



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

Promoting foster care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children: a training package for professionals in Europe

Coordinator Partners



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FONDAZIONE L'ALBERO DELLA VITA Onlus

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This project has been founded with support from the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Program of the European Union. 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.

Published on March 2019

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Acknowledgements

The project **FORUM – For Unaccompanied Minors - transfer of knowledge for professionals to increase foster care** was co-funded by the Directorate General Justice and Consumers of the European Commission under the Programme Justice REC – Rights of the Child-Violence against Children (REC-CHILD-AG-2016), which aims to promote and protect equality and the rights of persons, and in particular to promote non-discrimination and the rights of the child.

The Training Package 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: Kamena Dorling, from CORAM CHILDREB 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 Ireland¹.

The Forum project is implemented in partnership with 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).

Partners have been involved in collecting the training needs of the stakeholders in their countries and they contributed to finalize the content of the different components of the training package.

The package is divided in two parts: the PART I focuses on the project context, the presentation of the Shortlist on good practices and the Guidance on Minimum Standards; the PART II has its focus on the Training Programme to be developed in the different countries.

More information about the project and document to be downloaded on:

<https://forum-project.alberodellavita.org/>

¹ 2013, Foster Care and Supported Lodgings for separated Asylum Seeking Young People in Ireland, Banrandos and the Health Service Executive.

PART I

THE TRAINING PACKAGE

1.1. The FORUM Project

The training package 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 country 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 Union² 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 10th European Forum on the rights of the child: the protection of children in migration³ 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 will 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”*⁴, 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)

² Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – COM (2017) 211 final

³ http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=34456

⁴ NIDOS; SALAR, CHTB, 2015.

- 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.

Within this framework, in collaboration with the partners, the project has worked to raise awareness of key stakeholders about the benefits of foster care in alternative of reception centers for the care of Unaccompanied Migrant Children and it has developed a training package and standards in line with European best practices to enhance the capacity of professional to ensure and provide a quality foster care service.

1.2. The partnership

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 funded 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 Partner 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 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 –Iniziativa 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 Ireland⁵.

⁵ 2013, Foster Care and Supported Lodgings for separated Asylum Seeking Young People in Ireland, Banrandos and the Health Service Executive.

1.3. The Training Package

The training package is developed by a group of interdisciplinary European experts selected for their competences and experiences in the area of protection and reception of Unaccompanied Migrant Children, under the coordination of Fondazione l' Albero della Vita and with the collaboration of the project partners.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE TRAINING PACKAGE

The training package collects relevant deliverables elaborated within the FORUM project; the **overall objective** is to support and guide professionals and key stakeholders of the Member States providing them with tools and documents that can enlarge the knowledge on foster care practices in Europe and raise awareness on the benefits of foster care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children and for the reception system as a whole.

In addition, the Guidance on Minimum Standards and the Training package mainly could serve as a basis for the development of National Standards and Training programme adapted to specific national contexts.

Whom is the package targeted at?

This package is designed for professionals working with Unaccompanied Migrant Children, i.e.: psychologists, reception centers staff, social workers, lawyers, interpreters and cultural mediators; public entities in charge of migration and children care at regional, national and European level; third sectors organization working in the field of reception and care; volunteers.

The training package consists of different tools to improve competences and fresh knowledge for addressing the particular needs of children in migration, the foster careers and the reception system itself. The tools are conceived to be flexible to reflect the wide range of system in Europe and able to be replicated in different European countries.

The document will be made available on project and partners website so that they can be easily accessible by EU member states and a large number of professionals and stakeholders; a strategic communication plan outlined at the beginning of the project will ensure a proper and wide dissemination of the material elaborated.

On the top of that, FADV will activate European Networks to strengthen the dissemination phase: EUROCHILD (project partner), the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), International Foster Care Organization (IFCO) Confederation of family Organizations in the EU (COFACE) and Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM).

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. Thus, a strong **gender perspective** is common to the different tools elaborated.

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, recommendations have been pointed out 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 and they refer to the Guidance and to the Training outline to be provided to professionals.

Main recommendations:

- Research and provide more details on the different experiences children live according to their gender, both as children and as migrant minors, 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, especially when professionals are involved;
- Duly stress 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.

The package consists of tools with different purpose:

-  **Shortlist of European good practices:** it aims at providing less experienced EU member states with good practices already developed in country with long term experience in foster care or countries that had to face a huge numbers of Unaccompanied Migrant Children in the latest years.
-  **Guidance on Minimum Standards for foster care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children:** the document provides a list of standards that should apply in every reception system for ensuring a quality protection and care service to Unaccompanied Migrant Children.
-  **Training Programme:** the training programme has been developed for training professional on foster care provision for Unaccompanied Migrant Children and it aims at being used as a tool for developing workshops and training addressing professionals dealing with foster care for children in migration
-  **Video tour** on UK based foster care experience.

1.4. Short list of Good Practices

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

Matching 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 most countries, optimum matching is hindered by the availability of foster placements.

FOSTERING FOR INTEGRATION AND RESPECT OF OWN CULTURE

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 Migrant Children during the placement making process, it is important to consider the extent to which a prospective foster family can facilitate this.

NEEDS OF TRAINING FOR FOSTER CARERS

*In 2012, a study on fostering unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people published in **the UK**⁶ concluded that "there is no doubt that good foster care can make a positive difference to the lives of many unaccompanied young people". To ensure a quality response to the child vulnerability and to the foster families, a specific and targeted training is fundamental.*

MONITORING

Foster carers are subjected to regular monitoring and within these reviews voice of the child should be always heard.

SUPPORT IN THE CHILD AGEING OUT

Experiences are presented to provide specific actions to prepare young migrant children to the transition to the adulthood.

The full document of Shortlist of Good Practices is annexed (ANNEX n. 1)

⁶ 'Fostering Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People, A research project', Jim Wade, Ala Sirriyeh, Ravi Kohli and John Simmonds, Social Policy Research Unit, The University of York, University of Bedfordshire and BAAF, 2012

1.5. The Guidance on Minimum Standards

The Guidance on Minimum Standards has been developed by the interdisciplinary group of experts in coordination with the 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 careers; 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.

The full Guidance on Minimum Standards is included as Annex n. 2

1.6. Video on Foster Care experience

A video of representative case study of foster care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children is conceived as a tool for integrating the training package.

The virtual tour has the objective of demonstrate practical steps to implement foster care from the reception of the migrant children to the recruitment of a foster family through direct experiences and interviews.

The work was leaded by CORAM UK and it results in the creation of a 10-minutes film, which explore the provision of foster care for unaccompanied children seeking asylum, mainly through clear and engaging sit-down interviews with young people, foster carers, a social worker and a fostering expert sharing their experiences. The intended audience is practitioners, professionals and those involved with delivering a system of foster care.

The video can be watch at: <https://forum-project.alberodellavita.org/>

PART II

THE TRAINING PROGRAMME

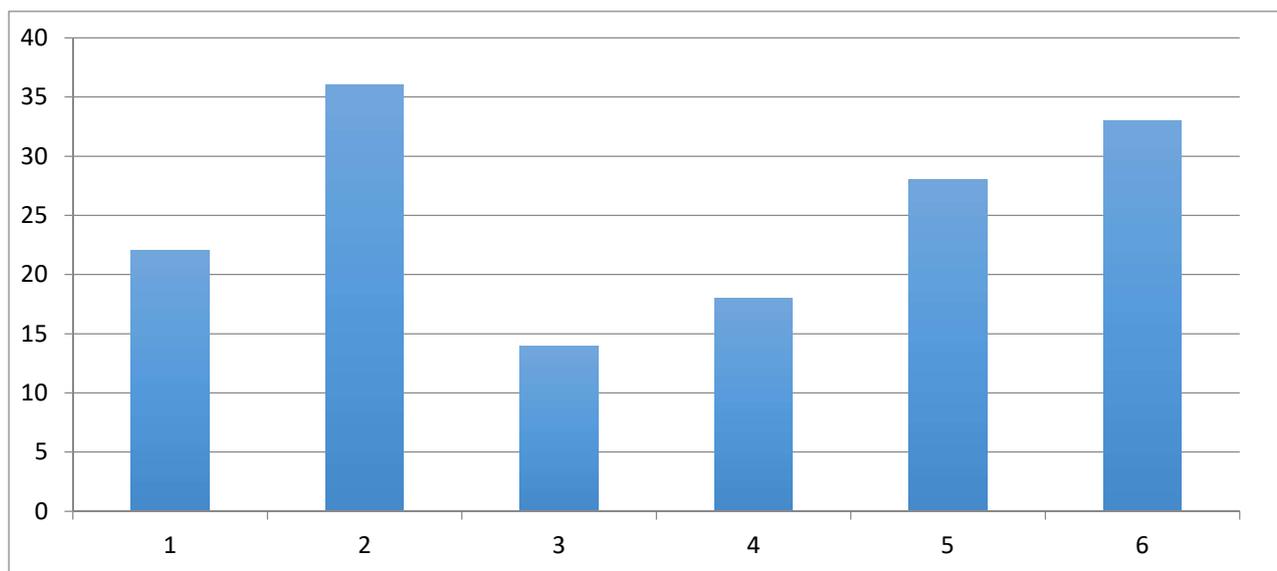
2.1. Background

2.1.1. TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

At the beginning of the project an important needs assessment was carried out across the six countries targeted to identify the main needs and gaps in training of operational staff working with Unaccompanied Migrant Children and foster care and thus tailored the most appropriate training programme.

