

**TOOLKIT**

**FOSTER CARE AND  
ALTERNATIVE FORMS  
OF CARE FOR  
UNACCOMPANIED AND  
SEPARATED MIGRANT  
CHILDREN.**

**A training toolkit for professionals, families, and  
minors.**



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# EPIC - EUROPEAN PRACTICES FOR INTEGRATION AND CARE

## Improving alternative forms of care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children

N. 863767

### STATEMENT

*March 11th 2021*

Every city could be a welcoming city: it depends on the people living there and on the Institutions who lead social and political affairs.

Every citizen, as well as every civil society organization and Institution, should promote and support the integration and flourishing of every Unaccompanied Migrant Child.

We hope that active inclusion and integration may become a praxis of every European city and a new culture of solidarity and justice disseminated thanks to everyday people's choice.

We believe in this approach and promote a welcoming city culture.

## Let's be part of a welcoming city!



# INDEX

Introduction	5
Background	6
<b>PART I: The manual</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Section I Migrant children: what do we know about them?</b>	<b>9</b>
1. Migrant children: who are they?	9
2. What are the main reasons that force children to migrate?	10
3. What are the main difficulties they encounter?	11
4. The rights of unaccompanied and separated migrant children and the legal remedies that can be applied to protect them	12
4.1 Pursuit of the best interest of the child	12
4.2 Internal laws of the member states of the European Union	13
4.3 FOCUS: the need to obtain asylum, the problem of trafficking, the need to reunite families.	14
<b>Section II Building up the necessary knowledge and skills to provide proper care for unaccompanied and separated migrant children</b>	<b>17</b>
1. Disorders that can affect migrant minors	19
2. Resilience of unaccompanied and separated migrant children	21
3. Care of children, support in accessing their rights in the integration process	24
3.1 Care of the person	24
3.2 Access to rights	25
3.3 Supporting the integration process	26
<b>Section III The care system for Unaccompanied Migrant Children</b>	<b>29</b>
1. Placement and care of the child	29
1.1 Placement in facilities specifically for children	30
1.2 Foster care and family-based care	32
1.2.1 The tasks of the foster carer	35
1.2.2 Homo-cultural foster care and hetero-cultural foster care	37
1.2.3 Benefits and challenges of foster care (homo-and hetero-cultural) in families	41
1.3 Alternative forms of foster care	41
1.4 Kinship care	43
2. Child protection	43

<b>SECTION IV The selection of Carers. The choice and matching</b>	<b>46</b>
1. The importance of evaluation and selection activities	46
1.1 The "assessment" of the child	46
1.2 The "assessment" of the person(s) who are/will be called upon to care for the unaccompanied child	47
1.3 Possible involvement of the family of origin	50
2. The activity of selection and matching. Compatibility	50
<b>Section V Training, support and monitoring</b>	<b>53</b>
1. Training	53
2. Support	56
2.1 Network support	56
2.2 Psychological support	58
3. monitoring	60
<b>SEZIONE VI Raising awareness on foster care (and other forms of care)</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Section VII Transition to adulthood</b>	<b>63</b>
1. Major problems the unaccompanied migrant minors may encounter	63
2. some precautions that caregivers should follow	64
<b>PART II: Training modules for professionals, foster families and unaccompanied and separated migrant children</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>TRAINING MODULE FOR PROFESSIONALS</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Training module for meetings with unaccompanied and separated migrant children and with young people benefiting from support measures over the age of 18</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Note</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Annexes</b>	<b>91</b>

## INTRODUCTION

The project "EPIC - European Practices for Integration and Care. Improving alternative forms of care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children - N. 863767" is a project co-funded by the European Union Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. The EPIC project seeks to improve the effectiveness and quality of alternative forms of care and, more specifically:

- Encourage the exchange of good practices and methodologies between partners;
- Valuing key actors with skills and information for the expansion of the reception and care service.

This Toolkit has been elaborated by the consultant Dr Andrea Panico, starting from the document "*Promoting the foster care of unaccompanied migrant children : a pathway to a better understanding of the situation. Training for professionals in Europe*", developed in the framework of the previous FORUM project (2017-2019, led by FADV).

This Toolkit has been integrated with new sections on i) family and UASC training, ii) foster care and other forms of care awareness-raising, and iii) transition to adulthood. It has also been integrated with the good practices of the EPIC project partners and with the Recommendations for improving the reception of unaccompanied migrant children, which emerged from the seven online roundtables held within the EPIC project between October and December 2020.

The EPIC project is carried out in collaboration with 8 European partners: Municipality of Palermo (Italy), ACCEM (Spain), OPU (Czech Republic), Reach for Change Foundation (Sweden), FCA - Fondazione Caritas Ambrosiana (Italy), Farsi Prossimo Onlus Societa' Cooperativa Sociale (Italy), Municipality of Macerata (Italy) and C.I.D.I.S. - Onlus - Centro Informazione Documentazione e Iniziativa per lo Sviluppo (Italy).

The Toolkit is divided into two parts:

1. a HANDBOOK, describing the situation of unaccompanied and separated migrant children, the care system, the selection and matching of families/single parents and their support, awareness-raising activities and the delicate phase of transition to adulthood.

2. TRAINING MODULES detailing the training programme for professionals, foster carers and unaccompanied and separated migrant children (and newly minted beneficiaries of support measures beyond 18).

More information about the project and the reference documents are available for download on the project website: <https://epic-project.alberodellavita.org/>

## BACKGROUND

Migration flows, which have increased exponentially in recent years, have brought to Europe not only adult men and women but also many minors unaccompanied by their families or legal guardians.

European countries receiving unaccompanied and separated migrant minors must protect and promote alternative reception systems to reception centres. These include foster care and other systems that have already proven effective, which can and should be further enhanced to ensure the holistic well-being and integration of these children.

Building on the excellent work done so far by alternative care systems, the EPIC project aims to improve the effectiveness and quality of alternative care through the following activities:

- Field visits to partner countries to exchange good practices and methodologies;
- Capacity building and training for professionals, families and unaccompanied and separated migrant children;
- Raising awareness of families and communities at the local level to promote family fostering as a form of care for unaccompanied and separated migrant children.
- Involvement of the private sector to foster training and employment opportunities for young people.

This Toolkit aims at improving the skills and knowledge of professionals, families, and children themselves in three countries: Italy, Spain and the Czech Republic. It has been elaborated starting from the "*FORUM training package*" originally addressed only to foster care professionals for unaccompanied and separated migrant children and, subsequently, integrating it to be usable for the training of families and minors, promoting foster care and alternative forms of assistance and care.

The training approach underlying the chosen modules is as follows:

- A. Proactive - *Learning-by-doing*
- B. Responding to demand - training responds to the needs of end-users, institutions, and countries.
- C. Integrated - Capacity-building activities reflect and support activities already underway.
- D. Sustainable - Training sessions are limited in time; however, by creating a network of trainers, one can ensure that the impact of the training session is maintained.

# **PART I:**

# **THE**

# **MANUAL**

## SECTION I

### MIGRANT CHILDREN: WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THEM?

#### 1. MIGRANT CHILDREN: WHO ARE THEY?

According to the European Commission, “the term <migrant children> covers all citizens of other countries under the age of 18 who migrate from their country of origin to and within the territory of the European Union in search of survival, safety, a better life, an education, economic opportunity, protection from exploitation and abuse, reunification with their families or a combination of these factors<sup>1</sup>

On the migratory route, these foreign migrant children may be:

- unaccompanied, “separated from both their parents and other relatives and not accompanied by an adult who, by law or custom, is legally responsible”, and in this case we refer to them as **unaccompanied children**.<sup>2</sup>
- accompanied by their parents and family.
- separated from both parents - or whoever in the past has exercised their legal guardianship - but not necessarily from other relatives, and in this case, we speak of **separated children**. This category may therefore include children accompanied by other adult family members (such as an adult brother or uncle).<sup>3</sup> It is important that “appropriate measures be taken to ascertain the family ties of separated children who travel with adults, before these children are sent elsewhere and before the adult accompanying them has been entrusted with their protection”.<sup>4</sup>

#### European data<sup>5</sup>

In 2020, 13.550 unaccompanied migrant minors requested asylum and international protection in the 27 member states of the EU. They accounted for 10% of all the asylum seekers under 18. Most of the unaccompanied minors were boys (88%). 67% were between the ages of 16 and 17 (about 9.100 of the migrant minors), while 20% were between the ages of 14 and 15 (about 3,000 minors) and 11% (about 1.500 minors) were under 14. Most of them came from Afghanistan (5.495 minors - 41%) Syria (2.265 minors - 17%), Pakistan (1.090 minors - 8%), Somalia (645 minors - 5%), Bangladesh (495 minors - 4%), Morocco (420 minors - 3%), Egypt (400 minors - 3%), Guinea (390 minors - 3%).

## 2. WHAT ARE THE MAIN REASONS THAT FORCE CHILDREN TO MIGRATE?

The main reasons prompting unaccompanied and separated children (hereafter UASC) to undertake the migratory experience are situations of war, violence and exploitation in their country of origin, or the absence of adequate means of support.<sup>7</sup>

The migratory process, from that for the individual to that of entire populations, of children or of adults, is almost always undertaken due to political, environmental, economic, or social factors.

In that sense it is possible to distinguish between “push” and “pull” factors.<sup>8</sup> Such push and pull factors explain, to a large extent, the migratory process of adults and children alike.

Among the push factors that, in the last 30 years, have involved European countries, causing vast migratory flows of people and entire populations fleeing from their countries of origin, are:

- ethnic, religious, political or social persecution;
- grave human rights violations such as slavery, exploitation of labour and sexual exploitation, etc.);
- wars and internal conflicts.

These migrants are identified as refugees, or international asylum-seekers. Other push factors may be environmental; they include natural disasters like the terrible drought afflicting East Africa, the floods that in the last two years have repeatedly struck the South Sudan and Somalia, earthquakes or accidental man-made disasters that have devastated vast areas, making it impossible to continue to live there (think of the tragedy that occurred in Beirut in August of 2020). These migrants might be defined as “*environmental*” and are, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) “*those who, because of sudden or gradual environmental changes that negatively affect their life or living conditions, are forced to leave their homes, either temporarily or permanently, and move to another area in their own country or abroad*”.<sup>9</sup>

*Pull factors* of an economic character may, instead, be at the root of migration by individuals seeking a better life, in the form of more job opportunities, the possibility of higher salaries, the availability of healthcare, a better welfare system, or the possibility of reunification with other members of their own family.

### 3. WHAT ARE THE MAIN DIFFICULTIES THEY ENCOUNTER?

Migrant children face significant challenges and dangers from the outset. In fact, in addition to the initial trauma due to the loss or abandon of the family and community, the voyage also involves a serious risk of undergoing threats, aggression and physical violence that could leave an indelible mark on a child from the psychological as well as physical standpoint.

On reaching Europe, the so-called country of first arrival may not be their final destination in the EU, and the migrant child immediately comes up against the difficulty of freely leaving that country of first arrival and proceeding legally to his or her final destination.<sup>10</sup> In particular, in the case of a child arriving in one of the so-called first entry countries, but intending to reunite with other family members, difficulties often arise relative to the time required to achieve the desired reunification, ranging from identification of the family members in the foreign country in which they are living, to the proof necessary to demonstrate the relationship.

The instructions of the traffickers and word of mouth among the traveling companions often encourage the children to run away from the structures in which they are detained, or to declare themselves of age during their identification, to be able to join their family members illegally without having to wait for the bureaucratic processes of the host country to be completed.

Another critical aspect concerns the procedure for the identification of the child and determination of his or her age. If they are not in possession of valid documents, UASC may be subject to determination of their age using methods that in many European countries are uncertain and outdated, giving unreliable results (such as ascertaining age by means of wrist x-rays).

The procedure is often lengthy, and may require recognition of asylum which, in addition to the trauma of uncertainty regarding the future, may lead to additional suffering caused by the child having to relive his or her personal story as a necessary step to obtain that status. The difficulties linked to the children's stay in the country of first entry may also be connected to their access to fundamental rights such as education, health, and essential legal protection.

Moreover, the children are forced to deal with a culture and language that are new to them and vastly different from their own. This has a severe impact on a child who, if not supported adequately through appropriate channels and provided with adequate support for integration, may experience a so-called "*culture shock*" and feel excluded from the new community with consequent social isolation, and may also experience discrimination of a social or racial character.

Additional difficulties may affect older children due to the lack of active policies in the host country relative to income support, when trying to find housing, apply for a job, etc.

## 4. THE RIGHTS OF UNACCOMPANIED AND SEPARATED MIGRANT CHILDREN AND THE LEGAL REMEDIES THAT CAN BE APPLIED TO PROTECT THEM

Migrant children who have gone through the experience of migration first-hand, precisely because of the difficulties and traumas connected with it, need the most rapid and complete protection possible. In that sense, international and European legislation, as well as that of the member countries, provide a highly detailed system of *hard* and *soft laws* for the safeguard and protection of UASC.

Among the most important legal remedies for the protection of children and the safeguard of their rights are the **Agreement on the Rights of the Child** of November 20, 1989, and the **Geneva Convention on the determination of refugee status** of July 28, 1951 (see in particular Section IV - *social wellbeing*).<sup>11</sup>

The European Union has developed additional legislation for the protection of children and the safeguard of their rights, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (The Charter),<sup>12</sup> the **European Convention for protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms** of November 4, 1950<sup>13</sup> and the **Convention of the European Council for the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse**.<sup>14</sup> The European legislature has also detailed the rights of children in Regulations<sup>15</sup> that are directly binding on member states - and in Directives,<sup>16</sup> which must be adopted by the member states and converted by them into their own national legal system.<sup>17</sup>

### 4.1 Pursuit of the best interest of the child

The guiding principle of the entire European (and international) body of law regarding the child is the pursuit of his or her best interest (*best interest of the child* - BIC).<sup>18</sup>

This principle guarantees that in all the decisions and actions that concern a child (including refugees, displaced children, children without a country and applicants for asylum) the child's best interest must be taken into consideration<sup>19</sup> in particular regarding the principle of the

unity of the family, the child's wellbeing and social development, his or her survival and safety, also in light of the child's own preference,<sup>20</sup> depending on the age and level of maturity of the individual.

In that sense, the member states of the European Union called upon to protect UASC have to provide to ensure that:

- as soon as a child is found in a country, an appropriate individual investigation is undertaken to establish any possible vulnerabilities and needs - depending on the gender and age of the child - and that this investigation takes into consideration all the subsequent procedures that relate to the child;<sup>21</sup>
- adequate conditions of accommodation are offered to the child, including a series of alternative options of assistance such as foster care and assistance in reunification with family members;<sup>22</sup>
- the child is provided with a guardian/legal representative;<sup>23</sup>
- access to education is guaranteed;<sup>24</sup>
- access to healthcare is guaranteed, including therapy for the treatment of mental illness and support to children who have experienced any form of abuse and/or trauma<sup>25</sup> and psycho-social support;
- thorough investigations are made to determine the possibility of reunification with the child's own family;<sup>26</sup>
- the child can engage in recreational activities including play and other age-appropriate activities,
- the child is allowed to present an application for asylum;<sup>27</sup>
- always taking into consideration the best interest of the child, before issuing a decision to repatriate, the child is provided with adequate assistance to ensure that he or she is returned to a family member, a designated guardian, or an adequate receiving structure in the country of repatriation.<sup>28</sup>

## 4.2 Internal laws of the member states of the European Union

As indicated in the preceding paragraph, the European Union has an influence on the internal legislation of the member states, which are required to adapt their legislation to comply with Community directives. Often, the legislation of the member states has developed in certain sectors - including the immigration sector - specifically thanks to the indications received via the EU.

Although Community law imposes basic regulations common to all the member states, there are still profound differences between different legal systems, especially about acceptance, guardianship, repatriation, and expulsion and holding the UASC.

### Some recent new legislation relative to the safeguard of foreign unaccompanied children.

Italy was recently the key player responsible for a major legislative reform that improved the system of protection and guarantees for unaccompanied foreign minors (MSNA).<sup>29</sup> Law no. 47 of 2017<sup>30</sup> introduced several important amendments to the standards in force relative to unaccompanied foreign minors. Among others, it introduced the figure of the Voluntary Guardian (see Section 3 §2) and assigns to the person in charge of the receiving structure - as guardian *pro tempore* and until the permanent guardian has been appointed - the duties relative to the request of a residency permit or asylum. The reform has also established that local organizations can *"heighten awareness and provide training to foster families to encourage the placement of unaccompanied foreign children in a family setting rather than in an institution" while noting, however, that "this must not require new or greater expenditures on the part of the public finance" and that "the local organizations shall provide within the limits of the resources available to them from their own budgets"*. Additional important steps have been taken about turning migrants back at the border - prohibiting this practice for UASC - and expulsions, greatly limiting the possibilities for allowing them. The law has also established that the age of the UASC should be determined, when necessary, by means of a multidisciplinary examination. Law 47/2017 also establishes that *"in the choice of a placement for the child, among those available, account should be taken of the needs and characteristics of the child resulting from interviews [...] with regard to the type of service offered by the receiving structure"* and that the structures in which the UASC are received *"shall satisfy [...] the minimum standards of services and aid provided by the residential structures for children and be authorized or accredited [...]"*. Finally, the rights of UASC to education and healthcare are emphasized.

### 4.3 FOCUS: the need to obtain asylum, the problem of trafficking, the need to reunite families.

Among the many critical aspects encountered at the time of identifying UASC, when they are taken in charge by the authorities, and which legislation has attempted to deal with by strengthening the action of protection and safeguard, are:

- **The need to apply for asylum.** Migrant children have the right to obtain refugee status if they have fled their country “for fear of persecution on account of their race, religion, nationality, ethnicity or political opinion” and when, due to this fear “they find themselves outside of the country of which they are citizens and cannot or, because of those fears, do not wish to avail themselves of the protection of that country”.<sup>31</sup> They have the right to obtain subsidiary protection when there are “grounded reasons to believe that, if they return to their country of origin or, in case of a citizen of no country, if they return to the country in which they had been living, they will run a real risk of suffering grave damage”.<sup>32</sup> Some EU countries have also strengthened their system of protection, providing to grant other types of residual protection for humanitarian reasons.
- **Possible victims of human trafficking.** This can occur when the child has been recruited, brought, transferred, or hosted for the purpose of being exploited for sexual purposes, servitude or in illegal economies such as selling drugs and stolen objects, engaging in theft, robbery, and fraud). This may have occurred at the time of their departure from the country of origin, along the migrant route to reach Europe, in transit from one country to another or in the country of arrival and/or destination. Migrant children, especially if unaccompanied, run a very great risk of falling into the trap of exploitation and trafficking.

Among the main tools of protection are, in addition to the aforementioned Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, which provides that the countries shall apply “any and all provisions tending to prevent kidnapping, sale or trafficking of children for any purpose and in any form”, the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings of 2005. Moreover, based on the provisions of the Treaty on the Operation of the European Union which, in article 79 (2008) requires the European parliament and Council to develop a policy of mutual understanding to ensure the prevention of human trafficking through the adoption of measures for the “prevention of human trafficking, in particular of women and children” - the European Union has enacted, over the years, Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and Council, dated April 5, 2011, ordering “the prevention and repression of crimes of human trafficking and the protection of the victims”, and Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and Council, dated October 25, 2012, listing the “minimum standards on the subject of rights, aid and protection for the victims of crime”.

- **Separation – temporary or permanent - from the family of origin.** Often, a child may be temporarily separated from the family environment. This can happen, for example, when members of their family are already in a European country that the child is attempting to reach. It may also happen, on the contrary, that a minor is in a European

country but that the rest of the family remains in the country of origin.

If it is in the best interest of the UASC, Community law (Directive 2003/86/EC and Regulation 604/2013) protects the child by guaranteeing the right to reunification of the family. Article 20 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) instructs that "any child who is temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment or who cannot be left in that environment in his or her best interest, has the right to protection and special aid from the government. The governments, for their part, provide a guardian for the child, in accordance with their national legislation. This guardianship may consist of foster care in a family, the institution of kafalah under Islamic law, adoption or, in case of need, placement in adequate institutions for childcare. In choosing among these options, due account will be taken of the need for some continuity in the child's education, and of his or her ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic origin".

## SECTION II

### BUILDING UP THE NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO PROVIDE PROPER CARE FOR UNACCOMPANIED AND SEPARATED MIGRANT CHILDREN

#### The main difficulties one might encounter when interfacing with unaccompanied and separated migrant children.

There are always critical points when a person interfaces with another person due to various factors (such as character). These difficulties may increase when the person with whom we must interact is an adolescent or a child who has different peculiarities, especially in the case of UASC. In this case, the centre operator, the guardian, the social worker, or the foster carer may encounter the following criticalities:

- **Distrust.** UASC tend not to trust operators but only fellow countrymen or other migrants. Mistrust is due *firstly* to the experiences they have lived, *secondly* to the indications given by traffickers and sometimes by their families of origin or friends who have already completed their migration journey. Moreover, the child may not want to talk about previous experiences, especially if they are highly traumatic. At the same time, they do not want to talk about their experiences may depend on a lack of trust in the adult of reference. It is essential to adapt to the minor's time without forcing him/her to tell his/her story, respecting his/her silences.
- **Fear.** Many minors who managed to reach an EU country did so only after experiencing a journey that in some cases can last for years and is often accompanied by physical and verbal violence, marked by deprivation and pain.
- **Different cultural background.** UASC may come from vastly different countries in terms of customs, habits, and traditions from the one in which they are present. This may influence the approach to issues concerning sexuality, religion, and other cultures.
- **Communication difficulties.** Communication difficulties can be traced to both verbal language and the interpretation of non-verbal (body) communication. It is also important to remember that this problem can be accentuated due to the low literacy level. Some minors, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, were not given the opportunity to attend school for a long time; some are illiterate.

This set of factors characterizing the child contributes to making him or her a particularly vulnerable person.

## The child migrant, a vulnerable person

Vulnerability, in general, can be defined as *"the reduced ability of an individual or group to cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural or man-made hazard."*<sup>33</sup>

Vulnerable groups are composed of people who, due to factors beyond their control, do not have the same opportunities as people in other groups within society, such people may be at high risk of health risks, often to meet their basic needs.<sup>34</sup> Vulnerable persons include,<sup>35</sup> among other things, minors, unaccompanied minors, disabled people, elderly people, pregnant women, single parents with minor, victims of human trafficking, people with serious diseases or mental disorders, and people who have been subjected to torture, rape, or other serious forms of psychological, physical, or sexual violence, such as victims of female genital mutilation.

The category of vulnerable people also includes political refugees and those seeking international protection. *"Implicit in refugee status is the notion of being vulnerable"* as they are obliged to *"leave their homeland and their loved ones in fear of never being able to return; they are those who have no choice or rather the alternative would lead them to torture, severe suffering and most often to certain death."*<sup>36</sup>

Migration is almost always a long and painful process from the very beginning. The person who decides to undertake the journey - be it an adult or a minor - leaves behind a situation of crisis in his or her country of origin, which can be dictated, as mentioned in the previous paragraphs, by various reasons (wars, persecution, famine, etc.).

The pain of separation from one's own land and community is followed by the difficulty of the journey, which is very often accompanied by the real danger of physical and psychological violence, precarious living conditions, social isolation, discrimination, and risk of exploitation. The arrival of a migrant child is also a further stress factor. He or she is catapulted into an environment and community often profoundly different from his or her original one (in terms of customs, traditions, approach to religion, etc.).

This combination of factors makes migrant minors particularly vulnerable, especially when they are unaccompanied.

## 1. DISORDERS THAT CAN AFFECT MIGRANT MINORS

For migrants fleeing from crises (wars, persecution, famine, etc.) and having suffered trauma (sexual abuse, kidnapping, etc.), there may be impairments at a cognitive level (alteration of perception and reality, affect regulation, etc.), at a somatic level (emotional disorders, substance abuse as self-medication, etc.) and a relational level (sociopathy).<sup>37</sup>

Some trauma-related pathologies can be identified as (i) *Post Traumatic Stress Disorder*,<sup>38</sup> (ii) *Acute Stress Disorder*,<sup>39</sup> (iii) *Psychotic Disorders*,<sup>40</sup> (iv) *Generalised Anxiety Disorder*,<sup>41</sup> *Personality Disorders* (*borderline*, addictions, sociopathy etc.) and *Adaptation Disorders*.

In some cases, the child may unconsciously remove the trauma as a means of self-defence.<sup>42</sup> In other cases, the minor may have great difficulty in expressing his/her emotions. This situation may lead to severe depression, anxiety, and alienation. Not infrequently, especially concerning some specific cultures and ethnic groups of origin, one of the situations mentioned above of strong psychophysical stress may lead to self-harm (or the indiscriminate use of drugs, medicines, and alcohol).

### Post-traumatic stress disorder.

Before arriving in their current country, child migrants may have been exposed to severe stressors such as physical abuse, war, and life-threatening conditions for months and years.

