



Vitoria-Gasteiz, October 7 2019

Dear Ombudspersons,

I am addressing this letter to you with a view to requesting your co-operation in an investigation my office is currently working on pursuant to an IOI request.

Indeed, the International Ombudsman Institute's (IOI) European Board decided in a meeting in Barcelona on 4.4.2017 that it would be useful to undertake an investigation on refugees and asylum seekers in Europe. This investigation was commissioned to a steering committee composed by the Dutch National Ombudsman, the Greek Ombudsman and the Ombudsman of the Basque Country. This investigation, which later on materialised as a discussion paper, was subsequently divided into four chapters, including: reception and application; integration, minors, and returns. In this regard, the Basque Ombudsman was entrusted with conducting the investigation on the chapter relating to unaccompanied minors.

As I already explained during our meeting in Athens in February 2019, the aim of the chapter is to identify and disseminate best practices when it comes to protection services for foreign unaccompanied minors in the light of the latest recommendations and reports of European and international human rights organisations on the matter. The intended outcome of the investigation is a guide of best practices on protection services for unaccompanied minors in Europe. The target group of the document are national governments, intergovernmental organisations and Ombuds institutions.

In order to identify the best practices applied in your country, we need your support as specified in the document enclosed hereby. The replies to the questionnaire that we have carefully prepared to that end will be essential in order to understand the different realities which exist throughout Europe as a means to elucidate subsequently which ones could be considered as best practices. The examples of those best practices that comply with the identified standards will then be incorporated into the guide. This will be disseminated and become known internationally, serving thus as guidance to other countries.

The results of the discussion paper will be presented in the IOI 12th World Conference which will take place in Dublin on 17-22 May 2020.

We thank you in advance for your collaboration and look forward to receiving your contributions.

Let me request you, dear Sir/Madam, to accept the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink is written over a circular blue stamp. The stamp contains a lowercase 'a' and the word 'ararteko' in a sans-serif font.

Manuel Lezertua

Ararteko-Ombudsman of the Basque Country