During the period March-June 2018, 151 organizations have been involved and 98 questionnaires were collected. Considering together third sector organizations, family associations and voluntary organizations, the non-profit world is definitely over-represented in the sample compared to the institutional realities, but this is nothing more than the picture of what happens in the daily reality of taking care of the Unaccompanied Migrant Children. There are also numerous representatives of the authorities linked to justice: 28 units. The less represented realities are the associations of families, which would have brought an experiential knowledge and therefore a vision of the target of the questionnaire different from the other actors.

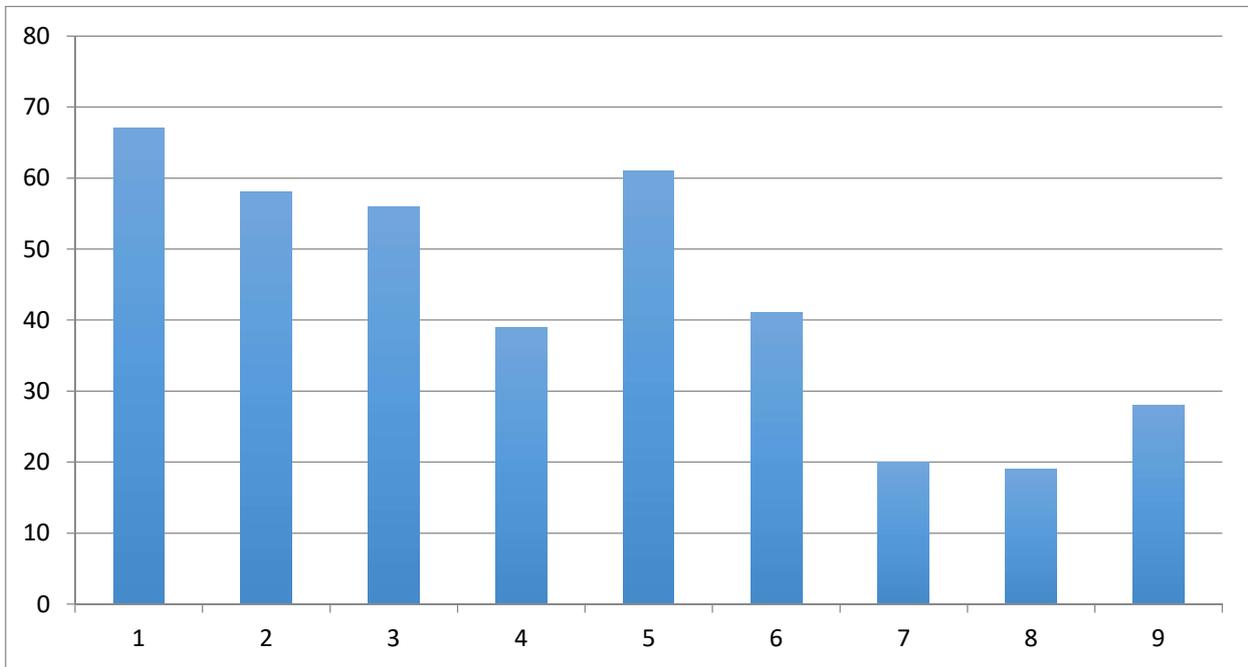
Types of organizations that have been involved in completing the questionnaire.



1. Municipal Service; 2. Third sector association; 3. Families Association; 4. Charity organization; 5. Justice; 6 Others.

2.1.2. TARGET GROUPS & KEY TOPICS

The training programme is tackling professionals working within the reception and care system for Unaccompanied Migrant Children, and it reflects as well the answer reported in the questionnaires.



1. Social workers; 2. Educators; 3. Responsible for social services; 4. Volunteers; 5. Foster families; 6. Judges; 7. Politicians; 8. Administrative staff; 9. Others

TARGET GROUPS social workers, educators, psychologists, cultural mediators, responsible for social services, lawyers and members of juvenile court, volunteers, administrative staff and other professionals committed to providing protection and foster care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children.

Based on the analysis of the questionnaire, the prevalent needs have been adopted to formulate the training programme. The research established the necessity for staff working in the reception system to be trained mainly on the legal framework on unaccompanied migrant children protection, the psychology of development, applied to the processes of cognitive, affective and relational development of unaccompanied migrant children.

KEY AREAS IDENTIFIED IN THE TRAINING NEED REPORT:

- Existing legislation on the protection of unaccompanied migrant children
- Psychology of development - specifically the processes of cognitive, affective and relational development of unaccompanied migrant children.
- The assessment of the suitability of the foster families for unaccompanied migrant children
- The social and community psychology of the host country (group dynamics, community intervention strategies with the unaccompanied migrant children)
- Daily life and cultural resources, systems of relationships of the countries of origin of migrant children
- The use of a relational approach sensitive to cultural differences
- The ability to establish and maintain relationships with local actors to create a support network for families entrusted with foreign children.
- Migration policies, referring in particular to unaccompanied migrant children
- Recruitment and monitoring:
 - the use of interview techniques suitable to identify the motivations and abilities of families competent in welcoming unaccompanied migrant children
 - the use of evaluation techniques and monitoring of family foster experiences
 - the use of techniques to evaluate families available to foster unaccompanied migrant children

2.1.3. HOW TO USE THE TRAINING MATERIAL

The package aims at guiding and supporting the trainers in presenting the material content, providing introduction to each module and to the most relevant slides of the training programme; when brainstorming and group exercise are proposed, handouts or suggestions on how to drive the exercise are provided.

The trainers are expected to adapt this programme to their specific national context, referring to the National Guidance on Minimum Standard, domestic legislation and social context⁷.

The training uses a participatory approach promoting engagement in the learning process. The role of the facilitator is therefore to encourage participation in an interactive way in order to valorize the competencies and experiences of the participants; case studies and exercise to be developed in small group or in pairs are proposed to reflect the national context with regards to Unaccompanied migrant children.

The full Power Point Presentation is included as Annex 3 and it can be downloaded by Forum website <https://forum-project.alberodellavita.org/>.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED FOR THE TRAINING

Laptop, multimedia projector, flipchart, blank paper for exercise, markers/board pens, pens.

⁷Trainers selected from partners' organizations benefitted by a training based on this content in Pragua, on January 2019, as activity foreseen in the project FORUM. This Package aims at guiding and supporting further trainers to held the training program and to professionals to download informative materials to increase knowledge and skills.

2.1. 4. OBJECTIVES OF THE TRAINING

The training programme aims to enable professionals to have the knowledge base to be able to provide foster care for unaccompanied migrant children.

THE TRAINING PROGRAMM ENABLES PROFESSIONALS TO:

- An improved understanding of the drivers of migration and experiences of unaccompanied migrant children
- An understanding of the existing international and domestic legal framework covering the treatment and protection of unaccompanied migrant children
- A knowledge of the different system of care for unaccompanied children and the benefits and challenges of foster care
- An understanding of the specific needs of unaccompanied children and how this group can be best supported emotionally and practically
- An understanding of how to identify networks of support and forms of professional partnership
- An understanding of how a system of foster care can be developed in the country, including recruiting, assessing, matching and supporting foster cares.
- An use of the tools to strengthen the national system of care.

