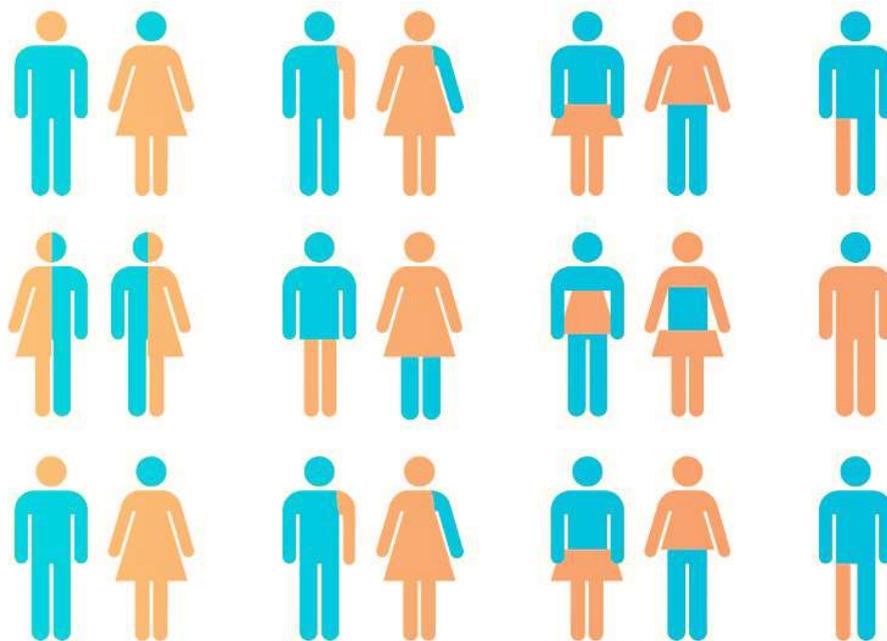




# Gender Analysis of deliverables produced by the project FORUM



By Tania Gatto

December 2018

# Table of contents

- Executive Summary.....3
- Background.....4
- Objectives and  
Methodology.....6
- Main findings.....8
  - Gender Background of Countries Involved.....8
  - Boys vs Girls .....9
  - Migration as a Choice.....12
  - Masculinity/ies.....13
  - LGBTI Migrants.....14
- Recommendations.....16
- Conclusions.....17

## Executive Summary

The gender analysis conducted in the context of the FORUM projects aims to acknowledge whether and how the gender dimension has been included in the development of the deliverables. Gender is 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, 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.

Regardless of the reason behind the migration choice, unaccompanied migrant children face vulnerability and risks, which are worsen by their young age and often are affected by their gender. Girls are more likely to be subject to trafficking in human beings, prostitution, child marriage and sexual violence while boys risk to end up in criminal circuits such as drug selling and begging, and also being exploited or trafficked. Sexual violence, though, is a serious treat for boys too, even if the phenomena is often overlooked and interventions still weak. Moreover, LGBTI people, face multiple discrimination, because of their status of migrant and members of a discriminated minority. Professionals and foster families need to be prepared and duly equipped to address the consequences migrant children may be subject to, due to their experience, and be able to acknowledge and understand how the gender dimension can affect the needs of children, in order to designed effective interventions.

Moreover, another element that can influence the quality and the successful inclusion of children into the new national context and in the eventual foster family, is the integration of the established set of gender notions, beliefs and roles that children travel with, within the new ones they will find in the country of destination. The definition of gender identity, expression and relations is a fundamental part of the growth of a child and should happen in a safe and healthy environment. Nevertheless, migrant children, due to the harsh conditions they live in, lack the support they would need to create positive and healthy masculine and feminine models. Extra care needs to be taken when addressing such issues, both by professionals and by foster families.

At the end of the analysis, the report provides a series of recommendations that professionals and staff may use to mainstream gender into the project and strengthen the inclusion of the gender dimension in the deliverables of the FORUM project.

