Review of the International Adoption System in Quebec, Canada.

Secrétariat aux services internationaux à l'enfant (SASIE).

SASIE: Role and Responsibilities

The *Secrétariat aux services internationaux à l'enfant* (SASIE), which operates under the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MSSS), exercises, on behalf of the Minister of Health and Social Services, the responsibilities of Quebec's Central Authority under the Hague Convention of 29 May 1993 on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption.

General Context: Developments in Intercountry Adoption and Review of Quebec's Adoption System

Against a backdrop of declining intercountry adoption and evolving international standards, several receiving States and States of origin have undertaken reviews of their adoption systems as part of their commitment to the 1993 HCCH Adoption Convention. Quebec is following this international trend.

On 26 November 2024, the Government of Quebec introduced a moratorium on the opening of new intercountry adoption cases through accredited adoption agencies. Based on the precautionary principle and the paramount importance of the best interests of the child, this decision responds, in particular, to concerns regarding the safeguards surrounding intercountry adoption procedures and the risks of irregular or illicit practices.

Cases already opened continue to be processed. Adoption procedures conducted without an accredited agency, where expressly permitted under Quebec regulations, are also not affected by this measure.

In parallel, work is underway to conduct a comprehensive review of Quebec's intercountry adoption system, covering practices, safeguards, services and governance. The review aims to gain a better understanding of current realities, assess whether existing mechanisms provide the necessary safeguards, and identify potential areas for improvement, while respecting the best interests of the child and their fundamental rights.

Quebec's ongoing work includes an integrity assessment of countries of origin, consultations with international partners, and initiatives focused on the prevention and handling of illicit practices in intercountry adoption.

As part of this work, SASIE places particular importance on ensuring that the voices and lived experiences of adopted persons are heard and taken into account.

Complementary Research and Analysis Mandates

As part of this review, an additional research mandate has been entrusted to the *Institut universitaire Jeunes en difficulté* (IUJD) to better understand the needs of adopted persons and families affected by illicit practices in intercountry adoption, as well as the forms of support that could be made available to them.

Furthermore, the École nationale d'administration publique (ENAP – National School of Public Administration) has been commissioned to undertake a research, analysis and participatory process aimed at documenting intercountry adoption practices and developing findings and recommendations.

This process draws on a literature review, interviews with adopted persons and adoptive parents, consultations with accredited adoption agencies, and an analysis of intercountry adoption practices in other countries.

Public Innovation Labs: A Participatory Approach

The research and analysis process conducted by ENAP will also take into account the outcomes of four public innovation labs.

These labs provide spaces for collective reflection, bringing together the knowledge, experiences and perspectives of those directly concerned — adopted persons and adoptive parents — alongside other relevant stakeholders.

They aim to deepen the understanding of key issues, develop a shared overview of the challenges, and identify potential avenues for improvement.

The three public innovation labs conducted by ENAP in 2026 focused on the following themes:

- **12 June – Adoption Journey:** The different stages of the intercountry adoption process and the interactions between the individuals concerned and the various stakeholders.
- **28 August – Illicit Practices:** Risk factors and measures for the prevention, detection and handling of irregular or illicit practices, as well as support for those affected.
- **28 September – Governance:** The roles and responsibilities of the various actors, coordination mechanisms and international cooperation.

A fourth lab, entitled **Voices of Adopted Persons**, was held on 14 October 2026. Organised by InterCountry Adoptee Voices (ICAV), in collaboration with L'Hybridé, this lab was designed by and for adopted persons, enabling them to contribute directly to discussions on issues affecting them and potential improvements to intercountry adoption practices.

International Social Service (ISS) was invited to participate in the first three labs to contribute its expertise in international child protection and cross-border cooperation.

ENAP's work will result in a publicly available report presenting the findings and recommendations arising from this process. The report will contribute to the broader ministerial review, which is expected to be finalised in winter 2027.

Together, these initiatives will help inform discussions on the future direction of intercountry adoption in Quebec, while upholding the best interests of the child and respecting their fundamental rights.