2.2. The Training Programme

2.2.1. TRAINING PLANNING

The proposed planning of the training is **12 hours**, divided into 3 modules/laboratories of 4 hours each. The training aims to address **20 trainees** per workshops. The training programme have been divided into **1 INTRO module plus 3 modules**:

INTRODUCTION

MODULE 1 – THE NEEDS AND SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN

MODULE 2 – PSYCHOLOGICAL, CULTURAL AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES/BUILDING CARE FOR UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN

MODULE 3 – RECRUITMENT, MATCHING AND MONITORING OF FOSTER CARE PROVISION

SUGGESTED TEMPLATE

	DAY 1	TIMING
MODULE	INTRODUCTION	1 HOUR
MODULE 1A	Experiences of Unaccompanied Migrant Children	1 ½ HOURS
MODULE 1B	Systems of care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children	1 HOUR
MODULE 2	Psychological, Cultural and development issues/ Building care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children	1 HOUR

	DAY 2	TIMING
MODULE 3A	Identifying Networks of support and forms of professional partnership	45 MINUTES
MODULE 3B	Recruitment and assessment of foster cares; matching of foster cares and children	1.15 HOUR
MODULE 3C	Training, retention and monitoring	½ HOUR

2.2.2. MODULE INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVE OF THE MODULE: This module is design to: introduce the training to participants; sharing the Outline and Aims of the training.

DURATION: 1 HOUR

Trainer introduces himself/herself and explains how the module is structured: contents, time, methods, exercises.

INTRODUCING TRAINEES AND TRAINER (20 min)

- Name
- Professional background
- Expectations for training
- Knowledge and direct experience about UAM

In the introduction module, the trainer explains the participants that the course runs for **1 ½ days, the OUTLINE of the training and the AIMS of the training.**

Introductory exercise 1: Building on my experience of working with unaccompanied children - 5 minutes.

Participants should write down the answers to the following questions:

- *My role and experience of working with unaccompanied children is...*
OR
- *I can build upon my relevant experience as a practitioner such as...*
- *The key things I would like to find out more from this course are....*

The participants have five minutes to complete the exercise. If they have not worked directly with unaccompanied children, they should think of what might be relevant from their experiences of working with children more broadly. After five minutes they will be asked to discuss their comments with a partner for five minutes. Then feed back to the main group.

2.2.3. MODULE 1 “THE NEEDS AND SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN”

MODULE 1 – THE NEEDS AND SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN

OBJECTIVE OF THE MODULE: This module is designed to: improve the understanding of the drivers of migration and experiences of unaccompanied migrant children; improve the understanding of the existing international and domestic legal framework covering the treatment and protection of unaccompanied migrant children; strengthening the knowledge of the different system of care for unaccompanied migrant children and the benefits and challenges of foster care.

DURATION: 2 ½ HOURS

The Module 1 is divided into 2 sub-modules:

- 1.A. Experiences of Unaccompanied Migrant Children (1 ½ hours)
- 1.B. Systems of care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children (1 hour)

MODULE 1.A – EXPERIENCE OF UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN

DURATION: 1 ½ HOURS

WHO ARE UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN?

Discuss as a group what we mean by ‘unaccompanied’ and ‘migrant’ before revealing definition used by the project.

Exercise 2: Who are unaccompanied children?

Discuss in pairs: (10 minutes)

- *How many unaccompanied migrant children you think are in Europe?*
- *How many in your country?*
- *Why have they come to Europe? What countries have they come from? (perhaps give post-its and ask them to write numbers and countries and then stick on wall?)*

Group discussion: (15 minutes)

The group should reflect on the relative freedoms enjoyed in Europe. We have the right, for example, to observe a religion of our choice and to vote. Many countries around the world are at war or have oppressive regimes. Explain that in countries where war, civil unrest, ethnic, religious or political oppression exists, parents strive to get their children out of danger. If the partners are dead, families of the children may try to

help. Often people pay large sums of money to agents to send their children to another country where they think they will be safe and have better opportunities. In some cases, the children escape by themselves.

DEFINITION OF UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN

- What do we mean by 'unaccompanied'?

"Children (aged under 18) 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."

Par. 7, General Comment No. 6 (2005), Treatment of unaccompanied and separated⁸ children outside their country of origin, at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/GC6.pdf>

- According to the European Commission, The term 'children in migration' covers all third country national 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...⁹

However, the content of the training package should be applied to all children in migration.

PROTECTION IN INTERNATIONAL LAW

Explain to group that in order to provide the right care services we need to understand migrants and refugees background and their previous life. Children might be escaping from danger, persecution, poverty. They will miss their families, their home, their country, language and culture. It is important to understand this, as well as the difficulties they might face demonstrating their need/right to remain in the host country.

Discuss definitions of asylum and refugee, child-specific forms of persecution and difficulties evidencing their stories.

Highlight some of the following problems:

- Child has been/is in danger of being murdered or imprisoned.
- Their parents or guardians have "disappeared".
- They are in danger of being forced to become a child soldier.
- They are prevented from practicing the religion they choose or forced to practice a religion or doctrine
- They have been intimidated or tortured to give information
- They are banned from political activity they choose or forced to take part in political activity they do not choose.
- They belong to a persecuted social, religious, ethnic or political group.
- Their parents are sending them to a 'better' life

⁸ 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.

⁹ European Commission, 'The protection of children in migration – General Background paper', 2016

- They are paying off a family debt
- They have been exploited and trafficked

Go through Article 20 of UNCRC¹⁰.

DRIVERS OF MIGRATION AND PROTECTION IN INTERNATIONAL LAW

Discuss about the drivers of migration and why Unaccompanied Migrant Children decide to come to Europe.

Go through slide and introduce fact that at a *domestic level* law and policy is very different.

Encourage participants to spend some time thinking about the system in their country, what they do and don't know about it and where they might find further information.

Exercise 3: Understanding the needs of unaccompanied children [handout] (10 minutes)

Divide the group into three smaller groups and give each group copies of one of the handouts below. Ask them to discuss the children needs and the services they would require and then answer the three questions. Give them 10 minutes and then ask them to feed back to the larger group.

Abdul

Abdul is a 16-year-old boy from Afghanistan. He arrived in your country yesterday in the back of a truck. He says his parents have been killed.

- *In what ways might Abdul come to the attention of the authorities?*
- *What are the first steps that should be taken?*
- *What longer-term issues and problems might Abdul face?*

Saadia

Saadia is from Somalia and has been in her host country for two years. In Somalia, a distant relative looked after her from the age of about eight. While she lived in Somalia, she always helped care for other children and did house 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 more important issues for Saadia?*
- *What services do you think are required to meet her needs?*

After 10 minutes gather feedback as a group and record responses on a flipchart. The main points to bring out as groups feedback are that these children each have special needs as well as common experiences such as separation and loss. Each will need a full assessment of needs. Some of the following needs should be highlighted: therapeutic help, interpreting, assessment of educational needs, health assessment, to meet other people from their culture who speak their language and follow their religion.

Discuss what might happen for each child in terms of their immigration status. What might change when they turn 18?

¹⁰ PPP slide 18

MODULE 1.B – SYSTEM OF CARE FOR UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN

DURATION: 1 HOUR

SYSTEM OF CARE - DEFINITIONS

Exercise 4 - Group discussion on the definition of foster care.

Discuss as a group about what we mean by “foster care” before revealing definition used by the project and the focus of FORUM project. (10 minutes)

Group discussion:

The group should reflect on the different ways in which foster care intended in different countries, according to the national law (and national language).

- Foster care
- Alternative care
- Residential care
- (Legal) guardianship
- Kinship care
- Reception families

TYPES OF CARE

- a. Family from own network
- b. Unknown family
 - Ethnic family
 - Indigenous family

SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTIC OF FOSTER CARE FOR UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN

Main goal of the foster care for unaccompanied migrant children is providing him/her with a proper and safe environment to support child development and his/her integration in the host society; the whole process is focused on the child and no parallel path is foreseen to support the natural family, as it usually happens in the foster care for national children. Reunification with the child’s natural family could also be a goal when it’s possible and it’s in the best interest of the child.