## Background

Worldwide, one in eight migrants is a child. According to the data of the European Commission, currently there are 5.4 million child migrants in Europe, which constitutes about 7% of region's migrants<sup>1</sup>. Among them, 106.000 are Unaccompanied Migrant Children (UAM). Moreover, UAM represent a relevant share of the total asylum seekers in Europe, as to say the 30%. According to the EUROSTAT data released for 2017<sup>2</sup>, 63,245 unaccompanied children applied for asylum in the 28 European Union countries.

The trends regarding the phenomenon are quite stables and characterized by specific elements. The majority, 68% or about 43,300, of unaccompanied children are between 16 and 17 years old. 21% are aged 14 to 15 (around 13,500 children) and a smaller 10% are less than 14 years old (almost 6,300 children). This means that 2/3 of the children arriving in Europe are older than the rest and are approaching legal adulthood. Moreover, among the unaccompanied children in Europe, a huge percentage, 89%, are boys, while only 11% are girls. This data is quite impressive, especially if we think that, women comprise slightly less than half of all international migrants worldwide and that, in Europe, the share of female migrants rose from 51.6% in 2000 to 52% in 2017<sup>3</sup>.

The fact that 16-17 years old boys embark in a migration journey more than same age girls can be seen as a strong gender connotation, as it may reflect the different role and responsibility boys and girls have in their respective countries, which are commonly patriarchal societies. Overall, gender has the biggest impact on the migration process of men, women, boys, girls. In fact, gender influences all the elements of the migration experiences, from reasons to migrate to the adequate age for migrating. Gender might determine where and how to migrate and through which networks and routes, but can also affect the possibilities and resources available and the relations that can be created with the country of destination.

It is a still widespread misconception to think that gender issues regard only or mainly women and girls and how to empower them; this is only a part of what gender is about. By definition, gender is a social construct and “refers to the roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society at a given time considers appropriate for men and women”<sup>4</sup>. Gender is about relations and dynamics between women, between men and between women and men. It is therefore crucial, particularly in the context of unaccompanied migrant children, who are mostly boys, to give a deeper look at the relations between men and at the male dynamics in very difficult contexts which may lead to the development of negative behaviours, that are the results of a deviated definition of masculinity. At the same time, it is important to understand what boys and girls face when trying to identify with a completely different culture and an established set of gender roles and beliefs, especially if they are inserted in a foster family, which may have different rules and roles from those in their own household.

---

<sup>1</sup> Children in migration. European Commission: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/rights-child/children-migration\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/rights-child/children-migration_en)

<sup>2</sup> Eurostat, “63 300 unaccompanied minors among asylum seekers registered in the EU in 2016” (May 2017).

<sup>3</sup> International Migration Report. Highlights. United Nations (New York, 2017)

<sup>4</sup> UN Women Training Centre Glossary, available at: <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=G&sortkey=&sortorder=>

In a situation, such as the one we are currently living in, in which migrants are often not even seen as human being, and due to a misleading propaganda are perceived as the enemy, gender discriminatory perceptions can deepen prejudice and racism. This is particularly true for boys and men, who are indiscriminately labelled as violent and a potential treat for women.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, gender stereotypes are strong and strengthen by the negative propagandistic use of them. Gender is thus a cross-cutting theme which affects all the spheres of life and the way we experience it. For this reason, it must always be considered as a lens through which understanding and analysing phenomena.

Another fundamental concept that must be bared in mind when addressing delicate and complex themes such as unaccompanied migrant children is intersectionality. Intersectionality is an analytic framework that allows to understand that different and multiple roots may originate discrimination and that there are cases in which these roots cannot be explained separately.

---

<sup>5</sup> “Il 90% dei migranti è maschio: si rischia il terrorismo sessuale”. Il Giornale (January 2016)

## Objectives and Methodology

A gender analysis is a tool that is usually adopted in the design phase of a project, in order to acknowledge and understand how gender relations can affect the development and results of a programme/activity. Nevertheless, a gender analysis can also be undertaken during the implementation of a project, to check whether gender considerations have been included in the project and how the inclusion or not inclusion of such considerations affects male and female (boys and girls) differently.

In the context of the FORUM project, the gender analysis aims to acknowledge the differences between boys and girls' lives and migration paths, how differences can impact their daily life, possibilities and risks in the destination country and whether and how this can affect the foster care experience. The FORUM project does not directly address the service of foster care, but rather aims to strengthen the competencies of professionals by equipping them with relevant expertise.

