In their day-to-day work the EurAdopt Accredited Bodies see a great need for stretching the focus from the initial stages of the adoption to the recognition of adoption as a life-long process. This leads to a great and increasing need for Post-Adoption Services. Therefore, based on their experiences, on statements in the Hague Convention, and supported by the state-of-the-art knowledge, EurAdopt has written a position paper on minimum standards for Post-Adoption Services.

In this paper an overview is given of the minimum standards EurAdopt perceives as indispensable in modern intercountry adoption. EurAdopt makes an appeal to governments to take their responsibilities to strengthen structures for PAS services and shows some examples of how these standards can be put into good practice. The minimum standards have been assessed in the light of the HCCH (1993) article 9c, that states that “Central Authorities shall take, directly or through public authorities or other bodies duly accredited in their State, all appropriate measures, in particular to promote the development of adoption counselling and post-adoption services in their States” and the elaboration of this article in the HCCH Guide for Good Practices 1 (2008).

An EurAdopt questionnaire on PAS showed that the actual situation in the different countries does not guarantee the development of PAS as required in the HCCH and the Guide to Good Practice. Neither, according to the experience of EurAdopt members, do those Guidelines cover the minimum needs of the adoptees, adoptive parents and biological parents, nor the practice implications for adoption actors such as accredited bodies, adoption counselling and central authorities. Moreover, new developments like effects and possibilities of social media and DNA-banks and searches may ask for new minimal requirements and standards.

In different countries there has been a discussion whether Post-Adoption Services could be covered by general social and health systems, but articles from renounced adoption scientists, including the consensus article from Palacios et al. (2019) show the state-of-the-art opinion of adoption scientists that the complexity of adoption issues requires adoption competent professionals with adoption specialised knowledge. Other articles show results that suggest that adoption preparation of prospective adoptive parents and post-adoption services (van Ginkel et al, 2018, ter Meulen et al., in press, ISS, 2019) have indeed resulted in a better development of adoptees.

The EurAdopt questionnaire showed that in most countries facilities for roots services are only available from Accredited Bodies (ABs), and most ABs try to finance the services without public money. Due to the increasing number of adoptees they mediated for and the decreasing fees due to the severely decreasing numbers of new adoptions, ABs are increasingly struggling to provide these services with an outdated finance structure. Moreover, EurAdopt signals a growing concern on behalf of PAS for birthparents in sending countries, both for relinquishing birth families and for birth families who are confronted by searching adoptees. Therefore EurAdopt advocates adoption specialized PAS collaboration between sending and receiving countries.
Why are Post Adoption Services needed?

• The rights and voice of the adoptee – EurAdopt believes that the responsible receiving States have a moral obligation to hear the ideas, initiatives and support needs of the adoptees who have been adopted into receiving States through the existing adoption systems.

• Lifelong support and legal responsibility – Support for the adoption triangle should be available as long as they need, through the different periods of life as the HCCH underpins the legal responsibility of States to provide life-long, adequate PAS.

• Specialization of adoption specific support – EurAdopt believes that Adoption Competent Practitioners are needed as an important preventing measure.

• The complexity of relinquishment and adoption deserves continuing research to develop and maintain good quality PAS.

Minimum standards proposed by EurAdopt

• PAS shall be anchored in law – EurAdopt stresses that PAS need the right legal and financial base in order to secure its availability and quality.

• PAS shall be financed by state funding – The statement in the Guide to Good Practice needs to be widened to the extent that the government should provide specialized care, as every person should get the help it needs, being adopted or non-adopted.

• PAS shall constantly be researched – EurAdopt stresses the importance and the need of support of research in adoption, translation of research results to the practice and evidence-guided PAS.

• PAS shall be provided by qualified experts - Given the importance of specialized adoption help, PAS should be given by specialised and/or qualified experts in adoption.

• PAS for birth families - Within the scope of the HCCH the Guide to Good Practices and the UN Guidelines for Alternative Care adequate services should equally be provided for birth families in sending countries. Therefore a cooperation with sending countries is required regarding searching, accessibility of information and support for identified birthfamilies.

• PAS should be life-long, dynamic, tailor-made and easily accessible.

Requirements for implementation

The implementation of the Post-Adoption Service minimum standards need: public funding, continuous adoption research and enough centralization of adoption knowledge (national and perhaps even international, as origins and issues of adoptees are often similar). Specific intercountry adoption training and tutoring should be available for professionals working with adoptive families and adoptees in PAS or otherwise, and adopters and adoptees need easily accessible information on what support is available and where it is found. Finally, well-functioning cooperation between sending and receiving countries in PAS and roots seeking issues should be supported.

As intercountry Post-Adoption Services in all countries will have to deal with common complex issues, it might be helpful and cost-saving to establish an international expert and expertise centre on PAS, serving both sending and receiving countries. An international Centre might make basic information available for all countries (e.g. research results, books, folders, webinars, online trainings, best practices). The information can be translated to the national (or even smaller scale) characteristics.

To read our full paper, which includes relevant research which has been used, please go to www.euradopt.org where you will find it.