

LANZAROTE COMMITTEE

Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe
Convention on the protection of children against
sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

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Replies to the thematic questionnaire

“Screening of professionals, volunteers and
other persons in contact with children”

SMILE OF THE CHILD

GREECE

Replies received by the Secretariat on 24 August 2026

**LANZAROTE COMMITTEE Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe
Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and
sexual abuse**

**Thematic questionnaire “Screening of professionals, volunteers and other
persons in contact with children” Adopted by the Lanzarote Committee on 26
March 2026**

Call for input from NGOs for Lanzarote Committee's new monitoring round

FEEDBACK FROM THE SMILE OF THE CHILD, GREECE

22. Please add any further details regarding the modalities of the screening procedures applicable in your State, if relevant.

In Greece, background checks regarding criminal convictions and other relevant information concerning individuals who work with or have regular contact with children are conducted through the established procedures for issuing criminal records and the relevant administrative procedures. Depending on the context, the competent authorities or organizations may request a criminal record certificate, including, where required by law, information regarding convictions for offenses of particular relevance to the protection of children.

For professionals working with children, the obligation to provide such a certificate or undergo the relevant background checks may arise in the context of hiring, appointment, or other employment procedures, in accordance with applicable law. Specifically, pursuant to Law 4837/2021 on the prevention of child abuse and neglect of minors, pursuant to Article 7, the following provisions apply to the filling of paid and volunteer positions in organizations and sectors involved in child safety and care:

(.....)

*1. It is prohibited to hire or allow to begin employment with child protection agencies, whether governed by public or private law, any person who has been convicted with a final judgment for: a) crimes against sexual freedom, economic exploitation of sexual activity, and family-related crimes under Articles 360 and 360A of the Penal Code (Law 4619/2019, A' 95), (b) crimes under Law 3500/2006 (A' 232) on combating domestic violence; (c) human trafficking pursuant to Article 323A of the Penal Code (Law 4619/2019, A' 95) and Law 4251/2014 (A' 80), d) drug trafficking pursuant to Law 4139/2013 (A' 74). More specific provisions already in force remain in effect. **The prohibition set forth in the first sentence also applies to cases where, at the time of hiring or commencement of employment, criminal proceedings are pending or a final or conclusive conviction is in effect, provided that such conviction has not become irrevocable.***

2. The prohibition in paragraph 1 applies to: (a) personnel employed by Child Protection Agencies under project contracts, contracts for the provision of independent services, employment contracts, as well as contracts for temporary staff or personnel contracted through a contractor; and (b) individuals who provide services on a voluntary basis.

3. A prerequisite for recruitment or commencement of employment at Child Protection Agencies is the submission of a copy of a criminal record from a court or general-purpose, in accordance with Article 572 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (Law 4620/2019, A' 96), from the candidate for recruitment or employment, stating that he or she has not been irrevocably convicted of the offenses listed in paragraph 1, as well as a sworn statement, in accordance with Article 8 of Law 1599/1986 (A' 75), stating that, at the time of submission, no criminal proceedings are pending against them and that no final or definitive conviction for the same offenses is in force that has not become final. A copy of the criminal record must be submitted by the candidate for recruitment or employment at private-law child protection agencies and is obtained ex officio by public-law child protection agencies.

(.....)

Furthermore, a fundamental prerequisite and condition is the ongoing re-screening of the aforementioned individuals, which is based on paragraph 7 of Article 7 of the same Law and states as follows:

7. Following the checks specified in paragraphs 3 and 4, any person employed by the Child Protection Agency **is required to resubmit a copy of their criminal record (for judicial or general use) and the relevant sworn statement within the last two months of each year.**

In order to comply with the legal provisions governing the screening of individuals to be employed in positions involving the care, education, recreation, and child safety, Article 8 of The Smile of the Child's employment regulations sets forth the requirements for hiring employees, specifically:

1. Candidates for hire must submit the following documents: a. Resume b. Certified copy of ID card or passport c. Recent certificate of marital status **d. A recent copy of a criminal record, which the employee must update annually and send to The Smile of the Child.** e. Type A military service certificate or legal exemption (for men) f. Copies of diplomas and academic certificates certified by the issuing institution (if any). g. Certificates of prior employment or letters of recommendation (if any). h. A valid work permit issued by the competent authority, where required. i. A certified health certificate—specifically for communicable diseases—renewed annually for those working in residential care facilities, day care centers, day programs, semi-independent living facilities, and similar settings, and who have continuous/daily or occasional contact with children, issued by a competent public medical authority or a certified private medical authority, in accordance with applicable regulations.

Furthermore, since The Smile of the Child is not staffed solely by employees but also includes citizens who volunteer with a strong sense of responsibility and

empathy toward children, as well as toward other vulnerable social groups, which our Organization supports in every way, both moral and material, regarding the procedure followed for volunteers: the process for their registration requires them to submit the necessary supporting documents (e.g., a copy of their criminal record, etc.) and sign the code of ethics followed by our Organization. From that point on, volunteers are evaluated by the colleagues who manage them, by the Volunteer and Membership Department, and, more generally, every effort is made to ensure that vetting is not overlooked and that an employee of the Organization is always present with them to provide appropriate guidance and supervision throughout the duration of their volunteer work.

