



A. RECOMMENDED FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSMENT OF APPLICANTS FROM THE PSYCHOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW

The text below describes the different domains that should be included in the psychological report. Drafting a high-quality report is highly demanding on the psychologist performing the assessment, as any partial findings arising from the examination by specific methods and techniques must be integrated in a meaningful result that will, using a holistic approach, describe personalities of applicants and their parenting competences. The preferred psychological diagnostic methods are described below.

The psychological report should include:

1. List and brief description of the methods used - methods should meet the criteria for a high-quality psycho diagnostic tool, therefore they should be readily available, recognised by professional public, must be valid, reliable, reproducible, current and standardised for the given population.

2. Basic information concerning the applicants - personal and family history

- a. Description of parents and other relevant persons from the childhood of applicants
- b. Reflection experienced in the childhood and model of education
- c. Values conveyed primary by the family
- d. Social interaction in the family of the applicant
- e. Description of how they became independent of their parents
- f. Special events (migration, loss of job, diseases, accidents, suicides, death in the family, etc.)
- g. Strategies for coping with emotion, stress and conflicts
- h. Strategies for coping with the fact that they cannot have children and other loss in their lives
- i. History of the couple
- j. Division and flexibility of their roles
- k. The idea of adaptation to changes in the family after the adoption

3. Specific aspects associated with successful adoption

a. Parenting competence of applicants

- Description of their own educational skills, positions and experience
- Reflection on strong and weak parenting skills
- Flexible approach to parenting
- Sensitivity and ability to respond to the needs of the child
- Ability to take the perspective of the child (mentalization)
- Good knowledge of the developmental needs of children and implications if they are neglected (reports from the preparation of the applicants, if available)
- Identification of risk of abuse of children or ill treatment
- Frustration tolerance, ability to set rules with children
- Open attitude to the history of the child and ability to guide him/her to process his/her losses
- Cultural sensitivity

b. Personal qualifications of applicants

- Exclusion of psychopathology
- Functioning and structure of their personality
- Openness to new experience
- Flexibility in the expectations of the child

- Level of emotional stability and maturity of the personality
- Ability and willingness to give up satisfaction of one's own emotional needs and to respond to demanding needs of the child, with the ability to ask for professional assistance, if necessary.

c. Attitudes of applicants regarding the adoption

- For how long the applicants have discussed the adoption
- Motivation of the applicants to adoption
- Degree of consensus in their motivation between partners
- Exclusion of dysfunctional motives for adoption

4. Plastic description of applicants, their characteristics, traits and dominant trends in behaviour, leisure activities and hobbies

In addition to any specific aspects that can be clearly associated with the successful adoption, a high-quality and plastic description of personalities of applicants from various angles is necessary for us. Description of all possible characteristics of applicants that may not be directly related to their ability to take care of a child is necessary for us for to find the best match between the child and the applicant.

5. Explicit measurement and opinion regarding the tendency of social desirability

The tendency to be shown in the best possible light is completely understandable for a similar type of examination. It is necessary that the assessing psychologist reflects a degree of social desirability, either using such personality questionnaires that have specific - the so-called validation scales, or by applying methods explicitly dedicated to detecting positive distortion or using projective techniques.

6. Child in the family

If the family already has a child, the child is an essential part of the psychological assessment of the applicants to map also the child's position regarding the adoption plan of his/her parents and potential risks arising from the adoption, taking into account the age of the child. At the same time, specifics and needs of the child in the family must be described.

7. Conclusion and recommendations, including any limitations of the applicants

A detailed opinion of the psychologist whether he/she recommends entering the applicant in the registry of suitable applicants for intercountry adoption, what strengths of applicants or their limitations have been identified. We also welcome his/her recommendation regarding the needs of the child that the applicants may particularly fulfil.

Recommended techniques and methods:

Psychological assessment must be clearly based on the combination of a multitude techniques and methods.

Clinical methods (observation, interview) can focus on all of the domains above, but particularly on the description of the life history, history of the couple and relationships behaviour.

Standardised personality questionnaires: We recommend using the MMPI-2 questionnaire (Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory), which provides information of personality traits of applicants (functioning of their personalities, risk of psychopathology), their parenting potential (strengths and weaknesses). At the same time, it also includes validation scales that can be used to reflect on the tendency to be presented positively. Naturally, another questionnaire that has adequate psychometric qualities (e.g. PSSI) can be used. When using methods without validation scales, e.g. NEO five factor personality inventory (NEO Five-Factor inventory), the assessment must be supplemented with a validation method or projective technique.

In the “*Specific aspects associated with successful adoption*” domain we recommend using e.g. PSI-4 methods (Parenting Stress Index, 4th Edition) or CAPI (Child Abuse Potential Inventory) that deal with strengths and potential risks in parenting. Also here, other methods that deal with relevant constructs (parenting strengths and weaknesses, parenting capacity, risk of ill-treatment of children, etc.) can be employed.

Projective techniques: their use is not mandatory. Nevertheless, they can provide interesting information in addition to the assessment, particularly, in the event of absence of validation scales or other risk arising from the tendency to be presented in positive light. Methods such as ROR and TAT may also give an option to describe personality, risk of psychopathology and parenting strengths and weaknesses. To describe their emotional ties and more generally their ability to form relationships, the APP projective method (Adult Attachment Projective Picture System) can be recommended.

The assumption is that this set of methods will be used dynamically. This means that the recommended set of methods may provide the basic settings in relevant personality and parental domains for the adoption.

B. RECOMMENDED FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSMENT OF APPLICANTS FROM THE SOCIAL POINT OF VIEW

The following points shall serve as the basis for the description of applicants and their background in social terms. It will allow us to have a better idea of the applicant, with whom we have no contact and to match him/her with the child with specific personality setting and needs.

1. Describe the methods used for social investigation
2. General details of applicants (name, date of birth, address)
3. Formal education and field
4. Stays abroad in excess of 3 months (which country, purpose of the trip). For stays exceeding 3 months (after 15 years of age of the applicant), it is necessary to provide a record of criminal history or similar document.
5. Employment:
 - current job, working hours
 - previous jobs in brief
 - maternity/paternity leave guaranteed by the law and other options how the parent may and is planning to stay at home with the child
6. Current marriage/partnership: Year of marriage, length of partnership. Any previous marriages.

7. Religious beliefs
8. Children who are raised in the family:
 - number of children
 - own children: name, year of birth, any specific needs, inclusion at school
 - children adopted: name, year of birth, date when they were accepted in the family (moving in), course of adaptation of the child after his/her arrival in the family, any specific needs, inclusion at school
 - setting and preparation of children to accept a new sibling
9. Leisure time activities: how the family spends weekends, holiday, evenings
10. Relations to wider social circle:
 - relatives and friends (who they are, who they meet, what their attitude to the planned adoption is)
 - community in the neighbourhood
11. Description of the abode and its suitability for children:
 - size of the apartment or house, garden
 - plan of the future space for the child/children
 - city/village, infrastructure, accessibility of services
12. Financial situation: revenues, expenditure, debts, plans, etc.
13. Conclusion and overall impression of the staff member who performed the assessment