These minors and adolescents are highly vulnerable and exposed to developing trauma-associated mental disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can develop when a person is subjected to a high degree of psychological distress because of being exposed to an extremely traumatic event that he or she has witnessed (death, the threat of death or serious injury, personal assault, war, sexual violence, torture, accidents, serious illness, etc.).

Symptoms usually appear within the first three months after the trauma (in some cases of *delayed onset*<sup>43</sup> PTSD even after several months), and the duration of the disorder can vary from short term to chronic.

It is vital to recognise post-traumatic stress disorder early and seek professional support for both the child and the carer. The primary disorders are the repetition of the event through *flashbacks*, numbing, avoidance of anything that can be traced back to the trauma,<sup>44</sup> panic attacks, nightmares, insomnia, anxiety, irritability and aggression, tension.

Knowledge about the existence of traumas that migrant minors may have experienced, as well as the ability to recognise them and to provide appropriate responses and care, are highly challenging for foster families and other Carers. Access to psychological and psychiatric care may also become even more difficult due to cultural and language barriers, as well as the limited resources available to national health services in responding to the specific needs of migrants and asylum seekers.

### Disorders caused by anxiety.

When one thinks of anxiety, one imagines the common symptoms, e.g., worrying, being over-anxious, panic attacks, etc. However, anxiety can manifest itself in many different forms and ways. Unaccompanied and separated migrant children can manifest very unusual forms of anxiety that can negatively influence their lives.

Common symptoms may include agitation, restlessness, poor concentration, somatic symptoms such as headaches or stomach-aches, and in the case of toddlers, crying and difficulty at bedtime. Some symptoms are correlated to the school and can see the child refusing to go to school or going into crisis before entry for reasons related to clothing or physical appearance or, again, having high expectations for schoolwork, homework, and sports performance. Doing homework can transform into a challenging moment.

It is advisable to remember that UASC can show different reactions based on the experiences and problems described above and have similar symptoms to any other child in a stressful situation.

### Symptoms also resulting from post-migration stress and acculturation factors

It has often been assumed that pre-migration stressors and travel-related stressors are the most influential on a migrant's health. However, research suggests that post-migration experiences have an equally significant impact. Minors may not be able to cope with or process experiences of loss and trauma that occurred before the beginning of the migration journey until the post-migration experiences have been processed.

The Carer must learn to recognise and not minimise these factors in any way. A helpful reflection to share concerns the processes of acculturation and the various strategies that the UASC could adopt in managing the encounter/clash with a new culture. For some of them, the acculturation<sup>45</sup> process is something that can be handled easily. Others may experience "acculturative stress". For a minority, such stress may evolve into psychic pathologies because the changes in the new cultural context exceed their ability to cope with them.

While facing the acculturation challenges, minors can adopt different attitudes: assimilation (seeking involvement with other cultural groups and renouncing their cultural heritage), separation (wishing to maintain their cultural heritage and not wanting to be involved in different cultures), integration (desiring to preserve their cultural heritage and at the same time trying to interact with other cultures), marginality (showing little interest in maintaining their cultural heritage or having relations with different cultural groups).

## 2. RESILIENCE OF UNACCOMPANIED AND SEPARATED MIGRANT CHILDREN

Resilience can be defined as the ability to cope with adversity, endure, and build and succeed in positively reorganising one's life, despite challenging situations and traumas.

Individual factors influence resilience as by environmental factors (family, general external environment etc.).

Some of the main factors that might foster resilience in a unaccompanied and separated migrant children include:

- **Social support.** Given that such minors are often adolescents, it is not surprising that peers are critical in providing them with the necessary social support.
- **Religion and spirituality.** It is crucial to assess whether religion plays a vital role in the life of UASC. Religion can be a source of comfort and support, representing an element of continuity concerning the "*previous life*" when the child is facing all the difficulties connected to the new one.
- **Avoidance/Suppression and Entertainment.** A possible solution adopted by minors is to avoid thinking about or discussing issues that brutally affect them. That still causes them a state of anxiety and worry (e.g., events that happened in their countries of origin worry about family members, fear about repatriation). Thus, some prefer to spend their time in different ways to avoid thinking about these problems, such as engaging in hobbies, voluntary work, or work. It is essential to recognise these reactions as possible resilience reactions and respect the minors' rhythm and wait, without forcing, to be ready to talk about their past.
- **Education.** Focusing on education and studies may also be a form of distraction and avoidance symptomatic of the child's resilience. Minors can be extremely ambitious because families may expect a lot from them educationally and [their professional

career], assuming that education systems are better. However, it is worth remembering that many UASC may have difficulties at school because of language barriers or because they are not (or not sufficiently) schooled.

- **Detachment.** Minors from a culture where separation from the family is typical at a young age may consider it an essential step in their development and emancipation.
- **Autonomy and independence.** A further source of resilience and coping is to act independently. Minors (especially adolescents) have often already achieved a sufficient level of independence before leaving their country of origin or have developed it during their journey to Europe. In their culture of origin, they may no longer be seen as minors, representing a challenge for the foster carers. The foster carers and the child need to have the possibility to discuss this issue calmly and constructively, involving guardians and social workers.

### How can you help develop resilience in a child?

There are several elements to be considered to help building strength in a unaccompanied and separated migrant children. In joint work with the social worker, the Carer should:

- **Creating/developing connections.** Finding a support network (family, friends, peers), staying in touch, finding time and skills for networking, offering, and receiving mutual support.
- **Focus on listening.** Listening to the child should be aimed at understanding the child and not at judging or giving recommendations. Also, it is necessary to balance questions and silences correctly, to let the minor guide you by respecting what he/she wants to reveal about his/her past and present and what he/she is not yet willing to trust in it.
- **Developing/improving communication skills** to find a channel for dialogue.
- **Learning to control and manage possible crises** that could affect the child.
- **Confidence,** success, and failure should always be evaluated according to the child's effort. Valuing his/her ideas and strengths.

- **Promoting and supporting** the relationship with the minor **a climate of hope and possibility** while remaining realistic about what will await him/her in the future (e.g., the start of the family reunification procedure, a job interview, etc.).
- **It is crucial to teach clarity in terms of objectives and to value achievements.** It is essential to teach the child to break down goals into manageable parts, maintain focus on tasks, complete them, and change approach and strategy in case of failure to recognise the value of the results achieved.

### **Good practices and studies on the resilience of unaccompanied migrant minors**

Studies in Ireland<sup>46</sup> and the Netherlands<sup>47</sup> have highlighted several coping strategies and sources of resilience adopted by refugees and Unaccompanied Migrant Children. These include acting autonomously and independently, attending school, perceiving positive support from peers and parents, being an active participant in the new community, and relying on religion.

Such studies on resilience strategies adopted by children are even more valuable when considering adolescent unaccompanied migrants.

For example, in a study by Kaukko & Wernesjö (2017),<sup>48</sup> Unaccompanied Migrant Children explained that they felt regressed during the reception period, "*brought back*" to their childhood, having had more capacity for action and responsibility for their actions before leaving their country of origin and during their travels in Europe.

Some minors raised similar considerations in a study conducted by De Graeve and Bex (2017)<sup>49</sup> in the Belgian context, Unaccompanied Migrant Children sometimes stated that they found it challenging to ask permission for actions they carried out independently during their migration journey.

Such research, therefore, indicates that those called upon to care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children must recognise and respond not only to the vulnerability that accompanies them but also considers their resilience and personal resources.

### 3. CARE OF CHILDREN, SUPPORT IN ACCESSING THEIR RIGHTS IN THE INTEGRATION PROCESS

#### The personalisation of the support offered.

It is vital to support the child in his or her growth and integration process, taking care of psychological and physical injuries and guaranteeing access to the rights established by law. Such a result is only possible through the personalisation of the support offered, i.e., using different approaches depending on the vulnerability of the beneficiary.

The support offered to the unaccompanied and separated migrant children must be specifically designed for the person. Any form of support **“must take into account the specific characteristics of the unaccompanied migrant children, their history, their path, needs, vulnerabilities, desires, potential and ties they may have already built or are building on a given territory”**.<sup>50</sup> The more tailor-made the support is, the greater the chances of achieving the short-, medium- and long-term objectives of caring for the person, allowing for better integration in the territory and an increase in personal well-being.

#### 3.1 Care of the person

One of the objectives of caring for the minor - with the support of the various professionals involved (pedagogue, psychologist, teacher etc.) - must succeed in restoring a sort of normality in his or her life. Therefore, because of what has been said above about the high probability that the UASC has suffered trauma or violence before or during the journey, it is of fundamental importance:

- Early identification of the UASC vulnerability.
- **“Providing wider psychological support to unaccompanied migrant children and implementing tools to overcome the cultural barriers that consider such support as a stigma”**.<sup>51</sup> It is necessary to psychologically support all minors by providing "specific services for minors, of both sexes, who may have experienced sexual or gender-based violence, promoting access to sexual and reproductive health care services".<sup>52</sup>

In particular, the support of the psychologist, who has the function of interpreting the needs of the UASC, mediating between the needs and requests of the latter and the care centre team, the guardian, and the foster carer, is necessary. In migration, given the peculiarities of the UASC (a cultural context that differs from the one in which they live in

terms of traditions, customs, and habits), the psychologist is required to be an expert in transcultural background.

The psychologist should be accompanied by an expert in ethnopsychiatry whose role is studying the disorder of the UASC's psyche within the cultural context and the environment in which it manifests considering the child's origins, customs, and traditions.

The expert in ethnopsychiatry - and the psychologist with transcultural and ethnopsychiatric training - are two significant figures, not only during the investigation to detect vulnerabilities but also throughout the children's growth. These two professionals develop a therapy for the vulnerable person with an intercultural approach that considers and respects their culture and religion.

The specialists in this field intervene in the *"operational procedures for the different reception measures, from the entry into the structure to the management of crisis and emergencies"* and the actual definition of the *"personalised reception, inclusion, support and rehabilitation projects"*.<sup>53</sup>

A further safeguard for unaccompanied and separated migrant children is the involvement of a developmental psychologist. It is a professional who studies the branch of psychology that deals with *"the different aspects of personality and the various forms of behaviour in the period from birth to the end of adolescence"*.

### 3.2 Access to rights

The Carer must support the unaccompanied and separated migrant child's access to the rights granted to him/her as a minor and, if applicable, as an applicant for international protection.

In particular, it is necessary:

- To assure the child's right ***"to be heard and the participation of all unaccompanied migrant children in the decision-making processes that affect lives"***;<sup>54</sup>
- Assuring the child's access to education and health care.

Moreover, if it is in the *best interests* of the child, it is necessary:

- support family search and reunification procedure.

- provide support during the process related to the application for international protection. The willingness and necessity of the application should always involve at least the minor's guardian and the relevant social worker. The minor should always have the possibility to be accompanied by trained persons to support him/her in the preparation of his/her hearing for the granting or not of the status, aware of the stress and anxiety that the minor is forced to experience before the hearing, providing further support in relation to the positive or negative outcome of his/her application.

### 3.3 Supporting the integration process

For a foreigner who has chosen or been forced to live in a country other than his own, the process of integration into the new host community is of fundamental importance. Indeed, through active participation (education, training, working life, sports, leisure, relationships, etc.) and mutual acquaintance, the social ties that are the basis of all coexistence can be created.

The full inclusion of UASC must consider many factors, including, on the one hand, their emotional needs - both with foster families and with children and adolescents of the same age - and, on the other, forms of expression that succeed in opening an authentic dialogue between culturally distant realities. In this sense, to promote the integration of MSNs, cultural mediation is essential. It is a tool that allows communication and dialogue in a shared and culturally sensitive space that protects differences, strengthens bonds, and ensures the harmonious development of minors in the host society. At the same time, learning the native language is of fundamental importance as speaking, writing, and understanding the host country's language is an essential step to ensure integration.

## Good practices related to integration

Italy - Caritas Ambrosiana together with Farsi Prossimo<sup>55</sup>

The experience of *Il Seme*. Since 2018, the community *Il Seme* is strategically located in a central district of Milan and is inserted around the parish of San Pio X and San Giovanni in Laterano. This location proves to be a driving factor for the migrant minors' attitude to be open to the context, to respond to their desire to communicate and enhance their internal resources. The Farsi Prossimo team welcomed the MSNs into the *Il Seme* community, proposing them a set of activities such as:

- Neighbourhood tours to get to know the local community and people living nearby.
- Unaccompanied migrant minors experience in the Tiepolo middle school through getting to know the classes and setting up craft workshops, which are then sold in the school.
- *"The window on the courtyard"*, an activity of a group of volunteer peers who organised fun activities (e.g., football tournaments) every week.

A vital component of the project, underlined by all Caritas Ambrosiana and Farsi Prossimo staff, was the commitment of the volunteers to invest significant efforts in proposing different voluntary activities related to the community *Il Seme* and in establishing relationships with the migrant minors living there. This effort has been fully rewarded as Caritas, and Farsi Prossimo can now count on a broad group of volunteers who share their time, skills, and interests in helping unaccompanied migrant minors approach the community and integrate. As Matteo Zappa, from Caritas Ambrosiana, says:

***"Talking about reception and welcoming of migrant minors, it is essential for us to include citizenship as well because a city becomes welcoming if it activates citizenship practices".***

### Sweden - Reach for Change in Stockholm

In 2016, Reach for Change<sup>56</sup> responded to the migration flow of asylum seekers by launching *Innovation for Integration*, a thematic initiative within their Swedish incubator. This programme is designed to help refugee and asylum seeker children and teenagers have the same opportunities as their Swedish peers. Since 2016, Reach for Change has been selecting seven social start-ups working with scalable ideas to integrate the needs of newly arrived children and adolescents into their incubation programme by supporting them through grants, capacity building and *networking*. Since 2016, the social innovation initiatives for integration have supported more than 3.000 minors and young people in Swedish society. All social initiatives work towards achieving one or more of the following outcomes:

- Improved language skills
- Greater knowledge of Swedish culture
- More social connections with established Swedes
- Enhanced links with government authorities
- More opportunities for higher education
- More job opportunities
- Improving mental well-being

During the round table session in October 2020, guest speaker Frida Olsson from Right to Play, one of the social entrepreneurs of Reach for Change, presented her organisation and its knowledge on developing effective methods for integrating unaccompanied minors into the Swedish labour market. In cooperation with companies, football stadiums and sports clubs, Right To Play runs a vocational training and employment programme. It also runs social activities with young people. Participation in Right To Play among unaccompanied migrant minors correlates with greater mental well-being; in a 2017 comparison between Right To Play participants and a control group, participation in their programmes was positively correlated with greater happiness. Key learnings highlighted by Frida Olsson were the importance of making a long-term commitment to young people and making each young person their turning point. Still, the most critical methodological advice is to see the individual.

***"Even if there are a lot of young people at an activity, our youth leaders and we have routines to make sure we talk to everyone, find out what is going on in their lives and follow up on what they have told us before."***

## SECTION III

### THE CARE SYSTEM FOR UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN

#### Taking care of the child's needs.

The system for taking care of the needs of unaccompanied and separated migrant children provides for a varied set of measures that combine to guarantee the pursuit of their *best interests*. These include foster care for individuals or families, so-called '*alternative*' care, residential care where the child is placed in a residential childcare centre or community, *Kinship Care*.<sup>57</sup>

In addition, the UASC - as is the case for an indigenous child who does not have parents or other relatives responsible for him or her - requires a figure called a *guardian* who, if he or she is not the same as the Carer, must be consulted by the latter for decisions concerning the UASC. These assistance measures are usually organised, established, and managed by the public administration (Juvenile Court, social services, etc.).

#### 1. PLACEMENT AND CARE OF THE CHILD

European policy, through its institutions and their work, has repeatedly shown how important it is for the health of the UASC to be placed in an environment that is suitable for their growth and development, where they can live in serenity with all the rights guaranteed by law, supported in their choices and the process of integration. In this sense, the European institutions have urged the member states to adapt their domestic law to ensure that the MSNs can be placed in the first instance - if possible - with their adult relatives, otherwise with a foster family, or in specific centres for minors.<sup>58</sup>

The use of such forms of assistance should aim to promote the child's well-being, to find a stable and secure long-term response, including, where possible and if it is within the child's *best interests*, the reunification of the UASC with their family.<sup>59</sup>

Also, taking into consideration the age of the migrant minors (for an unaccompanied migrant child over 16, lighter forms of foster care could be helpful to develop and/or increase their skills to integrate into the host community, to improve their training and working capacity, as well as to develop a path to independence), therefore, different forms of support and assistance could be offered and proposed to the minor such as placement in a community or a

reception centre, classic foster care or being hosted by a foster family only during the weekends.

When defining possible inclusion pathways and developing adequate and comprehensive protection measures as well as promoting opportunities for the child, it is, however, necessary to consider not only the age but **"to know social and cultural background that force them to leave their country of origin."**<sup>60</sup>

## 1.1 Placement in facilities specifically for children

This type of assistance refers to a medium/long-term solution provided to children staying in a residential context.

Depending on the country, various residential care options are available, depending on the needs of the child. UASC - also considering their age and other specific vulnerabilities - can be placed in a community or family home or in a care centre for unaccompanied migrant children.

In any case, the child's place must have standards of safety and protection for the child, including non-promiscuity with adults and access to adequate space for play and psycho-physical development.<sup>61</sup>

The importance of **"promoting relational continuity when unaccompanied migrant children move from residential facilities to foster care"**<sup>62</sup> is recalled.

### The framework regulating the reception system of unaccompanied migrant minors in EU countries

#### Italy<sup>63</sup>

All unaccompanied migrant minors, whether applicants for international protection or not, have the right to be received within the SAI reception system.<sup>64</sup> They have the right to stay in these centres until they reach the age of majority (plus a further six months) and, in the case of asylum seekers, until their case is settled (unless further extensions are granted).

If there are no places available, the assistance and reception of the unaccompanied migrant minors are temporarily provided by the municipality where the person is staying.

However, in the event of large numbers of arrivals, and if the municipality cannot guarantee reception, the unaccompanied migrant minors are received in temporary reception facilities set up by the Prefecture with territorial jurisdiction.

### Spain

Regarding the Spanish reception system, as regulated by Law 26/2015, there is a division of competencies between the State and the Autonomous Communities (*Comunidades Autónomas*) where the latter exercise guardianship over unaccompanied foreign minors (MENAS),<sup>65</sup> and therefore have the responsibility to adopt the necessary reception measures. The Framework Protocol on unaccompanied foreign minors of 13 October 2014 aims to coordinate the actions of all actors involved in the Spanish context in the protection of unaccompanied migrant minors.

It should be underlined that there are no special centres for unaccompanied migrant minors. Still, they are hosted in generic reception centres/facilities for minors in a situation of abandonment, as the applicable legal protection system is the same.

### Czech Republic

The reception system for unaccompanied migrant minors in the Czech Republic is a centralised system run by *Home for Foreign Children (ZDC)*<sup>66</sup> based in Prague. The ZDC - which was established by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports - is the main centre specialised in the reception and care of all foreign children and refugees at risk. Thanks to the fact that the number of unaccompanied migrant children arriving in the Czech Republic each year is very low - between 30 and 70 - the ZDC manages to support them with all its services (diagnostic centre, primary school, long-term accommodation service, study groups and student flats etc.).

Unaccompanied migrant children can stay in the ZDC until they reach 18 or complete their studies. After that, OPU offers them accommodation in a shared flat in Prague to support them in finding their first independent accommodation and a job.

In case the capacity of ZDC is not sufficient, it is possible that the children are accommodated in unsuitable centres for Czech children with behavioural disorders where they are forced to cope with challenging conditions. The OPU team assists all unaccompanied migrant children who are placed in ZDC facilities or other childcare facilities or homes.

## Good practices concerning reception facilities dedicated to unaccompanied migrant minors

### Spain - ACCEM reception centres

ACCEM's reception programme<sup>67</sup> is aimed at unaccompanied migrant minors in Asturias, Spain, aged between 15 and 18. The centre<sup>68</sup> has eight places and aims to cover the primary, personal, and educational needs of the minors, to foster and enhance their personal autonomy and to act on the factors that hinder social and labour integration processes.

## 1.2 Foster care and family-based care

Foster care means that the child is placed with a family and not in a care centre or community. Even though, as a rule, a family with children is preferred, to provide the child with close companionship and to overcome his or her loneliness, those who do not have children but wish to establish a bond with the child based on the same assumptions are not excluded.

Although EU member states have been encouraged by the European Commission and EU agencies,<sup>69</sup> the practice of foster care and placing UASC in families has increased in recent years and has proven to be effective and efficient, it remains underused. Also, for this reason, it is important **"encouraging and raising awareness of foster care and promoting societies that are more inclusive"**.<sup>70</sup>

## Foster care in EU countries

### Italy

In Italy, foster care is regulated by the Civil Code and Law 184/1983.<sup>71</sup>

The legislation provides that a minor temporarily deprived of a suitable family environment is entrusted to a family, preferably with minor children, or to an individual, capable of ensuring the maintenance, upbringing, education, and affective relations he needs.

Where foster care is not possible, the minor may be placed in a family-type community or, failing that, in a public or private care institution, preferably located as close as possible to the place of permanent residence of the family of origin. In the case of children under six years of age, placement may only take place in a family-type community.<sup>72</sup>

Family foster care shall be ordered by the local social service and enforced by the tutelary judge, subject to the consent of the parents or parent exercising parental responsibility, or of the guardian, after hearing the child who has reached the age of twelve and the child below that age, having regard to his or her capacity of discernment.

The family foster care order shall indicate I) the reasons for foster care, II) the times and ways in which the powers granted to the foster carer are to be exercised, III) the ways in which the parents and other family members may maintain relations with the minor, IV) the local social service responsible for the care programme, as well as supervision during foster care, with the obligation to keep the guardian judge or the Juvenile Court constantly informed.<sup>73</sup>

The foster carer shall have the duty to take the minor into his/her care and provide for his/her maintenance, upbringing, and education (considering, subject to exceptions, the instructions of his/her parents or guardian). The foster carer shall exercise the powers connected with parental responsibility concerning normal relations with the school and the health authorities.

The social service, within the scope of its competencies, on the instructions of the judge or according to the needs of the case, provides educational and psychological support, facilitates relations with the family of origin and the return of the minor to it in the most appropriate manner, also making use of the professional skills of other structures in the area and of the work of family associations indicated by the foster<sup>74</sup> parents.

## Spain

In Spain, foster care is provided for in articles 20 and 20-bis of Law 26/2015<sup>75</sup> which amended the minor protection system and the Civil Code. This system applies to unaccompanied foreign minors as well as to any minor (both foreign and Spanish) in a situation of abandonment (*desamparo*).

Foster care can take place in the minor's extended family and in an estranged family. It can also be carried out in a specialised manner, i.e., when one of the family members has specific qualifications, experience, and training to perform this function.

Foster care can take different forms, depending on its objectives and duration:

- Emergency foster care, especially for children under 6 years old, will last no longer than 6 months, while the most appropriate family protection measure is decided.
- Temporary family foster care, which shall be transitory, either for reasons related to the minor's situation when reintegration with his/her family is envisaged, or when a decision must be taken to adopt a protection measure of a more stable nature, such as permanent foster care or adoption. This type of foster care shall last two years unless the best interests of the minor require the extension of the measure.
- Permanent family foster care, which is established either when the 2-year period of temporary foster care ends and reintegration with the family is not possible, or directly in minors with special needs, or when the circumstances of the minor or the family require it.

Foster care is formalised through a resolution of the public body that exercises guardianship or care of the minor after assessing the suitability of the family. The legislation specifies both the criteria according to which the assessment is to be carried out, the procedure to be followed and the rights of the foster family. According to the Spanish system and the division of competencies between the State and the Autonomous Communities ("*Comunidades Autónomas*"), the latter have the protection of unaccompanied foreign minors and minors in a situation of abandonment which are on their territory, so it is at the regional level that the protection measures are defined and adopted for each minor for whom the Public Body exercises protection. This means that in Spain, each Autonomous Community has adopted its legislation on the protection of minors and adolescents. Worth mentioning is the recent adoption (March 2021) by the *Comunidad Valenciana* of an innovative decree regulating foster care at a regional level.

### Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, the regional authorities maintain and update a list of prospective foster parents, who, to be registered on the list, must undergo an in-depth training course on foster care. The foster parents on the list must be considered available to foster a child in need at any time the need arises. They are paid for this task, regardless of whether they have a foster child or not.

In practice, however, there is a shortage of foster parents for both Unaccompanied Migrant Children and Czech children, and foster carers often do not receive any training on how to care for unaccompanied foreign adolescent.

## 1.2.1 The tasks of the foster carer

Following foster care, the foster family - with the differences that remain between the laws of the various EU countries - assumes the duty typically to take in the child and provide for his or her maintenance, upbringing, and education, establishing emotional relationships with him or her.

The foster family also assumes rights that translate into parental authority in specific contexts and occasions. Foster parents exercise, for example, the powers associated with parental

responsibility in relation to normal relations with health authorities (albeit with the necessary differences that exist in different legislative systems).

### Relations with the family of origin.

When it is in the *best interest of* the unaccompanied migrant child, the foster carers' tasks also include fostering the relationship between the child in care and his/her family of origin. In this sense, when it is considered safe and appropriate and always considering the child's wishes, foster families should be able to help maintain this bond.