Accordingly, the gender analysis will not focus on the foster care service itself, but it will analyse the deliverables produced by the project to conduct its activities, in order to see if gender elements have been properly considered. Specifically, the deliverables chosen to be the objects of the analysis are: (1) Guidance on minimum standards, (2) Short list of good practices, (3) Outline of the training of trainers to be held in Prague and (4) Advocacy toolkit.

The methodology used for conducting this gender analysis consists of three main phases:

- Collection and desk review of all the relevant document related to the project and provided by the FORUM's project coordinator. Among them: deliverables, project proposal documentation, mid-term report, reports of focus groups, work planes, etc;
- Research and analysis of secondary data available on the themes of gender, migration, unaccompanied migrant children and foster care, such as legislations, researches, statistics, etc;
- Data analysis and report drafting.

Following the gender analysis approach designed by one of the major development project's donor USAID<sup>6</sup>, the two general questions that guide a gender analysis are:

- How will the different roles and status of female and males affect the work?
- How will the anticipated results of the work affect female and males differently?

To adapt references to the specific context, more punctual questions have been designed. Therefore, the report seeks to answer the followings:

- How and to what extent has the gender dimension been taken into account in the design and implementation of the project, including the development of the deliverables?
- How do different status and experiences of migrant boys and girls affect the objectives of the project and how is this reflected in the project deliverables?

---

<sup>6</sup> The approach used by USAID is outlined in the Gender Analysis toolkit available at the following link: <https://www.usaidassist.org/resources/gender-analysis-tools>

- How do the expected results of the project affect boys and girls differently and how is this reflected in the project deliverables?

## Main Findings

When designing and implementing a policy, programme, activity etc, it is fundamental to acknowledge that the gender dimension is constantly present, even if it is not the major concern. The huge and complex topic of migration is strongly dominated by the gender element. As we said above, gender affects the migration process in each of its stage and therefore, must be properly considered in order to address the specific needs of women and men, boys and girls.

Understanding how gender influence the experience of unaccompanied migrant children, allows the professionals working in the sector to provide adequate protection and the help needed. In the case of the FORUM project, it helps professionals to design the most appropriate intervention for boys and girls and might guide them in the process of foster care.

Below, we can find the major issues that, directly or indirectly, concern the gender dimension, consistently with the design, expected results and activities of the project. For all these aspects, we will see if they have or have not been included in the project proposal and deliverables of the FORUM project.

## Gender Background of Countries Involved

FORUM project aims to harmonize the processes of foster care in six targeted European countries, reducing the gaps amongst countries with major and minor experience in the provision of foster care services. These countries, Italy, Spain, Hungary, Slovenia, Czech Republic and Austria have different backgrounds and histories, as well as different degrees of gender equality. Even if this is not a project on promotion of gender equality, the concept is very important since it allows us to see whether women and men are considered and treated equally in the society, which roles and behaviours are considered appropriate, and, at the same time, it gives an idea of what it is expected from migrant boys and girls. Spain, for example, has a great history of tolerance and openness towards no homogenic models of masculinity and femininity, demonstrated also by the progressist politics towards LGBTI people. Czech Republic instead has a more complicated relation with gender equality, which causes originate back in the period of the communist regime; Czech Republic score on Gender Equality Index has been declining in the last decade. Czech Republic is one of three EU Member States that did not progress in terms of gender equality between 2005 and 2015<sup>7</sup>. Hungary's score as well are below the EU-28 averages in all domains<sup>8</sup>.

Moreover, these countries have different political, legal and social approaches towards migrations. Italy for example has a long history of integration, which finds its roots in the catholic background of the country. Hungary is currently facing an increasing hostility towards migrants. These two elements combined, gender and migration, should influence the approach and interventions designed for addressing the needs of unaccompanied migrant children. The FORUM project aims to balance the competencies of professionals from these countries, in the interest of migrant children. However, in the deliverable produced by the project, gender aspects related to the context of countries, do not seem to be explicitly reflected. Even if, as stated in the Minimum Standards deliverable, "*Minimum*

---

<sup>7</sup> Gender Equality Index 2017. EIGE. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2015/CZ>

<sup>8</sup> Gender Equality Index 2017. EIGE. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2015/HU>

*standards do not mean standardisation of provision. The standards are designed to be applicable to the wide variety of different types of services or projects*” no mention is done to the national environments and how to adjust these standards according to the national gender contexts. In this case, by paying attention to the gender context we don't refer only on how gender roles and relations are structured in the society but mainly on how gender considerations influence the approach towards migrant boys and girls by locals and the experience migrant boys and girls can live according to the country of destination.