Another peculiar aspect concerns the age of the Unaccompanied Migrant Children¹¹: they are adolescents, often very close to 18 years old. This requires that specific paths of foster care should be implemented with the fundamental aim of accompanying Unaccompanied Migrant Children to autonomy, in the transition to the adulthood.

¹¹ In 2017, a majority of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum were males (89%). Considering age, over two-thirds were aged 16 to 17 (77%), while those aged 14 to 15 accounted for 16% and those aged less than 14 for 6% (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/8895109/3-16052018-BP-EN.pdf/ec4cc3d7-c177-4944-964f-d85401e55ad9>).

For Unaccompanied Migrant Children three types of foster care are possible: with a family of his/her own network, with an indigenous family (hetero-cultural foster care) or with a family having the same culture of the Unaccompanied Migrant Children (homo-cultural foster care).

Hetero-cultural: a foster placement in which families or individual caregivers doesn't belong to the child's same ethnic group

Homo-cultural: a foster placement in which families or individual caregivers belong to the child's same ethnic group.

It can be stated that homo-cultural foster care represents an efficient and effective strategy for unaccompanied migrant children. In families whose culture they share, they find stability, welcome, shared habits and customs, and also valuable help in understanding the new country in which they have arrived. The family may also offer support after the children has reached adulthood, via ethnic networks that extend well beyond the city where they live. Although they may have a specific migratory project, these children arrive in a state of disorientation. They do not know the language, they have real problems with the food, and they don't know the rules. Being taken in by a family of the same ethnic group can reduce this first phase of complete disorientation. Finally, it promotes the active citizenship of immigrant families that are already fully integrated in the country, who thereby become a resource for the region where they live, challenging the tendency to think of them solely as service users.

Needless to say, there are also risks, and the social services have to take care to ensure that the foster family is genuinely promoting the inclusion of the children in the wider local community, and not just in the ethnic community. From this perspective, language is an issue. If the foster family usually doesn't speak the language of the host country, the children will have neither the opportunity nor the incentive to learn the language, and this reduces the opportunities for educational, employment and social integration. Not all children are able to take the opportunities available to them in terms of language courses, professional training courses, work placements, etc. Some prefer to seek shelter within the community until they turn 18, and then seek to make contact with a relative elsewhere the country where they live. Another problem relates to the foster families themselves. If they become excessively professionalised, there is a danger that they will end up reproducing the style of intervention of residential care, when the purpose of foster care is precisely to re-establish relationships of trust based on affection that provide a basis for the education and support of the child.

Examples of homo-cultural foster care form the shortlist of good practices:

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 minors. 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 Italy, the Municipality of Verona has developed the project INTRA-ETHNIC FOSTER CARE (<http://terradeipopoli.altervista.org/affido-omoculturale.html>). Through the activities of the Center for Family Foster Care and Solidarity, the Municipality of Verona has for some years launched an important pilot experience, unique in Veneto and with few comparisons in Italy, of homo-cultural foster care, which

facilitate foster carers from the same cultural environment of the migrant child. This form of foster care allows a child to find in the foster family an environment similar to that of the family of origin, both from a cultural, linguistic and religious point of view.

According to the document “Shortlist of good practices “, about intercultural foster care it is important to point out that foster families have to pay attention to some elements:

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.

According to the age of the migrant children, different form of foster care could be offered and proposed; supported lodging, or being hosted by a foster family only during the week-end for instance, could be appropriate for unaccompanied migrant children over 16 years and they might be useful for the following reasons:

- getting into education, training or work;
- improving the language;
- integration into the community;
- managing money;
- managing free time;
- learning to cook and do housework;
- attending appointments;
- building confidence;
- finding a home.

In short, the task of light foster care is to help children becoming more independent to prepare him/her to the exit from the protection system.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN EU POLICY

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL: The protection of children in migration - EUROPEAN COMMISSION - Brussels, 12.4.2017 - COM (2017) 211 final

While the use of family-based care/foster care for unaccompanied children has expanded in recent years and proven successful and cost-effective, it is still under-utilized.

Key action: ensure that a range of alternative care options for unaccompanied children, including foster/family-based care are provided.

2.2.4. MODULE 2 - PSYCHOLOGICAL, CULTURAL AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES/BUILDING CARE FOR UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN

MODULE 2 – PSYCHOLOGICAL, CULTURAL AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES/BUILDING CARE FOR UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN

OBJECTIVE OF THE MODULE: This module focuses on: Specific needs of Unaccompanied Migrant Children; The benefits of foster care and the challenges; Cultural awareness and cultural competence; Emotional and practical support that can be offered.¹²

DURATION: 2 HOURS

This module starts with a brain storm and group discussion to introduce the participants to the needs, vulnerability and culture of Unaccompanied Migrant Children.

PRE-MIGRATION EXPERIENCES

Sometimes it is unknown what stressors the child/young person has faced. The child him or herself may not entirely know or understand what happened in their country of origin. Families may send children to safety without telling them the details of why they are doing so. Important to remember that unaccompanied children may have experienced adversity that fits into the definition of a refugee and /or they may have experienced other forms of adversity that do not fit into that definition so clearly.

Often carers and those caring for unaccompanied children pay more attention to the adversity than to the ordinary life experiences that young people have had. Knowing a little about the ordinary life experiences of a young person prior to their arrival can be really helpful in creating a relationship with them and in helping them to adjust to their new surroundings. As will be discussed later it is important that foster carers don't pry unnecessarily so questions about previous life experiences should be asked in consultation with the social worker and guardian and taking into account what the young person is willing to tell.

MIGRATION AND TRANSIT

Suggested video clips which might be useful to show.

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

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

Exercise 5 - Group discussion

Suggest allowing the group to brainstorm for 10 minutes, followed by feedback to the wider group. Perhaps they could put material on flipcharts and these sticky flip charts could be put around the

¹² The Module has been developed by the expert Dr Maria Herczog & by Dr Muireann Ní Raghallaigh on behalf of Forum.

room for people to look at during the coffee break etc. Having this discussion before the next slide on post-migration experiences might help participants to relate more to the material.

POST MIGRATION EXPERIENCE

Often thought that pre-migration stressors and stressors on the journey are those that are most influential but research suggests that post migration experiences have a very significant impact. Often young people will be unable to deal with or process pre-migration experiences of loss and trauma etc. until the immediate post-migration experiences have been dealt with. There is a danger that when a young person has fled bombing, death and destruction, service providers or foster carers might think that a stressor such as finding it difficult to do one's homework is really too significant and that young people should be able to accept such things. Important that carers recognise and don't minimise these stressors in any way.

Exercise 6 - Group brainstorm

Could brain storm with the group regarding how culture might differ (an example: a young person in foster care who was labelled as 'rude' by his foster parents. This was because at the dinner table he would say 'give me the salt', rather than 'please may I have the salt' or 'could you pass me the salt please'. He was horrified when he realised what they thought. In his culture communication was much more direct and saying things in this way was not seen as rude.

Could use this quote if you liked: 'Ambiguous loss' (Boss, 1999) -

"The massive losses suffered by refugees have no prescribed rituals for healing and little social support. Society does not easily acknowledge the grief of a person who has lost everything they hold dear in their former country. In addition, refugee families may be so busy 'adjusting' that they cannot give themselves permission to grieve"¹³.

POST-MIGRATION: ACCULTURATION

Useful for foster carers to have an understanding of acculturation and the various strategies that Unaccompanied Migrant Children might adopt in managing the move to a new culture.

For some, the process of acculturation is negotiated with ease, for others, it leads to "acculturative stress" and for a small minority it leads to psychopathology, because changes in the cultural context exceed an individual's capacity to cope.

Acculturation is viewed as a two-dimensional process: "In any intercultural situation, a group can penetrate (or ignore) the other, and groups can remain culturally distinct from (or merge with) each other".

Hence, an immigrant decides (a) whether it is considered to be of value to maintain his or her cultural heritage, and (b) whether it is considered to be of value to develop relationships with the larger society. These two dimensions are independent of each other. Immigrants adopt different acculturation attitudes, and from these attitudes they chose certain behaviors.

Assimilation attitude/strategy: When migrants seek involvement with other cultural groups and want to give up their heritage culture.

¹³ (Fantino & Colak, 2001, p. 594)

Separation attitude/strategy: When migrants wish to maintain their heritage culture and do not wish to have involvement with other cultures.

Integration attitude/strategy: When migrants wish to maintain their heritage culture whilst simultaneously seeking interaction with other cultures.