Such contacts usually take place by phone, using WhatsApp or Skype. Social workers should provide foster carers with detailed and precise information about this (advice, procedures, etc.), ensuring that foster families can support and understand the child (who may experience very mixed emotions ranging from happiness to loneliness, anger, or fear).

Maintaining contact with family members will be of particular importance in situations where it is possible for the unaccompanied migrant children to be reunited with their family.

#### **Good practices supporting foster carers' relationships with their families of origin**

##### Grecia – Metadrasi

In Greece, the NGO METAdrasi developed a foster care project especially for young minors who could be reunited with their families in another EU Member State. Since February 2016, 13 minors have been placed in foster families, and five of them have subsequently been reunited with their families in another EU Member State.<sup>76</sup>

## 1.2.2 Homo-cultural foster care and hetero-cultural foster care

Two types of foster care are possible for unaccompanied migrant children:

- with a family that has the same language, culture, and traditions as the unaccompanied migrant children (homo-cultural foster care), a foster care where the families or individual foster carers belong to the same ethnic group as the child.

Homo-cultural foster care can be an efficient and effective strategy for the protection and integration of unaccompanied migrant children. In a family in which the minor can share the same cultural background, he/she can find good help in understanding the new country where he/she is hosted. The unaccompanied migrant child may experience, especially initially, a state of disorientation that a family of the same ethnic group can help him/her overcome. Homo-cultural foster care has also proved to be a valid tool for promoting the active citizenship of immigrant families already integrated into the country, making it an essential resource for the territories, challenging the tendency to think of them only as service users.

However, this type of foster care can hide risks. In this sense, the social services and other professionals involved must effectively encourage and support the foster family to really promote the child's inclusion in the local community and not only in the community of his/her ethnicity.

An important vehicle for integration is language. Here too, however, homo-cultural foster care may represent a risk if only the language of origin is spoken within the family circle and not that of the host country, thus discouraging the child from learning the language and consequently reducing opportunities for education, employment, and social integration.

## Good practices in homo-cultural foster care

### Italy - Municipality of Verona

In Italy, the Municipality of Verona has developed a project called "Homo-cultural foster care."<sup>77</sup> Through the activities of the *Centro di Accoglienza e Solidarietà Familiare* (Centre for Welcoming and Family Solidarity), it has been running for some years an important initiative, unique in the Veneto region and with very few comparisons in Italy, which guarantees the unaccompanied migrant minor a family with the same cultural background. This form of foster care allows the minor to find in the foster family an environment similar to that of the family of origin, from a cultural, linguistic and religious point of view. Thanks to European funding (European Fund for Integration 2011 - action 8), the Department of Social, Family and Equal Opportunities Services, in collaboration with the Association of Cultural Mediators and Mediators Terra dei Popoli, has consolidated the project on the reception and protection of minors from different cultures, creating a permanent centre involving social workers from the municipality, cultural mediators and numerous migrant communities.

### France - Service d'accueil familial du département de Paris

In France, the *Service d'accueil familial du département de Paris* works with many foster families throughout Paris. According to the latest data, 90% of them come from North Africa, mainly Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, and have been in France for a long time. These foster families are also able to accommodate unaccompanied minors. The family does not have to support or promote a specific religious orientation. They are 'recruited' for a public service. The families receive 1.300 euros per minor per month, financed by the department.<sup>78</sup>

- With an indigenous family (hetero-cultural foster care), a foster care in which the families or individual foster carers do not belong to the same ethnic group as the child. Foster carers shall be adequately informed about the reference values and cultural and religious differences through meetings with community representatives, social workers, ethno-psychologists, ethno-pedagogists and cultural mediators.

One of the main advantages of this type of foster care is that the minor, being in a family with customs and traditions different from his own, can get to know and discover new traditions, thus speeding up his integration in the community. Moreover, foster care with an autochthonous family can create a discontinuity in the minor's life with his previous life; if the latter has suffered traumas, it can represent a breaking point from which to start again.

### **Good practices in hetero-cultural foster care**

#### Italy - the Famiglie a colori of Macerata

*"Famiglie a colori"* (Colourful Families) is a project of the Municipality of Macerata aimed at promoting family foster care, including homologous foster care, for unaccompanied migrant minors.

The initiative started in 2016, when there was an increasing flow of migrants in the municipality, as well as throughout Italy and Europe. The reception centres for minors (*Comunità Educativa*) were complete. Having to guarantee a safe place for these boys and girls, the social workers of the Municipality of Macerata asked for the support of Macerata's families.

Since then, the service has been systematised with favourable results, first for the minors but also for the entire population. This is thanks to the continuous work to structure and nurture a network of foster families and a whole series of services aimed at foster care the integration of unaccompanied migrant minors through:

- learning the Italian language
- obtaining a qualification or completing vocational training courses
- discovering the city and connecting with its citizens through art and culture
- job placement

The many testimonies perfectly described the richness of this programme, which succeeds in catalysing the work of the various actors involved towards the common goal of integration: the goodwill of the families and volunteer tutors; the competence of the social workers, psychologists and educators who guide these processes and support the families, boys and girls at all times; the commitment of the volunteers who accompanied the unaccompanied migrant minors in their discovery of the city of Macerata; the artists who encouraged them in their integration process and finally the companies who welcomed the unaccompanied migrant minors for their vocational training.

E.'s words tell her success story with *Famiglie a Colori*:

***"I arrived in Italy in 2016, in Pozzallo (Sicily), and from there, I was transferred to Licata. I stayed in Licata for three months without doing anything. I wanted to go to school and continue studying, so I ran away. While I was on my way to Bologna, the train conductor made me get off at Macerata; I went to the police station who asked the municipality, and they transferred me to a community for a fortnight. Once I was settled in, I started studying, learning the language, attended third grade. While I was doing that, I took a course for metalworkers. Now I work as a turner here in Macerata'.***

France - Service d'accueil des Mineurs Isolés Etrangers du département du Pas-de-Calais

In France, according to the latest data, the *Service d'accueil des Mineurs Isolés Etrangers du département du Pas-de-Calais*<sup>79</sup> could count on approximately 1.900 foster families that can take in almost 6.000 minors. These are French families that deal mainly with French minors but can also take in unaccompanied migrant minors. In this French region, the recruitment of families with the same cultural background as the unaccompanied migrant minors is considered almost impossible due to the limited availability of families from the same cultural background.

A positive element recorded in relation to the foster care of unaccompanied migrant minors in French foster families is a more incredible speed in learning the language and an easier integration in the school context.

The foster families involved are all professional foster families employed by the department, who have signed an "agreement" confirming their capacity to be foster parents.

### 1.2.3 Benefits and challenges of foster care (homo-and hetero-cultural) in families

Foster care in a family (whether the Carers are a couple or a single person) has benefits compared to other types of placement of unaccompanied migrant children. These benefits translate into more significant support in accessing health care, education, and social support, helping the child to improve his or her ability to build relationships and facilitating integration. The ongoing construction of the child's relationship with the foster carers can also contribute to developing a new relationship of trust with the outside world. These strengths of the foster care system strongly contribute to the development of the resilience of Unaccompanied Migrant Children.

At the same time, classic foster care is characterised by some limitations, such as the difficulty in recruiting foster carers and the fact that foster carers are usually not professionally trained, unlike what usually happens/should happen in residential care facilities where professionals such as educators, psychologists, legal advisors, etc. are employed. Moreover, classic foster care can entail long waiting times due to the bureaucratic process necessary for its formalisation.

Finally, one of the potential disadvantages of foster care is that contrary to what happens in reception centres and communities, minors do not usually live with their peers. Consequently, it is essential that the fostered unaccompanied migrant children still live their daily lives with their peers, whether minors from similar cultural backgrounds or children who are citizens of the "host" country.

### 1.3 Alternative forms of foster care

***"In addition to foster care, it is important to promote alternative forms of care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children"***, families and individuals can be, for example, involved as mentors or for sporadic support to UASC becoming what we could call ***"support families"***).<sup>80</sup>

**Mother-child foster care.** The foster family takes in the child and the mother at their home or in an adjoining flat. This solution is chosen when the mother is noticeably young and needs a family context to guide and support her. This foster care may succeed in accompanying and reinforcing the relationship between mother and child preparing for autonomy.

**Light foster care.** This is the experience of caring for a child where the child is taken in by a family or an individual, spending some time with them during the day or the week, but also short periods of the year or, for example, the holiday period. Through this form of foster care, the available families/individuals generally act mainly as support in finding a job and in

carrying out bureaucratic and administrative tasks, as well as stimulating the child in school, educational and training activities and, in general, in socialising. One of the objectives of "light" foster care is to help UASC to become more independent to prepare them for leaving the protection system.

### **Good practices related to "light" foster care**

#### Czech Republic - OPU's Host Care project

**Host Care for unaccompanied migrant children** by OPU<sup>81</sup> is a new project to promote the foster care of migrant children. Although there are no legal obstacles to implementation, there are still no cases of foster care in the Czech Republic. The main difficulties encountered are the high age of the unaccompanied migrant children, who are mainly 15-17 years old, and foster families. With the *Host Care* project, OPU promotes a unique form of foster care: families host the Unaccompanied Migrant Children living in the host structure only during weekends and holidays to spend their free time with them, thus having more opportunities to integrate into society. With the collaboration of the local social services, OPU manages the project of:

- Search for families willing to assist Unaccompanied Migrant Children.
- Conducting a psychological assessment of families
- Training and evaluation of host families
- Matching families with Unaccompanied Migrant Children
- Quarterly planning, continuous support of OPU, engagement of professionals, development of self-support sessions for families, leisure activities for families and Unaccompanied Migrant Children involved

## 1.4 Kinship care

*Kinship care* means raising children by grandparents, extended family members, or other adults with whom the child has a close family relationship because the biological parents - for a variety of reasons - are unable to fulfill their function.<sup>82</sup>

This system - which does not necessarily entail the legal custody of the child in care - keeps many of them out of the classic foster care system since the practice of entrusting children to *de facto* relatives does not follow any typified regulatory procedure such as that provided for foster care to families or individuals. Moreover, there is no child assessment - thus failing to listen to his or her wishes and identify what is really *in the child's best interest* - nor of the families, which hardly ever undergo any specific training. Finally, this type of informal foster care does not follow any monitoring process, thus escaping statistical registration and any evaluation tool.

## 2. CHILD PROTECTION

As a rule, decisions relating to the child's upbringing and education, as well as any other decision relating to the child's sphere, are taken by the parents.

However, if a minor's parents are inadequate, disabled or deceased, it may be necessary for a court to appoint a *Guardian*. This is also the case for UASC, who, as they do not have family figures responsible for them, need a guardian to guarantee their rights.

Depending on the country of reference, the guardian may have different names and different tasks/duties. As a rule, he/she is the legal representative of the child and the person who must ensure that his/her rights are fully respected.

### The institution of Guardianship in EU countries

#### Italy - The establishment of the Voluntary Guardianship for unaccompanied migrant minor

In Italy, a minor is considered to have rights but is incapable of acting (with certain exceptions) until 18. In cases where "*both parents are dead or for other reasons cannot exercise parental authority*"<sup>83</sup> the judge must appoint a guardian.

The guardian must represent the minor, administer his or her property and look after his or her interests. The appointment of the guardian of the unaccompanied migrant minor must take place as soon as possible.<sup>84</sup> If the minor is an applicant for international protection, the appointment by the Juvenile Court must take place within forty-eight hours after the communication of its presence on the territory.<sup>85</sup>

Law No. 47/2017 established the figure of the "*voluntary guardian*", a person who has made himself or herself available to become the guardian of one (or more) unaccompanied migrant minors (max 3, with some exceptions) to ensure a meaningful and constructive relationship with the minors.

The figure of the Voluntary Guardian became particularly important at a time when, before the legislative reform, the vital flow of migrants and the scarce availability of guardians meant that the Court had to appoint the so-called *institutional guardian*, a person (usually belonging to the social services, the mayor of the municipality where the unaccompanied migrant minor was hosted, the councillor, etc.) who was called upon to look after dozens of them at the same time.

In Palermo, the training, management, and coordination of volunteer mentors, after initially being carried out by UNICEF, has been carried out since 2019 as part of a FAMI project.

#### Spain - The institution of guardianship

In Spain, protection is regulated in Articles 20 and 20-bis of Law 26/2015, which amended the child and adolescent protection system<sup>86</sup> and in the Civil Code.

As mentioned above, according to the Spanish system and the division of competencies between the State and the Autonomous Communities (*Comunidades Autónomas*), the latter have the protection of unaccompanied foreign minors and minors in a situation of abandonment on their territory, so it is at a regional level that protection measures are defined and adopted for each minor for whom the Public Entity exercises protection.

According to the legislation, the public body exercising guardianship must adopt the protection measures necessary to take charge of the minor. Moreover, it is provided that, in adopting these protection measures, family-based efforts must always prevail over residential care, and stable measures must have priority over temporary ones and consensual actions over imposed ones.

#### Czech Republic - The institution of guardianship

In the Czech Republic, the Regional Authority and its officials are responsible for providing protection to all children at risk for legal proceedings.

Guardianship must be approved by the Court, which is obliged to act as soon as it becomes aware of a child at risk. The guardian accompanies the child at all legal stages; in the case of unaccompanied migrant children, the guardian follows the child through the asylum procedure, during any period of detention, etc. The guardian cooperates with experts (including NGOs) in providing all the guardianship services the child needs.

## SECTION IV

### THE SELECTION OF CARERS. THE CHOICE AND MATCHING

#### 1. THE IMPORTANCE OF EVALUATION AND SELECTION ACTIVITIES

A foster care service should select, assess, and support a heterogeneous group of foster carers (families or individuals) and support persons (light foster care, guardian, etc.) able to respond appropriately to the multiple needs of UASC, considering their ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic specificities.

The definition of guiding criteria in the selection phase and especially in the matching phase between the potential foster family and the potential child is undoubtedly complex. It should balance the need to identify general principles to consider the child's personal history and experience. This process - structured in different and well-defined steps - must be guided by the principle of pursuing the best interest of the child, going beyond possible conflicts of interest between communities that are sometimes reluctant to refer boys or girls who represent a good factor of cohesion and group stability within the same community.

##### 1.1 The "assessment" of the child

The operators of the foster care service, collaborating with the community operators where the minor is hosted, collect his/her data on which a joint reflection is then started. At this stage, the participation and training of the community and foster care operators is fundamental for the child's selection process.

In particular, the operators who follow the UASC and are involved in the formulation of the foster care project must ensure that a psychological and social diagnosis is carried out, which allows them to define - also to facilitate the following matching with the foster family - the minor's need for foster care and the type of foster care envisaged.

The report should also contain, among others:

- personal data, a brief history of the child, presence of any decrees of the Juvenile Court (or other judicial authorities);
- the reasons that led to the foster care decision.
- prediction of the duration of foster care.
- if the UASC still maintains contact with his/her family of origin, the type and frequency of relations between the latter and the child.

- if the UASC still maintains contact with their family of origin, the kind of cooperation that can be envisaged between the latter and the child, as well as between the family of origin and the foster carers.
- if the UASC still maintains contact with his/her family of origin, the conditions that would allow the UASC to return to his/her family of origin.
- any indications on the type of family suitable for the minor. The assessment of the minor's psychological distress must be detected and reported to the foster family. Although it is not always prejudicial to the assessment for foster care, it is fundamental that the foster carers know the minor's situation so that they do not feel inadequate in the face of the discomfort that the UASC may manifest at a later stage.
- the procedure (how and when) for checking the project.

When assessing the suitability to start a family foster care experience, the child's community background should be taken into consideration as fully as possible, evaluate therefore the of autonomy, whether he/she respects the rules, whether and how he/she relates to his/her peers and adults. The possible inclusion of the child in a school and training programme may provide further information necessary to complete the assessment and selection process. It is always advisable to remember that the formulation of the foster care plan cannot preclude the child from being heard, obviously if this is possible (e.g., the child is not mature enough, etc.).

## 1.2 The "assessment" of the person(s) who are/will be called upon to care for the unaccompanied child

The assessment process of the family or individual who decides to foster the UASC should be clearly and unequivocally defined and explained to the future foster carers (the same applies to other forms of assistance such as guardianship).

It is vital that those who will be called upon to carry out recruitment, and subsequently *matching*, activities identify:

- the stages and content of the selection process and, where possible, the timeframe.
- the minimum and desirable standards to be applied during the evaluation phase.
- the personal qualities, skills, and attitudes sought and/or to be attained.

The assessment should be carried out by adequately trained professionals and should include face-to-face meetings with both prospective foster carers and other family members living in the household.

During the survey aimed at assessing the child's potential foster carers, several aspects must be examined in-depth, concerning which the observer is called upon to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the future foster carer, to assess the possible ways and times for taking care of the child. In this sense, the survey should deepen the following aspects.

#### ENVIRONMENT.

- The **environmental context** (city, countryside, suburbs, condominium, industrial area, etc.) and **socio-cultural context** (presence of services, parks, leisure facilities, schools nearby, etc.) where the house is located.
- **External characteristics of the dwelling** (existence of exterior spaces and usability, how these spaces are managed and what features they have etc.) **and internal characteristics** (size, number of rooms, environment etc.).
- If **there are** any **animals**, domestic or not, outside or inside the house (how they are managed etc.);
- **Housekeeping** (whether order or disorder appears significant, whether the environment is cosy or cold, what climate it emanates etc.).
- **Precise place** in which **the care recipient would fit in** (would he/she have an individual or shared space? An adequate and sufficient space for him/her and the other members? etc.);
- **Common spaces** (which spaces are arranged for family members to meet? Which ones are most used for a meeting? How exactly will the areas change with a new member? Are the spaces already available? Are they reorganised? etc.).

#### RHYTHMS OF LIFE

- **General habits of the** applicant household (when they get up, what time they leave the house, how many hours they spend outside the home on average).
- **Use of free** time in everyday life (lunches, dinners, evenings), at weekends, during holidays.
- **Visitation of the house by friends and relatives** (how much? by whom?)
- **Relations with the neighbourhood.**

#### PECULIARITIES OF THE COUPLE

- **The attitude of the couple**, or the future foster carer if single (e.g., hospitality, welcome, embarrassment, serenity etc.).
- **Specific dynamics of the couple** that emerge in the domestic environment (e.g., roles, jokes, harmony).
- **Willingness to the presence of the educator**, how the couple takes advantage of the opportunity to have the operator in the house (e.g., ask questions, enter a deeper relationship etc.).

#### PRESENCE OF NATURAL CHILDREN

- **Age and occupation.**
- **Willingness to relate to the educator** (e.g., if there is a strong shyness-shyness or if interaction is serene and spontaneous if he/she appears introverted or extroverted etc.).
- **Spontaneous interactions.**
- **Presence of the foster care issue in the family** (e.g., whether it has been addressed, when and how).
- **Sharing the choice of foster care with the rest of the family** (e.g., do children and parents feel the same way? etc.).
- **Management of domestic space and change after the inclusion of the new member in the household.**

#### **Good practices related to the evaluation process**

##### Ireland - national standards

In Ireland, the National Standards for Foster Care Placements state that foster carers must undergo a comprehensive assessment regarding their ability to perform the task of foster care. Carers must be supervised and supported by a professionally qualified social worker to enable them to provide "*high-quality care*".

The Standards also state that foster carers must "*participate in the mandatory training to develop the skills and the knowledge needed to provide high-quality care*". They must attend the training regularly reviews.<sup>87</sup>

### 1.3 Possible involvement of the family of origin

A fundamental aspect during this phase is the involvement and approval - if it exists and if it is in the best interests of the UASC - of the family of origin. Without whose consent, the child may not accept the idea of joining another family.

The cultural mediator plays a crucial role in explaining to the family of origin that:

- foster care does not replace or eliminate the bond with the son/daughter.
- that foster care is a different institution from adoption.
- what advantages the child can benefit from in a foster care experience, also given the migration project.
- foster care does not entail the interruption of the child's relations with his/her family of origin, which, if it is not contrary to his/her *best interests*, are instead expected and encouraged (see § 1.2.1 The foster carer's tasks - Relations with the family of origin)

## 2. THE ACTIVITY OF SELECTION AND MATCHING. COMPATIBILITY

*Matching* is the selection process that considers the peculiarities and characteristics of the child and the candidate foster families and attempts to maximise the pursuit of the best interests of the minor as much as possible.

It is essential to emphasise the need for potential families or interested individuals and the children to meet and choose. Such choice is crucial as, in most cases, it involves teenagers. What is sought during the *matching* activity is the highest possible level of compatibility between the foster carer and the UASC.

### The matching procedure.

The matching between the child and the foster family is performed by professionals who must check that the characteristics and availability of the foster family correspond to the child's needs.

Once the family that will take in the child has been identified, all the actions aimed at getting to know the parties must be prepared to accompany the child and the family towards each other following the foster care path established. The next step is then to start the procedures for the family to meet the child, according to the methods indicated in the project, until foster care is granted.

Of particular importance is how the confirmation of the foster care decision is shared with the child, mainly its reasons. It is a delicate and significant moment that lays the foundations for the future emotional relationship and trust between the child and the foster family.

## Criteria and critical factors to be taken into consideration during the *Matching phase*.

Some specific measures and elements must be considered when seeking "*compatibility*" between the Carer and the child, including:

- **The child's wishes concerning the foster care project.** The child may want/not want to be placed with someone from his/her own culture.
- **The geographical position of the carers' home and the specific child needs.** It is necessary to investigate whether an urban or rural area is more suitable for the child's needs, particularly if he/she needs specific services. Therefore, the neighbourhood and the availability of services are essential factors (e.g., school buildings and access to religious institutions). They should be assessed before placing a child.
- **Additional housing factors.** Size of the flat and layout of the house (e.g., the existence of a place where the child can study if there are young children in the house). The foster family should be able to accommodate all those living there comfortably. In the case of a child with disabilities or other special needs, all arrangements should be made to meet unique needs/vulnerabilities. The place should be welcoming, adequately furnished, with a good level of cleanliness and hygiene. Outdoor spaces that are part of the premises should be safe and secure.
- **The composition of the foster family.** Presence of other minors in the home, their age (e.g., the foster carer's child is the same age as the UASC).
- **Foster family migrant status.** Belonging to a family of migrant origin can be helpful or can hinder the placement. It is beneficial for the foster family to understand what it means to be a migrant or asylum-seeker, including understanding the asylum procedure and the legislative migration framework. However, a family with a migrant background may still struggle with integration, may not yet have resolved their migration trauma, and maybe tensions within the family regarding adaptation to the new society (e.g., children integrating faster than their parents).
- **Educational factors.** The ability to help and support the child or obtain such help during his/her training/schooling.  
Also, in this case, the geographical location of the foster carer is vital so that the foster care generally does not entail, if possible, the child's transfer to another school. In this

sense, all other conditions/characteristics of the foster carer are equal. It would be essential to choose those who cannot be transferred to another school.

- **Sexuality.** Sexuality can be an essential element when the child refuses to be taken in by an LGBTQ couple<sup>88</sup> or vice versa, future foster carers are not ready to take in an LGBTQ child.

### **Good practices concerning the matching procedure and the search for compatibility.**

#### Ireland, the NETHERLANDS, and Greece

In Ireland, social workers working with unaccompanied migrant minors identified several factors that were considered to match compatibilities, such as ethnicity, culture, language, religion, geographical location, educational needs, health needs, family composition, carers' links to the community, children's hobbies, contact with family members and the views of the minor.<sup>89</sup>

However, in most countries, optimal compatibility is hampered by the availability of foster care placements. A pan-European study published in 2015 found that the Netherlands was<sup>90</sup> *“the only country that does not face a lack of suitable families willing to take care of Unaccompanied Migrant Children”*. Thanks to a structured foster care system, foster care is available to all young unaccompanied migrants through a system applied nationally and set out at Ministry of Security and Justice policies. In the Netherlands, Nidos, the national institution for protecting unaccompanied foreign minors, recruits its own foster families. It does not depend on the general Dutch foster care system, suggesting that this approach may be helpful elsewhere.

In Greece, METAdrasi's innovative action *“A home for human rights”* (METAdrasi - Shelter for Unaccompanied Migrant Children)<sup>91</sup> seeks to offer unaccompanied migrant children the opportunity to be hosted by families. This project was developed after exchanging experiences with organisations in the Netherlands, Italy, Belgium, and France. METAdrasi continued to create a register of families interested in providing temporary accommodation for unaccompanied minors. Priority was given to families who speak the same language as the minor, have a similar cultural background and would be able to take responsibility for providing a family environment until the minor could be reunited with the family (homo-cultural foster care).

## SECTION V

### TRAINING, SUPPORT AND MONITORING

#### 1. TRAINING

**Foster carers' training.** Foster carers (families and individuals), as well as those who support them, should be trained, and prepared to deal with the problems they may encounter, identifying the skills and strengths they have or need to develop.

