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Family Reunification Psychosocial Support Modelling Project

Project Result Booklet

*Improvement of Family Reunification Programme
in Turkey by Cooperation with European Counterparts*

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Koruncuk Foundation and L'Accueil's Visit to Berlin Mitte Family and Youth Center, Germany: We listened to the work of the Youth Center serving under the municipality and the details of the social service system in Germany.

Project Information

Project name: Family Reunification - Psychosocial Support Modelling Project

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Project Beneficiary: Turkish Foundation for Children in Need of Protection (Koruncuk Foundation)

Project Partner: L'Accueil asbl (L'Accueil)

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**Turkish
Foundation
for Children
in Need of
Protection
Turkey**

Founded in 1979, the foundation, provides access to education and consultancy services through socially, psychologically, and economically preventive, protective and rehabilitative solutions to the children whose fundamental needs and access to education are at risk, with the aim to enable children to be included in society as strong, confident, productive and value adding, responsible individuals. It provides social, psychological, and economical support in varying levels to the youth over 18, who grew up at the Foundation. It also conducts studies for dissemination of social services models and studies at the national level and thus to increase awareness in the society on the children's rights. It works for the protection of children's rights and reduction of risks to access these rights with the Platform for Protecting Children and Their Rights, which the Foundation pioneered for its establishment with over twenty civil society organizations.

**L'Accueil
Child
Protection
Centre
Belgium**

Founded in 1989, L'Accueil Child Protection Centre provides accommodation, therapeutical training and health control services assessing the physical, psychological and emotional status of the child for children between 0-6 of age, whose parents cannot provide their functions temporarily due to relational or personal challenges. It performs studies to develop functionality of families through Multiple Family Daycare established in 2003. It gives psychosocial/psychoeducational support before and after reunification to strengthen the reunification process of families with children. The Centre provides educational, social, and psychological support services to the families of disabled children through the Early Aid Services Project since 2006. L'Accueil works in cooperation with families and various social or legal services agencies for the protection of children and support the families in cases of maltreatment, abuse, or neglect.

Introduction and Relevance

Social services own the problem by identifying the reasons causing the appearance of the fact of child in need of protection and the implementations to eliminate these reasons or relieve the consequences.

Social services have an important function in the prevention of violations of children's rights.

Each child has the right to live with his/her own birth family. This right is stated in particular in Convention on the Rights of the Child dated 1989, to which our country is party, and in all relevant international declarations and documents. On the other hand, the project is covered under the EU negotiation chapter "Chapter 19 - Social Policies and Employment" with the establishment of social protection systems at appropriate levels for the children in need of protection and combatting against social exclusion. The main reason for children to be taken from their families and go under the state protection is due to the identification of risky situations for children.

Each child has the right to live with his/her own birth family.

Koruncuk Foundation started its own pilot implementation in 2017 to systematically perform the monitoring of children who are decided to be reunified with family while staying in Bolluca Children Village and to support adaptation process for the cases where reunification occurred relatively fast. Within the scope of this study, all families were provided with both psychological and social support, as well as problems experienced during reunification could be observed closer.

Objective of the Project:

Family Reunification - Psychosocial Support Modelling Project aims to analyse the best practices in the EU for the well-founded experiences in the field of family aid and home-based child protection system and discuss the challenges experienced during this stage in order to relieve these challenges of reunification and to present a reunification model applicable in Turkey.