Marginalization attitude/strategy: When migrants have little interest in maintaining their heritage culture or in having relations with other cultural groups.

VULNERABILITY

Vulnerability has been defined as:

“Diminished capacity of an individual or group to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural or man-made hazard...” A second definition of vulnerability could also be referred to: “Vulnerable groups are people who, due to factors outside their control, do not have the same opportunities as other groups in society, or who are disproportionately exposed to health risks, often in efforts to meet their basic needs”.¹⁴

TRAUMA

In many cultures emotional words may not be used to describe distress but rather feeling sick, headache, chest pain or stomach ache. PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress disorder) needs to be recognized, and often professional support is needed both for the child/young person and for the care taker to understand the signs, symptoms, and the optimum forms of support.

Before their arrival to their current country of residence, migrant children had been exposed to severe stressors such as physical abuse, war and life-threatening flight conditions over months and years. Without having a close person with them, these children and adolescents are highly vulnerable for developing trauma-associated mental disorders such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression or anxiety¹⁵.

Trauma-informed care and appropriate acknowledgement of the young refugees, migrant’s special mental healthcare needs are extremely important challenges for the foster families. This is especially true, as the refugees’ access to regular mental healthcare is limited due to cultural and language barriers and due to limited resources and readiness of the mental healthcare system to serve this population, in most of the countries even for other children and young people in need for care.

RESILIENCE

Resilience can be defined as class of phenomena characterized by good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development.

What facilitates resilience amongst UAM?

Social Support: Given that Unaccompanied Migrant Children are often teenagers it is not surprising that peers are particularly important in providing social support. One of the potential drawbacks of foster care is that young people are usually not placed with peers, compared with residential care where young people are living with their peers. Hence, essential that Unaccompanied Migrant Children have opportunities to be with peers – including other young people of their ethnic/cultural/religious background; other young people who are unaccompanied; and young people from other cultural backgrounds (including those who are citizens of the ‘host’ country)

¹⁴ WHO, (2016): The Health and Environment Lexicon: Multi-Language Glossary of Health & Environment Terminology.

¹⁵ (Jensen, Fjermestad, Granly, & Wilhelmsen, 2015).

Religion/Spirituality: Important to know whether religion plays an important role in the lives of the Unaccompanied Migrant Children. Religion can act as a source of comfort and support, and can represent continuity at a time where there is a lot of discontinuity. For example, ones' relationship with Allah or with God can remain constant when all other relationships are new or changed. Also, attendance at religious services can be very helpful to young people.

Cultural interpretations of experiences: (e.g. young people coming from culture where separation from family is common at a young age – seeing it as an important step in development)

Avoidance / Suppression & Distraction (hobbies, volunteering, working): One way of coping for some young people might be to avoid thinking about or discussing those things that are most upsetting or worrying for them (e.g. events that happened in their countries of origin; worry about family members; concern re deportation). Some young people want to keep busy as a way of not having time to think about these things – as a way of distracting themselves. While professionals and foster carers might sometimes view this as a negative way of coping and one that will not be beneficial in the long run, it is important to go at the young person's pace and wait until they are ready to talk about things.

Education: Focusing on education and studies might also act as a form of distraction and might give young people a goal to aim for. Young people may be very ambitious and families might expect a lot educationally because the young person is in Europe and because there may be an assumption that education systems are better there. Important to also remember that many Unaccompanied Migrant Children may struggle educationally because of language barriers or because they have missed school for many years.

Acting autonomously / independently: Another source of resilience and way of coping is by acting autonomously. Young people have often been quite independent before they left their country of origin and during their journey. In their own cultures they may not be viewed as children anymore so this may pose challenges for foster carers. Important to be able to discuss this and to allow young people some independence, in consultation with guardians and social workers.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

Resilience is influenced by the following: the individual, the family, and the external environment. The individual (child) factors include dimensions such as social skills, personal awareness, feelings of empathy, and internal locus of control. The family dimensions include: parent-child relationships, valued social role, and parental harmony. The environmental dimensions include: successful school experiences, friendship networks, valued social role, and mentoring relationships.

The Social Bonding domain includes the dimensions of school, family, and pro- social norms. The school sub-scale measures the child's perception of the value of school. The family sub-scale measures how emotionally connected the children feel to their families. The Pro-social sub-scale measures the child's ability to trust and engage with others and to view the good in people.

The Personal Competence domain includes the following four sub-scales: self- concept examined the respondents' views of themselves; self-control measured how a child manages him or herself; positive outlook measures the respondents' perceptions of their future. This dimension is particularly critical in understanding and working with undocumented, unaccompanied immigrant children because of the lack of control they may feel while they are in custody, which can negatively impact their outlook on the future.

Self-Efficacy examines the child's self-determination, which is also a crucial factor in a child's ability to solve their problems and overcome adversity.

The domain of Social Competence can best be described as a quality rather than a set of skills or abilities. It has been defined as the power of the individual to be resourceful and to engage with others in a friendly and cooperative manner.

Assertiveness measures to a child's capacity to ask for help or guidance when they feel they need it. Confidence can be measured by how well liked the respondent feels, their sense of active membership in a community, and their sense of having companionship in the world. Cooperation/contribution measures the respondent's perception of their readiness to engage with others in a friendly and cooperative manner.

Risk factors can be comprised of three dimensions: Family Environment, Peer Group, Environment, and Personal Behaviour.

The Family Environment dimension includes levels of family supervision and family interaction.

The peer and neighbourhood environment dimension measures the levels of alcohol and other substance, violence exposure as well as attitudes concerning alcohol and other drug use and other risky behaviours.

The children's perceptions of major life experiences consist of a series of items that that provides descriptive information about the child's previous experiences. Experience in the home country can include such items as whether they lived with family prior to coming to the country of current residence, who they were living with; who raised them; school and work experience; how they were treated in the household and why they chose to leave. Experience on the journey included such items that tapped how they were treated on the journey, goals as pursuing and education, holding a job, and reunifying with family. **HELPING BUILDING RESILIENCE**

Elements¹⁶ to be taken into consideration to help in building resilience:

Connectedness: Finding a support network (family, friends, peers), staying connected, finding time and capacity for network, offering and receiving reciprocal support.

Curiosity: About what happened and what would happen, feelings and emotions in self and others, sense of wonder and awe, sense of exploration, stay with the problem and ask questions. Foster carers should be cautious about the extent of their curiosity and about what questions they ask.

Communication: Striving to develop communication skills, articulating thoughts and feelings, regular, proactive and effective modes.

Control and crisis management: regain control and regroup, learn to crisis calmly and effectively, learning from mistakes, prevent and if possible avoid to panic.

Change and acceptance: accept change as inevitable, prepare for change rather than hope change does not occur, maintaining a positive approach to day to day variations, focus on things, that can be changed.

Clarity of focus: break down objectives into manageable chunks, maintain focus on tasks and see them through, change approach if one does not work, give oneself positive feedback from small successes.

Confidence: positive self-image, attribute success and failure to effort, ability, view efforts and ability as learnable skills, self-efficacy, valuing own ideas, contributes.

¹⁶ Ref: <https://hubpages.com/education/A-Simple-Guide-to-Teaching-Resilience>

Creativity: Takes time out to relax, hobbies, sports, interests outside of learning, working, duties, ability to synthesis new ideas, ability to thing flexibly and work around a problem.

ANXIETY

Oftentimes, when we think of anxiety, we picture the common symptoms - for instance worrying, overthinking, panic attacks etc. However, anxiety can perform itself in many different forms and ways. It is essential to recognize that anxiety often means more than worrying, and carefully assessing the symptoms that can also be signs of anxiety. Unaccompanied Migrant Children may perform very unusual forms of anxiety that are affecting their lives and they need help to be recognized and treated by professionals and/or in a support group. These symptoms include among others:

- Agitation
- Restlessness
- Inattention, poor focus
- Somatic symptoms like headaches or stomachaches
- Avoidance
- Tantrums
- Crying
- Refusing to go to school
- Meltdowns before school about clothing, hair, shoes, socks
- Meltdowns after school about homework
- Difficulties with transitions within school, and between school and an activity/sport
- Difficulty settling down for bed
- Having high expectations for school work, homework and sports performance

Unaccompanied migrant children can show different reactions based on the experiences and issues described earlier but also having similar symptoms to any other child in a stressful situation or facing mental health challenges. Equally some of the above symptoms may relate to their normal developmental stage and may not be indicative of anxiety.