To learn the various skills to provide the best possible care for the child in care, the training should include modules covering the following aspects:

- the features of the migratory phenomenon of UASC in the country and Europe in general;
- national immigration and asylum systems (legislative framework);
- trafficking and exploitation of children and related risks;
- the emotional impact of migration on UASC, the effect of previous difficulties, including trauma, faced by the children, their resilience;
- understanding the specific needs that UASC have and how these needs can be addressed both emotionally and practically;
- understanding of psycho-evolutionary/emotional dynamics, approach to adolescence;
- cultural diversity and the intercultural dimension of foster care and other forms of assistance;
- the rights and duties of the foster child and the foster family, the guardian, etc.;
- identification and activation of networks to support UASC and the various professionals involved. This topic is particularly suitable for social workers, foster carers and guardians;

- knowledge of other possible care and assistance systems for UASC, including benefits and challenges of family-based foster care. This topic is particularly proper for social workers and foster carers;
- the social assistance system and the services that can support foster families during foster care. This topic is particularly relevant for social workers, foster carers and guardians;
- improving the understanding of how a foster care system can be developed (selection, assessment, *matching* and support to foster families). This topic is particularly suitable for social workers and foster carers;
- the importance for the UASC to maintain contact with the original family (where this is in the *child's best interest*).
- gender issues. The gender dimension is particularly relevant as it strongly influences both the condition of being a minor and that of being a migrant. It is imperative to include gender among the reasons that determine and influence the needs of UASC and among the elements to be considered - together with ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic needs - when designing a support and care intervention. In particular, whoever is called to work in the interest of the UASC must be aware that gender is linked deeply to the culture of each country and, consequently, some implications can define and influence the experience of foster care and caring. In particular, the different gender entails specific and various critical issues related to the child's physical and psychological health and behavioural problems.

## Good practices concerning training of foster carers

### United Kingdom

In a study conducted in the UK, social workers identified five areas of training needs highlighted by prospective foster carers: the minor's cultural needs, the relationship in communication with people with language barriers, the minor's needs related to learning about life in England, the conditions related to asylum seeker status and the demands for support and awareness-raising.

Alfaca project: Nidos (Netherlands), Minor N'dako (Belgium), Jugendhilfe Süd Niedersachsen (Germany), OPU (Czech Republic), Red Cross (Denmark) and KIJA (Austria)

Under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme, the EU co-funded a follow-up project, in cooperation with Nidos (Netherlands), Minor N'dako (Belgium), Jugendhilfe Süd Niedersachsen (Germany), OPU (Czech Republic), the Red Cross in Denmark and KIJA (Austria), developing the ALFACA training programme with support materials and online for professionals working with host families dealing with Unaccompanied Minors. The training consists of several modules on recruitment, selection, matching and orientation of host families.<sup>92</sup>

### Germany - Children in exile

Within the framework of the project "*Children in Exile*" (Pflegekinder in Bremen - PiB), foster families in Germany receive a guidebook, the "*Small A-Z for PiB foster parents*", which has been specially written about unaccompanied migrant minors and informs families about important topics related to this target group.<sup>93</sup>

## The preparation and training of the child.

It is essential to understand that a child who has been assessed as suitable for the foster care experience must be - like the foster carer - adequately informed and prepared to enter the foster family. In this sense, it is necessary to meet the family, exchange experiences with other

minors already in foster care, reassure them about their autonomy and the bond with their original family, explain and effectively understand what foster care is (also because there may not be a comparable institution in their country of origin), study the language to facilitate relationships and the understanding of the process.

## 2. SUPPORT

Accompaniment and support - to the families and the child - are considered fundamental for the success of the foster care project.

After the initial training, the families should not be left behind. It is necessary to guarantee them the accompaniment for the whole duration of the project: information, provided in a clear, precise, and written form, on the services available and that can be activated at any time, especially in cases of emergency or if difficulties arise, are fundamental tools to encourage and support the foster care process.

Accompaniment should favour in particular:

- the contact and support of the network with other foster groups and families, "*feeling alone and isolated*" is a serious risk for the success of the foster care project;
- adequate psychological support to the foster carers and the child.

### 2.1 Network support

Every foster family placement is made possible "*by the involvement of several subjects and actors, each of whom plays a specific role within the foster care project: **the child and his/her family members, the members of the foster family or the individual foster carer, the operators of the services competent in foster care, the judicial authority, the operators of the private social sector and the other subjects involved***".<sup>94</sup> The implementation of a good foster care project, therefore, requires the activation and support of a good network in which different realities and professionals interact and work, with "*well-defined tasks and functions, to be carried out with the utmost professionalism and competence*" and "*in which each actor is required to operate synergically, recognising the other as an interlocutor and as an indispensable resource for the good performance of the project*".

### What is a support network?

We can define a network as a '*plurality of actors*' connected by social ties with a relationship with an individual. In this sense, we can identify different types of network: i) the primary

network, consisting of family members, relatives, and friends, and ii) the secondary network (professionals, agencies, and support organisations).

But the network also, as mentioned, unites several people and specialists, individuals, and groups, who can work together in an integrated way to achieve specific goals, working together to assist individuals or families most appropriately and efficiently. In this sense, a “*coping network*” is defined as “a set of interpersonal links anchored not so much to an individual, but a [...] well-specified problem, and thus to the purpose of its coping”,<sup>95</sup> distinguishing:

- a “*natural coping*” network when all the joint work towards the coping goal was unplanned, people interconnected for spontaneous reasons,
- the “*pure primary natural coping network*” which is made up entirely of relationships between people who already have well-structured links before a given problem arises;
- the “*secondary natural coping*” network, which is a link that is established later than the appearance of a problem to cope with it.

### The actors involved in the support network.

It has been found that where the support networks work effectively, supporting the family and the minor, foster care is effective; on the contrary, where the territorial support networks - for various reasons - do not work, foster care has difficulty in taking off and, if started, leaves more critical issues to emerge.

Among the professionals who are most involved in networks are:

- The **social worker's** task is to “*look for*” the network to face common problems that a foster family might encounter. Suppose a natural network already exists - made up of relations between active and motivated people (a professional and not) present and already known - aimed at facing a common problem. In that case, the social worker's task is to accompany and consolidate existing social actions. Such a result can be achieved by facilitating relations, recognising strengths and promoting dialogue to identify the coping network. Where no such network exists, the social worker's task is to stimulate its development around the problem.
- **Community and shelter workers** who often knew and followed the UASC first, during the pre-foster care phase.
- Because of their importance for the psycho-physical support of UASC, **the local health institution**, particularly for specialist, diagnostic and rehabilitation services.

- **The school**, one of the first and most influential observers of the discomfort that may afflict UASC.
- **Associations in the territory** represent a valuable complementary resource to the support of public bodies. They can support the foster family in the path towards foster care and during the project.
- **The judicial authorities** intervene in the different stages of the foster care project.
- **Representatives of migrant communities** are significant with their role in cultural mediation.
- **All those involved in employment support** are fundamental for their role in accompanying the UASC in the world of work, especially in the delicate phase of transition to adulthood.

## 2.2 Psychological support

The support of the psychologist (and other health professionals experienced in preventing distress and the promotion of psychological health) during foster care is critical in equal measure for the unaccompanied and separated migrant children and the foster carers.

The minors must have the possibility of receiving the necessary support from professionals in the field (psychologist, anthropologist, a psychologist with transcultural and ethno-psychiatric training, etc.) to face this delicate phase of his or her life. This need is even more substantial in the case of UASC who have suffered traumas and violence during their journey and have experienced cognitive, somatic, or relational impairments (see Section II § 1).

### **Psychological support to foster carers during the foster care period.**

Foster carers should also receive appropriate support in dealing with reactions and feelings arising from their relationship with children, mainly when they show challenging and complex behaviour.

It is essential that foster carers understand the importance of psychological support and do not feel judged or inadequate for the ways and results they are carrying out their delicate task. During the sessions of psychological support, foster parents have the possibility to express without fear all their experiences related to the experience they are going through, not only as parents but especially as a couple and as individuals. They should have the possibility to:

- talk about their new role as foster parents;

- make sense of what is new (acquire new awareness);
- expressing doubts, uncertainties, fears, sense of inadequacy that this role can bring;
- read together, appropriately, the experiences and behaviours of the child;
- share joys and successes that the child has brought to their personal growth and possibly to that of the couple.

### **Good practice in support**

#### Italy - Social Services and Mutual Aid Groups

In Italy, good practices exist in the form of mutual aid groups of foster families. The experiences of foster carers are shared.

In the projects AMICI DEI BAMBINI (Ai.Bi), MI AFFIDO A TE and BAMBINI IN ALTO MARE.<sup>96</sup> For example, various forms of support are provided, such as psycho-pedagogical support.

96

#### Fondazione L'Albero della Vita

The Foster Care Project Team of Fondazione L'Albero della Vita, which operates mainly in Lombardy, works to make it possible for a minor in need of a family to meet a family and the most appropriate resource. Through periodical training courses (three per year), families are prepared on what it means to welcome a minor with a complex and often traumatic history. For unaccompanied migrant minors, specific elements are provided as the project is different from classic foster care. Once the foster care has started, on behalf of the Social Service, support and monitoring are vital elements. Foster carers have a dedicated psychological space to share their experiences; also, the welcomed minor and any natural minors have a reference figure and the opportunity to share their experiences.

The psychologist and the educator support the family during the process by providing guidance and encouraging new interpretations of the dynamics at work. Periodically, focus groups are organised between foster carers, children/young people in care and natural children, who can thus find additional space for sharing and growth. The creation of family networks allows foster parents to confront and help each other solve obstacles and share their experiences. The team interfaces with the Social Services, share updates on the progress of foster carers and participates during the planning process.

### 3. MONITORING

Monitoring is an opportunity for foster carers and children to share their opinions and requests regarding needs and problems to be addressed.

In the monitoring phase, it is necessary to identify dedicated operators both for interviews with families at predefined intervals and for interviews with the child and, in general, with all family members.

Quality monitoring requires the involvement of a range of professionals working together according to their expertise. The agency or competent authority should visit and conduct continuous monitoring of each foster placement. It should make an adequate number of visits, at regular intervals, until the child reaches 18 years old. If the placement continues beyond that, the visits will continue until the end of the placement. Ideally, monitoring should be carried out by a social worker other than the one supervising and supporting the foster parents.

#### **Good practices related to monitoring and support**

##### Ireland - HIQA<sup>97</sup>

In Ireland, regular reviews of the placements of minors in care are conducted by social workers, with the views of minors sought in these settings. In addition, the Health Information and Quality Authority has a statutory duty to monitor and inspect foster care providers. HIQA conducts its inspections against the National Standards for Foster Care.<sup>98</sup> The standards state that minors' views must be heard when decisions are made about them or the care they receive. In addition, a child version of the National Foster Care<sup>99</sup> Standards is also available.

## SEZIONE VI

### RAISING AWARENESS ON FOSTER CARE (AND OTHER FORMS OF CARE)

An institutional commitment and a precise decision to promote the foster care service providing more information on the institution and on the unaccompanied and separated migrant children is required.

To promote the foster care service for UASC, Member States should launch national and local awareness-raising campaigns through radio, newspapers, and social media. Within the framework of these campaigns, meetings should be organised to present the characteristics of the foster care institution and the services that are already active and/or can be activated on the territory, enriched with direct testimonies of foster families and foster children. An evaluation of the results of awareness-raising and information campaigns on foster care organised in the past shows that word of mouth among foster families is the best way to promote the institution.

Another fundamental element for good quality information and awareness-raising campaign is the deconstruction of the collective imagination that has been built about UASC. The deconstruction should describe the children for what they really are, i.e., minors with the typical peculiarities of any other child or adolescent.

#### **Good practices related to the promotion of foster care.**

##### Italy - the experience of the Municipality of Palermo

In Palermo, in response to the growing number of arrivals, the foster care system has been more organically regulated since 2017. Local groups and institutions have begun to promote the programme, raising awareness of the importance of accommodating unaccompanied migrant minors in family contexts rather than in reception centres. However, the figures in Palermo remain low (5 children allocated in 2017 and 8 in 2018), despite the development of the Terreferme project, which has increased the visibility of foster families as an alternative form of care. The Municipality hopes that the EPIC project, together with a widespread recruitment campaign, will further increase the number of available foster families.

Italy - Caritas Ambrosiana Family Foster care Project together with Farsi Prossimo

The project<sup>100</sup> was launched in 2017 with a partnership agreement with the Municipality of Milan. Since then, in close collaboration with the local social services Caritas and Farsi Prossimo has worked hard to promote this service through:

- awareness-raising activities;
- training of operators and families;
- an individual assessment of families and minors
- in case the foster care project start, it is necessary constant monitoring and support to families and minors at every stage of journey.

To date, individuals and families who have decided to look after migrant minors have proved to be valuable resources as support figures working alongside the community and as minors' *carers*.

## SECTION VII

### TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

Turning eighteen and coming of age marks a crucial and compassionate step for minors in general and unaccompanied migrant minors in particular.

Most unaccompanied migrant minors are adolescents, often close to the age of 18 (of the more than 13.500 asylum seekers minors who have applied for international protection in the 27 EU Member States, 67% were between 16 and 17 years of age), and this, therefore, requires the implementation of specific foster care and reception programmes with the fundamental objective of accompanying them towards autonomy. Awareness of their age and the potential difficulties that may arise must be the subject of attention both by operators/social services and foster families.

When assessing a foster care pathway, the specificity of age must therefore always be considered to clarify the role of accompaniment to adult life that the foster family should facilitate. In this sense, it is essential to underline the need to call for a rapid and accurate assessment of the condition of a minor who is close to reaching 18 years of age since he/she has an extremely short time to enter the protection and integration system as a minor with all the rights that being a child entail.

To make young people independent, it would also be necessary **“that member countries implement all programmes, services, activities, and protective measures for unaccompanied migrant children even after they turn eighteen, to support their transition to adulthood and to foster their integration into society”**.<sup>101</sup>

## 1. MAJOR PROBLEMS THE UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT MINORS MAY ENCOUNTER

Some of the most critical issues that an Unaccompanied Migrant Children may encounter when they come of age include:

- the fact that many of the rights that the UASC was entitled to as a minor (e.g., the right to study, the right to enrolment in the health service, etc.) are lost on coming of age - in different ways in each country - means that some countries provide for certain institutions to protect the minor during this delicate transition phase (e.g., in Italy the so-called *administrative continuation*);
- the availability of accommodation;
- an income;

- possession of a valid residence permit.

## 2. SOME PRECAUTIONS THAT CAREGIVERS SHOULD FOLLOW

Also, as mentioned above, most of the UASC received in Europe are over 16 years old. It is of fundamental importance to adopt good practices that can facilitate the transition to adulthood. It is necessary to focus on:

- **Obtaining the required documentation to have a new residence permit.** It is paramount that the person who must take care of the child makes every effort to receive all the necessary documentation to obtain a new permit before the child comes of age.
- **Validation and recognition of competencies acquired in non-formal and informal settings.** As part of the *New Skills Agenda for Europe*, the EU has developed a tool for profiling the skills of *non-EU nationals, the EU Skills Profile Tool for non-EU citizens*.<sup>102</sup> It is an online tool aimed at facilitating the mapping of skills of third-country residents. It is a multilingual and free tool. It can be used to reconstruct a migrant's professional profile by mapping their skills, qualifications, and previous work experience. Although the tool is not intended to recognise or authenticate skills, it offers personalised advice on, among other things, recognition of qualifications and validation of skills.
- **Job placement.** Monitor whether training courses have been set up to facilitate the access of the UASC to the labour market, focusing on job placement with professionals who stimulate the connection between the job offer and the skills and desires of the UASC, promoting vocational training and internships (learning a trade could give the UASC a greater and more profound sense of being part of the host country and help meet their expectations as well as those of their family of origin).<sup>103</sup> For this to happen, those responsible for the integration of the UASC should **"foster coordination/ agreements with the private sector to facilitate the access into the labour market"**.<sup>104</sup>
- **Searching for accommodation.** In this regard, it is advisable to contact and ask for support from social services, reception centres (whose operators should support migrants in their search for accommodation once the migrant's reception period is over), and associations that support migrants in various ways.

## Good practices related to the support of UASC in the transition to adulthood

### Italy - the "Percorsi" project of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies,

The national government has developed several projects to help foreign minors in their transition to adulthood. For example, the "Percorsi" project of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies establishes a *personal endowment* for each minor involved. This endowment includes a) training opportunities to improve the minor's chances of finding a job; b) economic support for the minor's participation in a 5-month internship; c) a grant for the organisation where the minor works to provide monitoring during the internship. These projects are supported by the government (at the national or regional level) or by organisations in the tertiary sector and are developed through networks of organisations in which foster families or residential care facilities for unaccompanied migrant minors are involved.

### Italy - the projects of CIDIS Onlus

We highlight three programmes that have been implemented since 2015 and are targeted explicitly at unaccompanied migrant minors and young adults. Since 2015, CIDIS has worked with approximately 6.000 unaccompanied migrant minors.

- **Family Placement:** The programme aims to give unaccompanied migrant minors that are about to turn 18 and will therefore be considered adults, the opportunity to live in a family context rather than in adult centres. By actively involving the community through public campaigns and calls for participation, CIDIS can place nearly-18-years young people with host families for six months. By doing so, young people are supported in the transition to adulthood and can be more independent. A vital element of the programme is the presence of a multidisciplinary team to support both families and minors in this process.
- **CIDIS Home:** The programme consists of a *co-housing* arrangement for adolescent migrants who have arrived in Italy unaccompanied and are approaching adulthood. CIDIS Home is in the centre of Naples. It functions both as a living arrangement for young migrants, who can cultivate their independence and socialisation skills, and as a hostel for tourists that residents help manage and run. This dual function helps young migrants become more independent while allowing them to develop skills related to the tourism sector and access vocational training.

- **Popeye Youth Centre:** The centre aims to promote social and personal opportunities for young migrants living in the area by offering them educational, artistic, and professional activities and giving them a space to socialise and meet with their peers. The youth centre consists of a network of associations and territorial services. It promotes workshops, courses, creative activities, and recreational events to promote legality and active citizenship that will involve Italians and foreigners aged 15 - 21.

#### Italy - refugee welcome.

"One boy, one family" is the principle that inspires the project "Never again alone" - promoted by Refugees Welcome Italia<sup>105</sup> and Cidis Onlus, together with Asgi, Cooperativa Nuovo Villaggio, Corigliano Calabro Municipality and Mugnano Municipality, aims to experiment with innovative ways of welcoming young people who arrived in Italy as unaccompanied migrant minors by offering them the opportunity of being hosted by a family.

People are the core of the campaign. It is an opportunity for couples or single citizens willing to open the doors of their homes for at least six months. They are accompanied and followed throughout the process and receive a small reimbursement.

#### Spain - The ACCEM programme

ACCCEM's programme for personal autonomy and preparation for independent living in Castilla La Mancha is aimed at young people aged between 16 and 24 who are or have been under the care of the administration. Its main objective is to facilitate the *empowerment* and adaptation process to autonomous and independent living of unaccompanied migrant minors. The programme provides support in reception, vocational training/access to work, economic support, and social inclusion. It has a specific pre-employment programme for young people. ACCCEM's experience shows the importance of individualised work with each minor and the use of a participatory methodology for each of them to implement the programme and services.

The testimony of F., a Moroccan girl who arrived in Spain as a minor, outlined all the difficulties she experienced as a migrant, a girl and alone, and the essential support she received from the ACCCEM programme to obtain a school diploma and go through that difficult transition from adolescence to adulthood. She participated in this programme in Castilla la Mancha and is now 21 years old. In her testimony, she repeatedly underlined the multiple discriminations she faced (at home, at work, etc.), both in her community of origin and in the Spanish community, for being a woman, a migrant, and a minor. F. also talks about the challenges she faced during her migration and integration process because of the cultural and religious barriers in her country of origin and in the host country.

### Czech Republic - Half Way House in OPU

OPU's Half Way House is a long-term project dedicated to accompanying unaccompanied migrant minors during the transition to adulthood. It was established in 2008 and targeted young people aged 18-26 with valid resident status in the Czech Republic but no family background. It involves the provision of temporary accommodation (usually for 12 months). The flat can accommodate 4 people. Such a solution can promote the integration process into the society through housing, social involvement, social workers support and therapeutic assistance, legal and personal support.

# **PART II:**

## **TRAINING MODULES FOR PROFESSIONALS, FOSTER FAMILIES AND UNACCOMPANIED AND SEPARATED MIGRANT CHILDREN**

**(with young people benefiting from support  
measures beyond the age of 18)**

## TRAINING MODULE FOR PROFESSIONALS

### TRAINING COURSE OBJECTIVES

In-depth study of the following topics:

- factors driving migration, particularly of UASC;
- understanding of the international and national legal framework related to the protection of UASC;
- the specific needs of UASC, how to deal with their vulnerabilities;
- the different ways of receiving and caring for UASC, particularly the benefits and challenges of foster care, the role of the guardian, the social worker and other professionals involved (psychologist, ethno-psychiatry specialist, etc.)
- personal and professional support networks
- the foster care system in the host country (selection, assessment, compatibility, and support).

### TRAINING COURSE DURATION AND METHODS

#### **Duration:**

The proposed training is 12 hours, divided into 3 modules/workshops of 3 + 3 + 6 hours, respectively.

The duration of modules and exercises refers to a classical delivery mode in presence, is indicative and can be redefined according to needs. In particular, it is advisable to redefine the time and duration of the workshops if it is necessary to carry out all or part of the training in online mode (e.g., to carry out the activities of Module 3 in different sessions).

**Max. number of participants**

The training aims to address a maximum of 20 participants per workshop.

**TRAINING COURSE STRUCTURE**

The training programme is divided into 1 INTRODUCTORY module and 3 THEMATIC modules.

**INTRODUCTION**

Max. 20 minutes.

Aims: introducing the participants to the training, sharing its outline and objectives.

Topics covered:

- personal presentation of the trainers explaining how the module is structured (contents, time, methods, exercises);
- personal presentation of participants;
- any professional and personal experience related to the topic of foster care, concerning the foster care of UASC, knowledge, and direct experience with UASC;
- training expectations of the participants.

**Introductory exercise: my experience with UASC**

Maximum time - 5 minutes. Participants shall answer the following questions themselves:

- My experience with UASC is (e.g., voluntary work, knowledge of other people who deal with UASC in various ways, any experience I have had during my professional activity etc.) \_\_\_\_\_
- The topics I would like to explore in this course are \_\_\_\_\_

Participants have five minutes to complete the exercise.

They are then asked to discuss in pairs (max. 5 minutes) and report to the group.

## MODULE 1

### Unaccompanied and separated migrant minors: migration phenomenology, legislation, protection and rights.

Duration: 3 HOURS

Objectives: knowing the migratory flows phenomenon, particularly involving UASC to improve the understanding of the international and national legal framework concerning their protection.

#### Part 1 - Migrant children

1. Migrant children, who are they? (see Section I, § 1 of the Toolkit)



#### Introductory exercise to point 1

Pair discussion (10 minutes)

Address the following topics:

- How many UASC do you think there are in Europe?
- How many in your country?

2. What are the main reasons for children to migrate? (see Section I, § 2 of the Toolkit)

Supporting material to be seen before starting the introductory exercise:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDmCYHt4KGk>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xpG3jLGGkvc>



### Introductory exercise to point 2.

Group discussion (10 minutes)

Encourage the group to reflect on the causes of migration (what makes UASC come to Europe?).

What are the main difficulties that minors and UASC face? (see Section I, § 3 of the Toolkit)



### Introductory exercise to point 3.

Group discussion (10 minutes)

Stimulate the group to reflect on the difficulties faced by UASC during the journey.

4. Legal instruments to protect migrant children (see Section I, § 4 of the Toolkit)



### Introductory exercise to point 4.

Group discussion (10 minutes)

To stimulate the group to reflect on the freedoms and rights enjoyed in EU countries in contrast to many countries in the world (freedom of religion, voting, marriage, etc.).

## MODULE 2

### Psychological, cultural and developmental issues. integration and the transition to adulthood.

DURATION: 3 HOURS

Objectives: to know and explore the specific needs of UASC and what emotional and practical support can be offered to them.

#### **PART 1: Building the necessary knowledge and skills to provide the proper care for unaccompanied and separated migrant children.**



#### **Introductory exercise to Part 1 *Understanding the needs of UASC***

Discussion in small groups (20 minutes).

Divide the group into three smaller groups and give each group the exercise below.

Each group should discuss (10 minutes) the needs of the children and the services they would need and then answer questions.

Abdul is a 16-year-old Afghan boy. He arrived in your country yesterday on the back of a truck. He reports that his parents have been killed.

- How could Abdul come to the attention of the authorities?
- What are the first steps to be taken?
- What long-term problems and issues might Abdul face?

Saadia comes from Somalia and has been in the host country for two years. In Somalia, a distant relative has cared for her since she was about eight years old. While living in Somalia, she always helped take care of other children and did domestic work. When her relative left Somalia, she took Saadia with her, but the relationship broke down. Saadia had never been to school until she came to the host country at the age of 12.