Objectives defined within the project have been collected under 3 main titles:

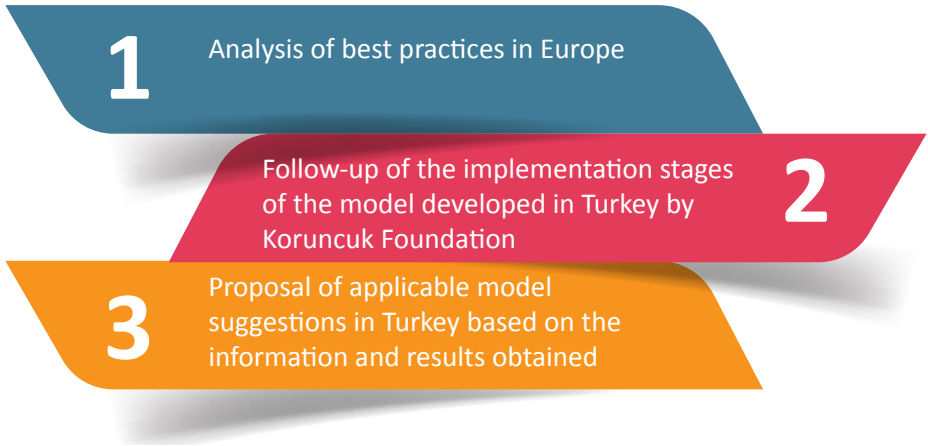
Analysis: To analyse the care institution models implemented in the EU and the family support stages in the biological family reunification models

Model development: To develop a model harmonizing our social structure and the best practices in the EU with the purpose of improving the Family Reunification programme in Turkey

Policy influence: To share the programme proposal established on the basis of the outputs of the project with the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services and policy makers.

Project Activities

The Project has 3 main fields of activity:



The project is based on the principle of cooperation and sharing of best practices and to this end child protection systems and family reunification implementations in 6 different European countries were observed during the project through field visits and literature review.

Besides the desktop research, implementations in different countries were analysed through the cooperated institutions in the countries. In-situ analysis of the institutions and implementations was carried out in Belgium and Germany visits. Model examples were evaluated through online meetings held with the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) from the Netherlands, Bulgaria and Czech Republic due to the COVID-19 pandemic affecting the whole world. Finland was analysed through literature review.

Civil Society Cooperation and Dialogue Improvement

The project was carried out in partnership with L'Accueil from Belgium. All stages of the project were meticulously planned with L'Accueil, in line with the purposes of exchange of information and experience between the EU and CSOs of Turkey.



Koruncuk Foundation and L'Accueil came together in Istanbul in the first month of the project for the project Kick-Off Meeting.

Continuously updated cooperation through remote meetings and correspondences was strengthened with the field visit to Belgium. The field visit to Germany where the inter CSOs working system was closely analysed, was performed with L'Accueil. Participating in the meetings of other countries analysed within the project, L'Accueil obtained information about the other social service practices for the child in Europe. Thus, both the Koruncuk Foundation from Turkey and L'Accueil team had the opportunity to develop their information and experience.

What is Family Reunification System?



Relations between the child and family play an important role for the child's psychosocial development and gaining character. Growing of a child in a healthy family environment is essential for the child in terms of establishing healthy social relations and existence in the social structures in the future.

Family Reunification System is a social service model implemented for the child to complete his/her development within the family through the provision of necessary economic and social supports to the children that are taken under protection due to economical and social deprivation without the causes threatening the welfare or security of the child.



- Supporting the healthy psychosocial and personal development of the child
- Development of a healthy relationship and secure attachment between the child and family
- Establishing healthy social relationships and participation in social life



- Provided that there are no elements in the family that will affect the development of the child negatively;
- Advisory measure
 - Education measure
 - Health measure
 - Social and economical support

Best Practices in Europe

Within the project, field visits were planned to various countries in Europe to analyse the best country practices in place in the area of child protection system, legislation for children in need of state protection, foster family, and family reunification process. In Belgium and Germany, meetings were held with both the representatives of formal social service institutions under the municipalities and with the civil society organizations serving in the field; and legislation as well as the practice were observed on the spot. Country analysis of the Netherlands, Bulgaria and Czech Republic, which would not be performed physically due to COVID-19 pandemic, were carried out through online meetings; and that of Finland was performed via literature review.

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Number of countries analysed in Europe

- Belgium and Germany, in situ visits
- The Netherlands, Bulgaria and Czech Republic, online meetings
- Finland, literature review



Berlin, Germany: Compass's Come Back Project describes the process of a two-year follow-up system involving all parties for children who are eligible to return from the protective system to their family.



Berlin, Germany: In the Panke-Haus Project of Berlin-Casablanca, children and families are placed in the homes of the institution and supported by a concentrated and holistic psychoeducation approach.

Best Practice Sharing Meetings

“Best Practice Sharing Meetings in Europe” were held at two different periods to share good practices in state protection for the children under state protection and care models, as well as during the reunification of the child with the biological family.

With the participation of experts from Turkey and European Union, meetings were held to prepare applicable model suggestions for the process concerning children returning to their biological families.



Family Reunification Best Practices Symposium, 13-14 March 2020

Experts from Germany and Belgium shared their best country practices, information and experience on the field with the interested experts and CSO representatives from Turkey in the symposium. Reunification system in Turkey was explained to the participants by the experts from the Ministry and case studies from Koruncuk pilot implementation were presented. Within the framework of the symposium, further meetings were held with experts in Turkey to merge the cooperation and experience processes gained through the project and to prepare applicable reunification models with the biological family of the child in Turkey.



37 people attended the meeting held in Istanbul on 13-14 March. The participants listened to the observations from field studies and case presentations of the Koruncuk Foundation, along with the good practice examples from Germany and Belgium. They discussed the lacking aspects of the work in group meetings and shared their suggestions that could be applied in our country through good examples.

European Best Practices Sharing Meeting, 3 December 2020

Experts shared information and experiences relevant to social services and family restrengthening studies for the purposes of child protection in their respective countries on the meetings held online with the participation of CSO representatives, field experts and academics from Belgium, Czech Republic, the Netherlands, England and Turkey on 3 December 2020.



3 December 2020 Presentations of Belgium, UK, Netherlands and Czechia were held online.

120+

Number of experts with whom information was shared and dialogue was developed

Family Reunification Workshop, 4 December 2020

In the workshop held on 4 December 2020, problems and deficiencies in the system of reunification with biological family after the care of the institution or foster family were opened for discussion by all the relevant parties. Additionally, the model proposal developed by the Koruncuk Foundation in the light of the information gained in the project and expert opinions were discussed.

The meetings contributed to the analysis of different care examples of the child protection and development of a model that would put forward the security of the child and the needs of our country; and also, intermediated the strengthening of the dialogue between experts from Turkey and Europe.



4 December 2020 Following the "Family Reunification Workshop" held online, the closing session of the project was held.

Family Reunification Processes: Country Implications and Common Points



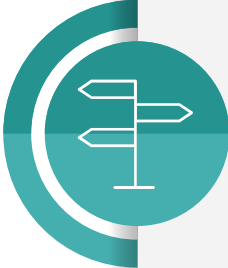
Common aspects of child protection policies in Europe

The findings have been collected through the analysis of child protection implementations in force in Germany, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland and the Netherlands.



Social Service Implementation Stages

1. Central government defines the legal framework.
2. Municipalities and local governments provides the basic support.
3. Service is provided and controlled through the funded CSOs.



The state directs the family to the suitable CSO with relevant problem scope.



“Each child has the right to participate in decisions related to growing with the family and related to him/herself.”
This principle is implemented throughout the child protection process from day one.

Between 6 months - 2 years

If the family can regulate their conditions by making use of the services they are provided with, they can take the child back.



The Role of Local Authorities and CSOs

: Civil initiatives are the most important counterpart of the state in rapid identification of the risks that might threaten the security of the children.



Result:

- The more the welfare of the country increases, the more studies focusing on strengthening the biological family are adopted.
- Family based models function more powerfully with the cooperation of state and CSOs,
- In each stage of the reunification, the participation to decisions of the child and the family is ensured.



Background for the Model: Pilot Implementation and Workshop

The pilot implementation initiated by Koruncuk Foundation in 2017 aiming to follow up the reunified children and support the adaptation process later have been expanded with Family Reunification Psychosocial Support Modelling Project where information and experiences were shared and results of the implementation were followed up.

Within the framework of this pilot implementation a “Pilot Model” proposal was created as a result of the field implementation studies performed with a total of 12 families with the participation of 27 children and their parents.

The pilot implementation was performed in the house of each family with a setup of family therapy session. The social service expert keeping regular contact with the children reunified with their biological families and their families exchanged information about the project with the families. In this process, considering the current needs of the families volunteering to participate in the study and their family structures, they were forwarded to the psychological support team.

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Number of children supported by the project

27

Number of children benefitting from the project

Therapy process was conducted by two expert psychologists one of which was specialized in child and teenager therapy and the other in family therapy. In total 27 children directly benefited from this implementation along with their mothers/fathers/caregivers. The psychologists who regularly visited the families performed sessions focusing on development of parental skills, increasing communication skills within the family, strengthening connection and traumas.

During the process, the social services expert kept regular contact with the families and followed up the economical and social needs of the families. These needs were covered sometimes by the support provided by Koruncuk Foundation and sometimes by directing the family to the identified resources based on their needs.

The field team had regular meetings with the supervisors monitoring and directing the study in the field during these studies with the families. The implementations improved through the directives of the supervisors and the conducted literature reviews, and synthesis of the information and practices obtained from other countries.

Some families attained very good results in a short period, whereas the some others were observed to be in need of more time. There were also some families who did not regularly attend

The Guidelines was developed based on the experiences of the families and the children.

A review of applied methods, differences observed among families and challenges experienced during the pilot implementation was made in order to develop a more efficient implementation model and as a result, a draft guideline for “Family Reunification Psychosocial Support Model” is prepared.



In Berlin Kinderschultz Zentrum, trauma studies are carried out with children in the play rooms used for therapy.

Result and Assessment

The project team conducted studies with the children reunified with their biological families after the state protection in Turkey and the families of children during a year. Furthermore, child protection systems, legislations and reunification implementation in force in various countries in Europe were analysed and the best practices of the countries coming forth in their social services systems were analysed. In light of the data obtained with the field studies performed with the families in Turkey, including all the studies conducted within the project, and the best practices in Europe in the field of child protection, a model adaptable to Turkey has been established. The observations of the families studied in the field demonstrate that the problems occurring during the reunification process are actually apparent before the child is reunified.

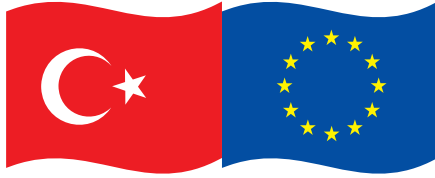
Luxembourg, Belgium: At the Psycho-Medical Institute, information was shared about the services provided for the psychological empowerment of children from families with conflict, as well as about the guidance and follow-up services provided to families.



Growing with the family is the right of every child but, it is the common duty of the adults to protect the children against the situations threatening the physical or emotional health of the child. The first and the most efficient step is to conduct preventive studies to eliminate these kinds of threats even before occurring. The main reason for children to be taken from the families to be provided with the state protection is the identification of risky situations for children. Therefore, it is of uttermost importance to evaluate the families and monitor them during the process in the reunification process.

Close and comprehensive support to the families is required for prevent children from returning to the institutional system and any new traumas after the reunification. The obtained results demonstrate that it is possible for families and children to achieve success in this challenging adaptation process through a close support.





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Family Reunification - Psychosocial Support Modelling Project aims to present an applicable model with the focus of improving the existing reunification model applicable in Turkey. Given their well-founded experiences in the field of family aid and home-based child protection system, analysis of EU best practices and improvement of social services in Turkey by integrating experiences are among the target objectives.

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