with prospective adoptive parents, but no adoption decision had been issued at the time of the COVID-19 outbreak in your State? How many children were in such a situation?</p> <p>The AABs in Sweden are mainly financed through fees from PAPs. Due to travel restrictions and the stop in the adoption processes, the AABs suffered loss of expected revenues, which in turn led to financial difficulties for the AABs. The Government decided to give MFoF the task of distributing up to SEK 3.5 million to</p>

	<p>the AABs in order to ensure that adoption processes that had already begun could be completed. The purpose of the grant was to ensure that children who had already been matched with adoptive parents could be united with their new family.</p> <p>The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has advised against non-essential travels to many of our countries of origin. MFoF has deemed travels necessary to complete ongoing intercountry adoptions as essential travels.</p> <p>Sweden and a number of other receiving states have collaborated and written a joint letter to the Chinese Central Authority, kindly asking for their assistance regarding travels to China for PAPs with matching proposals from CCCWA.</p> <p>In April 2020, there was 67 children who were matched with PAPs. In June there were 87 matched children. The 30th of September, 17 of these children had been united with their Swedish families and 34 new children had been matched with PAPs.</p> <p>This means that on September the 30th there was 104 children who were matched with PAPs.</p>
3.	<p>What measures, if any, did your State take to deal with cases where the adoption decision had already been issued, but the child was still in the State of origin at the time of the COVID-19 outbreak in your State? How many children were in such a situation?</p>
	<p>See the answer above.</p>
<p>III. DURING COVID-19 (cases in transition and new cases)</p>	
	<p>States of origin only</p>
4.	<p>Has your State adapted, and if so how, the following stages of the adoption procedure:</p> <p>a) Declaration of adoptability of the child: N/A</p> <p>b) Matching: N/A</p> <p>c) Socialisation period: N/A</p> <p>d) Support and counselling to adoptable children: N/A</p> <p>e) Adoption decision: N/A</p> <p>f) Other stages:</p>

	N/A
	<u>Receiving States only</u>
5.	<p>Has your State adapted, and if so how, the following stages of the adoption procedure:</p> <p>a) Eligibility and suitability of prospective adoptive parents:</p> <p>It is the local social welfare authorities in the different municipalities who assigns PAPs to the compulsory parental courses. In March 2020 MFoF was given the task to coordinate the parental courses. Within the scope of this task, MFoF is currently, on a try out basis, allowing some educators to lead parental courses for PAPs digitally. Normally it is compulsory for PAPs to attend in person.</p> <p>It is the local social welfare authorities who evaluates and assesses the PAPs eligibility and suitability to adopt. There are as of yet no available statistics on how the pandemic has affected the municipalities ability to carry out the home study reports and assessment of PAPs. The same goes for their ability to assign PAPs to the parental courses. There is a newly released report from the Swedish Agency for Health and Care Services Analysis regarding the consequences of Covid-19 on the social welfare authorities. According to the report, the municipalities generally have had to change their work methods in some areas. For example, digital assessment talks have occurred more frequently than meetings in person. Home visits have in many cases taken place on video link. If meetings have happened in person it has been after careful consideration. With this beeing said, the report also shows that many meetings, and e.g. parental courses were cancelled or paused in the initial phase of the pandemic.</p> <p>b) Support and counselling to prospective adoptive parents:</p> <p>See the answer above. A good deal of the counselling and informatory work is carried out within the framework of the compulsory parental course for PAPs. PAPs can contact the local social welfare authorities to ask questions at various stages of their decision-making process.</p> <p>c) Other stages:</p> <p>Post adoption services and support: In May 2020 MFoF received a government assignment to provide professional adoption-specific counselling to adoptees. In the procurement of providers for the service, MFoF deemed digital accessibility as a necessary requirement.</p>
IV. USE OF TECHNOLOGY	
	<u>Both States of origin and receiving States</u>
6.	<p>Has the use of technologies (e.g, videoconferencing) evolved in the adoption procedures in place in your State since the outbreak of COVID-19 in your State? Please specify:</p> <p>a) any benefits and challenges:</p>

	<p>See the answer above. Digital tools is more frequently used both at state and municipality level. However, there is no uniformity in how and when digital tools may be used. Each municipality has its own guidelines.</p> <p>The benefits of the digital parental courses mentioned above is that PAPs all over Sweden can get access to the courses despite geographic location. This also means that PAPs can get access to the courses faster than before. The feedback from PAPs and educators so far has been positive. Many of the PAPs believe that they have been more active during the digital education, than they would have been if the education had been a traditional one.</p> <p>Challenges can be differences in the technical qualifications of the educators. It can also be necessary to involve more people to lead the courses, e.g. if group exercises are held in different chat rooms.</p> <p>Also, it's a challenge to be secure that the "soft" values are not lost when digital tools are used in assessment talks and support talks etc. For example to feel and adapt to dynamics and mood between parties and also to build a trusting relationship.</p> <p>b) if your response to question 72 ("Use of new technologies") of the 2020 Questionnaire on the practical operation of the 1993 Adoption Convention (Prel. Doc. No 3) has changed:</p> <p>. Nothing has changed</p>
<p>V. POST COVID-19: LOOKING AHEAD</p>	
	<p><u>Both States of origin and receiving States</u></p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Has your State developed any practices during this pandemic period that would be useful to mainstream into regular work practices? If so, please elaborate on what those practices are and how you plan to go about mainstreaming them into regular work practices:</p> <p>Yes. For example the digital accessibility to the parental courses for PAPs and also the digital accessibility to adoption-specific counselling to the adoptees mentioned above.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Please share any good practices and lessons learned by your State which may be applied in the event of another pandemic or similar state of emergency:</p> <p>Please insert text here</p>
<p>VI. ANY OTHER COMMENTS</p>	
	<p><u>Both States of origin and receiving States</u></p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Please insert here any other comments you may have:</p> <p>Please insert text here</p>