In the Shortlist of good practice deliverable, is stated *“International research suggests that being able to find a balance between ones new culture and ones culture of origin is optimal in terms of psychosocial well-being. When considering the culture of an unaccompanied 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”*. It is not doubt that considerations done in the above sentences are of primary importance. Nevertheless, it is not clear if gender aspects are among the elements of the culture to which the best practice is referring. Gender roles and relations are fundamental aspects of the different cultures and strongly vary among them. Migrants boys and girls arrive with a pre-established set of notions about gender roles, masculinity and femininity, and on how they apply to the different spheres of society, particularly in families. Same is true for foster families. Therefore, when choosing and preparing foster families to receive unaccompanied migrant children, gender related considerations must be taken into account, as well as acknowledged and explained, as they may create collisions, misunderstanding and overall difficulties in adjusting to a new and different environment for the children, as much as difficulties for the families in providing adequate support to the children.

## Boys vs Girls

To treat boys and girls equally means to design interventions that focus on their specific needs. Being some of their needs different on the base of gender, in order to ensure equality, some interventions might have to be different as well. Throughout the proposal and the deliverables, the FORUM project refers indistinctly to children migrants, without specify the gender related implications. Nevertheless, even without a direct reference to gender, the principles that guide the foster care Minimum Standards for unaccompanied migrant children such as 1) Best interests of the child as a primary consideration in all matters affecting them and 2) Right of the child to express his or her views freely, and the continues reference to the physical and emotional health and well-being, imply that each case is taken in charge considering all the relevant elements that may affect a procedure of foster care, including gender. The same concept is reflected in the Shortlist of Best Practices deliverable, which stated that *“Foster carers are able to provide individualised care to teenagers, with this care taking into account the pre-migration, migration and transit experiences of unaccompanied children, and which pays particular attention to the unaccompanied child’s experience of exercising agency prior to their arrival in the new country”*. It may be more accurate though, especially for countries that have less experience in mainstreaming gender in projects and interventions, to explicit the gender dimension in the deliverables, in order not to risk for it to be overlooked.

When working with such sensitive themes combined together, such as migration, children and foster care, especially within the increasingly complex climax we are experiencing in Europe and worldwide, nothing can be taken for granted. In the case of migrant children, gender considerations are doubly important as children might face risks and vulnerabilities which are strengthened by their young age and might be more exposed to different kinds of abuses. When talking about risks migrant children may face during the migration process and once they have arrived in the country of destination, the gender dimension is fundamental, especially if they travel alone and through irregular migration pathways. All children may risk abusive situations, but it is more likely for girls to be subject to trafficking and prostitution, child marriage and sexual violence. Boys instead are more likely to be subject to different kinds of exploitation such as child labour or may be forced to find ways to earn money, through mendicancy and drugs selling, but also being caught out in mafia dynamics<sup>9</sup> or other forced criminalities.

Additionally, boys also might be subject to sexual violence. In fact, they might be forced to sexual exploitation by others but also for their survival, they have learnt that is a way to gain money easily. Although adolescent boys comprise a substantial majority of the population of unaccompanied and separated children, they are rarely the focus of policy discussions and are consistently left out of gender-based violence prevention and response efforts<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, even when their situation is taken in charge by the authorities or related services, boys are at increased risk of going missing, often leaving the care of those who would protect them to return to traffickers, who are the first people who “helped” them and that they trust, who will continue their exploitation<sup>11</sup>. Foster care might be a great solution for children, as the care of a family can tremendously change their experience as migrants, and first and foremost, as children. However, in order to make this experience the less traumatic and the most life-changing for them, professionals and foster families need to be prepared on what they might encounter.

