Professional Consultation – Information Sheet

Enlarged Group

Projects Outline: ISS and International Family Mediation

July 2015

For five years now, ISS has introduced a programme aiming to support and to reinforce the formalisation of, and access to, international family mediation practice. This important area of practice is also of high interest to The Hague Conference, the European Union and other regional political entities. This letter provides an overview of the projects that have been prioritised, while drawing focus on Project Three regarding collaboration to develop a set of key principles and promising practices\(^1\) in the area of international family mediation.

Over the years, ISS has established a strong track record in dealing with cross-border family conflicts and cases of child abduction throughout the world. While it was a good learning curve for ISS in the field of child protection, it was also an opportunity to build networks of professionals working in the same field. This, in turn, has created an opportunity for sharing knowledge, different perspectives and experiences, and work towards further strengthening of the shared practices and goals in international family mediation. ISS cooperates with inter-governmental organisations such as The Hague Conference on Private International Law and professional networks throughout the world.

Out of these efforts, three international family mediation projects were created in 2011, aiming primarily at raising awareness, sharing information and facilitating access to mediation spheres.

**Project One**, now completed, resulted in the drafting and publication of a guide to international family mediation for families and professionals (http://www.iss-ssi.org/index.php/en/what-we-do-en/mediation-en). It was specifically drafted for use worldwide, taking into consideration major languages and cultural specificities. This publication was the fruit of a large multidisciplinary consultation process that brought together several professionals and practitioners. Drafted in compliance with all legislations, its international distribution is underway, supported by the input of several administrative

\(^1\) We deliberately call them ‘promising’ rather than ‘best’ practices, as we cannot guarantee their on-going quality.
and legal authorities, and the recommendation of political organisations like the HccH Permanent Bureau.

**Project Two**, intimately linked to the publication, is to adapt and publish the content on a dedicated website, where families and professionals will also find country specific information concerning relevant and reliable resources to help resolve their cases. For example, the goals include providing guidance for where to find mediators, specialist legal advice, central contact points for mediation under The Hague Conventions of 1980 and 1996, etc.

**Project Three**, is designed to develop and establish a set of key principles and promising practices for international family mediation processes, thus enabling a wider recognition of this specialised area of mediation from State authorities and other major actors. To achieve this, ISS will host a meeting where mediators and professionals who are active in cross-border family conflicts will gather from across regions to exchange ideas, expertise, multicultural perspectives, experiences, and lessons learned in issues of training, deontology and general practice. The hope is to create an environment of engagement and collaboration towards achieving an international charter reflecting shared understandings in this specialised mediation practice area.

A professional consultation was started this summer to initiate this endeavour. While ISS itself cannot provide all the necessary expertise, it recognises the strength and knowledge inherent in its networks of individuals and organisations. In this context, therefore, ISS, in the role of the facilitator and coordinator has the privilege to bring together all the actors for promoting dialogue and best practices, and thereby advocate for the best interest of children.

For ISS, this work is the initial step towards the creation, on the long-term, of a global network of professional mediators specialised in cross-border conflicts. Our hope is to jointly look towards the future by reaching out to experts and professionals from different continents and cultures, and inclusively work for the advancement of international family mediation practice (models of practice, articulation with the law, competencies & training etc.). A dynamic and collaborative effort in international family mediation will progressively become an opportunity for families throughout the globe, and promote understanding and agreement in disputes involving children.

Looking forward to reading you, please receive our best regards,

Jean Ayoub
Secretary General
International Social Service