EMPATHY

Empathy: The fundamental "human" skill. Empatheia means - "feeling into", the ability to perceive the subjective experience of another person. An empathic response is an attempt to put ourselves in the other person's place so that our feelings will suggest to us not only his emotions but also his motives. Empathy is **trying to understand the other from the inside - not from the outside as an interested observer.**

The most important aspects of empathy:

1. Awareness of the state of being of another.
2. Understanding of this condition.
3. A personal identification with the situation.
4. Appropriate affective response.

Blockages to empathy:

1. Emotional neglect, abuse, maltreatment results in dulling empathy.
2. Stress acts to dampen empathy towards the needs of others.

3. Emotional abuse results in hyper vigilance to cues that have signaled threat. Such obsessive preoccupation with feelings of others as children often results in adults who suffer intense emotional ups and downs.

Empathy is an essential skill of all human beings but especially important for caring professionals, parents. Helping children to feel empathy is the basis for integration into any family, peer group, society etc. Repeated experiences of stress are hardwired into the brain, creating damaging pathways. Risk factors such as domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, maternal depression, maternal addictions, and poverty are not just additive to the vulnerable developing brain; they are multiplicative in their impact.

DISTRUST

Unaccompanied Migrant Children often distrust people they get in contact with at their arrival in Europe. Crucial that foster carers understand this distrust and work with it rather than against it

Reasons for distrust:

Past experiences: e.g. experiences where they have been left down before, perhaps by family members or by people in authority. E.g. of a girl who fled her country, helped by her mother, as her father was going to act in a way that would have put her in danger. Experience of a boy whose next door neighbors, friends of his family, turned out to be on the other side in a conflict. Didn't know who to trust anymore.

Being accustomed to distrust (living in a regime where nobody trusts anyone. You don't know whose side people are on

Being distrusted by others – discourses of distrust in relation to asylum seekers are widespread. Young people will pick up on public attitudes, on the views of officials who don't believe them or view them with suspicion. References to 'culture of suspicion' vis a vis asylum process in several countries.

Inability to tell the truth: a young person may have been warned by family members or by smugglers not to tell the truth. Difficult to build trusting relationships if one does not feel able to tell the truth

Not knowing people well: Young person may have just moved to a country. Knowing who to trust and who not to can be challenging, even in the best of circumstances. When a young person has experienced adversity and when they are in a different cultural context this might be even more challenging (e.g. Difficult to read communication cues cross culturally)

Distrust as a purpose: young people use it to survive and to protect themselves. Shouldn't be simply pathologised.

CULTURE AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Identity – culture forms a key part of one's identity. Identity development as a key task during adolescence.

Self-awareness – Critical for foster carers to be self-aware as regards culture. Need to have an understanding of what they consider their culture to be and what values and ways of behaving etc are emphasised within that culture. Need to know how they feel about cultural differences.

Links to cultural continuity, language – having continuity of culture is often helpful for young people. So for example if carers can know a few words in the young person's language or get to know a little about their culture and give the young person opportunities to have some cultural continuity that is likely to be helpful (e.g. food that is bought/ cooked)

Exercise 7 - Group Discussion

What do we mean by culture?

When we think about the culture of an Unaccompanied Migrant Children whom we know what comes to mind?

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines culture as 'distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group' encompassing 'in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs'.

Cultural Competence 1

Criticisms of cultural competence: It is argued that it is impossible to achieve; Group characteristics might get privileged over individuality – thus leading to stereotyping; Need recognition of sub cultures.

Important to highlight that it is not necessary for a foster carer to be really knowledgeable about a particular culture. While reading up on a culture or talking to members of a given culture might be useful, one needs to hold these ideas in mind tentatively – they might be typical of a culture but this does not mean they are set in stone. Need to constantly adopt a stance of 'respectful curiosity. The willingness to learn is key. Self-awareness is of vital importance. So knowing one's own culture and one's own biases regarding other cultures is essential.

Cultural Competence 2

Considering culture at all times – but at the same time it is important not to assume that everything is 'cultural'.

BUT Cultural sensitivity should not become cultural stereotyping; this is especially relevant to foster carers who may have some knowledge of a particular cultural group (from previous fostering experience, or perhaps because they are a member of that group).

Potential Differences in Culture

Facilitator should read these from left to right, the ones on the right being (to some extent) the opposite of the ones on the left. These should be viewed cautiously. The idea is to consider how people might differ partly because of culture.

Important to point out that we cannot categorize whole cultures as belonging to one of these columns...
Danger of being essentialist

FOSTER CARE FOR UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN: BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

Benefits of foster care vis a vis other forms of care:

- ▶ Building relationships
- ▶ Promoting resilience,
- ▶ Facilitating integration
- ▶ Developing trust
- ▶ Facilitating access to health care, education, social support
- ▶ Continuity in care provision

Challenges of foster care vis a vis other forms of care:

- ▶ Uncertainty (time, status, wishes)
- ▶ Age of the child/young person

- ▶ Difficulties recruiting foster carers
- ▶ Foster carers are usually not professionally trained unlike residential care workers.
- ▶ System reflections

EMOTIONAL AND PRACTICAL SUPPORT

How might foster carers provide support:

- ▶ Focusing on their own intercultural competence & that of the young people
- ▶ Active listening
- ▶ Respecting silence: Recognizing that the young person may not want to speak about previous experiences and may not trust them. Going at the young person's pace
- ▶ Identifying young person's strengths & interests and ensuring these are built on
- ▶ Restoring normalcy
- ▶ Ensuring participation
- ▶ Emotional regulation (including anger management)
- ▶ Helping young people to set and implement realistic goals: Supporting unaccompanied migrant children in their goal setting and goal striving is necessary, as they carry many unrealistic wishes and unattainable goals, which can be threatening to their mental health.
- ▶ Providing support as regards the asylum claim or any other administrative procedures. The type of support as regards the **asylum claim**, as well as any administrative procedures will depend on the young person's wishes and should be offered in consultation with the Social Worker and the guardian. For example, the foster carer should be willing and able to listen to the young person's story if they want to practice telling it; they should be aware of the stress and anxiety the young person is going through prior to their asylum hearing and be able to support them in that regard; provide support in relation to either a positive or negative outcome of their asylum claim or any other administrative procedure. Young person might need help with paperwork.
- ▶ Linking with extracurricular clubs etc
- ▶ Ensuring access to services, including education, health care, rehabilitation, play, leisure,
- ▶ Support tracing family and contacts if in the best interests of the child
- ▶ Help with budgeting, cooking, managing bills, finding accommodation (for leaving care)

2.2.5. MODULE 3 - RECRUITMENT, MATCHING, TRAINING AND MONITORING FOSTER CARE PROVISION

MODULE 3 – RECRUITMENT, MATCHING, TRAINING AND MONITORING FOSTER CARE PROVISION

OBJECTIVE OF THE MODULE: This module focuses on: Network assessment and providing technics and strategies to recruit the most appropriate foster carers for a specific child; provision of training and system to guarantee a proper monitoring of the foster care.

DURATION: 2 ½ HOURS

The Module 3 is divided into 3 sub-modules:

Module 3A: Identifying Networks of support and forms of professional partnership (45 min.)

Module 3B: Recruitment and assessment of foster carers; matching of foster carers and children (1.15 HOUR)

Module 3C: Training, retention and monitoring (½ hour)

MODULE 3.A – IDENTIFYING NETWORKS OF SUPPORT AND FORMS OF PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIP

DURATION: 45 MINUTES

NETWORK OF SUPPORT AND FORMS OF PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIP

- Social network assessment: what is and how you can do it (Methodology and Technique)
- Formal and informal social support
- Inter-professional team-working

COPING NATURAL NETWORK AND INTERPROFESSIONAL NETWORKING

Two types of network can be identified: the coping natural network and the inter-professional networking

Natural network: it regards relationships between active and motivated people (professional or not) present in complex life events, in which the social worker has the task to facilitate relationships, recognize strengths and promote open dialogue (*Seikkula & Arnkil, 2006*). The guidance of the social worker allows people who are interested in the achievement of a common aim to focus on this mutual interest and therefore to decide to work together, forming a coping network. In the case of foster care, it means helping foster families in improving their social network, connecting relatives, friends, neighbors, people living in the community, operators of different services (school, work, social services, third sectors operators, volunteers, etc.) that are interested in helping foster carers and unaccompanied migrant children.