The approach professionals should use with children, and the conflicts and difficult situations that can arise with foster families, can thus be influenced and exacerbated by the different tragic experiences and sufferings children faced due to their status of migrant boy or migrant girl. Children might have to get different kinds of support for their physical and mental health according to their gender. For example, in the Minimum Standards deliverable it is stated that “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 for medical treatment needs to be obtained”. It is true that minimum standards are basic and concise, however, complex situations such as the health of a migrant child, require a bit more specificity, especially if we are considering the gender dimension. Let’s take the example of migrant girls who may be subject to female genital mutilation (FGM). Due to migratory flows the number of girls and women living outside their country of origin who have undergone female genital mutilation has increased, as well as the risk of being subjected to the practice in Europe<sup>12</sup>. The repercussions of FGM in the physical and psychological

---

<sup>9</sup> “Child migrants in Sicily must overcome one last obstacle – the mafia” The Guardian (July 2016)

<sup>10</sup> Sexual Victimization of Male Refugees and Migrants: Camps, Homelessness, and Survival Sex. Rachel E. McGinnis. Rochester Institute of Technology. (November 2016)

<sup>11</sup> Care of unaccompanied migrant children and child victims of modern slavery. Department of Education. (UK, November 2017)

<sup>12</sup> WHO. Topics. Female Genital Mutilation. Available at: <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/fgm/prevalence/en/>

health of girls are impressive<sup>13</sup>, and often they are beyond the understanding of people who are not doctor or professionals in the field. Researches show that female gender is associated with a certain types of mental health issues, even if studies are at a beginning stage and therefore data must be taken carefully<sup>14</sup>. In general, though, it is necessary to pay punctual attention to the cases and experience children may have to face as migrant boys or girls, and on the base of it, design specific interventions who take all characteristic into account. As said, this is particularly important to be highlight especially in those countries who are behind in the mainstreaming of gender into policies and laws.

It is therefore crucial for the deliverables to reflect the gender implications of the phenomena of unaccompanied migrant children. Also, in the advocacy toolkit, there is no reference to gender in communication. To send gender sensitive messages when advocating for migrants is all the more important in our age, due to the negative and saboteur use of media and social networks. Not only, the form in which messages are sent is equally important; imprecise or not reasoned choice of word can be interpreted as discriminatory or biased, regardless of what the intentions are. Indeed, it is important to be aware of the subliminal messages on gender norms and roles that can hide in the communication. There are several principles and guidelines for a gender sensitive communication, among them we can recall:

- Make sure to challenge and not to reinforce gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes are never neutral, as they reflect asymmetries of status and power, most of the times in favour of men, to which corresponding social roles derive. The language is a powerful means through which sexism and discrimination is perpetrated. For example, gender stereotypes are reinforced when girls are described as emotional or passive and boys as strong or tough.
- Avoid using exclusionary forms in language. Especially in the case of English language, when using pronouns, it is important to refer to the group you are talking about using both “he” and “she” or using “they”. It is fundamental not to use “he” or “his” when referring to girls also. For instance, “To each minor will be given his right to be a child” must be changed for “To all minors will be given their right to be children”. Use the plural instead of gender affirmative pronouns.
- Avoid gender stereotypes in video and images communication. As well as in the verbal communication, video and images often perpetuate gender stereotypes, contributing to fixate gender roles. For instance, often women and girls are immortalized in context of family care or cooking. Males and boys as well are often depicted in military, industrial and sportive contexts. In order to challenge these stereotypes, women and men, boys and girls should be depicted in different and variable situations, including those considered male or female dominated.

