

“The implementation of individual assessment in Greece from the juvenile probation officers’ perspective”

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IA-CHILD PROJECT

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Description of the function and the role of the Juvenile Probation Service in Greece



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Function of the service



Founded in 1979 under Ministry of Justice

- Merged with Adult Probation Service in 2014
- Supervised by the Public Prosecutor in each Juvenile Court.



Staff: civil servants

- jurists, psychologists, social scientists, social workers



Dealing with minors 12-18

- accused of having violated the criminal law
- crime prevention field

Role of the service

- Carrying out a social research:
 - assessment of the personal, family and social situation
 - meetings and interviews with the minors and their families
 - request for an expert evaluation
 - making immediate interventions and referrals to experts
- Submission of a confidential report to the Judicial Authorities which includes a proposal of the treatment that the Juvenile Probation Officers consider appropriate for each case
- Organization and supervision of the implementation of educational/reformative measures
- Oversight and support of the young person in the re-integration process, when the Court orders the offender's placement under the supervision of a Juvenile Probation Officer



The Juvenile Probation Officers' goal is:

the minors'

- personal and social progress
- self-esteem enhancement
- deterrence of their stigmatization
- socialization
- undertake responsibilities for their actions



Individual assessment can be performed:

- Before court, for any child accused, after the date of the hearing has been set
- Possibly during the main investigation, if there is an order by the Investigating Judge
- In cases of diversion of criminal procedure after an order issued by the Public Prosecutor
- When the social inquiry report needs to be updated

The emerging needs



- development, improvement and evaluation of the individual assessment procedure
- exchange of information, experience and expertise
- adoption of specific guidelines
- development and flexible use of a relevant tool

The conduct of a social inquiry as the sole type of assessment in Greece



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An individual form includes:

- Personal information about the child's identity, address, educational status or occupation
- References about the crime, of any co-accused persons, time, place, description, statement on whether or not he/she has committed the offence
- Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the family
- A text- report
- A conclusive non-binding proposal about the proper measure

Topic of discussion about social inquiry report :

- Not a common specific individual form and structure in all the Juvenile Probation Services, although at the back page they all write a descriptive text.
- Questions in the individual form which are regarded nowadays to be old-fashioned.



More necessary than ever to create a convenient, useful common tool for all professionals in Greece

Specific interesting issues in relation to individual assessment in Greece



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The first point of discussion

Should Juvenile Probation Officers explore the involvement of the minor in the offense?

• pro: the minor shall learn to undertake responsibility, his/her ability to relate with the victim shall be enhanced, his/her empathy shall be increased, all these will prevent any recidivism.



• contra: outside the limits of the role of the Juvenile Probation Officer, inside the hearing procedure of the Juvenile Judge and Juvenile Public Prosecutor.

The second point of discussion

The level of confidentiality of the social report:

Should the report be accessible:

- to the minor himself/ herself ?
- to the parents or caretakers of the minor?
- to the defense attorney of the minor?



A summary of the main points on the implementation of individual assessment in Greece according to the results of the interviews with the Juvenile Probation Officers



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The basic principles of the Greek juvenile justice system are:

- Safeguarding the child's best interests and well-being
- Promoting the child's education and social integration
- Ensuring the individualized treatment of young offenders

Difficulties in effectively conducting the social inquiries

- lack of a single regulatory framework and of an assessment tool
- difficulties to trace the child and the family, or their unwillingness to cooperate
- the absence of a social policy on networking of agencies
- lack of a wide ranging intervention program designed to meet the needs of the assessment and
- lack of interpreters in cases involving young refugees

Following challenges emerge:

- Adoption of guidelines, regulatory framework and/or a tool
- Training and education of juvenile probation officers
- Conduct of a semi-structured interview
- Enactment of the obligation to carry out individual assessments in law
- Placement of the supervision of cases under the guidance of experts
- Exchange of knowledge via participation in research programs

Conclusions

- The legal framework and the practice of individual assessment in Greece shall be improved.
- Important changes are expected to be introduced after the incorporation of the EU Directive 2016/800 in Greece.
- The changes shall constitute a core step towards the direction of enhancing the importance of children's individualized treatment and of promoting their rights within the criminal justice system.