The social worker identifies the people who work and produce positive power in the coping process, although they still do not relate to each other, and joins these social relations. Through the professional guide, the social worker motivates people to connect each other, to work together, to share a task, to think together and to act intentionally about the tasks to be faced. This professional activity is called relational guidance of a coping network. The social worker observes and reformulates what occurs in the network, pays attention to the feelings that emerge and reformulates them to render them visible to the network, places importance on certain aspects of reasoning so that they can be recirculated and subjected again to common reflection, captures the ideas that emerge in the network to continue reformulating and reflecting on action strategies or new problems to face.

The social worker who guides the network has a double position: she/he is located both inside the network and outside the network because she/he is, at the same time, an active member of the network and a guide. The guide function does not exclude the possibility for social workers to participate in networks as members who reflect with others what can be accomplished, by expressing their opinions and by providing resources. However, it is important that the relational guidance be prevalent and that the social worker contribute to the reasoning about what to do without exercising his/her decision-making power and ideas for change rather than facilitating joint reasoning among all of the members of the network. The social worker, in this situation, works in a **constructive dialogue** with other people, jointly establishes interpretations and identifies with them paths to be followed.

The logic of the network provides for the presence of a **range of actors** with different professional skills and experiences, but all at the same status level (without hierarchies) temporarily brought together by a shared objective. The professional may be a member with the same opportunities as the others (including non-professionals, obviously), or the professional may act as an observer/relational facilitator, helping to ensure that the network is fluid and is characterized by reflection upon its actions (Archer, 2003). See Graphical representation of a coping network.

Coping network: before we consider the social worker (acting from a relational perspective) as a member of the network, we need to recognize that one of the social worker's tasks is **to 'seek out' the coping network when he or she encounters a foster family**. So, from this perspective, one of the skills of the social worker is the ability to identify whether the environment of the individual/service user already contains people who are dealing with the problem, who they are, what relationships, if any, exist between them, and how to relate to them. In this case is very important to fulfil a good assessment process in which relational resources are reported through the use of social network analysis to study a focal actor (a person or a family) and the relations that surround that person or family (i.e., *egocentric analysis*; also known as personal network analysis). Egocentric analysis highlights the effect that small networks can have on behavior, which in turn, underscores the importance for practitioners and researchers to examine an individual's local network to more fully understand the level of risk and protective factors affecting the individual.

Inter-professional network: Where there is already a natural coping network, the task of the social worker is to accompany and consolidate those social actions that already exist. Where, by contrast, no such network exists, **the social worker's task is to seek to stimulate the development of such a network around the problem**. It is the job of the social worker to seek out similar insights that may provide a basis for activating an interest in identifying a solution to the problem. This activity is one we might define as "public presentation of the goals", in which the social worker sets out his or her reading of the situation, thereby helping other actors to recognize each other in ways that had until then been unclear to them but which have become clearer as a result of the social worker's actions. In this way, the social worker may build a coping network from scratch.

Exercise8: "Reading network of a foster family"

You have to draw the map of the family Smith, that are interested in foster care for an unaccompanied minor, Moussa (16).

Smith's haven't any children; the husband is artisan; the wife is teacher in an elementary school. They like sports, their families of origin live in the same city of them, the husband is voluntary for the civil protection and the wife is member of the association of the public library.

Image their network and draw it.

A second type of networking is more traditional and regards the creation of **links between professionals involved in the case and their organizations**: it means to use a multidimensional approach. However, it does not mean mere juxtaposition of different prospects (medical, psychological, social, educational, etc.), instead, it points out the necessity for their integration in order to offer personalized answers to specific needs of the foster family and the unaccompanied children.

In the case of foster care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children, services involved are: **social services, juvenile court, health services, educational services, organizations involved in training programs, etc.**

Structural factors that facilitate collaborative care include collaborative leadership, organizational culture that supports collaboration, effective methods of communication, and collocation. Interdisciplinary teams require clarity of roles and responsibilities to ensure optimum team function. Professional members come to the team with varying degrees of understanding concerning the capabilities of other professions.

In view of the procedural nature of integration, it must be supported practically through effective tools (operating protocols, guidelines, spread of the use of ICT, etc.), but even before that it must create a common culture, a culture of integration among the various professional spheres, in order to avoid that the instruments acquire purely bureaucratic functions.

Through the instrument of multidimensional evaluation units is possible to reach a comprehensive assessment of the problem, making possible to highlight the different perspectives, indispensable step in the creation of a truly personalized intervention. The unified management of the project, then, is supported by the existence of a *case manager*, a true *trait d'union* between the various phases of the project, among the various players and various professionalism.

THE KEY DIMENSION OF INTERPROFESSIONAL TEAMWORK

- Democratic approaches
- Effort to breakdown stereotypes and barriers
- Regular time to develop team working away from practice
- Good communication
- A single shared work location
- Mutual role understanding
- The development of joint protocols, training and work practices
- Agreed practice priorities across professional boundaries
- Regular and effective team meetings
- Team members valuing and respecting each other
- Good performance management.

MODULE 3.B – RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT OF FOSTER CARERS; MATCHING OF FOSTER CARERS AND CHILDREN

DURATION: 1.15 HOUR

RECRUITMENT OF FOSTER CARERS

Exercise 12: read the following examples (handouts). Are foster carers for unaccompanied children specifically recruited in your country? What are, or might be, the challenges of this kind of recruitment?

*Matching is widely regarded as a complex endeavor. Many different factors need to be considered in order to identify the best possible foster placement for a given child. In most countries, optimum matching is hindered by the availability of foster placements. In a study conducted by de Ruijter de Wildt et al. (2015), the **Netherlands** was found to be 'the only country that does not face a lack of suitable families who are willing to take care of unaccompanied minors.'. It has a structured system of foster care for unaccompanied minors, whereby foster care is available to all unaccompanied minors, 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 minors recruits its own (ethnic) foster families and is*

therefore not dependent on the general Dutch foster care system¹⁷, thus suggesting that such an approach might be useful elsewhere as well.

In **Greece**, METAdrasi's innovative action "A Home for Human Rights" METAdrasi – Foster Care for unaccompanied minors¹⁸ seeks to provide unaccompanied minors with the opportunity to be hosted by families. This project developed after exchange of expertise with organizations in 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 with the child, have a similar cultural background and would be able to undertake the responsibility to offer a family environment until such time as the child could be reunited with his/her family (intra-ethnic 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 foreign children. Apart from the fact that the recruitment of families with the same cultural background is supposed to be near-impossible given the limited availability of resources, it is also regarded as discriminatory against the minors since the goal for these children is integration in France. A positive side effect of reception of UAMs in French foster families is said to be that the French children learn to respect adults and the importance of school from the foreign foster 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.

Exercise 13: developing a recruitment plan (handout)

Using the questions below as prompts, individual participants to begin to draft a foster care recruitment plan:

- How many foster carers are needed? Within what time frame??
- What families are need and for whom? (ages of children, gender, ethnic cultural or indigenous family, languages, religion, single with or without children etc.)
- Where might prospective foster carers be found? (existing networks, cultural groups, schools, churches, mosques, community centers etc.)
- What methods could be used to recruit? (e.g. formal advertising, speaking to groups, word of mouth, specific recruitment roles) What resources might be needed?
- What information already exists for people interested in becoming foster carers?

ASSESSMENT OF FOSTER CARERS

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.

¹⁷ Reception and Living in Families: Overview of family-based reception for unaccompanied migrant children in the EU Member States, February 2015, at <http://www.scepnetwork.org/images/21/276.pdf>

¹⁸ <http://metadrasi.org/en/campaigns/foster-care-for-unaccompanied-separated-children/>

Exercise 9: In pairs, make a list of the different things that would need to be assessed when deciding whether an individual could become a foster carer. Who should carry out the assessment? Then participants to feed back to main group, with ideas recorded on flipchart.

Then Trainers are asked to read out and discuss the Minimum standards on assessment:

“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 should involve face to face meetings with the prospective foster carers and with any other family members living in the household.

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, neighborhood 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.”