---

<sup>13</sup> WHO. Topics. Health risks of female genital mutilation (FGM). Available at: [https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/fgm/health\\_consequences\\_fgm/en/](https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/fgm/health_consequences_fgm/en/)

<sup>14</sup> Gender differences in the mental health of unaccompanied refugee minors in Europe: a systematic review. L. Mohwinkel, A.C. Nowak, A. Kasper, O. Razum. BMJ Journal. (2017)

## Migration as a Choice

In the deliverable Outline of the Training to be held in Prague, when talking about the migration drivers, there is a reference to gender as one of the elements influencing the decision to migrate. This is particularly true for boys, especially those between 16 and 17 years old, as to say the majority of unaccompanied migrant children. The decision to undertake the migration path can have different reasons such as conflicts and wars, environmental disasters, poverty, discrimination and persecution and others. Often, one cause is not enough to explain the complexity behind the migration choice. In the case of migrant children, especially for boys, migration may be a reasoned choice, agreed by the child and the family. Children may have to move to a new country or continent to help and contribute to the family livelihoods, as much as migration may be a cultural and traditional process for those children who live in traditionally emigration lands. In some cases it might also be seen as a ritual passage to adulthood, necessary to the construction of an active, adult male hood<sup>15</sup>. Among the drivers for migration, therefore, some of them can be rooted in the culture and background of the country of origin. If we consider at a glance, the context of the most common emigration regions towards Europe, such as North Africa, Middle East, Sub Saharan Africa, but also East Europe and South East Asia, a common trend is a patriarchal society<sup>16</sup>. Roles and responsibility of boys and girls, men and women, in the society influence their decision or their obligation to migrate. Particularly in the case of boys, they might feel the responsibility to migrate in order to support the family. In such cases, migrant children are in many ways similar to adult migrants in seeking new social and economic opportunities. For many young people, especially boys, migration is strongly linked to their stage in the life course as it becomes important for their transition from childhood to adulthood<sup>17</sup>. In these cases, children are not considered so, they are instead providers of support, voluntary unaccompanied migrants, searching for new possibilities. We consider them children, but it is quite difficult to “cage” them in a definition. This poses doubts and questions when addressing their right to live their childhood, especially in the context of a foster family.

Moreover, migrant boys and girls traditionally live different degrees of freedom and decision-making power in their home country, being boys who can enjoy higher levels of free will. The gender dimension strongly affects their chances and might influence their decisions on how to conduct their lives once in the new country. Despite the difficulties and risks of being migrant children, not necessarily they are willing to give up their freedom. This of course might lead to vulnerabilities and risks, related to how to survive, especially in hostile contexts. Children are easy preys for traffickers and other criminals. Regardless of the willingness to migrate, independent migrant children are significantly affected by the absence of protection and support from their families, and by the challenges of their new situations after migration. The option of foster care, even if it may sound the more just for them, since every child deserves to be a child and live in a caring and protected environment, may not be what migrant children want or expect. There is not a right or wrong answer, each case must be addressed according to its specific needs.

It is a hope that the theme of migration as a reasoned choice, influenced by the gender dimension, will be accurately addressed in the training, so that professionals become highly aware of the implications it might have on foster care.

---

<sup>15</sup> Migration Projects: Children on the Move for Work and Education. S. Punch. Department of Applied Social Science, University of Stirling. (2007)

<sup>16</sup> This is a reasoned generalization. Each country of the regions cited has different contexts and cultures.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

## Masculinity/ies

A characteristic of being children is that they are in the process of developing their own identity. Identity is a “dynamic construct which is rapidly changing under the influence of the environment, education and family”<sup>18</sup>. In the case of migrant children this process is stud with obstacles. A healthy environment is a fundamental element for a serene development of children’s identity, which is something migrant children are not lucky to have. Moreover, the lack of parental support and the encounter with deviated masculine and feminine models (such as violent, oppressive and abusive persons) during the journey, especially if undertaken through illegal pathways, can contribute to exacerbate already difficult situations.

In the Minimum Standard Deliverable, it is stated that “*Foster carers [...] 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 [...]*”. The definition of the identity is profoundly linked to the gender dimensions and, due to its importance, it should be reflected in the text. By the age of three, most children can label themselves as boys and girls and by the age of four most of them have a stable sense of their gender identity<sup>19</sup>, to which is linked the gender expression, which is “The ways gender is presented, through actions, clothing, demeanour, and more. The outward-facing self, and how that’s interpreted by others based on gender norms”<sup>20</sup>. Gender expression is socially learnt, and it is profoundly linked to the environment a person lives in, through which he or she acknowledges what is appropriate for boys and for girls, for men and for women. Apart from the connections this has with stereotypes and prejudices, what it is important in the context of migrant children, is that since boys and girls continuously learn “how to be” boys and girls during childhood, the harsh situation they face, and the persons they meet, contribute to define their idea of masculinity<sup>21</sup> and femininity<sup>22</sup>.

