**Child protection**

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|  On 5 June 2024 we sent out this questionnaire (request 5820). It had been requested by a committee of enquiry into child protection. But on 9 June 2024 the National Assembly was dissolved. But the new legislature has decided to reconstitute the committee of enquiry into child protection. We therefore ask :- colleagues who have already replied to let us know if there have been any changes or clarifications to be made;- colleagues who have not had the time to reply to please complete this questionnaire. Many thanks in advance! |

**I. – Situation in France**

Child protection is defined by the French Social Action and Family Code, which states that *‘it aims to ensure that the child's fundamental needs are taken into account, to support his or her physical, emotional, intellectual and social development and to safeguard his or her health, safety, morality and education, while respecting his or her rights’*.

It therefore covers many aspects: prevention, identifying situations of danger or risk of danger, implementing administrative or judicial protection measures for minors and adults under the age of 21.

It is aimed at families experiencing acute educational or material difficulties. Parents who have difficulties in raising a child on a day-to-day basis, and in meeting their child's safety, health and educational needs, may benefit from child welfare services. This may involve measures at home, social assistance benefits or placement in care facilities.

In France, there are almost 350,000 minors (aged under 18) or young adults who are the subject of a child welfare measure (in French: *Aide sociale à l’enfance - ASE*). This represents an increase of around 20% since 2011.

Child welfare is a departmental service for children and families (France is divided into 101 ‘départements’, which are local authorities responsible for a number of areas).

There have recently been a number of breaches reported in the media. There have also been a number of debates, for example on the limits of this social assistance based on age or on the monitoring of foreign minors who arrive unaccompanied and illegally on French territory.

A ‘commission of enquiry into the failings of public child protection policies’ has therefore recently been set up.

<https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/17/organes/autres-commissions/commissions-enquete/protection-de-l-enfance>

**By means of the questionnaire below, the Committee of Inquiry is asking your Parliament to provide us with a basis for comparison with the situation in France.**

**We would like a response before 18 December 2024.**

**Thank you very much in advance for your contribution.**

**II. – Questionnaire**

**I - Governance and legislative and regulatory framework**

**of child protection policy**

1 - The governance of child protection :

a) Which national or local authorities are responsible for public policy on child protection? Who are the associated service providers?

b) How is the governance of child protection structured?

c) What are the links between the various national players and/or decentralised child protection services?

d) Are children in care or former children in care represented on governance bodies?

2 - What measures have been put in place to detect minors at risk?

3 - How do the various players involved in child protection interact, in particular the services responsible for child protection, the juvenile justice system, education and the medical sector?

4 - Are there special care arrangements for children with a dual vulnerability (protection measure and disability)?

5 - Specify the current main thrusts of child protection policy (from prevention policy through protection policy to the integration of young adults). In particular:

a) What are the main legislative and regulatory advances that have been made in the last ten years?

b) Is child protection policy harmonised across the country?

c) What resources are allocated to child protection policy (nature, recipients, budgets and implementation of this funding, as well as changes over the last ten years)? Is this policy sufficiently considered as an investment in the future, and not as a short-term budgetary cost?

6 - Is there a specific model for the care of protected children aged 0-3? If so, what is it (e.g. a nursery)?

7 - Until what age do protected children receive specific support? Is there specific care for young adults and, if so, in what form and up to what age? What are the elements of this care that encourage support towards autonomy?

8 - What data and statistics are available on child protection? Is there standardised software at national level to monitor protected children and produce comprehensive statistics at national level?

9 - What prevention policies are in place to support vulnerable families?

10 - What are the specific features of the care provided to unaccompanied minors (unaccompanied foreign minors) present in France?

11 - What is the state of research into child protection in each Member State? What budget is allocated for research into this public policy? In particular, do you have any data or studies on the social integration of young people who have been taken into care by child protection systems in the various Member States?

12 - Identify the main strengths and weaknesses of child protection policy.

**II - Questions about administrative and judicial measures**

**implemented to protect children**

13 - On the administrative or judicial measures taken :

a) What are the different protection measures that can be taken in each State? What is the proportion of each?

b) What is the percentage breakdown of administrative and judicial measures? In a similar way to French child protection policy, is judicial intervention subsidiary to administrative intervention?

c) How long does it take to implement child protection measures? Do different measures take different lengths of time to be implemented?

d) Are there any difficulties in enforcing placements, or are placements essentially guided by the number of places available rather than the needs of the child?

14 - How is justice for minors at risk organised?

a) What human and financial resources are allocated to justice for minors at risk?

b) What are the difficulties and successes of the judicial system in terms of child protection?

c) Are minors systematically assisted by a lawyer during hearings?

15 - On foster families, care structures and human resources :

a) What proportion of children in care are in foster families and what proportion are in institutional care?

b) How has the number of foster families changed over the last ten years? As in France, are you seeing a shortage and an ageing of foster families?

c) Are foster care structures and establishments facing a shortage of places to take in children?

d) Does the legal and regulatory framework provide for minimum staffing levels in childcare facilities? If so, what are they?

e) Are states facing staff shortages and difficulties in attracting staff to child protection jobs? What is being done to make or keep these jobs more attractive?

f) What levels of training and qualifications are required to work in the child protection sector?