



“Hope For Children” CRC Policy Center

Reporting on CAN-MDS II Operators’ seminars in Cyprus



Co-funded by the Rights,
Equality and Citizenship
Programme of the European Union

Acknowledgements & Disclaimer

This document has been produced within the framework of the project CAN-MDS II. Rights, Reference Number: REC-AG-2017/REC-RDAP-GBV-AG-2017.

It has been produced with the financial support of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme, of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.

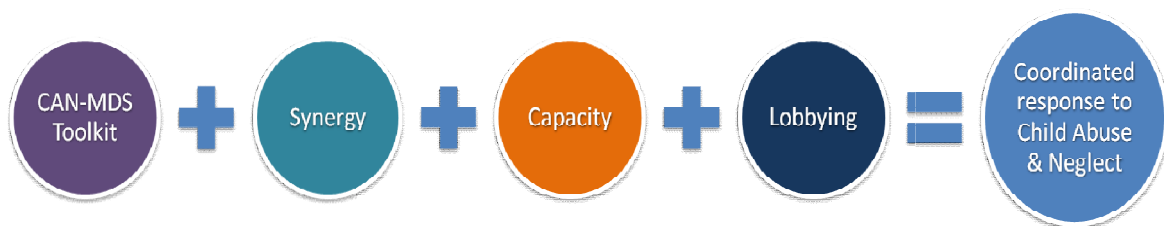


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The CAN-MDS II project:

As set out in the UNCRC, ratified by most countries in the world, all children have the right to protection from all forms of violence (Article 19). Realization of this right requires concerted effort, effective procedures, and coordination and cooperation by child protection relevant sectors. Reporting of suspected or known child abuse and neglect (CAN) cases by professionals working with children is the first step toward protecting children from future victimization. Follow-up at a case level, including of services to a child-victim provided by agencies from various sectors, is the next step for avoiding re-victimization. Aggregated CAN data are essential to identify trends, measure responses, feed into policy development and inform prevention, identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment, judicial involvement and follow-up of cases.

In this context the CAN-MDS System was developed to strengthen speedy coordination and cooperation among professionals *at a case-level*, namely to be used as a *ready-to-use* tool for improving multi-disciplinary and inter-sectoral cooperation by facilitating appropriate information sharing among professionals, reporting, follow-up and prevention of re-victimization. In parallel, *at a population-level* the system aims to operate as a mechanism for collecting uniform, reliable and comparable epidemiological data for incidence of reported CAN cases and changes in the magnitude of the problem over time at local, national and international levels.

About the training implementation in Cyprus:

In the framework of the CAN-MDS II project, “Hope For Children” CRC Policy Center was responsible for organizing and delivering 7 of trainings to a total of 89 professionals working in different agencies and institutions in Cyprus.

Due to the pandemic and the measures against its spread, which the Republic of Cyprus was issuing, by changing them in a tactical way and which were very strict, the professionals working on the project had to adjust several times the way the trainings were going to be delivering in order to be able to deliver them. However, since the timeframe was narrowing, it decided to deliver them in a blended way, face-to-face and online format. Thus, the first trainings, which dealt with the theoretical approach, were recorded and shared with the participants so that they could watch them.¹ The trainings concerning the practical approach were conducted in person, through small and mixed groups of professionals. Regarding the trainings for the professionals of the Children's House (CH) and Helpline Operators of Hope for Children, where the platform would be implemented in a pilot phase, it was decided that these would be delivered only online so that the pilot phase could start. However, professionals from Hope For Children, working in

¹ Detailed information on training agenda & material used is available in D2.4 (Cypriot Training Module)



the project were able to assist the professionals of CH and Helpline Operators in a face to face form in cases where problems have arisen.

The first training, held on the 19/04/2021 and carried out online in the premises of HFC by Andria Neocleous and Rafaella Georgiou from HFC and Marina Efthimiadou from SWS. Professionals from HFC (CH and Helpline operators) were participated in the training. Participants registered through google forms.