At the same time, it also needs to be taken into account that boys and men, as well as girls and women, arrive in the country of destination with a background set of notions on masculinity and femininity. In the case of children, especially if 16-17 years old, they already have an established core of notions, beliefs and practices, particularly on gender relation, which might be very different from those of the country they have arrive to. This collision between what they used to know and what they encounter, can create misunderstanding, as a minimum, but also traumatic experiences and social stigmas and prejudice.

Let’s take the case of boys, since they represent almost the 90% of unaccompanied migrants children but also because masculinity tend to face more resistance to structurally change than femininity. Migrants males might have to redefine and renegotiate their identification with the hegemonic masculinity, in order to adjust and find a balance with the new context they live in. This

---

<sup>18</sup> Child Identity. Wikipedia

<sup>19</sup> “Gender Identity”: Your psychological sense of self. Who you, in your head, know yourself to be, based on how much you align (or don’t align) with what you understand to be the options for gender.

A friendly reading and very well documented source for understanding the different components of what we usually call gender is the Gender Bread Person. Reference is available at this link:

<https://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2015/03/the-genderbread-person-v3/>

<sup>20</sup> Definition taken from the Gender Bread Person. Reference in the footnote above.

<sup>21</sup> A social construction that express norms, characteristics and roles traditionally associated to men and boys.

<sup>22</sup> A social construction that express norms, characteristics and roles traditionally associated to women and girls.

often results in a quite hard process.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, this is particularly relevant in the case of children, as they will have the chance to interact with different dimensions and version of masculinity, positive and negatives, according to their experience. On one hand, children are still in the process of defining themselves and the world around, and it might be easier for them to modify and adjust their pre-established notions on gender roles and relations to the ones of the new country they are living in, order to make it easier for them to live with a new environment. On the other hand, due to the incredibly difficult situations that being an (unaccompanied) migrant children, often illegal, pose to them, the chances of referring to healthy and equilibrated masculine models collide with the harsh contexts they have been forced to face. This may push boys to identify with negative masculine traits and behaviours, which can affect the coexistence with the new environment, and with a possible foster family.

For instance, during one of the meeting held with unaccompanied migrant children in Milan, when talking about who deserved a foster family, children reply that only “good boys” deserve a family, while “bad boys” do not. However, foster families could help “bad boys” to become “good boys”. When asked if “bad boys” were so also in their home countries, they agreed that “No, they become bad once they arrive in Italy”. It is not sure what they refer to when they said boys become bad when they arrive in the new country but an hypothesis could be related to the fact that they behave in negative ways, maybe to survive or maybe because they identify with “bad” masculine models.

A lot still needs to be done by professionals and authorities to acknowledge the importance of the gender dimension. Although several projects and advocacy actions have been implemented in order to challenge stereotypical masculinity and gender roles in general, there is an overall lack of projects in the field of gender and unaccompanied migrant children, despite the strongly recognized role of gender in migration. Unfortunately, this is also reflected in the Shortlist of Good Practices Deliverable, which lack any reference to gender related good practices. Such lack denotes a still widespread blindness towards the importance of gender related issues in all the spheres of life and migration steps, but, on the other hands, it means there is a whole sector still uncovered, with a lot of space for intervention.

## LGBTI Migrants

When talking about gender mainstreaming, it is important not to forget that a part of the gender studies is dedicated to persons who identify as Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transsexuals and Intersex. In most of the world, unfortunately, being LGBTI is a source of discrimination, persecution, even death. Migrants boys and girls, men and women, may face terrible persecutions in their countries of origin and are forced to migrate. Even if several countries in Europe have adopted laws to increase the rights of LGBTI people and persecute discrimination, yet LGBTI migrants and refugee who arrive in Europe, are at risks of being abused, exploited and oppressed for who they are. Since we can say that almost all of the risks and vulnerabilities faced by adult migrants are faced and doubled for unaccompanied migrant children, for those who identify as LGBTI, the arrival in Europe does not always represent the chance to live freely. Instead, a still widespread discrimination often leads to a lack of support from the migrant community and the immigration system. LGBTI people find themselves with no choice but to go back hiding or being victims of violence. Often, same-sex