- What do you think are the most critical issues for Saadia?
- What services do you think are needed to meet its needs?

After 10 minutes, collect feedback from the different groups and record the answers on a flipchart.

The main issue to highlight as group feedback is that UASC have specific needs and common experiences such as separation and loss (needs such as therapeutic assistance, educational support, health assessment, support to meet other people of their culture who speak their language and follow their religion).

1. Disorders that may affect migrant children (see Section II, § 1 of the Toolkit)
2. The resilience of the UASC (see Section II, § 2 of the Toolkit)
3. Children care and support (see Section II, § 3 of the Toolkit)

## PART 2: THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

1. The main problems that the MSN may encounter in the transition to Adulthood (see Section VII, § 1 of the Toolkit)
2. Some precautions that carers should take (see Section VII, § 1 of the Toolkit)



### Introductory exercises to Part 2

Exercise 1 →

Group discussion (10 minutes)

To stimulate discussion on the following question:

- What might happen to each UASC about their migration status? What might change when they turn 18?

Exercise 2 →

Group discussion (10 minutes)

Encourage the group to reflect on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) definition of culture, identifying it as 'the *distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group*' which include 'in

addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs, and then answer the following questions:

- What do we mean by culture? When we think of the culture of UASC, we know, what comes to mind?

## MODULE 3

**Systems for taking care of the unaccompanied and separated migrant children (placement, foster care and guardianship). selection, support and monitoring of the foster care service. raising awareness in the institution.**

DURATION: 3 HOURS (the exercises and topics covered suggest that the module could be developed over a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 6 hours).

Module's objectives: to know and deepen the different ways of supporting and hosting UASC, how foster carers are selected, how families and minors are matched.

### PART 1: THE UASC CARE SYSTEM

1. Children placement care (see Section III §1 of the Toolkit)



#### Introductory exercises on points 1 and 2.

Exercise 1 →

Group discussion (20 minutes)

- Encourage participants to think about their country's reception system.

Exercise 2 →

Group discussion (20 minutes)

- Encourage the group to give their definition of "foster care", before presenting the description used by the project and the aim of the FORUM project (10 minutes).
- Encourage the group to reflect on possible differences between countries regarding foster care (10 minutes).

## PART 2A: THE ACTIVITY OF SELECTING A CAREGIVER FOR THE CHILDREN SELECTION AND MATCHING

1. The importance of evaluation, selection, and matching (see Section IV § 1 of the Toolkit)



### Introductory exercise to point 1

Group discussion (10 minutes)

While illustrating the examples related to the selection of foster carers, encourage participants to answer the following questions:

- are UASC foster carers specifically sought and selected in your country? What are or could be the challenges of this selection methodology?



### Exercise following point 1

Exercise to be done alone (15 minutes)

Using the following questions as suggestions, individual participants start to draw up a plan for the selection of future foster carers:

- How many foster carers are needed to adequately cover the needs of the UASC in your area?
- What types of families should be involved more (age of children, gender, native or ethnic family, languages, religion, single with or without children, etc.)?
- Where can potential foster carers be found? (existing networks, cultural groups, schools, churches, mosques, community centres, etc.)?

- What information already exists for people interested in becoming foster carers?

2. Selection and matching activities (see Section IV § 2 of the Manual)



### Introductory exercise to point 2

Exercise to be carried out in pairs (15 minutes)

Make a list of aspects to be considered when assessing whether an individual can become a foster carer (e.g., who should carry out the assessment?).

Report to the group afterwards.



### Exercise following point 2

Exercise to be done alone (15 minutes)

Imagine a child you know (e.g., son/daughter or grandchild or child of a friend) in need of foster care. Tell the social worker what placement would be the most "suitable" for that child (e.g., classic foster care, light foster care, etc.). What factors should the social worker consider?

## PART 2B: TRAINING, SUPPORT AND MONITORING

1. Training (see Section V § 1 of the Toolkit)
2. Support (see Section V § 2 of the Toolkit)



### Exercise following point 2

Group discussion (15/ 20 minutes)

Drawing a map of the network of the Smith family, interested in foster care an UASC, Moussa (16 years old).

The Smiths have no children; the husband is a craftsman; the wife is a teacher in a primary school. They like sports, their families of origin live in the same town as them, the husband is a volunteer for civil defence, and the wife is a member of the public library association.

3. Monitoring (see Section V § 3 of the Toolkit)

### **PART 3: PROMOTING SUPPORT FOR UASC**

1. Foster care (and other forms of assistance to UASC) awareness-raising activities (see Section VI of the Toolkit)



#### **Introductory expertise to point 1**

Group discussion (10 minutes)

- Encourage participants to think about the importance of raising awareness of foster care by asking them how they became aware of the issue and what measures they would support to promote it.
- Encourage participants to think about ways and situations that make it easier to identify and involve potential future foster carers? (existing networks, cultural groups, schools, churches, mosques, community centres, etc.).

# TRAINING MODULE FOR MEETINGS WITH UNACCOMPANIED AND SEPARATED MIGRANT CHILDREN AND WITH YOUNG PEOPLE BENEFITING FROM SUPPORT MEASURES OVER THE AGE OF 18

## TRAINING COURSE OBJECTIVES

In-depth study of the following topics:

- the rights of UASC in the host country,
- the structure of the care system and the role of the guardian, the benefits of foster care,
- vulnerabilities, knowing them to deal with them.

## TRAINING COURSE DURATION AND METHOD

### Duration:

The meetings are divided into 3 modules of 2 hours each (2+2+2).

The duration of the modules and exercises refers to a classical method of delivery in presence. It is indicative and can be redefined according to needs.

It is advisable to rearrange the timing and duration of the workshops if it is necessary to carry out all or part of the training in online mode (e.g., carrying out the activities of Module 1 in different sessions).

The workshop aims to provide UASC with basic information about their rights regarding their status through videos, pictures, games, and *child-friendly* activities.

**Note: the suggested support material make reference to the Italian legislation. It is advisable to accompany the activities with similar materials - related to the domestic reality - in each country.**

### Participants:

The training is aimed at a group of up to 10 minors aged between 14 and 17, or a group of up to 5/7 young adults benefiting from support measures over the age of 18.

## TRAINING COURSE STRUCTURE

The training programme was divided into 3 THEMATIC modules.

### INTRODUCTION

Time: 20 min.

Objectives: Introducing the training to The UASC; sharing outline and objectives.

Topics covered:

- Personal presentation of the educators and trainers explaining how the meetings are structured (content, time, methods, exercises/games).
- Presentation of UASC (or young people benefiting from support measures also beyond 18 years old).

Exercise to facilitate the introduction of the UASC.

Using a globe or a map, ask each child to indicate their country of origin.

### MODULE 1

#### UASC: protection and rights

TIME: 2 hours.

Objectives: knowing the international and national legal framework concerning the protection of UASC.

#### PART 1: THE RIGHTS OF UASC

Supporting material, see:

<http://www.cir-onlus.org/2019/09/03/sei-arrivato-in-italia-la-brochure-informativa-realizzata-da-cir-e-unhcr-per-msna-che-arrivano-in-italia/>

<https://www.meltingpot.org/IMG/pdf/>

[manuale\\_sopravvivenza\\_illustrato\\_msna\\_21maggio2020.pdf](#)

1. The rights of UASC (see Section I § 4 of the Manual).



#### Introductory exercise to Part 1

Draw the outline of a child on a poster board and hang it on the wall.

Ask UASC to write on *post-it notes* what rights they think they have in the country and then stick them on the template.

2. The possibility to seek international protection (see Section I § 4, in particular, § 4.3 *FOCUS: the need to obtain international protection, the problem of trafficking, the need to be reunited with family members*, of the Manual).

3. The possibility to seek protection against trafficking and severe exploitation (see Section I § 4 § 4.3 *FOCUS: The need to obtain international protection, the problem of trafficking, the need to be reunited with family members*, of the Manual).

4. The possibility of reuniting with family members (see Section I § 4, in particular, § 4.3 *FOCUS: the need to obtain international protection, the problem of trafficking, the need to reunite with family members*, of the Toolkit)

Supporting material, see:

<https://www.jumamap.it/it/2020/05/11/la-tratta-di-persone-e-una-grave-violazione-dei-diritti-umani/>

## **PART 2: THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD**

1. The main problems the UASC may encounter (see Section VII § 1 of the Manual).
2. Some precautions to be taken before reaching adulthood (see Section VII § 2 of the Manual).



### **Introductory exercise to Part 1**

Question stimulating group discussion (15 minutes)

Encourage UASC to answer the question:

- What might change when you turn 18? "

## **MODULE 2:**

**Reception systems and taking care of the UASC (placement and foster care of the UASC, guardianship).**

TIME: 2 hours.

Objectives: learning about and explore the different ways of supporting UASC.

1. Children placement and care (see Section III § 1 of the Manual)
2. Foster care (see Section III § 1 of the Manual)



### Introductory exercises on points 1 and 2.

Exercise 1 →

Question stimulating group discussion (15 minutes)

- Encouraging UASC to think about the child welfare system in their own country (what happens if a child loses its parents? What if he/she cannot rely on the family network?).

Exercise 2 →

Question stimulating group discussion (15 minutes)

- Encouraging UASC to discuss what is meant by 'foster care'.

2. Child protection

## MODULE 3

### Selection, support and monitoring of the foster care service.

TIME: 2 hours.

Objectives: to know and deepen the phases of the foster care procedure

1. *The importance of the assessment and selection of the UASC and the foster family. The choice and the matching (see Section IV § 1 and § 2 of the Manual)*



### Exercise 1

Question stimulating group discussion (15 minutes)

Encourage UASC to answer the question.

- What characteristics should the person called to take care of you have? ”.

Help them draw up a list of aspects to consider when assessing an individual's possibility of becoming a foster carer (what characteristics should he/she have according to the UASC, e.g., a big house, children, being young etc.).

2. The support of the child, during the different phases of the foster care process (see Section V § 1 "The preparation and training of the child" and § 2.2 of the Manual)



### Exercise 1

Question stimulating group discussion (15 minutes)

Encourage UASC to answer the question:

- What problems do you think could arise when you start the foster care experience (e.g., communication problems, partial loss of autonomy, more sharing of choices, etc.)? ”

## NOTE

1. European Commission, The protection of children in migration – General Background paper, (2016), available at the link: [https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/document.cfm?doc\\_id=42359](https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/document.cfm?doc_id=42359)
2. Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin, Para 7, 2005, available at the link: <https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/GC6.pdf>
3. Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin, Para 8, 2005.
4. <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2017/IT/COM-2017-211-F1-IT-MAIN-PART-1.PDF>
5. See also: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR\\_ASYUNAA\\_custom\\_854018/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=5311e6f9-53df-4847-a689-b443f539d1f1](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR_ASYUNAA_custom_854018/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=5311e6f9-53df-4847-a689-b443f539d1f1)  
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20210423-1>
6. Unaccompanied and Separate Children, English acronym
7. UNICEF, Children on the move in Italy and Greece, 2017, available at the link: [https://www.unicef.org/eca/sites/unicef.org.eca/files/2017-10/REACH\\_ITA\\_GRC\\_Report\\_Children\\_on\\_the\\_Move\\_in\\_Italy\\_and\\_Greece\\_June\\_2017.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/eca/sites/unicef.org.eca/files/2017-10/REACH_ITA_GRC_Report_Children_on_the_Move_in_Italy_and_Greece_June_2017.pdf)
8. For more information see: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/it/headlines/world/20200624STO81906/perche-le-persone-migrano-esplorare-le-cause-dei-flussi-migratori#:~:text=Tra%20i%20motivi%20socio%2Dpolitici,fattori%20determinanti%20per%20la%20migrazione>
9. For more information see: <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/environmental-migration>
10. Regulation 604/ 2013 defines the criteria for determination of the country with jurisdiction to examine the asylum application.
11. The texts of these legislative provisions are available at the links:  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>  
<https://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b66c2aa10.pdf>
12. The text of the Charter is available at the link: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM:l33501>
13. The text of the legislative provision is available at the link:  
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/005>
14. The text of the legislative provision is available at the link  
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/201>
15. See EU Regulation 2016/399 outlining the “Union’s code relative to the conditions for crossing frontiers by persons (Schengen frontier code)” and the Dublin Regulation 604/2013 specifying the “criteria and mechanisms for determining which member country has jurisdiction for examination of an application for international asylum presented in one of the member states by a citizen of a third country or of no country”. The texts of these legislative provisions are available at the links:  
The text of the legislative provision is available at the link:  
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32016R0399>

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/LSU/?uri=celex%3A32013R0604>

16. See, in particular, Directive 2011/95/UE detailing the “standards for granting asylum to citizens of third countries or of no country, on a uniform status for refugees or for those persons who have reasons to benefit from the subsidiary protection, and on the nature and content of the protection granted”, Directive 2013/32/EU outlining “common procedures for the purpose of recognition and revocation of the status of international asylum” and Directive 2013/33/EU specifying the “standards relative to the reception of international refugees”.  
The texts of these legislative provisions are available at the links:  
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32011L0095>  
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=celex%3A32013L0032>  
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32013L0033>
17. Thanks to the effectiveness they have shown even beyond the borders of the country involved in disputes, the decisions of the ECHR have acquired particular importance, especially in the last twenty years, on the subject of migration and migrant children. A case in point is C-648/11 MA and a. against the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which had induced the Council of the European Parliament to invite the Commission to revise Regulation 604/2013 to comply with the ruling of the Court.
18. See, in particular, art. 24 of the Charter of Fundamental Human Rights of the European Union, art. 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, consideration no. 18 of Directive 2011/95/EU, consideration no. 33 of Directive 2013/32/EU, art. 23 of Directive 2013/33, articles 6.3 and 23.1 of Regulation no. 604/2013.
19. On the subject of pursuit of the best interest of the child see, among others:  
EASO, "Practical guide on the best interests of the child in asylum procedures", March 2019, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5c827e1b4.html>  
COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILDREN, "General comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration (art. 3, para. 1)", 29 May 2013, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/51a84b5e4.html>  
UNHCR, "Safe & Sound: what States can do to ensure respect for the best interests of unaccompanied and separated children in Europe", October 2014, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5423da264.html>  
UNHCR, "Field Handbook for the Implementation of UNHCR BID Guidelines", November 2011, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4e4a57d02.html>
20. See, in particular, art. 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 24 of the European Union's Charter of Fundamental Human Rights, art. 23.2 of Regulation no. 604/2013.
21. See the Communication of the Commission to the European Parliament to the Council - The protection of migrant children COM/2017/0211 available at the link: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52017DC0211>.
22. See, in particular, art. 31.3 Directive 2011/95/EU, art. 24.2 Directive 2013/33/EU.
23. See, in particular, articles 12 and 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 31 of Directive 2011/95/EU, articles 6.2 and 24 of Regulation no. 604/2013, art. 24.1 of Directive 2013/33, art. 25.1 of Directive 2013/32/EU.
24. See, in particular, art. 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 22.1 of the Geneva Convention, art. 27 of Directive 2011/95/EU.
25. See, in particular, art. 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 30 of Directive 2011/95/EU.
26. See, in particular, articles 10 and 22.2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 10.3 of Directive 2003/86/EC, articles 31.5 of Directive 2011/95/EU, art. 8 of Directive 604/2013, art. 23 of Directive 2013/33/EU.

27. See, in particular, art. 18 of the Charter of Fundamental Human Rights of the European Union, articles 6 and 8 of Regulation 604/2013, art. 7.4 of Directive 2013/32/EU.
28. See, in particular, art. 10 of Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and Council, dated December 16, 2008, detailing the "standards and common procedures applicable in member states to the repatriation of citizens of third countries whose stay is irregular".
29. Minori Stranieri non Accompagnati, Italian acronym
30. Law no. 47 of April 7, 2017, detailing "Provisions on the subject of protective measures for unaccompanied migrant children". The text of the law is available at the link: <https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:legge:2017-04-7:47>
31. Art. 2 letter D of Directive 2011/95/EU.
32. Art. 2 letter F of Directive 2011/95/EU.
33. See: <https://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/disaster-management/about-disasters/what-is-a-disaster/what-is-vulnerability/#:~:text=Vulnerability%20in%20this%20context%20can,concept%20is%20relative%20and%20dynamic>
34. For more information, see WHO, Glossary of health emergency and disaster risk management terminology, 2020, available at the link: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/glossary-of-health-emergency-and-disaster-risk-management-terminology>
35. Article 21 of Directive 2013/33/EU
36. See the interesting work by Caroppo E., Del Basso G., Brogna P. "Trauma and vulnerability in migrants seeking international protection", 2014, available at the link: <http://www.scielo.br/pdf/remhu/v22n43/v22n43a07.pdf>
37. See footnote 37
38. See <https://www.msdmanuals.com/it/professionale/disturbi-psichiatrici/ansia-e-disturbi-correlati-allo-stress/disturbo-post-traumatico-da-stress>
39. See: <https://www.msdmanuals.com/home/mental-health-disorders/anxiety-and-stress-related-disorders/acute-stress-disorder-asd>
40. See: <https://medlineplus.gov/psychoticdisorders.html>  
<https://www.jpsychopathol.it/article/sintomatologia-delle-psicosi-maggiori-analisi-fattoriale-di-1891-soggetti-psicotici/>
41. See: <https://www.msdmanuals.com/it-it/professionale/disturbi-psichiatrici/ansia-e-disturbi-correlati-allo-stress/disturbo-d-ansia-generalizzata-dag>
42. See: Bromberg P. Clinic of trauma and dissociation, Raffaello Cortina Editore
43. See: <https://www.verywellmind.com/delayed-onset-ptsd-meaning-and-reasons-2797636#:~:text=What%20is%20Delayed%20Onset%20PTSD%3F,-Delayed%20onset%20PTSD&text=In%20some%20cases%2C%20the%20delayed,experience%20of%20a%20traumatic%20event.>
44. In psychology, avoidance refers to the behavioural strategy of avoiding all situations that may lead to negative moods, discomfort or feared things.
45. Acculturation can be defined as "the whole [...] of the processes of conscious or unconscious acquisition of the culture or at least some of the cultural traits of another social group" from Learning in extended cultural contexts. Education and Globalisation by Juliana E. Raffaghelli
46. Ní Raghallaigh, M. and Gilligan, R., Active survival in the lives of unaccompanied minors: coping strategies, resilience, and the relevance of religion, Child, and Family Social Work, 2010.

47. Sleijpen, M., Mooren, T., Kleber, R.J., & Boeije, H.R., *Lives on hold: A qualitative study of young refugees' resilience strategies, childhood*, 2017.
48. Kaukko, M. & Wernesjö, U., *Belonging and participation in liminality: unaccompanied migrant children in Finland and Sweden. Childhood*, 2017.
49. De Graeve, K. & Bex, C. *Caringscapes and belonging: an intersectional analysis of care relationships of unaccompanied migrant children in Belgium, Minors' Geographies*, 2017
50. Dalle raccomandazioni di EPIC Project n. 1 Sostegno su misura
51. Dalle raccomandazioni di EPIC Project n. 2 Sostegno specializzato
52. European Commission, *Comunicazione della Commissione al Parlamento Europeo e al Consiglio*, 2017, available at the link: <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2017/IT/COM-2017-211-F1-IT-MAIN-PART-1.PDF>
53. Cfr: "Manuale operativo per l'attivazione e la gestione di servizi di accoglienza integrata in favore di richiedenti e titolari di protezione internazionale e umanitaria. Con versione aggiornata dell'approfondimento "La protezione internazionale delle persone vittime della tratta o potenziali tali". Agosto 2018, disponibile al link: <https://www.sprar.it/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/SPRAR-Manuale-Operativo-2018-08.pdf>
54. From the recommendations of EPIC Project No. 1, Tailor-made support
55. Caritas Ambrosiana is an office of the Archiepiscopal Curia of the Diocese of Milan called the Office for the Pastoral Care of Charity - Caritas Ambrosiana, within the Mission and Charity Sector. Farsi Prossimo Onlus scs, founded on 29/11/1993, is a type A social cooperative promoted within the activities of the Fondazione Caritas Ambrosiana with the aim of developing and managing the socio-educational services promoted by the Foundation in the diocese of Milan. Further information is available at: <https://www.caritasambrosiana.it/>.
56. Reach for Change is an international non-profit organisation founded in Sweden. Further information is available at: <https://reachforchange.org/en/>
57. For the different definitions of types of reception, see the UNICEF nomenclature available at: <https://www.unicef.org/eca/definitions>
58. See, in this sense, the provisions relating to the reception of unaccompanied foreign minors seeking protection indicated in Directive 2011/95/EU, which, in Article 31, paragraph 3, states that "The Member States shall ensure that unaccompanied minors are accommodated: a) with adult relatives; or b) with a foster family; or c) in centres specialised in accommodation for minors; or d) in other arrangements offering suitable accommodation for minors. In this context, the views of the child shall be taken into account in accordance with the age and degree of maturity of the child. 4. As far as possible, siblings shall be placed together, taking into account the best interests of the minor concerned and, in particular, his or her age and degree of maturity. Changes of residence of unaccompanied minors shall be limited to a minimum". Furthermore, Directive 2013/33 recital 22 states that "When deciding on accommodation arrangements, Member States should take in due account of the best interests of the minor, as well as of the particular circumstances of the applicant where he/she is dependent on family members or other close relatives such as unmarried minor siblings already present in the Member State". Article 24 of the same Directive states that "Unaccompanied minors who make an application for international protection shall, from the moment they enter the territory of the Member State where the application for international protection has been lodged or is being examined until the moment they are obliged to leave, be

placed (a) with adult relatives; (b) with a foster family; (c) in accommodation centres with special facilities for minors; (d) in other accommodation suitable for minors. Member States may place unaccompanied minors aged 16 years or over in accommodation centres for requesting adults where it is in their best interest”.

59. UN, Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4c3acd162.html>
60. From the recommendations of EPIC Project No. 2, Specialised support
61. See EASO, Guidance on reception conditions for unaccompanied children: operational standards and indicators, available at <https://easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Guidance-on%20reception-%20conditions-%20for-unaccompanied-children.pdf>.
62. From the recommendations of EPIC Project No. 6, Alternative care
63. For more information on the system for the reception and care of unaccompanied minors in Italy, see EASO, Operational handbook for the reception and care of unaccompanied minors, available at: [https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/2021-03/vademecum\\_operativo\\_per\\_la\\_presa\\_in\\_carico\\_e\\_laccoglienza\\_dei\\_msna\\_def.pdf](https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/2021-03/vademecum_operativo_per_la_presa_in_carico_e_laccoglienza_dei_msna_def.pdf)
64. <https://www.retesai.it/>
65. Menores Extranjeros No Acompañados, Spanish acronym
66. <http://zdcpraha.cz/>
67. Accem is a non-profit, non-partisan and non-confessional organisation working to improve the living conditions of people in vulnerable situations. For more than 20 years, they have been working with children in situations or at risk of social exclusion, providing care and shelter to children in situations of hardship, both of indigenous and foreign origin.
68. <https://www.accem.es/centro-de-acogida-a-menores-no-acompanados-en-asturias/>
69. See European Commission, The protection of children in migration, 2017.
70. From the recommendations of EPIC Project No. 6 Alternative care
71. Law No 184 of 4 May 1983 - as amended by Law No 149 of 28 March 2001 - laying down "Rules governing the adoption and foster care of minors".
72. Article 2 of Law 184 of 4 May 1983
73. Article 4 of Law 184 of 4 May 1983
74. Article 5 of Law 184 of 4 May 1983
75. Ley 28 July 2015, No 26, on 'modificación del sistema de protección a la infancia y a la adolescencia', available at: <https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/2015/BOE-A-2015-8470-consolidado.pdf>
76. See: Fundamental Rights Report, 2017, p.184-186, available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/annual-reports/fundamental-rights-2017#child-rights>
77. For more information, see: <http://terradeipopoli.altervista.org/affido-omoculturale.html>
78. For more information see: <https://nidosineurope.eu/projects/reception-and-living-in-families/france/>
79. See footnote 78
80. From the recommendations of EPIC Project No. 6, Alternative care
81. Founded in 1991 in Prague as a humanitarian, non-governmental and non-profit organisation, OPU has been helping refugees and foreigners in the Czech Republic for 28 years. In 2003, OPU established a team dedicated to assisting unaccompanied and separated migrant children, consisting of lawyers and social workers. Currently, OPU is the only non-governmental organisation

in the Czech Republic that systematically focuses on this specific group of migrants, trying to respond to the disadvantages of the current reception and care system. The organisation offers legal support, socio-economic support, training, support for MSNs approaching 18 years of age, leisure activities with the help of volunteers, a 24/7 helpline where minors are encouraged to call if they need assistance. For more information, see: <https://www.opu.cz/cs/>

82. For more information on this institution and its dissemination, see SAVE THE CHILDREN, kinship care report. Syrian Refugee Children in Jordan, available at: [https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/documents/jordan\\_report\\_kinship\\_care\\_final.pdf](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/documents/jordan_report_kinship_care_final.pdf)
83. Article 343 of the Italian Civil Code
84. Article 19 (5) of Legislative Decree No 142 of 2015
85. Art. 26 paragraph 5 of Legislative Decree no. 257 of 2008
86. See footnote 75
87. Ireland's National Standards for Foster Care, available at the following link: [https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/National\\_Standards\\_for\\_Foster\\_Care.pdf](https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/National_Standards_for_Foster_Care.pdf)
88. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer
89. Ní Raghallaigh, M., Foster care and supported lodgings for separated asylum-seeking young people in Ireland: the views of young people, carers and stakeholders. Barnardos and the HSE, 2013, available at: [https://researchrepository.ucd.ie/bitstream/10197/4300/1/Foster\\_care\\_for\\_separated\\_asylum\\_seeking\\_young\\_people.pdf](https://researchrepository.ucd.ie/bitstream/10197/4300/1/Foster_care_for_separated_asylum_seeking_young_people.pdf)
90. Reception and Living in Families: Overview of family-based reception for unaccompanied minors in the EU Member States, February 2015, available at: <http://www.scepnetwork.org/images/21/276.pdf>
91. For more information, see: <http://metadrasi.org/en/campaigns/foster-care-for-unaccompanied-separated-children/>
92. <https://engi.eu/projects/alfaca/manual/PiB>, Information from the concept on 'Kinder im Exil', available at: [www.pib-bremen.de](http://www.pib-bremen.de).
93. PiB, Information from the concept on 'Kinder im Exil', available at: [www.pib-bremen.de](http://www.pib-bremen.de).  
For more information, see: Reception and living in families in the EU for unaccompanied minors, available at: <http://www.scepnetwork.org/images/21/276.pdf> , p45.
94. See Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, Linee di indirizzo per l'affidamento familiare, 2012, and La promozione delle reti dell'affido familiare, available respectively at the following links:  
[https://www.minori.gov.it/sites/default/files/linee\\_guida\\_affidamento\\_familiare\\_2013.pdf](https://www.minori.gov.it/sites/default/files/linee_guida_affidamento_familiare_2013.pdf)  
[https://www.garanteinfanzia.org/sites/default/files/la\\_promozione\\_delle\\_reti\\_dellaffido\\_familiare.pdf](https://www.garanteinfanzia.org/sites/default/files/la_promozione_delle_reti_dellaffido_familiare.pdf)
95. See: Folgheraiter, La logica sociale dell'aiuto, pp 244 ff.
96. <https://www.aibi.it/ita/attivita/affido/#1505379818504-442b5ad6-e357>; <https://www.aibi.it/ita/category/bambini-in-alto-mare/>
97. <https://www.hiqa.ie/areas-we-work/childrens-services>
98. Ireland's National Standards for Foster Care, available at the link: [https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/National\\_Standards\\_for\\_Foster\\_Care.pdf](https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/National_Standards_for_Foster_Care.pdf)
99. The Children's Book about Foster Care, available at the link: [https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/The\\_Childrens\\_Book\\_about\\_Foster\\_Care.pdf](https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/The_Childrens_Book_about_Foster_Care.pdf)
100. <http://epic-project.alberodellavita.org/events/welcoming-cities/>

101. From EPIC Project Recommendations No. 7 Transition to adulthood
102. <https://ec.europa.eu/migrantskills/#/>
103. For more information on access to employment, see the toolkit developed by Albergo della Vita in the framework of the W4Integration Europe project: "Labour integration for vulnerable migrants".
104. From the recommendations of EPIC Project No. 4 Job placement
105. <https://refugees-welcome.it/>

## **ANNEXES**

- Annex 1. EPIC Quality assessment Checklist
- Annex 2. EPIC Recommendations
- Annex 3. EPIC Statement
- Annex 4. EPIC Guidance for service expansion
- Annex 5. FORUM Best Practices
- Annex 6. FORUM Minimum standard
- Annex 7. Assessment Forms (only to be printed)



Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, Migration and Security Funds

**EPIC - EUROPEAN PRACTICES FOR INTEGRATION AND CARE.  
Improving alternative forms of care for Unaccompanied Migrant  
Children**

-  
**N. 863767**

**QUALITY ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST**

Title of deliverable	QUALITY ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST
Deliverable N	
Date	25/5/2020
Version	Draft 2



## QUALITY ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST - QAC

### OBJECTIVE

Each Partners analyse its service through common quality assessment tools provided by the Coordinator. Field visits enrich each partner experience driving the self - analysis of how quality components are integrated in the local services for unaccompanied migrant children care and integration. Each partners evaluate how different actors of public and private sectors interact for children well-being by considering vocational training, fellowship, services networks for leisure activities.

This checklist is based on the *“Guidance on Minimum Standards for provision of Foster Care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children”* elaborated in the FORUM project, and on the *“EASO Guidance on reception conditions for unaccompanied children: operational standards and indicators”*.

This Checklist reflect the key principles enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which are discussed in the Committee on the Rights of the Child’s General Comment Number 6 (2005) on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children outside of their Countries of Origin.

The following general principles are of particular importance:

- Non-discrimination (article 2)
- Best interests of the child as a primary consideration in all matters affecting them (article 3)
- The right to life, survival and development (article 6)
- Right of the child to express his or her views freely (article 12)

Because of Unaccompanied Migrant Children status and degree of vulnerability, child reception must be addressed taking into account that they need a legal guardian firstly and special care and attention secondly. Too often, range of solutions in project target countries - where the empowerment of legal guardian is still left behind - is limited to residential care without considering, as priority, the best interests of the child.

The Checklist includes: A) Children participation in Decision making process, B) Children well-being (Children’s emotional, social and educational development); C) Recruitment, assessment and training of the professionals; D) Placement; E) Training, development and ongoing support; F) Monitoring; G) Promoting independence and transition to adulthood.



## CHECKLIST

Service/Project:	
Organization:	Place:
Guest/	

N.	QUESTIONS	YES	NO	COMMENTS (or in case of N/A)
<b>A) Children participation in Decision making process</b>				
<i>Children's participation means that children have the right to have their voices heard, are listened to seriously and are able to influence decisions affecting them.</i>				
1	Have you ensured that unaccompanied children receive relevant information on their status, covering all aspects of reception conditions: their right to reception, the form of provision of material reception conditions (housing, food, clothing and daily expenses allowances), access to healthcare, education, leisure activities, and specific arrangements for applicants for international protection with special needs, if relevant?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2	Have you given information covering the roles of staff working with unaccompanied children?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3	Have you provided information explaining the obligation of appointing a representative in order to assist unaccompanied children on procedural issues and in their everyday life?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4	Do all these information were provided in a child-friendly, age-appropriate and culturally sensitive manner?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5	Are Interpreters and/or language mediators available in reception facilities to allow communication with unaccompanied children in their native language?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

6	Do you give safe and inclusive opportunities to Unaccompanied children, to express their views/opinions and for their views to be considered in line with age and maturity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7	Do the children actively participate with the staff on the definition of the background, needs, skills and future prospects (vocational training or fellowship opportunities) for themselves?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8	Do relations with the community of origin of the child, present in the area, are favoured?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9	Do relationship with the legal guardian is favoured?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## B) Children's emotional, social and educational development

*The action is shaped around the concept of best interest of child which means that all the activities should contribute to guarantee full and effective enjoyment of all the rights as well as the holistic development of the child, including physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.*

<b>MEDICAL</b>				
10	Do a standardised mechanism/procedure is in place to systematically identify and assess special needs for unaccompanied children?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
11	Do a medical screening is conducted by specialized personnel in migration medicine, ethno psychology / ethno psychiatry?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
12	Do a cultural mediator is present during medical visits?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
13	Do the child has been prepared for the visit? Do you pay enough attention to the gender of the doctor?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
14	Do the children has access to necessary healthcare, equal to that of nationals including preventive, mental, physical and psychosocial care?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

15	Do the Unaccompanied children in need of mental healthcare, rehabilitation services and/or qualified counselling are provided with such services by the presence of a clinical psychologist (with specialization in ethno psychiatry) in the reception facility or outside the centre?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<b>HOUSING</b>			
16	Do you have a mechanism in place to consider whether there are specific and objective reasons for the allocation of a particular housing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
17	Do you ensure that family unity is respected, in line with the principle of the best interests of the child?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
18	Do separate bedrooms for single male and female children exist and no access is possible for children of the opposite sex?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
19	Do you ensure sufficient, adequate, and functioning sanitary infrastructure in the housing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
20	Do the cleanliness of private and common areas of the housing is checked on a regular basis?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
21	Do access to a telephone is possible at least for calls concerning family contact, contact with the representative and procedural, legal, medical or educational issues?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
22	Is there a space dedicated to prayer?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<b>EDUCATIONAL</b>			
23	Do the unaccompanied child is supported in its everyday life and activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
24	Do the unaccompanied child is provided with help with homework and tutoring?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
25	Do all unaccompanied children have quick access to internal or external preparatory classes, including language classes,	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

	when necessary, in order to facilitate their access to and participation in the education system?			
	<b>LEISURE</b>			
26	Is there a daily access to a variety of leisure activities, both indoor and outdoor, according to age and after consultation with the unaccompanied children?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
27	Is there a minimum range of sport activities appropriated to the unaccompanied child's age regularly provided?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
28	Do the Internet access and its duration is age-appropriate and is regulated and supervised by the staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
29	Is there an area suitable for leisure activities inside the housing or nearby within public space?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
30	Are there agreements with CSO/volunteers to support and integrate these children in their leisure activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<b>MATERIAL SUPPORT</b>			
31	Do Unaccompanied children have access to sufficient and adequate food?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
32	Can they choose the menu? Are there typical dishes of their tradition?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
33	Do Unaccompanied children possess sufficient clothing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
34	Do Unaccompanied children have access to sufficient and adequate personal hygiene products and non-food products?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
35	Do you ensure that an adequate daily/weekly expenses allowance is provided?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## C) Recruitment, assessment and training of the professionals

*In order to perform all the tasks to deal with children, those working with unaccompanied children (educators, guide, orienters, monitoring responsables) have to be appropriately available, qualified, trained, supported and monitored.*

36	Do the reception facility provide sufficient qualified staff to carry out the day-to-day care of unaccompanied children?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
37	Do Staff working with unaccompanied children in the reception context has clear terms of reference (job description)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
38	Do Staff working with unaccompanied children in the reception context is qualified in accordance with national law and regulations concerning his or her particular terms of reference (job description)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
39	Do training is provided in a regular manner and reviewed depending on the needs of the staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
40	Do the trainings provided include gender and age-specific concerns, cultural training, conflict management, initial and specialised training on the identification of persons with special needs, awareness of mental health issues, recognising signs of radicalisation, and identification of victims of human trafficking as well as first aid and fire safety?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
41	Is there a space for discussion as a team, and supervision by external experts?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## D) Placements

*The best interests of the child should be a primary consideration and his/her consent should be taken into consideration, as his/her wishes and feelings taken into account.*

42	Do the placement has been discussed with the child and they have information about the foster care and reception system and their rights?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
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43	Do you make efforts to place children with carers who can meet their needs, including their ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
44	Do you try not to separate siblings from each other in care placements unless there are compelling reasons for doing so?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
45	In case of separation, does regular and appropriate arrangements are put in place for them to have contact with each other?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
46	Do clear procedures exist for introducing children into the foster care placement, to the foster carer and to others living in the household?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

### E) Training, development and ongoing support

*Foster carers and caregivers should receive the training and development they need to carry out their role effectively, on an ongoing basis.*

47	<p>Do foster carers have an understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> the domestic immigration and asylum system and how to support the child within that system;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> the situation of unaccompanied children in the country and in Europe in general;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> the impact of migration on unaccompanied children;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> the impact of previous adversities, including trauma, on unaccompanied children;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> trafficking and the risks of children going missing;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> the social care system and services that can support foster families during foster care;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> resilience;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> cultural diversity;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> gender issues;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> the rights and the duties of the foster child and foster family;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> the importance of family contact (where appropriate and safe).</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
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48	Do foster carers/caregivers receive regular support on how to manage their responses and feelings arising from caring for children?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>F) Monitoring</b>				
<i>Either internal and external monitoring should be in place, to assure the best interest of the child is in place</i>				
49	Do the children actively participate to the assessment of his need, situation, skills?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
50	Do the relevant agency or authority visit and conduct flexible monitoring of each accommodation for children (foster care families, reception centres, individual housing...)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
51	During these regular visits, do information on the mental and social development of the unaccompanied child is exchanged with the representative?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
52	Child reception staff present in the accommodation centre/individual housing 24/7.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
53	The presence of the unaccompanied child in the accommodation centre/individual housing is monitored at least once a day to be sure the child has not absconded.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
54	The reception facility has to provide for a regular monitoring mechanism of staff performance to ensure day-to-day care of unaccompanied children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>G) Promoting independence and transition to adulthood</b>				
<i>Residential care staff/Foster carers should help children to prepare for leaving the foster family, with the nature of the preparation depending on why they are leaving the foster family. Residential care staff/Foster carers should help children to prepare for adulthood so that they can reach their potential and achieve psychosocial and economic wellbeing.</i>				
55	Are skills related to autonomy assessed on a regular basis?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

56	Do the Unaccompanied child is provided with support and training on home budget management and home management?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
57	Do the unaccompanied child's psychological wellbeing and mental health is taken into account and safeguarded during day-to-day care?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
58	Do the unaccompanied child has access to awareness raising activities on the risks of drugs and alcohol use, according to its age and maturity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
59	Do the unaccompanied child has access to awareness raising activities on sexual and reproductive health, and on gender roles, according to its age and maturity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
60	Do the Social Services or other competent authorities, support the families/Reception centres staff with the offer of adequate training and educational activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
61	Do the Social Services or other competent authorities, support the families/Reception centres staff with the offer of vocational training, fellowship?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
62	Do the Social Services/Civil Society promote adequate support's projects for children in transition to adulthood?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
63	Are the children supported and accompanied in house-searching activity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, Migration and Security Funds

# EPIC - EUROPEAN PRACTICES FOR INTEGRATION AND CARE

## Improving alternative forms of care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children

No. 863767

### Recommendations from the e-Roundtables



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## THE PARTNERS OF THE ACTION ENTITLED “EPIC - EUROPEAN PRACTICES FOR INTEGRATION AND CARE. IMPROVING ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF CARE FOR UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN”,

Following seven e-Roundtables held from 22nd October to 2nd December 2020, organized by all partners and involving around 250 stakeholder and partners;

addressing to public authorities at the local and regional level, CSOS, Institutions, Universities and private sectors;

Having regard that action is shaped around the concept of the **best interest of the child**, which means that all the activities should contribute to guarantee full and effective enjoyment of all the rights and the holistic development of the child, including physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development;

Having regard to the recent **policies and legislative framework** for the protection of the rights of the child in migration: *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – The protection of children in migration (2017)*; *the Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors (2010-2014)*; *The European Agenda on Migration*; *the action plan on Integration and inclusion 2021 – 2027*; *the New Pact on Migration and Asylum (2020)*

### Adopt and promote the following recommendations

#### 1. TAILOR-MADE SUPPORT

- Assure **an individualised work** with Unaccompanied Migrant Children and the use of a **participative methodology** in implementing the program and the services.
- Assure the right to be heard and the **participation of Unaccompanied Migrant Children in the decision-making processes** that affect their lives.
- **Personalisation of the support offered:** any support must take into account the specific characteristics of the Unaccompanied Migrant Children, their history, their path, needs, vulnerabilities, desires, potential and ties they may have already built or are building on a given territory.

## 2. SPECILISED SUPPORT

- Providing wider **psychological support** to Unaccompanied Migrant Children – and implementing tools to overcome the cultural barriers that consider such support as a stigma.
- Promoting the knowledge of Unaccompanied Migrant Children' social and cultural **background that force them to leave their country of origin** to define possible paths of inclusion and develop adequate and comprehensive protection measures and the promotion of opportunities.

## 3. INTEGRATION

- **Integration of people's lives** is defined in different areas: education, training, working life, sport, leisure, relations, etc. Full inclusion must take into account the multiple interests of Unaccompanied Migrant Children.
- **Active participation:** through mutual knowledge, we can create those social ties that are the basis of any coexistence.
- **A positive integration process** of Unaccompanied Migrant Children should take into account:
  - Their emotional needs, both with foster families and children of the same age;
  - Forms of artistic expressions, to open an authentic dialogue between culturally distant realities.
- **Cultural mediation:** promoting the integration of Unaccompanied Migrant Children by focusing on cultural mediation as a tool that allows communication and dialogue in a shared and cultural-sensitive space that protects differences, strengthen the links and ensures the harmonious development of children and the host society.
- **Speaking, writing and understanding the language of the host country** is an essential step for assuring integration.

## 4. JOB PLACEMENT

- Focusing on **job placement** with professionals boosting the linking labour offers and Unaccompanied Migrant Children' skills and desires.
- Promoting **vocational training and internship:** learning a job gives the Unaccompanied Migrant Children the feeling of being part of the host country and fulfil personal/family expectations.
- **English for the workplace**, according to labour sector is crucial to increase the employability for Unaccompanied Migrant Children.

- It is important to promote the connection between Unaccompanied Migrant Children as employees and the stakeholders of the **labour market**, supporting the integration of Unaccompanied Migrant Children.
- Fostering the **coordination/agreements with the private sector** to facilitate the access of Unaccompanied Migrant Children into the labour market.

## 5. INVOLVEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY

- Promoting and sponsoring the role of the **voluntary guardian/mentor**. They should be provided with advice and support. It is also advisable to provide them with aid, such as paid leave to perform their tasks and a refund of expenses. The volunteer guardians/mentors cannot be left alone.
- **Strengthening the Network of collaboration** in the territory - working by integrating the different life areas requires the constitution of support and intervention networks. Such networks can operate at different levels: informal networks of peers and mentors; institutional networks involving actors having a professional mandate; mixed networks where public and private stakeholders (profit and non-profit entities) cooperate to create opportunity.
- **Fostering active citizenship** to promote mutual knowledge, involve the community and eliminate/reduce stereotypes and mutual prejudices.

## 6. ALTERNATIVE CARE

- Encouraging, raising **awareness of foster care** and **promoting societies that are more inclusive**.
- Promoting **relational continuity** when Unaccompanied Migrant Children move from residential facilities to foster care.
- **Supporting (psychologically and economically) families and individuals** hosting Unaccompanied Migrant Children.
- Beside foster care, it is important to promote other **alternative forms of care** for Unaccompanied Migrant Children: families and individuals can be engaged as mentors or for random support to Unaccompanied Migrant Children ("supporting families").

## 7. TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

- It is important to implement all programs, services, activities and protection measures for Unaccompanied Migrant Children **even after they turn eighteen**, to support their transition to adulthood, to foster their integration into the society.
- All the above Recommendations should be taken into consideration in the vulnerable and challenging moment of the **transition to adulthood**.



# EPIC - EUROPEAN PRACTICES FOR INTEGRATION AND CARE

## Improving alternative forms of care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children

N. 863767

### STATEMENT

*March 11th 2021*

Every city could be a welcoming city: it depends on the people living there and on the Institutions who lead social and political affairs.

Every citizen, as well as every civil society organization and Institution, should promote and support the integration and flourishing of every Unaccompanied Migrant Child.

We hope that active inclusion and integration may become a praxis of every European city and a new culture of solidarity and justice disseminated thanks to everyday people's choice.

We believe in this approach and promote a welcoming city culture.

## Let's be part of a welcoming city!





Coordinated by  
*ONLUS*  
**l'Albero  
della Vita**  
PROGETTI D'AMORE  
PER I BAMBINI



**FORUM**  
FOSTER CARE FOR  
UNACCOMPANIED  
MIGRANT CHILDREN



Co-funded by the Rights, Equality  
and Citizenship Programme  
of the European Union

# Guidance on Minimum Standards for provision of Foster Care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children



Credit Photo Valentina Tamborra

## European Partners



**coram clic**  
Children's Legal Centre

**Család, Gyermek, Ifjúság**  
Kiemelkedően Közhatalú Egyesület  
FAMILY CHILD YOUTH ASSOCIATION



**FICE**  
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FEDERATION OF  
CHILDREN'S COMMUNITIES



**ORGANIZATION  
FOR AID TO  
REFUGEES**





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This publication reflects the views only of the author and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made on the information contained therein.

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1. Background | **p.4**

---

2. The Guidance on Minimum Standards | **p.7**

---

3. Definition of Unaccompanied Migrant Children | **p.9**

---

4. The Minimum Standards | **p.10**

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## 1. BACKGROUND

The Guidance on Minimum Standards is developed within the framework of the project **FORUM For Unaccompanied Minors - transfer of knowledge for professionals to increase foster care.**

The FORUM project responds to the European Commission priority to ensure better protection and respect for the rights of all children in migration on EU territory through the **development of a quality foster care service system** promoting the exchange of expertise from countries where foster care is already developed toward countries where the foster care provision is still limited.

In recent years, the number of children reaching EU Member States has increased and many of them are arriving unaccompanied. The existing European Union policies and legislation<sup>1</sup> provide a wide framework for the protection of the rights of children in migration but the recent surge of arriving migrant children have exposed gaps and shortcomings in protecting their rights and the need for target actions to better protect children in migration has been highlighted.

The project is implemented within the EU recent policies and legislation framework for the protection of the rights of the child in migration: **Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – The protection of children in migration** (2017); the **Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors** (2010-2014); The **European Agenda on Migration**; the Commission Recommendation “**Investing in Children: Breaking the cycle of Disadvantages**” (2013).

The “10<sup>th</sup> European Forum on the rights of the child: the protection of children in migration<sup>2</sup>” have underlined the need for targeted actions to better protect children in migration.

The action is shaped around the concept of **best interest of child** which means that all the activities should contribute to guarantee full and effective enjoyment of all the rights as well as the holistic development of the child, including physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

Because of Unaccompanied Migrant Children status and degree of vulnerability, child reception must be addressed taking into account that they need a legal guardian firstly and special care and attention secondly. Too often, range of solutions in project target countries - where the empowerment of legal guardian is still left behind - is limited to residential care without considering, as priority, the best interests of the child. Moreover, in these target countries, many of the key stakeholders do not consider Unaccompanied Migrant Children as being children before being migrants.

Countries have been thus selected based on the number of Unaccompanied Migrant Children, on their experience on foster care and on the lack of practices on foster care. Based on the Report “*Reception and Living in families. Overview of family based reception for Unaccompanied Minors in the EU member States*”<sup>3</sup>, the following targeted countries have been selected:

- Countries with high percentage of Unaccompanied Migrant Children claiming for asylum (Italy, Hungary and Austria)
- Transiting countries who are expected to increase the number of Unaccompanied Migrant Children or welcoming them through relocation policies (Slovenia, Hungary and Czech Republic)
- Partner from countries with experience in foster care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children (UK)

<sup>1</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – COM (2017) 211 final

<sup>2</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item\\_id=34456](http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=34456)

<sup>3</sup> NIDOS; SALAR, CHTB, 2015.

- Partner from countries with large number of migrant children in residential care (Spain)
- Partner with great expertise in advocacy who can channel project outcomes through EU member States (EUROCHILD, Belgium).

The project is built on three pillars: Advocacy, Transfer of Knowledge and Capacity building.

- **Advocacy** at local, national and European level aims at raising awareness and promoting foster care benefits not only for Unaccompanied Migrant Children but for the whole reception system.

In order to initiate foster care programs, key stakeholders from public and private sector managing reception system need to understand the potential benefits and risks of foster care.

The partner EUROCHILD has designed a toolkit to assist child rights advocates and other professionals in influencing the governments at national, regional and local level, to promote the development of better care services for unaccompanied and separated migrant children in the EU. The toolkit can be downloaded at FORUM Website: <https://forum-project.alberodellavita.org/materials/>

- **Transfer of knowledge** is meant from associations with sound experience in foster care toward associations with minor experience; the project has elaborated a Guidance on Minimum Standards to be adapted at the national context through national standards for foster care services.
- **Capacity building** of professionals dealing with migration and child protection is crucial to extend good practices and standards to a wide range of key actors.

The project is coordinated by Fondazione L'Albero della Vita and implemented in partnership with European relevant organizations committed to improve the protection and reception of migrants and Unaccompanied Migrant Children: Accem (Spain), Organization for Aid to Refugees OPU (Czech Republic), Family Child Youth Association FCYA (Hungary), FICE – International Federation of Educative Communities (Austria), and Slovenska Filantropija (Slovenia).

**Fondazione L'Albero della Vita** was founded in Italy in April 1997 and since its foundation, Fondazione L'Albero della Vita has committed itself to promote effective actions aiming at ensuring well-being, protecting and promoting rights, encouraging the development of children, their families and the communities to which they belong, both in Italy and in the world.

**Accem:** Accem is an NGO which works in promoting the defense of fundamental rights, the support and accompaniment of persons at risk of social exclusion, with a focus on asylum and migrations.

**FICE Austria:** FICE Austria is the national section of FICE-International. The vision is to create networks across continents worldwide to support actions and all those working with at-risk children, children with special needs and children and young people in out-of-home care. All activities aim to respect the personality, interests and needs of the child or the young person.

**Organization for Aid to Refugees (OPU)** has been helping refugees and foreigners in the Czech Republic for 25 years. OPU's main activities include providing free legal and social counselling to applicants for international protection and to other foreigners in the Czech Republic, organizing training programs for both professionals and the general public, and other activities aimed at promoting integration of foreigners.

**Slovenska filantropija** is a non-governmental and humanitarian organization operating in public interest since 1992. Its programs are aimed at increasing the quality of life in the community and advocacy

for the disadvantaged. Various activities are combined in program units Migrations, Volunteering, Intergenerational cooperation, Promotion of health, International and development cooperation. Areas of work of the Migration unit are psychosocial, integration, legal and learning assistance, leisure activities, awareness raising and advocacy for the rights of unaccompanied and separated children, asylum-seekers, persons with international protection and other migrants.

**FCYA - Family, Child, Youth Association** is a non-profit organization established in 1993 in Hungary. It aims to support the protection of children and strengthen families by fortifying, training and providing services to helping professionals. The association is also involved in numerous international research and training programs, it takes part to prestigious national and international conferences.

### THE EXPERT PARTNERS ARE:

**CORAM (UK):** an NGO with great experience in foster care and providing care and support for migrant children. It runs expert group's activities.

**Fondazione ISMU:** is one the most influencing research center on migration in Italy and Europe. It is member of the expert group.

**EUROCHILD:** is an advocacy network of organizations who promote the well-being of children. It supports the applicant in the advocacy activities and dissemination of project findings and results.

The Guidance on Minimum Standards has been designed by the **Expert Group** constituted within the project FORUM – For Unaccompanied Minors - transfer of knowledge for professionals to increase foster care with the contributions of all partners.

The Expert Group is composed of: Kamena Dorling, from CORAM CHILDREN LEGAL CENTER LBG – CORAM Intls(UK), Giulio Giovanni Valtolina and Nicoletta Pavesi, from ISMU - Iniziative e Studi sulla Multietnicità, Dr. Maria Herzog, expert on foster care (Hungary) and Dr. Muireean Ní Raghallaigh, Lecturer in Social Work, School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice, from University College Dublin (Ireland), author of one of the most relevant study on foster care system for Unaccompanied Migrant Children in Ireland<sup>4</sup>.



<sup>4</sup> 2013, Foster Care and Supported Lodgings for separated Asylum Seeking Young People in Ireland, Banrandos and the Health Service Executive.

## 2. THE GUIDANCE ON MINIMUM STANDARDS

The Guidance on Minimum Standards has been developed by the interdisciplinary group of experts in coordination with partner's organizations and it details standards for foster care services for Unaccompanied Migrant Children.

The standards apply to those overseeing the provision of foster care to Unaccompanied Migrant Children. Where a standard places an expectation on foster careers, this should be interpreted as an expectation on those overseeing the fostering service to support the foster career to meet the standard.

**Minimum standards do not mean standardization of provision.**

The Standards are designed to be applicable to the wide variety of different types of services or projects: service providers should aim to meet the minimum standards but **should strive also for best practice.**

**Standards includes:** legal framework; children well-being; recruitment, training and assessment of foster carers; placement; training, development and ongoing support; monitoring; transition to adulthood.

Based on the Standards highlighted in the Guidance document, each target country is called to formulate a **Guide on National Standards**, in order to adapt the minimum standards to the national priorities and context.

**The Minimum Standards reflect the key principles enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; as regards foster care, the following general principles are of particular importance:**

- Non-discrimination (article 2)
- Best interests of the child as a primary consideration in all matters affecting them (article 3)
- The right to life, survival and development (article 6)
- Right of the child to express his or her views freely (article 12).

**The Standards in providing foster care have been clustered according to the following main categories:**

- Children's emotional, social and educational development
- Recruitment, assessment and training
- Placements
- Training, development and ongoing support
- Monitoring
- Promoting independence and transition to adulthood

The application of the Minimum Standards should be carried out with a strong **gender perspective**. An expert on gender mainstreaming has been involved in the project to analyse the gender dimension of the migration phenomena and how this is reflected in the project deliverables.

Gender is indeed a cross-cutting theme which is present in all the spheres of life. In the context of Unaccompanied Migrant Children, the gender dimension is particularly relevant as it strongly affects both the condition of being children as well as being migrant.

Among the Unaccompanied Children in Europe, a huge percentage, 89%, are boys, while only 11% are girls. The gender component is strongly related with the decision to undertake the migration path, which can find its root in several interconnected reasons. Among them, the necessity to contribute to the livelihoods of the family, the continuity with a traditionally migration culture, the transition to adulthood, but also persecutions, wars and other harsh living conditions. Sometimes, especially for boys, migration is a voluntary decision. Taking into account the drivers to migrate, and the experience during migration, gender is a fundamental element when designing interventions; gender is among the elements that influence both the decision and the experience and therefore must always be considered.

Based on these assumptions, the Guidance include as well a part of recommendations in order to guide social services, professionals and organizations in the strengthened inclusion of the gender dimension in the provision of the foster care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children.



Credit Photo Valentina Tamborra

### 3. DEFINITION OF UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN

According to the European Commission<sup>1</sup>, the term ‘children in migration’ covers all third national country children who migrate from their country of origin to and within the territory of the EU in search of survival, security, improved standards of living, education, economic opportunities, protection from exploitation and abuse, family reunification or a combination of these factors...”.

However, we consider these standards to be applied to all children in migration.

**Unaccompanied Migrant Children** (also called unaccompanied minors) are children, as defined in article 1 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.<sup>2</sup>

**Separated children** are children, as defined in article 1 of the Convention, who have been separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary care-giver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members.

The document adopts the definition set up in the Article 20 of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child:

#### *The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 20:*

*1. A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State.*

*2. States Parties shall in accordance with their national laws ensure alternative care for such a child.*

*3. Such care could include, inter alia, foster placement, kafala of Islamic law, adoption or if necessary placement in suitable institutions for the care of children. When considering solutions, due regard shall be paid to the desirability of continuity in a child's upbringing and to the child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background.*

The Minimum Standards are applied to Unaccompanied Migrant Children who are seeking, or have sought, asylum in the host country as well as to Unaccompanied Migrant Children who arrived in a EU country but are not seeking for asylum.

<sup>1</sup> EC, “The protection of children in migration”, 2016

<sup>2</sup> Para 7, General Comment No. 6 (2005), Treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin, at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/GC6.pdf>

## 4. THE MINIMUM STANDARDS

All family-based care-settings must meet general Minimum Standards in terms of, for example, living conditions, safeguarding and access to basic services (such as education and health).

The Minimum Standards should reflect the key principles enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which are discussed in the Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment Number 6 (2005) on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children outside of their Countries of Origin.

As regards foster care, the following general principles are of particular importance:

- Non-discrimination (article 2)
- Best interests of the child as a primary consideration in all matters affecting them (article 3)
- The right to life, survival and development (article 6)
- Right of the child to express his or her views freely (article 12)

All of those involved in the provision of foster care should ensure that in all actions concerning children, the best interest of the child is a primary consideration; that they are treated as a child first and foremost, without discrimination, and that each child who is capable of forming his or her own views has the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting them, according to his/her age and degree of maturity.

A child's carer/s have a responsibility to promote all aspects of the child's development.

### 1. Children's emotional, social and educational development

Foster carers of Unaccompanied Migrant Children should help them experience as full a family life as possible as part of a loving foster family with a carer / carers who can make everyday decisions as they would their own child/ren.

Foster carers should value diversity and should enable the child to experience a positive sense of identity and help them to reach their potential. This should be done through individualised care, by providing an environment and culture that promotes, models and supports positive behaviour and helps the children develop skills and emotional resilience that will prepare them for independent living, including reunification with their families where possible and appropriate.

However, it's important to highlight the need to assess if family reunification is in the best interests of the child. Family reunification in the country of origin is not in the best interests of the child and should therefore not be pursued where there is a "reasonable risk" that such a return would lead to the violation of fundamental human rights of the child<sup>1</sup>.

Foster carers should ensure that the Unaccompanied Child's views, wishes and feelings are taken into account in all aspects of their care; and that they are helped to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases; and know how to obtain support and make a complaint.

Foster carers should advocate for all aspects of the child's development, including educational attainment and physical and emotional health and well-being. The child's wishes and feelings should be taken into account, by the foster family as well as by other key individuals in their life, for example social workers, teachers, legal professionals, guardians, local authority staff and advocates.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/GC6.pdf>

A child's health should be promoted in accordance with their placement plan, and foster carers should be clear about what responsibilities and decisions are delegated to them and when consent from the child or guardian for medical treatment or other decisions needs to be obtained.

Foster carers should be given practical help to support appropriate contact with family, if this is in the best interest of the child, alongside support to manage any difficult emotional or other issues that the child and foster carer may have as a result of contact.

Foster carers should be supported to promote children's social and emotional development, and to enable children to develop emotional resilience and positive self-esteem.

Children should be helped by their foster carer to develop their emotional, intellectual, social, creative and physical skills. They should be supported to take part in school based and out of school activities.

Foster carers should actively safeguard and promote the welfare of foster children. They should endeavour to make positive relationships with children, generate a culture of openness and trust and should be aware of and alert to any signs or symptoms that might indicate a child is at risk of harm, or at risk of going missing.

## 2. Recruitment, assessment & training

A fostering service should recruit, assess and support a diverse group of foster carers who can respond appropriately to the wide-ranging needs of the Unaccompanied Migrant Children for whom they provide care, including their ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic needs. This may include carers from the host country and carers from a migrant background.

The fostering service should as well develop criteria and guidance on how to select the migrant children given a recruited family, taking into account his/her wishes, background situation, specific needs or any other relevant aspect that might affect the smooth relationship with the foster family.

The assessment process should be set out clearly to prospective foster carers, including:

- the qualities, skills or aptitudes being sought or to be achieved;
- the standards to be applied in the assessment;
- the stages and content of the selection process and, where possible, timescales involved;
- the information to be given to applicants.

The assessment should be conducted by someone with appropriate training and knowledge and should involve face to face meetings with the prospective foster carers and with any other family members living in the household. In most cases there are standard criteria on the professional level and experience needed to do the assessment and the training. In some programs, like the PRIDE for instance, the assessment is done during the pre-service training, where the trainers and the members of the group are also providing feedback for the prospective foster parents.

The foster home should be able to comfortably accommodate all who live there including where appropriate any suitable aids and adaptations when caring for a child with disabilities or other special needs/vulnerabilities. It should be warm, adequately furnished and decorated, and maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene. Outdoor spaces which are part of the premises should be safe and secure.

The environment, neighbourhood and availability of relevant services (for example appropriate school education and access to religious institutions) should also be assessed before a child is placed in that area.

Prospective foster carers should be provided with training and preparation to become foster carers in a way which addresses, and given practical techniques to manage, the issues they are likely to encounter and identify the competencies and strengths they have or need to develop.

### 3. Placements

Prior to the placement of each child, the foster carer should be provided with all the information held by the fostering service that they need to carry out their role effectively. The information is provided in a clear, comprehensive written form and includes the support that will be available to the foster carer.

It is very important to recognise the sensitivity of some of the information and data protection, confidentiality. It has to be regulated carefully and not used to block the provision of the needed information.

The placement should be discussed with the child and they should be given information about the foster care system and their rights.

Efforts should always be made to place children with carers who can meet their needs, including their ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic needs. In making decisions about where a child should be placed, the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration and his/her consent should be taken into consideration, as his/her wishes and feelings taken into account. The consent of his/her guardian is also needed.

When placements are made, foster carers and Unaccompanied Children should be made clear about the continuing care or support that will be in place (and whether this will continue when the child transitions into adulthood) and contingency plans should be made should the placement not work out.

Siblings should not be separated from each other in care placements unless there are compelling reasons for doing so. Where they are separated, regular and appropriate arrangements should be put in place for them to have contact with each other.

A child should be welcomed into a foster home and leave a foster home in a planned and sensitive manner which makes them feel respected, valued and accepted. Clear procedures should exist for introducing children into the foster care placement, to the foster carer and to others living in the household. These procedures should cover planned and, where permitted, emergency/immediate foster care placements. They help children understand what to expect from living in the foster home.

Where there are other children in the foster family, their views should be listened to and they should be encouraged to engage with the foster child.

### 4. Training, development and ongoing support

Foster carers should receive the training and development they need to carry out their role effectively, on an ongoing basis. A clear framework of training and development should be put in place and this should be used as the basis for assessing foster carers' performance and identifying their development needs.

Foster carers should have the support services and development opportunities they need in order to learn the various skills and approaches that can help them provide their foster child with the best possible care.

This should include an understanding of:

- the domestic immigration and asylum system and how to support the child within that system;
- the situation of unaccompanied children in the country and in Europe in general;
- the impact of migration on unaccompanied children;
- the impact of previous adversities, including trauma, on unaccompanied children;
- trafficking and the risks of children going missing;
- the social care system and services that can support foster families during foster care;
- resilience;
- cultural diversity;
- gender issues;
- the rights and the duties of the foster child and foster family;
- the importance of family contact (where appropriate and safe).

Foster carers should receive support on how to manage their responses and feelings arising from caring for children, particularly where children display very challenging behaviour, and should understand how children's previous experiences can manifest in challenging behaviour.

Sufficient resources and supports should be put in place to enable difficulties in foster placements to be overcome, in order to ensure continuity of care for unaccompanied children, unless such continuity is not considered to be in their best interests.

## 5. Monitoring

The relevant agency or authority should visit and conduct flexible monitoring of each foster care arrangement, at a minimum four times a year with approximately three months' intervals until the child turns 18, or in case the foster care continues, until the foster care ends.

Visits can be organised as well with no prior advice. Ideally monitoring should be undertaken by a different social worker to the one supervising the foster parents.

Monitoring should include an opportunity for foster carers and the child to share their views on any needs and problems that should be addressed, both separately and together.

## 6. Promoting independence and transition to adulthood

Foster carers should help children to prepare for leaving the foster family, with the nature of the preparation depending on why they are leaving the foster family.

Unaccompanied Children may be moving on to a new care placement or moving out of care because they have turned 18. They may be reuniting with family either in the country of reception, in the country of origin or in another country. In some contexts, Unaccompanied Children may be subject to deportation orders, being returned either to their country of origin or to a third country, or reunited to his/her family or resettled in a third country. The nature of the preparation will vary depending on the plan that is in place for the children.

Foster carers should help children to prepare for adulthood so that they can reach their potential and

achieve psychosocial and economic wellbeing. There should be training and support available in preparing and supporting young people to make the transition to independence and to either building their futures in that country, in their country of origin or in another country. This might include education and employment.

Foster families cannot be alone in this important commitment. Social Services or other competent authorities have the responsibility to support foster families, promoting support projects for children in transition to adulthood, along with the public services network and third sector organisations (for example in relation to social housing, education, apprenticeships, employment, etc.).

## 7. Gender dimension

As result of the gender analysis conducted, Minimum Standards on how to mainstream the gender component in providing foster care have been point out:

- Mention and include gender among the grounds that influence the needs of children and that are taken into consideration when designing an intervention, together with ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic needs;
- Research and provide more details on the different experiences children live according to their gender, both as children and as migrant children, so that professionals are able to design more punctual interventions that can better address needs of children;
- Due to the nature of the phenomena, pay extra attention on masculinity dynamics and make sure that they are adequately studied, acknowledged, understood and integrated in the design of interventions;
- Make sure that gender is considered and discussed as a driver for migration, but also a cross-cutting theme that influence all migration steps;
- Duly stress the importance of preparing operators and foster families on how to deal with gender related elements that may lead to physical, psychological and behavioural health issues;
- When dealing with foster families, make sure that operators -and foster families themselves- are duly aware that gender is profoundly linked to the culture of each country and as so, there are implications that can define and affect the family experience;
- Ensure that gender neutral language is always used, and that words, images, video and other messages do not reinforce stereotypes and prejudices. Take extra care on unwanted subliminal messages.



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## Foster Care Provision for Unaccompanied Migrant Children: Shortlist of Good Practices in Europe

Coordinator

Project Partner



CSALAD, GYERMEK, JELESIAG  
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Family Child Youth Association





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## 1. BACKGROUND

The shortlist of good practices is developed within the framework of the project **FORUM – For Unaccompanied Minors - transfer of knowledge for professionals to increase foster care.**

The FORUM project responds to the European Commission priority to ensure better protection and respect for the rights of all children in migration on EU territory through the **development of a quality foster care service system** promoting the exchange of expertise from countries where foster care is already developed toward countries where the foster care provision is still limited.

In recent years, the number of children reaching EU Member States has increased and many of them are arriving unaccompanied.

The existing European Union<sup>1</sup> policies and legislation provide a wide framework for the protection of the rights of children in migration but the recent surge of arriving migrant children have exposed gaps and shortcomings in protecting their rights and the need for target actions to better protect children in migration has been highlighted.

The project is implemented within the EU recent policies and legislation framework for the protection of the rights of the child in migration: **Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – The protection of children in migration (2017)**; the **Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors (2010-2014)**; The **European Agenda on Migration**; the Commission Recommendation **“Investing in Children: Breaking the cycle of Disadvantages” (2013)**.

The 10<sup>th</sup> European Forum on the rights of the child: the protection of children in migration<sup>2</sup> have underlined the need for targeted actions to better protect children in migration.

The action is shaped around the concept of **best interest of child** which means that all the activities should contribute to guarantee full and effective enjoyment of all the rights as well as the holistic development of the child, including physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

Because of Unaccompanied Migrant Children status and degree of vulnerability, child reception must be addressed taking into account that they need a legal guardian firstly and special care and attention secondly. Too often, range of solutions in project target countries - where the empowerment of legal guardian is still left behind - is limited to residential care without considering, as priority, the best interests of the child. Moreover, in these target countries, many of the key stakeholders do not consider Unaccompanied Migrant Children as being children before being migrants.

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<sup>1</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – COM (2017) 211 final

<sup>2</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item\\_id=34456](http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=34456)



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Countries have been thus selected based on the number of Unaccompanied Migrant Children, on their experience on foster care and on the lack of practices on foster care. Based on the Report *“Reception and Living in families. Overview of family based reception for Unaccompanied Minors in the EU member States”*<sup>3</sup>, the following targeted countries have been selected:

- Countries with high percentage of Unaccompanied Migrant Children claiming for asylum (Italy, Hungary and Austria)
- Transiting countries who are expected to increase the number of Unaccompanied Migrant Children or welcoming them through relocation policies (Slovenia, Hungary and Czech Republic)
- Partner from countries with experience in foster care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children (UK)
- Partner from countries with large number of migrant children in residential care (Spain)
- Partner with great expertise in advocacy who can channel project outcomes through EU member States (EUROCHILD, Belgium).

The project is built on three pillars: Advocacy, Transfer of Knowledge and Capacity building.

- **Advocacy** at local, national and European level aims at raising awareness and promoting foster care benefits not only for Unaccompanied Migrant Children but for the whole reception system.

In order to initiate foster care programs, key stakeholders from public and private sector managing reception system need to understand the potential benefits and risks of foster care.

The partner EUROCHILD has designed a toolkit to assist child rights advocates and other professionals in influencing the governments at national, regional and local level, to promote the development of better care services for unaccompanied and separated migrant children in the EU. The toolkit can be downloaded at FORUM Website: <https://forum-project.alberodellavita.org/materials/>

- **Transfer of knowledge** is meant from associations with sound experience in foster care toward associations with minor experience; the project has elaborated a guidance on minimum standard to be adapted at the national context through national standards for foster care services.
- **Capacity building** of professionals dealing with migration and child protection is crucial to extend good practices and standards to a wide range of key actors.

The project is coordinated by Fondazione L’Albero della Vita and implemented in partnership with European relevant organizations committed to improve the protection and reception of migrants and Unaccompanied Migrant Children: Accem (Spain), Organization for Aid to Refugees OPU (Czech Republic), Family Child Youth Association FCYA (Hungary), FICE – International Federation of Educative Communities (Austria), and Slovenska Filantropija (Slovenia).

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<sup>3</sup> NIDOS; SALAR, CHTB, 2015.



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**Fondazione L'Albero della Vita** was founded in Italy in April 1997 and since its foundation, Fondazione L'Albero della Vita has committed itself to promote effective actions aiming at ensuring well-being, protecting and promoting rights, encouraging the development of children, their families and the communities to which they belong, both in Italy and in the world.

**Accem:** Accem is an NGO which works in promoting the defense of fundamental rights, the support and accompaniment of persons at risk of social exclusion, with a focus on asylum and migrations.

**FICE Austria:** FICE Austria is the national section of FICE-International. The vision is to create networks across continents worldwide to support actions and all those working with at-risk children, children with special needs and children and young people in out-of-home care. All activities aim to respect the personality, interests and needs of the child or the young person.

**Organization for Aid to Refugees (OPU)** has been helping refugees and foreigners in the Czech Republic for 25 years. OPU's main activities include providing free legal and social counselling to applicants for international protection and to other foreigners in the Czech Republic, organizing training programs for both professionals and the general public, and other activities aimed at promoting integration of foreigners.

**Slovenska filantropija** is a non-governmental and humanitarian organization operating in public interest since 1992. Its programs are aimed at increasing the quality of life in the community and advocacy for the disadvantaged. Various activities are combined in program units Migrations, Volunteering, Intergenerational cooperation, Promotion of health, International and development cooperation. Areas of work of the Migration unit are **psychosocial, integration, legal and learning assistance, leisure activities, awareness raising and advocacy for the rights of unaccompanied and separated children, asylum-seekers, persons with international protection and other migrants.**

**FCYA - Family, Child, Youth Association** is a non-profit organization established in 1993 in Hungary. It aims to support the protection of children and strengthen families by fortifying, training and providing services to helping professionals. The association is also involved in numerous international research and training programs, it takes part to prestigious national and international conferences.

The Expert Partners are:

**CORAM (UK):** an NGO with great experience in foster care and providing care and support for migrant children. It runs expert group's activities.

**Fondazione ISMU:** is one the most influencing research center on migration in Italy and Europe. It is member of the expert group.

**EUROCHILD:** is an advocacy network of organizations who promote the well-being of children. It supports the applicant in the advocacy activities and dissemination of project findings and results.



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## 2. THE SHORTLIST OF GOOD PRACTICES

The Shortlist of Good practices is designed with the contribution of the expert group constituted within the project FORUM – For Unaccompanied Minors - transfer of knowledge for professionals to increase foster care; the Expert Group is composed of: Kamena Dorling, from CORAM CHILDREN LEGAL CENTER LBG – CORAM IntlS(UK), a NGO with a great experience in foster care and providing care and support for migrant children; Giulio Giovanni Valtolina and Nicoletta Pavesi, from ISMU –Iniziative e Studi sulla Multietnicità, one of the most influencing research center on migration (Italy); Dr. Maria Herzog, expert on foster care (Hungary) and Dr. Muireean Ní Raghallaigh, Lecturer in Social Work, School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice, from University College Dublin ( Ireland), author of one of the most relevant study on foster care system for Unaccompanied Migrant Children in Ireland<sup>4</sup>.

The draft of the Shortlist of European Good Practices has been driven by the objective to demonstrate to key stakeholders in the countries with minor experience a number of good practices developed in experienced countries or experience of success, with the goal of highlighting the positive impact of foster care for the children in migration as well as for the national protection system.

Based on this assumption, the experts gathered data and they went through a literature review to select and capitalize a comprehensive and significant pool of good practices covering different national systems, including good practices from EU awarded project.

The Shortlist of Good Practices covers the following topics:

- ✚ MATCHING & RECRUITMENT
- ✚ FOSTERING FOR INTEGRATION AND RESPECT OF OWN CULTURE
- ✚ NEEDS OF TRAINING FOR FOSTER CARERS
- ✚ MONITORING
- ✚ SUPPORT IN THE CHILD AGEING OUT

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<sup>4</sup> 2013, Foster Care and Supported Lodgings for separated Asylum Seeking Young People in Ireland, Banrandos and the Health Service Executive.



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### 3. THE GOOD PRACTICES

#### List of good practices selected

1. A pool of foster careers is recruited which allows the best possible match to occur.
2. The assessment process for prospective foster carers is set out clearly, including the qualities, skills or aptitudes being sought or to be achieved.
3. Children / Young people have a placement that allows them to both adapt to the new society and maintain connections with their own culture, taking their own wishes into account.
4. Foster carers are adequately trained to be able to provide a good balance between emotional support and practical help, depending on the needs and wishes of the child / young person.
5. Foster carers possess the self-awareness necessary to offer the best possible care and emotional support.
6. Foster carers are able to provide individualised care to teenagers, paying attention to not only the vulnerability but also to resilience and strength.
7. Foster carers understand the asylum and immigration system with which the child / young person must engage and are able to support them.
8. Foster families are able to help maintain links with the child / young person's family of origin where it is appropriate and possible.
9. Foster families are provided with training and support.
10. Foster carers are subjected to regular monitoring and placements are reviewed regularly. Within these reviews the voice of the child / young person is heard.
11. Foster carers work with other stakeholder to prepare children / young people for life after care.



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## Description of the Good Practices

### 1. A pool of foster careers is recruited which allows the best possible match to occur

*Matching – selecting the foster carer or foster family that is the best fit for a specific child - is widely regarded as a complex endeavour. Many different factors need to be considered in order to identify the best possible foster placement for a given child.*

*In Ireland, social workers working with unaccompanied migrant children identified a range of factors that were considered when matching, including ethnicity, culture, language, religion, geographical location, educational needs, health needs, family composition, carer's links to the community, children's hobbies, contact with family members, and the views of the child.<sup>5</sup>*

*However, in most countries, optimum matching is hindered by the availability of foster placements.*

*A pan-European study published in 2015 found that the **Netherlands**<sup>6</sup> was 'the only country that does not face a lack of suitable families who are willing to take care of unaccompanied migrant children. It has a structured system of foster care for unaccompanied children, whereby foster care is available to all unaccompanied migrant children, through a system which is nationally applied and laid down in policy by the Ministry of Security and Justice. In the Netherlands, Nidos, the national guardianship institution for unaccompanied migrant children recruits its own foster families and is therefore not dependent on the general Dutch foster care system, thus suggesting that such an approach might be useful elsewhere as well.*

*In France, "DEPARTEMENT ARDECHE<sup>7</sup> and ADOS SANS FRONTIERES<sup>8</sup>" have developed a system of "sponsoring"<sup>9</sup> families – a form of foster care. The idea of sponsorship - co-produced within a working group involving professional actors in the care of children and associations in the social and charitable sectors - aims to provide 20 young people with a family. This welcome will be accompanied by the "Pluriels" association, which will be flanked by families and young people with a 24-hours support.*

*In Greece, the METAdrasi's innovative action "A Home for Human Rights" (METAdrasi – Foster Care for unaccompanied migrant children<sup>10</sup>) seeks to provide unaccompanied migrant with the opportunity to be hosted by families. This project developed after an exchange of expertise with organizations in the Netherlands, Italy, Belgium and France. METAdrasi proceeded with creating a record of families that would be interested in providing temporary accommodation for unaccompanied children. Priority was given to families that speak the same language as the child, have a similar cultural background and would be able to*

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<sup>5</sup> Ní Raghallaigh, M. (2013) *Foster care and supported lodgings for separated asylum seeking young people in Ireland: the views of young people, carers and stakeholders*. Barnardos and the HSE, Dublin. Available at: <https://researchrepository.ucd.ie/handle/10197/4300>

<sup>6</sup> Reception and Living in Families: Overview of family-based reception for unaccompanied minors in the EU Member States, February 2015, at <http://www.scepnetwork.org/images/21/276.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ardecche.fr/1214-mineurs-non-accompagnes.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Association pour favoriser la relation, sous forme de parrainages, entre les mineurs non-accompagnés de 16 à 18 ans et la population gardoise (<http://adossansfrontiere.collectif-citoyen.fr/2017/12/lardeche-recherche-des-familles-pour-accueillir-des-mineurs-migrants/>)

<sup>9</sup> "Le parrainage est un dispositif qui permet d'héberger et accueillir à titre bénévole un mineur non accompagné chez soi (texte du code de l'action sociale)".

<sup>10</sup> <http://metadrasi.org/en/campaigns/foster-care-for-unaccompanied-separated-children/>



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*undertake the responsibility to offer a family environment until such time as the child could be reunited with his/her family (homo-cultural foster care).*

*In **France**, the « Service d'accueil des Mineurs Isolés Etrangers du département du Pas-de-Calais » employs 1,900 foster families that can receive a total of 5,950 children. These families are French families who mostly take care of French children but can also foster non-French children. The recruitment of families with the same cultural backgrounds as unaccompanied migrant children is considered to be near-impossible given the limited availability of resources. Moreover, this is also not considered to be in the best interests of the children. The foster families that are being used are all professional foster care families, employed by the department. They have signed an 'agreement' confirming that they are capable of being a foster parent. The 'service familial' of the department supports the families. The department is also exploring the possibilities to work with voluntary families in the future.*

- 2. The assessment process for prospective foster carers is set out clearly, including the qualities, skills or aptitudes being sought or to be achieved.**

*In the program "Jugendhilfe Süd-Niedersachsen" in **Germany**, the requirements both for host families and for the organization and its employees have been laid down in a performance description. This contains the process unaccompanied migrant children undergo, basic requirements and the profile of host families (both German and multicultural families are being recruited), the way families are recruited, educated and assisted in their job, and what all this means for the Youth Support Agency and the social workers responsible for the project.<sup>11</sup> In Ireland, the National Standards for Foster Care (mentioned above) stipulate that foster carers must undergo a comprehensive assessment of their ability to carry out the fostering task and must be supervised and supported by a professionally qualified social worker to enable them to provide "high quality care". The Standards also set out that foster carers must "participate in the training necessary to equip them with the skills and knowledge required to provide high quality care" and that they must participate in regular reviews.<sup>12</sup>*

- 3. Children / Young people have a placement that allows them to both adapt to the new society and maintain connections with their own culture, taking their own wishes into account.**

*Being able to find a balance between one's new culture and one's culture of origin is optimal in terms of psychosocial well-being. When considering the culture of an unaccompanied migrant children during the placement making process, it is important to consider the extent to which a prospective foster family can facilitate this. It may involve efforts to engage in 'cultural matching' whereby a young person is placed with a carer from their own ethnic group. Alternatively, it may involve a placement with a family of a different ethnicity, including a family from the majority 'host' population. Either way, the important thing is that the*

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<sup>11</sup> 'Leistungsangebot für die Unterbringung und Betreuung von Inobhut genommenen unbegleiteten minderjährigen Flüchtlingen in Gastfamilien', Fachdienst Familienonderpflege, (available only in German), in: In: Reception and living in families, - in the EU for unaccompanied minors, <http://www.scepnetwork.org/images/21/276.pdf>, p46.

<sup>12</sup> Ireland's National Standards for Foster Care can be found here: [https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/National\\_Standards\\_for\\_Foster\\_Care.pdf](https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/National_Standards_for_Foster_Care.pdf)



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wishes of the young person vis a vis culture are taken into account and that the carers are adequately equipped, through training and through resources available to them, to facilitate integration in the hosting society while keeping the link with the culture of origin.<sup>13</sup> Foster carers should also be adequately equipped to deal with discrimination and racism that the young person in their care may experience.

In **Italy**, “WELCOME REFUGEES ITALIA: fostering projects for refugees and unaccompanied migrant children”<sup>14</sup> is a project that aims to promote cultural change and a new model of hospitality. The association believes that family hospitality is the best way to facilitate the social inclusion of refugees in the country, contributing more than any other intervention to overcoming vulnerability and hardship and encouraging expression of personal potential, participation and the achievement of well-being. The project believes that for an unaccompanied migrant children reception within a family can be a decisive moment of the journey towards full autonomy: living with local people is the best way to become part of a community and get to know the social and cultural context of the community more quickly. Unaccompanied children can more easily create a network of social relationships, improve the knowledge of the language, reactivate human and professional resources, invest in his or her own life project: resume studying, find a job, attend a professional training course. The association promotes a model of acceptance that, precisely because it is based on exchange, encounter and mutual knowledge between migrants and Italian citizens, can contribute to fighting prejudices and discrimination. The belief is that reception in families is good for everyone: not only for refugees or unaccompanied children, but also for citizens who decide to open the doors of their homes. Those who host a migrant at home have the opportunity to learn about a new culture, help a person to build a project of life in Italy, become a more aware and an active citizen, activate new bonds of community.

In **Italy**, the Municipality of Verona has developed a project called “HOMO-CULTURAL FOSTER CARE”.<sup>15</sup> The Centre for Family Foster Care and Solidarity has for some years launched an important initiative, unique in Veneto and with very few comparisons in Italy, which provides the unaccompanied migrant child with a family of the same cultural background. This form of foster care allows a child to find in the foster family an environment similar to that of the family of origin, from a cultural, linguistic and religious point of view. Thanks to European funding (European Integration Fund 2011 - action 8) the Department of Social Services, Family and Equal Opportunities in partnership with the Association of Mediators and Cultural Mediators Terra dei Popoli, has consolidated the project on care and protection of children of different cultures, creating a permanent hub involving social workers of the Municipality, cultural mediators and numerous communities of migrants.

In **France**, the “Service d’accueil familial du département de Paris” works with 110 foster families all over Paris. 90% of them come from North Africa, mainly from Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, and have been in France for a long time. These foster families are able also to host unaccompanied migrant children.

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<sup>13</sup> See Ní Raghallaigh, M. and Sirriyeh, A. (2015). The negotiation of culture in foster care placements for separated refugee and asylum seeking young people in Ireland and England, *Childhood*, 22(2), 263–27

<sup>14</sup> <http://refugees-welcome.it>

<sup>15</sup> <http://terradeipopoli.altervista.org/affido-omoculturale.html>



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*According to the service, the family does not have to support or promote a specific religious orientation due to the fact that they work for a public service. Families receive €1,300 per child per month, which is financed by the department.*

*In Switzerland, Association Tipiti, situated in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, receives mandates by the Central Government to place young unaccompanied children into foster families and has experience with hetero-cultural placements (placements involving unaccompanied migrant children being placed with families of a different cultural background to their own). The organization works with a system training, support and monitoring 40 children in 28 families.*

**4. Foster carers are adequately trained to be able to provide a good balance between emotional support and practical help, depending on the needs and wishes of the child / young person.**

*In 2012, the results of a study on fostering unaccompanied asylum-seekers youth were published in the UK.<sup>16</sup> The research concluded that “there is no doubt that good foster care can make a positive difference to the lives of many unaccompanied young people. At its best, it provides for warm family-like relationships that can be transformative for young people and foster families alike”. It was also concluded that “by being adaptive, flexible and willing to share, many foster carers and young people had managed to create a network of family-like relationships that helped young people to settle, thrive and explore life within and beyond the placement”. Drawing on that same study Sirriyeh (2013)<sup>17</sup> points to the importance of the practical responses of carers, particularly immediately after a young person’s arrival. Welcoming young people and providing rest and refuge by making food, showing them around the house and how to use appliances and allowing them to rest. Beyond that, celebrating events in young people’s cultural traditions and organising family social activities around the interests of the young people helped to produce positive relationships, with food practices playing a particularly important role in the extent to which young people felt a sense of belonging. Generosity of foster carers, and small gifts that they provided were seen by young people as indicators that foster carers cared about them. Young people often looked for ways in which foster carers went ‘beyond duty’ to do something they would do for their birth children, thus allowing young people to feel a sense of really belonging within the family.*

*In Italy, the on-going Profuce project operates in different cities.<sup>18</sup> This project consists of a two-year program, financed by the European Commission. The organization "Istituto degli Innocenti" is heading the project in Italy, in cooperation with the City of Florence, and the non-profit Villaggio SOS in Vicenza. Greece and Bulgaria are also participating in the project. Profuce is launching recruitment campaigns to find foster families, with a total of 280 parents to be involved in the project. It includes training for social workers and for families. The training is using the "Alternative Family Care" method (ALFACA), developed by Nidos, a Dutch NGO. The method focuses on dealing with cultural differences, as well as psychological problems and*

<sup>16</sup> Wade J., Sirriyeh, A., Kohli R., and Simmonds, J., (2012) Fostering Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People, A research project’ Social Policy Research Unit, The University of York, University of Bedfordshire and BAAF

<sup>17</sup> Sirriyeh, A. H. (2013). Hosting Strangers: hospitality and family practices in fostering unaccompanied refugee and asylum seeking young people. *Child and Family Social Work*, 18(1): 5-14

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.istitutodegliinnocenti.it/content/profuce-prendersi-cura-dei-ragazzi-arrivati-da-soli-europa-grazie-allaffidamento-istituto-0>



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*focusing on the child's best interests. With this method, the focus is placed on certain aspects of a child's life, such as a strong bond with their family of origin and their own country.*

**5. Foster carers possess the self-awareness necessary to offer the best possible care and emotional support.**

*Various studies have pointed to the emotional needs of unaccompanied migrant children, needs that arise from their pre-migration experiences, their experiences of migration and transit and from their post-migration situations, including difficulties that unaccompanied children have in trusting those around them.<sup>19</sup> This distrust poses many challenges for carers, but perhaps most especially for people who are providing care for unaccompanied children in their own home. It requires such carers to be understanding, sensitive and self-aware in their responses. Ní Raghallaigh's (2003) study of foster care for unaccompanied children in **Ireland**, mentions an example of experienced carers who referred to the difficulty of fostering someone who did not open up about their experiences. The carers stated: "We make a point of trying not to delve into their past. ...What we say to them is, 'look, you know, if there are any issues that come up for you as a result of what happened in your past that you really need to talk to us about, we're here, we're ready to listen. ... But don't feel that you have to tell us your past'. ... The curiosity that we all have, or my curious nature would be to ask, 'well, tell me what has brought you to here'? But, in a sense, we feel that we have to respect their need for privacy." (p.76).*

**6. Foster carers are able to provide individualised care to teenagers, paying attention to not only the vulnerability but also to resilience and strength.**

*Studies in both **Ireland**<sup>20</sup> and in the **Netherlands**<sup>21</sup> have pointed to a number of coping strategies and sources of resilience among refugee and unaccompanied migrant children people. These include acting autonomously/independently, performing at school, perceiving support from peers and parents, maintaining continuity, participating in a new society, and use of religious faith. This is an important point to be taken care as unaccompanied migrant children usually enter the care system when they are teenagers. Entering foster care as a teenager is likely to pose challenges for many, and there may be particular challenges in this regard for unaccompanied children. For example, in a study by Kaukko & Wernesjö (2017)<sup>22</sup> unaccompanied migrant children talked about being 'reversed' into childhood, having had more agency and responsibility prior to leaving their countries of origin and during*

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<sup>19</sup>Ní Raghallaigh, M. (2014) The causes of mistrust amongst asylum seekers and refugees: insights from research with unaccompanied asylum seeking minors living in the Republic of Ireland, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 27 (1):82-100 ; Kohli, R. K. S. (2006) 'The Sound of Silence: Listening to What Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children Say and Do Not Say'. *British Journal of Social Work* 36: 707-721

<sup>20</sup> Ní Raghallaigh, M. and Gilligan, R. (2010) Active survival in the lives of unaccompanied minors: coping strategies, resilience, and the relevance of religion, *Child and Family Social Work*, 15 (2):226-237

<sup>21</sup> Sleijpen, M., Mooren, T., Kleber, R.J., & Boeije, H.R. (2017) Lives on hold: A qualitative study of young refugees' resilience strategies, *Childhood*, 24(3): 348-365.

<sup>22</sup> Kaukko, M. & Wernesjö, U. (2017), Belonging and participation in liminality: unaccompanied children in Finland and Sweden. *Childhood*, 24(1): 7-20



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their journeys to Europe. A similar point was raised by young people in a study conducted by De Graeve and Bex (2017)<sup>23</sup> in the **Belgian** context where unaccompanied children sometimes found it challenging to be asking permission for things having made decisions by themselves during their migratory journey. This points to the fact that carers need to recognise and respond to, not only the vulnerability of unaccompanied children but also their resilience and resourcefulness.

**7. Foster carers understand the asylum and immigration system with which the child / young person must engage and are able to support them.**

The international literature refers to the stress experiences by unaccompanied migrant children as they negotiate the asylum and immigration systems. Given this stress, it is crucial that foster carers are able to support them in relation to this.

While this support might take various forms, often depending on the extent to which young people are willing to disclose details of their asylum claim to their carers, an **English** study by Wade et al (2012)<sup>24</sup>, highlighted the support that foster carers in this regard. They helped young people to be able to tell their stories and sometimes accompanied them to their asylum hearings. Carers required to show empathy and understanding and it required young people to show a high level of trust in their carers and an ability to be open. These activities required a high level of trust and openness from the young person and trust, empathy and understanding from the foster carer. One carer said: "Because I knew him much better I decided, with his immigration solicitor, that I would do his statement...We had a three-hour session, with some breaks, where we literally went through the whole thing... We kind of prepared for it and we did it and it was difficult, but he was OK with it. And I think it means [that] I've got that level of knowledge now that you wouldn't normally have." (cited in Sirriyeh & Ní Raghallaigh, 2018<sup>25</sup>).

**8. Foster families are able to help maintaining links with the child / young person's family of origin where it is appropriate and possible.**

Maintaining contact with family members is of huge importance for unaccompanied migrant children, when having such contact is considered to be safe and appropriate, taking into account the wishes of the child. Such contact is likely to be by telephone, using What's App or via skype, although occasionally social services may be able to bring a child from one jurisdiction to another to meet family members. Social workers should provide foster carers with guidance regarding this contact, ensuring that foster families are able to support children who may feel upset or lonely after their contact with family members. Maintaining contact with family members will be of particular importance in situations where unaccompanied migrant children are likely to be reunited with their families.

<sup>23</sup> De Graeve, K. & Bex, C. (2017) Caringscapes and belonging: an intersectional analysis of care relationships of unaccompanied minors in Belgium, *Children's Geographies*, 15:1, 80-92

<sup>24</sup> Wade J., Sirriyeh, A., Kohli R., and Simmonds, J., (2012) *Fostering Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People, A research project*. Social Policy Research Unit, The University of York, University of Bedfordshire and BAAF

<sup>25</sup> Sirriyeh, A. & Ní Raghallaigh, M. (2018) Foster care, recognition and transitions to adulthood for unaccompanied asylum seeking young people in England and Ireland. *Child and Youth Services Review*.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.02.039>



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In **Greece**, the NGO METAdrasi has developed a foster care project especially for very young children who are likely to be reunited with their family in another EU Member State. Since February 2016, 13 children have been placed in foster families, and five of them were subsequently reunited with their families in another EU Member State.<sup>26</sup>

### 9. Foster families are provided with training and support.

In a small scale study undertaken in the **UK**, carers identified five areas of need which unaccompanied migrant children in their care have had, including cultural needs, needs relating to speaking English / communicating with a language barrier, needs relating to learning about life in England, needs relating to young people's status as asylum seekers, and advocacy needs. Information, training and support was required in relation to each of these needs, with carers suggesting that social workers, personal contacts, other carers, local refugee support organisations and the internet all acted as sources of support and information.<sup>27</sup> In 2016 the UK government commissioned training for foster carers and support workers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children who are at risk of going missing from care. 1,230 people were trained and independent evaluation of the training showed that participants felt more confident following the training and 99% of participants said that the course had assisted them in their role in looking after these children. In November 2017, the government announced it would commission a further 1,000 training places.<sup>28</sup>

Under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Program, the EU co-funded a follow-up action project whereby Nidos (**the Netherlands**), in cooperation with Minor N'dako (**Belgium**), Jugendhilfe Süd Niedersachsen (**Germany**), OPU (**Czech Republic**), the Red Cross in **Denmark** and KIJA (**Austria**), developed a training program with supportive and online materials for professionals working with host families who take care of unaccompanied children. The training consists of different modules on recruitment, screening, matching and guidance of the host families<sup>29</sup>.

As part of the 'Children in Exile' project, (Pflegekinder in Bremen (PiB)), foster families in **Germany** receive a guide, the 'Small A-Z for PiB foster parents' which has been specially written about unaccompanied migrant children and informs the families on important subjects relating to this target group.<sup>30</sup>

In **Italy** the laws n. 184 (04/05/1983) and n. 149 (28/03/2001) relate to foster care. These laws set out that Municipalities have to organize training for families and people who intend to become foster families. Social services have the responsibility to support and supervise foster families during foster care.

<sup>26</sup> Fundamental Rights Report 2017, p.184-186, <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/annual-reports/fundamental-rights-2017#child-rights>

<sup>27</sup> Sidery, A.L. (2017) Exploring the Training and Support Needs of Foster Carers Providing Placements for Unaccompanied Young People, Masters dissertation submitted to School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-and-refugee-children>

<sup>29</sup> <https://engi.eu/projects/alfaca/manual/>

<sup>30</sup> Information from the concept on 'Kinder im Exil' by PiB, available on the website [www.pib-bremen.de](http://www.pib-bremen.de). In: Reception and living in families, - in the EU for unaccompanied minors, <http://www.scepnetwork.org/images/21/276.pdf>, p45.



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**10. Foster carers are subject to regular monitoring and placements are reviewed regularly. Within these reviews the voice of the child / young person is heard.**

*In Italy, all foster care projects are monitored by social services (it is provided by law). Sometimes, there are organized self-help mutual-aid groups of foster families, in which different experiences are shared. See for example: "AMICI DEI BAMBINI (Ai.Bi), Progetti MI AFFIDO A TE and BAMBINI IN ALTO MARE".<sup>31</sup> In these projects several forms of support are provided: psycho-pedagogical support from the AiBi Association; an economic contribution from the Municipality; the monitoring of the project by the Social Services.*

*In Ireland, regular reviews of placements of children in foster care are conducted by social workers, with the views of children sought in these contexts. In addition, the Health Information and Quality Authority<sup>32</sup> has a statutory remit to monitor and inspect the providers of foster care services. HIQA conducts its inspections against the National Standards for Foster Care<sup>33</sup>. The Standards state that children's views must be heard when decisions are made which affect them or the care that they receive. In addition, a child's version of the National Standards for Foster Care is also available<sup>34</sup>.*

**11. Foster carers work with other stakeholder to prepare children / young people for life after care.**

*In Italy a lot of third sector organisations have programs for unaccompanied migrant children providing specific actions to prepare young people for the transition to the adulthood. In the project "Mai più soli – Cidis Onlus" several actions are implemented with the aim to help children in looking for work (through apprenticeship, for example) and in looking for homes when they are 18 (through social housing, for example). The National Government has developed some projects to help migrant children in the transition to adulthood: for example, the project "Percorsi" of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, establishes a "personal endowment" for each child involved. This endowment includes a) training opportunities to improve the chances to find a work; b) an economic support for the child to participate in a 5-month internship; c) a grant for the organization where the child works to offer monitoring during the internship. These projects are supported by Government (at national or regional level) or by third sector organizations, and are developed through the networks of organizations in which foster families or residential care facilities for unaccompanied migrant children are involved.*

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.aibi.it/ita/attivita/affido/#1505379818504-442b5ad6-e357>; <https://www.aibi.it/ita/category/bambini-in-alto-mare/>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.hiqa.ie/areas-we-work/childrens-services>

<sup>33</sup> Ireland's National Standards for Foster Care can be found here: [https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/National\\_Standards\\_for\\_Foster\\_Care.pdf](https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/National_Standards_for_Foster_Care.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> The Children's Book about Foster Care: [https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/The\\_Childrens\\_Book\\_about\\_Foster\\_Care.pdf](https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/The_Childrens_Book_about_Foster_Care.pdf)



Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, Migration and Security Funds

**1. Please, indicate your level of knowledge on the following topics listed below:**

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
a. The greatest difficulties migrant children encounter in the arrival countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
b. The disorders that can affect migrant children	<input type="checkbox"/>				
c. The different options of placement and care of the child	<input type="checkbox"/>				
d. Which are the selection criterias for carers	<input type="checkbox"/>				
e. Why the support to families is important	<input type="checkbox"/>				
f. The importance of the network	<input type="checkbox"/>				
g. The main problems that an unaccompanied migrant minors may encounter	<input type="checkbox"/>				

**2. Which topics you would like to be included in the training?**

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### 3. Please, share any other comments or suggestions here

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*Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire.*

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## FINAL ASSESSMENT

### 1. What is your overall knowledge of the main argument of the training ( UAM)?

Excellent

Very Good

Good

Satisfactory

Poor

Comments   
:

### 2. Please, indicate your level of knowledge on the following topics listed below:

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
a. The greatest difficulties migrant children encounter in the arrival countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
b. The disorders that can affect migrant children	<input type="checkbox"/>				
c. The different options of placement and care of the child	<input type="checkbox"/>				
d. Which are the selection criterias for carers	<input type="checkbox"/>				
e. Why the support to families is important	<input type="checkbox"/>				
f. The importance of the network	<input type="checkbox"/>				
g. The main problems that an unaccompanied migrant minors may encounter	<input type="checkbox"/>				



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**3. Please, indicate your level of agreement with the statements listed below:**

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
a. The objectives of the training were clearly defined	<input type="checkbox"/>				
b. Participation and interaction were encouraged	<input type="checkbox"/>				
c. The topics covered were relevant to me	<input type="checkbox"/>				
d. The training will be useful in my work	<input type="checkbox"/>				
e. The trainers were knowledgeable about the topics provided during the training	<input type="checkbox"/>				
f. The training objectives were met	<input type="checkbox"/>				
g. The time allocated for each session was sufficient	<input type="checkbox"/>				
h. The meeting room and facilities were adequate	<input type="checkbox"/>				



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**4. To what extent did the training increase your knowledge on foster care and alternative forms of care for unaccompanied migrant children?**

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**5. Which topics that you think would have been useful to deal with were not included in the course?**

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**6. What aspects of the training could be improved?**

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**7. Please, share any other comments or suggestions here**

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*Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire.*

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