

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>The proceedings remained the safeguards and procedures of the Convention. Portugal, as State of Origin, included online meetings previous to the agreement on the matching, with the Receiving States and, when appropriate, with the local adoption teams and PAPs. A specific training regarding each specific adoption was also implemented during 2020, which was also done by video in times of confinement (and in presence if otherwise). Specific health protection measures were taken during transitions, regarding masks, clothing used to enter the Homes.</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>State of origin: there was one case of a matching of two siblings already approved by the National Council for Adoption when the outbreak happened. The planning of the transition was postponed for the opening of the borders, but the preparation of the PAPs and of the children didn't stop.</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>State of origin: there were no such cases.</p>

III. DURING COVID-19 (cases in transition and new cases)	
	<u>States of origin only</u>
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:</p> <p>No.</p> <p>b) Matching:</p> <p>A Guideline was issued defending the maintenance of the matchings for intercountry adoption, with due consideration of the flexibility and special attention to sudden changes of the confinement rules throughout the year of 2020.</p> <p>c) Socialisation period:</p> <p>Videomeetings between PAPs and children with the support of the adoption teams before the first meeting in presence, in order to allow children to become familiar with the faces and expressions of the PAPs without the masks.</p> <p>d) Support and counselling to adoptable children:</p> <p>No changes</p> <p>e) Adoption decision:</p> <p>No changes.</p> <p>f) Other stages:</p> <p>Many adoptions were in the pre-adoption phase at the time of the outbreak, but the children were already living with the PAPs, in the receiving state. In these cases, this CA requested updated information regarding the effects on the families and the coping strategies, and intensified the support given.</p>
	<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>New applications were accepted, but the period of assessment may be longer than usual during periods of confinement, since no assessment should be concluded without mandatory personal interviews and interviews in the home of the PAPs.</p> <p>Parts of the training were transmitted online, through Teams whenever possible or Zoom.</p> <p>b) Support and counselling to prospective adoptive parents:</p> <p>Included more interaction via video meetings and phone contacts.</p> <p>c) Other stages:</p> <p>All the procedures that were compatible with online methods were adapted for this methodology.</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>State of Origin and receiving state: Before, videoconferences were used for meetings between the CA and accredited bodies, mostly. After the outbreak it became a common method for meetings between the adoption teams, adoption teams and PAPs, training and support.</p> <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it's more complicated to perceive all the non verbal information in a videoconference context; - during the pre-adoption phase, it's not possible to assess fully the interaction between PAPs and children; - practical interventions (some activities of the trainings for PAPs, some parts of the characterization of the children and also of the preparation of the children) are not compatible with non presential methods. <p>Bennefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better adaptation to the personal/professional agenda's of the intervenients, - Gain in time between meetings (no time spent traveling). - Promove the articulation and the communication between the teams and the PAP `s <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>State of origin and receiving state: Yes. The procedures that were compatible with non presential methods were adapted for online structure.</p>
V. POST COVID-19: LOOKING AHEAD	
	<u>Both States of origin and receiving States</u>
7.	<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>State of origin and receiving state: Many of our practices adapted to online methodology will continue to be a part of the regular work because of the benefits gained (some parts of the training for PAPs, some parts of the interviews during assessment, videoconferences together with presential visits during pre-adoption/post adoption phase, some meetings between the CA's, accredited bodies, local adoption teams, Professionals of the Homes and PAPs). With the exception of matching, no phase is completed without mandatory presential</p>

	interviews.
8.	<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>The videomeetings between CA's, accredited bodies and local adoption teams before the matching is decided (sometimes, in specific cases of more complex matchings, even with the participation of the PAPs) have proved very beneficial to clarifying more easily the questions on both sides.</p> <p>The need to adapt some of the cointents of the trainings and of the support to the videomeeting form has also been beneficial for the PAPs, regarding availability and confluence of agendas.</p>
VI. ANY OTHER COMMENTS	
	<u>Both States of origin and receiving States</u>
9.	<p>Please insert here any other comments you may have:</p> <p>Despite all the adjustments made to ensure the best interests of children and to ensure their right to have a family, face-to-face contacts at various levels remain essential. Some of the methodologies used in the pandemic period, namely the use of online contacts, which have proved to be especially effective, will certainly continue to be explored and generalized.</p> <p>We also highlight the importance of the role of the PB as a supervising entity, congregating information, promoting good practices and eventually harmonizing procedures, if necessary (whenever the national legal systems allow it).</p>