---

<sup>23</sup> Men, migration and hegemonic masculinity. University of Wollongong (Australia, 2009)

attraction and transgender identity are concepts so much intertwined with social taboos that it becomes difficult to even speak the word.<sup>24</sup> Being a migrant child and LGBTI often becomes a source of multiple discrimination, which require adapted tools for being addressed. Additionally, what we have said before in regard to masculinity (and femininity) is valid also in the case of LGBTI migrant children, who often strive to adapt to hegemonic masculinity (and femininity).

Due to the intolerance and ignorance widespread all over the world, the identification of whoever person as LGBTI can still be an issue, which difficultness increases in the case of a child. In most cases, apart from the obstacles to face with the group of peers, LGBTI people find the greater intolerance and hostility among the members of the family. In the case of foster carers who choose to undertake this journey with migrant children, it is fundamental to be ready to accept a child for who he or she is, even if this challenges the values and customs of the family. A reference to such theme and to the implications that may have on the living experiences and traumas of the child, but also on the challenges for the foster families, who might have to question their own stability even more, should be done on the Deliverable Outline of the Training and Minimum Standards, as LGBTI people might require specific support.

---

<sup>24</sup> “Forgotten twice: the untold story of LGBT refugees.” World Economic Forum. (January 2018)

## Recommendations

The last section of this report aims to provide recommendations in order to guide the FORUM project partners to strengthen the inclusion of the gender dimension in the deliverables of the FORUM project and may be used as a reference for future interventions. As result of this gender analysis, the project should:

- 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;
- Use intersectionality as one of the main analytic frameworks, in order to better understand the complexity of migration phenomena and transform such complexity in adequate interventions;
- Research and provide more details on the different experiences that 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;
- Ensure a fair representation of different genders in the text and in future deliverables and outputs to guarantee that all visions are considered and integrated in future interventions;
- At the same time, 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, during the Training in Prague but also during all other meetings of the project, especially when professionals are involved;
- Duly stress in the deliverables the importance of preparing professionals 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 professionals -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. Reflect this element in the deliverables.
- Possibly take inspiration from gender focused interventions, even if not directly related to unaccompanied migrant children, but that can be adapted to the specific context, in order to integrate useful gender elements to future outputs;
- 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. This is particularly important for advocacy actions and must be stressed in the Advocacy Toolkit.

## Conclusions

As we have stressed throughout this report, gender is a cross-cutting theme which influence all the spheres of life. Gender related issues differ according to the life cycle, to the personal life experience, to the culture and environment each person lives in and to many other factors. We have also seen how gender can influence and affect the overall experience of unaccompanied migrant children, defining for them different life paths and often leading to different but always awful forms of abuses.

Overall, the deliverables lack to explicitly reflect the importance of including the gender dimension. Throughout the project documents and deliverables, there are very limited reference to gender and its implication both in the life of children, in their experience as migrant, but especially on how gender might influence the good outcome of interventions, directly and indirectly. Such gap reflects a scarce awareness on the relevance of the gender dimension and gender mainstreaming. The implicit references that may be found in the deliverables are not enough to denote the complexity and importance of gender mainstreaming in the project's outcomes. This is particularly true since the deliverable are intended for professionals who might or might not have previous gender knowledge and understanding. Moreover, the project and deliverables see the participation of several countries, which have different gender backgrounds, that may be inevitably reflected on professionals' actions. Especially in countries with low level of gender equality, gender discrimination or other similar issues may affect the actions of professionals.

The gender analysis conducted hopes to provide knowledge and increase awareness on the necessity to include gender elements in the deliverable, in order to allow professionals and foster families to better address the needs of unaccompanied migrant children. The perceived necessity to undertake a gender analysis is a fundamental first step towards a greater mainstreaming of gender in design and implementation of projects and it is a symptom of a growing recognition of how gender influence and affect the successful implementation of interventions.

This publication was funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020)

*The content of this publication represents the views of the author only and his/her sole responsibility. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.*