Similar vetting requirements apply to individuals involved in foster care, adoption, and guardianship proceedings. The competent public authorities assess the suitability of prospective foster parents or adoptive parents and other individuals exercising responsibility for children, taking into account the information required by Greek law, including, where applicable, information from criminal records. Furthermore, the assessment covers not only the prospective adoptive parents but also their broader family and social circles, in order to gain a more comprehensive and evaluative understanding of the environment in which the child will grow up and develop.

Criminal record certificates are issued in two types:

- a) general-purpose criminal record certificates
- b) criminal record copies for judicial use

Criminal record copies for general use are issued for any lawful purpose, while criminal record copies for judicial use are issued and provided exclusively in the following cases:

- to the public prosecutor, the regular investigating judge, and the public prosecutor of the competent Military Court, exclusively for judicial use
- to the directors of detention facilities to complete the convict's file, provided that the convict has been convicted by a final court decision
- to public authorities for a specific lawful purpose
- to foreign diplomatic authorities for citizens who are to emigrate
- to foreign authorities exercising criminal jurisdiction, when there is a treaty on mutual legal assistance
- for appointment to the public sector, if requested by the competent agency, and in any case for the appointment of judicial officers, educators at all levels, members of the security forces, and candidates for admission to the academies of the Armed Forces and the security forces.

Finally, copies of criminal records for judicial use include all convictions imposed by final decisions of criminal courts, while copies of criminal records for general use do

not include:

- fines or prison terms of up to six months, after three years have elapsed since their completion

- prison terms exceeding six months or confinement in a psychiatric facility, after eight years have elapsed since their completion

- sentences of imprisonment, after twenty years have elapsed since their imposition.

23. What challenges related to the screening for criminal convictions for sexual offences against children of professionals, volunteers and persons wishing to become adoptive parents, foster parents or a child's legal guardian exist in your State in practice (e.g. administrative costs, delays, cross-border co-operation)?

In Greece, one of the key practical challenges is ensuring that verification procedures are carried out consistently and without undue delays by the various authorities and agencies involved. Administrative procedures may require the submission, verification, and exchange of documents between different agencies, which can in some cases cause delays, particularly when more than one competent authority is involved. Nevertheless, in Greece, the process for obtaining a criminal record has been significantly simplified, with the option to request it online via the gov.gr website, or in person at a KEP (Citizen Service Center), or—if it is for judicial use—by applying to the relevant court clerks' offices.

An additional challenge concerns individuals who have previously lived, worked, or resided abroad. Obtaining reliable and up-to-date information from the criminal records of foreign authorities may be more complex and time-consuming than searching for information in Greek national records. Differences between national legal systems, administrative procedures, and languages, as well as differences in the scope and content of criminal record information, may complicate cross-border verification. In some cases, the absence of a readily accessible or comprehensive mechanism for exchanging all relevant information may make the process dependent on cooperation between the competent authorities of the countries involved.

The administrative burden and the availability of resources within the relevant public agencies can also affect the speed at which vetting procedures are completed. This can be particularly important in adoption and foster care procedures, where the screening is part of a broader assessment of the suitability and capacity of prospective caregivers.

Another practical challenge is ensuring that screening procedures are sufficiently comprehensive while also complying with legal requirements regarding data protection, confidentiality, and the principle of proportionality. A criminal background check must be conducted on an appropriate legal basis and, on its own, cannot replace a broader assessment of a person's suitability to work with children or

to care for them.

Overall, the main practical challenges can therefore be summarized as **administrative delays, coordination among the competent authorities, access to information regarding previous residence or employment abroad, cross-border cooperation, and the need to balance the effective protection of children with data protection requirements and procedural safeguards.**

24. What promising practices, if any, would your State like to highlight in the screening of professionals, volunteers and other persons in contact with children?

Of particular importance to Greece is the process of systematically conducting background checks through official criminal record checks for individuals whose professional or personal activities involve regular contact with children, in conjunction with broader suitability assessments where required by law.

In the areas of adoption and foster care, the screening of prospective parents is part of a broader assessment process and is not based solely on criminal record information. This broader approach allows the competent authorities to assess the individual's overall suitability and ability to provide a safe and stable environment for the child; for this reason, the assessment considers not only the individual as a whole but also their broader family, work, and social environments. Consequently, a broader and more comprehensive investigation is conducted, which does not rely solely on the absence of a criminal record.

Another best practice is the use of official administrative and judicial records and the involvement of the relevant public authorities in the verification process. This helps reduce reliance on mere affidavits from applicants [which are still taken into account in every case as a guarantee of individual responsibility] and enhances the reliability of the information used to make decisions regarding the protection of children.

The further development of digital public administration and e-services in Greece also has the potential to facilitate the faster exchange and verification of official documents, reduce the administrative burden, and improve coordination among the competent authorities. Further digitization and improved interoperability of public sector systems could further enhance the effectiveness of control procedures.

Greece also considers continued cooperation at the European and international levels to be particularly important, especially in cases involving individuals who have lived or worked in other countries. Improving mechanisms for the timely and secure exchange of relevant information from criminal records, while fully respecting data protection rules and fundamental rights, can contribute significantly to the effective protection of children.

Finally, background checks should be viewed as just one element of a broader framework for child protection. Effective protection also requires appropriate

hiring procedures, professional qualifications, child protection policies, supervision, training, and ongoing monitoring of individuals who work with children or provide care for them.