MATCHING

Definition of Matching: the process of selecting an individual or family that is the best fit for a child.

A SELECTION OF FACTORS THAT MAY BE CONSIDERED WHEN “MATCHING”

- ✚ **Wishes of the young person:** young person may not want to be placed with someone from their own culture.
- ✚ **Geography:** Would an urban or rural placement be best suited to the personality of the young person and their previous experience? Are there services that the young person needs to be near?
- ✚ **Accommodation factors:** How big the apartment is; layout of the house (e.g. is there somewhere the young person can study if there are young children in the house).
- ✚ **Family composition:** presence of other children in the house, - their ages vis a vis the unaccompanied migrant child (e.g. too close in age? There is a connection between foster placement breakdown and small age difference with the other children in the foster family), their views about fostering; whether there will be a couple caring for the young person or an individual;
- ✚ **Migration status:** The family being of a migrant background may be helpful or it may hinder the placement. Helpful in terms of the family understanding what it is like to be a migrant or maybe to be an asylum seeker; understanding of the asylum process and other procedures (i.e. immigration law, etc.), of what it is like to flee one’s country etc.; understanding of trauma; However, a family with a migrant background may themselves still be struggling to integrate, may be dealing with their own trauma, there may be

tensions within the family already regarding adjustment to the new society (e.g. children integrating faster than parents);

- ✚ **Ability to live with secrecy and silence:** Often unaccompanied children won't want to talk about their experiences prior to arrival in the current of current residence. Foster carers might expect that young people will confide in them and be willing to share. Recognise that it is a lot to ask someone to act as a parent figure for a child whom they know very little about.
- ✚ **Educational Factors** (e.g. educational levels of the foster parents and have the capacity to help young person with schooling or to get this help for them; where the young person is attending school currently (if applicable) – is it very important that the placement move does not involve a school move?);
- ✚ **Sexuality** – is the young person open to being cared for by a gay couple. Is the couple open to caring for a gay young person?

Exercise 10– Individual reflection 1

- ▶ Imagine that a young person you know (for example, your son/daughter or niece/nephew or friend's child) is going into foster care.
- ▶ If you were to advise a social worker about what placement might be 'a good fit' for that child what advice would you give? What factors should the social worker take into account?

Facilitator:

Ask people to take time to reflect individually in order to do this exercise. Ask them to jot down what they had considered. Then ask for some feedback before asking them to move on to the next exercise (re matching of an unaccompanied child) and then again asking for feedback).

In training foster carers it is important for the foster carers to know what factors are considered when deciding what young person might be placed with them.

Exercise 11– Individual reflection 2

- ▶ Now think of an unaccompanied migrant child whom you know.
- ▶ If you were to advise a social worker about what placement might be 'a good fit' for that child what advice would you give? What factors should the social worker take into account?

The trainees can choose one of the cases discussed in the training if they don't yet have contact with Unaccompanied Migrant Children.

TRAINING AND ONGOING SUPPORT

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.

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 careers' performance and identifying their development needs.

*In a small scale study undertaken **in the UK**, carers identified five areas of need, 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 organizations and the internet all acted as sources of support and information.¹⁹ 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.²⁰*

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 systems and how to support the child within that systems;
- the situation of Unaccompanied Migrant 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; and
- 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 behavior, and should understand how children's previous experiences can manifest in challenging behavior. Sufficient resources and supports should be put in place to enable difficulties in foster placements to be overcome, in order to ensure

¹⁹ A.L. Sidery, Exploring the Training and Support Needs of Foster Carers Providing Placements for Unaccompanied Young People, School for Policy Studies, September 2017

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-and-refugee-children>

continuity of care for unaccompanied migrant children unless such continuity is not considered to be in their best interests.

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.

2.3. EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE TRAINING COURSE ON FOSTER CARE FOR UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN

DATE:
TITLE AND LOCATION:
TRAINERS:

Dear Participant,

we would be most grateful if you could provide feedback on training you have followed.

I. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

1. What is your overall assessment of the training?

Excellent

Very Good

Good

Satisfactory

Poor

Comments:

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

	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
1. The objectives of the training were clearly defined	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2. Participation and interaction were encouraged	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3. The topics covered were relevant to me	<input type="checkbox"/>				

4. The training will be useful in my work

5. The trainers were knowledgeable about the topics provided during the training

6. The training objectives were met

7. The time allocated for each session was sufficient

8. The meeting room and facilities were adequate

3. To what extent did the training increase your knowledge on foster care?

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

5. What aspects of the training could be improved?

6. Please, share any other comments or suggestions here

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

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Annex 1: SHORTLIST OF GOOD PRACTICES

List of good practices selected

- 1.** A pool of foster carers 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.

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.²¹

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**²² 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 ARDECHE²³ and ADOS SANS FRONTIERE²⁴" have developed a system of "sponsoring"²⁵ 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 children²⁶) 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 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

²¹ 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>

²² 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>

²³ <http://www.ardeche.fr/1214-mineurs-non-accompagnes.htm>

²⁴ 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/>)

²⁵ "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)".

²⁶ <http://metadrasi.org/en/campaigns/foster-care-for-unaccompanied-separated-children/>

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.²⁷ 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.²⁸

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 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.²⁹ 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"³⁰ 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

²⁷ '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.

²⁸ Ireland's National Standards for Foster Care can be found here: https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/National_Standards_for_Foster_Care.pdf

²⁹ 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

³⁰ <http://refugees-welcome.it>

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”.³¹ 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. 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**.³² 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

³¹ <http://terradeipopoli.altervista.org/affido-omoculturale.html>

³² 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

beyond the placement". Drawing on that same study Sirriyeh (2013)³³ 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.³⁴ 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 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.³⁵ 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).

³³ 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

³⁴ <https://www.istitutodegliinnocenti.it/content/profuce-prendersi-cura-dei-ragazzi-arrivati-da-soli-europa-grazie-allaffidamento-istituto-0>

³⁵ 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

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 Ireland³⁶ and in the Netherlands³⁷ 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)³⁸ unaccompanied migrant children talked about being ‘reversed’ into childhood, having had more agency and responsibility prior to leaving their countries of origin and during their journeys to Europe. A similar point was raised by young people in a study conducted by De Graeve and Bex (2017)³⁹ 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)⁴⁰, 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, 2018⁴¹).*

³⁶ 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

³⁷ 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.

³⁸ Kaukko, M. & Wernesjö, U. (2017), Belonging and participation in liminality: unaccompanied children in Finland and Sweden. *Childhood*, 24(1): 7-20

³⁹ 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

⁴⁰ 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

⁴¹ 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>

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.

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.⁴²

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.⁴³ 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.⁴⁴

Under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Program, the EU co-founded 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 families⁴⁵.

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.⁴⁶

⁴² Fundamental Rights Report 2017, p.184-186, <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/annual-reports/fundamental-rights-2017#child-rights>

⁴³ 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.

⁴⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-and-refugee-children>

⁴⁵ <https://engi.eu/projects/alfaca/manual/>

⁴⁶ Information from the concept on 'Kinder im Exil' by PiB, available on the website 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.

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.

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".⁴⁷ 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 Authority⁴⁸ has a statutory remit to monitor and inspect the providers of foster care services. HIQA conducts its inspections against the National Standards for Foster Care⁴⁹. 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 available⁵⁰.

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.

⁴⁷ <https://www.aibi.it/ita/attivita/affido/#1505379818504-442b5ad6-e357>; <https://www.aibi.it/ita/category/bambini-in-alto-mare/>

⁴⁸ <https://www.hiqa.ie/areas-we-work/childrens-services>

⁴⁹ Ireland's National Standards for Foster Care can be found here: https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/National_Standards_for_Foster_Care.pdf

⁵⁰ The Children's Book about Foster Care:

https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/The_Childrens_Book_about_Foster_Care.pdf

Annex 2: GUIDANCE ON MINIMUM STANDARD

The Guidance on Minimum Standards has been developed by the interdisciplinary group of experts in coordination with the 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 careers; 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.

Definition of Unaccompanied Migrant Children

According to the European Commission⁵¹, the term 'children in migration' covers all third country national 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.⁵²

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.***

⁵¹ EC, “The protection of children in migration”, 2016

⁵² 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>

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.

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 child⁵³.

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

⁵³ <https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/GC6.pdf>

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.

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; and
- 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 minors, 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.