The second and third trainings were held face to face in the premises of HFC on the 17/06/2021 by the same trainers. They were two teams. Again, some of the professionals of HFC that they couldn't participate in the 1st training, participated in this one along with professionals of the other sectors. In total we had, 30 participants in both teams. Participants signed attendance list.

The fourth and fifth trainings were held face to face in the premises of HFC on 18/06/2021 by the same trainers. We had in total, 25 professionals in both teams participating. Participants signed attendance list.

The sixth training was held face to face on 24/06/2021 by same trainers in the premises of SWS. We had in total 8 participants from SWS. Participants signed attendance list.

The seventh training was a ToT training. Was held on 28/06/2021 face to face by the same trainers in the premises of HFC. A representative of Ministry of Education trained as a trainer to be able to deliver the trainings to colleagues of MoE. Participant signed a participation list.

The professionals involved in the implementation of the CAN-MDS II project were particularly involved and interested in the new reporting mechanism built within the framework of the project. Professionals from various fields related to the handling of child abuse and neglect cases participated, such as Mental Health Services, Health Services, Ministry of Education and Pedagogical Institute, Police, Non-Governmental Organizations, Helpline Operators, Social Welfare Services.

According to the feedback of the professionals we had during the trainings, some found the platform extremely useful for data purposes, in order to support both at European and national level the prevention and combating of such incidents/phenomena.

Others raised concerns about the way the platform works and the fact that the national administrator has to be consulted in order to register an incident in relation to child's

ID, and felt that this would add to their workload, which would have a negative impact on the management of incidents.

Moreover, after the training, professionals were able to give a clearer picture of what constitutes child abuse and neglect. For example, prior to the training, some professionals felt that abuse addressed more serious incidents such as sexual abuse, as well as aggravated physical and mental abuse. However, after the trainings they were able to give a more open and broader picture

regarding the issue. Moreover, the evaluation results showed that some of them, while before the training they knew the specific legislation defining the national framework, after the trainings they were able to refer to European legislation, recognising its binding nature at national level. They were also more easily able to analyse the relevant legislation so that it was broadly applicable to the cases they handled, rather than applying it strictly in a literal sense.

Although initially the professionals presented a hesitation regarding the usefulness of the platform, later on and after the trainers explained to them the usefulness of the platform, they seemed to understand and agree, accepting that the platform is something we need at national level, since in Cyprus, there is no unified system for the recording of such cases, which results in having many different data, without being able to clearly and unambiguously define the extent of the problem.

Regarding the training of professionals, all agreed on the fact that professionals need further training. It is also worth noting that it was commented from a police officer that the lack of incident awareness training on the part of professionals, combined with their legal obligation to report such suspicions, often results in over-reporting, thus increasing the workload of professionals investigating cases, which results in a delay in investigating and handling cases where there is a real problem. They also indicated that this is also negative for the children themselves, since they are forced to go through the relevant investigation procedures without any reason, with the risk of being inconvenienced or even injured.

They all agreed that multidisciplinary cooperation in handling cases of children abuse and neglect is a must and that we need to give more emphasis on that and do the necessary steps to achieve this in excellence.

Specifically about the platform, although during the trainings there was confusion and a lot of discussion about the role of the operator, afterwards they all seemed to have a full understanding of the role and said that everything will be easier for them once they start using the platform in practice. The trainers pledged to remain available to the practitioners during the practical application in order to help and solve any questions, and they share their contact information with the participants.

Conclusion

The trainings of Operators of CAN MDS platform in Cyprus showed the gaps and needs in relation to the professionals and the systems in place regarding child neglect and abuse. The feedback provided by the professionals that participated in the trainings of the project will serve as a guide to improve the current mechanisms as well as the further education of professionals in order to enhance their skills. Also, notes were taken in order to improve the platform so it can be adapted perfectly in a national level without barriers. The project team, both on the part of SWS and on the part of HFC, engaged to remain in contact with the professionals and make sure to



deal and solve any issues will arise. Added to that, more discussion with the Commissioner for personal data protection of Cyprus will take place in order to make sure that data are protected.



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Programme of the European Union

REC-RDAP-GBV-AG-2017) was funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship