



LOST IN MIGRATION

Working together to protect children
from disappearances, from European
priorities to local realities

Challenges and progress in implementing the
European Commission Communication on the
Protection of Children in Migration: Providing effective
protection and enhancing integration at local level

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**Missing
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1

Introduction

Since 2015 and the increase of migrants' and refugees' arrivals in Europe, women and children on the move outnumber adult men.¹ UNICEF has estimated that 5.4 million migrant children live in Europe.² In 2017, 32,000 children arrived in Greece, Italy, Spain and Bulgaria, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). At least 54% of them were unaccompanied or separated from their parents.³ Hundreds of children are held in immigration detention throughout Europe, although exact numbers are lacking.⁴ Missing Children Europe and the Maltese President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society found that the lack of efficient protection systems at the local level and the limited use of solidarity mechanisms among EU member states have increasingly exposed children to violence, exploitation and abuse.⁵ Europol noted that at least 10,000 unaccompanied children went missing in 2015 and national reports prove that children have continued to go missing due to poor conditions in some reception centres, lack of information on their rights and potential remedies, slow and complex procedures for protection, lack of training for professionals in contact with children and lack of coordination at national and cross-border level.⁶

Especially with regard to children, this means that special measures should be taken to ensure their protection and integration into host communities.⁷ The European Commission concluded in 2017 that children in migration require specific and appropriate protection. These children 'are in a state of particular vulnerability, because of their age, their distance from home and often their separation from parents or carers'.⁸

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (Current Affairs Committee)⁹ acknowledged in 2017 that in the absence of a clear and coherent European response to migration, local and regional governments have been left with limited means and guidance to fulfil their responsibility to provide newly arrived migrants with protection, support and access to key public services such as housing, healthcare and education.¹⁰ "[T]he increasing number of migrants coming to Europe constitutes a critical challenge for all levels of government, calling for adapted and effective measures in Council of Europe Member States."¹¹ Debates often are around the burden created by and the risks brought by migrants to

host societies, instead of focusing on successful integration and the benefits that migrants can bring. Unfortunately, 'the current crisis brings with it the risk of new forms of xenophobic violence and a new outbreak of discrimination and racism'.¹² The Congress concluded that 'local authorities should prioritise policies and programmes directed towards children (accompanied or not)'. These children are harmed and traumatised and it is in the interests of society to support these children in their integration into society. The European Committee of the Regions (EU)¹³ also emphasises that 'a good reception and integration process is a long-term investment in welfare, democracy and human rights'.¹⁴

The Congress notes that the participation of children themselves and seeing them as partners would be recommended.¹⁵ It is stated that "Co-operation and co-ordination between all levels of governments including local, regional and national governments and dialogue between cities of different countries as well as exchanges of good practices examples, will allow the development of innovative initiatives involving migrants and refugees as well as citizens".¹⁶

¹ Council of Europe, **From reception to integration: the role of local and regional authorities facing migration**, CG32(2017)07final, 28 March 2017, Explanatory memorandum, para. 75.

² UNICEF, **Uprooted: The Growing Crisis For Refugee And Migrant Children**, September 2016, p. 11.

³ UNICEF, **Refugee and Migrant Crisis in Europe Humanitarian Situation Report . 26**, 15 January 2018.

⁴ FRA, **European legal and policy framework on immigration detention of children**, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2017, p. 13.

⁵ Lost in Migration Delegate booklet, Brussels, 11-12 April 2018, Background Note on p.11.

⁶ Lost in Migration Delegate booklet, Brussels, 11-12 April 2018, Background Note on p.11.

⁷ UN Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW), **Joint general comment No. 3 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 22 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the general principles regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration**, CMW/CIG/CJ3-CRC/CIG/CJ22, 16 November 2017, paras. 49-50.

⁸ European Commission, **The Protection of Children in Migration**, COM(2017)211 final, Brussels, 12

April 2017, p. 2.

⁹ The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is an institution of the Council of Europe, responsible for strengthening local and regional democracy in its 47 member states and assessing the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. See for more: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/congress/overview>.

¹⁰ Council of Europe, Report CG32(2017)07final, **Summary**, p. 1.

¹¹ Council of Europe, Report CG32(2017)07final, **Resolution 411 (2017)**, para. 1.

¹² Council of Europe, Report CG32(2017)07final, **Explanatory memorandum**, paras. 24-27.

¹³ The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) is an EU advisory body composed of locally and regionally elected representatives coming from all 28 member states. Through the CoR they are able to share their opinion on EU legislation that directly impact regions and cities. See for more: https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/institutions-bodies/european-committee-regions_en.

¹⁴ European Committee of the Regions, **Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions — The protection of children in migration**, 2018/C 054/14, Brussels, 13 February 2018, para. 43.

¹⁵ Council of Europe, Report CG32(2017)07final, Explanatory memorandum, para. 81.

To the question “Is it a refugee crisis or a crisis of policy?” the answer of the Congress is clear and sound: there is both and ‘what is needed is a combination of a long-term approach and crisis management, which can provide basic necessities and promote social cohesion, safeguarding at the same time the human rights of the new migrants.’¹⁷

The European Commission recognised that a wealth of knowledge and good practice is

available in the member states on the protection of children in migration.¹⁸ This research project builds on the results of recent EU co-funded projects, existing research and available good practices related to the protection and integration of children in migration. The project aims to identify good practices and key challenges at the grassroots level and to deepen the discussion and cooperation of high-level decision-makers and implementation in European cities.

1.1 Latest EU-commitments

In May 2015, the European Commission adopted an **EU Agenda on Migration** in which it promised to develop a comprehensive strategy to protect children in migration.¹⁹ In November 2016 the European Commission organised the 10th Annual EU Forum on the rights of the child, focusing on children in migration.²⁰ At this conference, NGOs urged the Commission to follow-up on its commitment to develop this strategy, emphasizing that an EU action plan on all refugee and migrant children is necessary to coordinate actions and mobilise resources. Also, the **Lost in Migration** conference held on 26-27 January 2017 underlined the need for targeted actions to better protect children in migration.²¹

In April 2017 the European Commission issued the Communication on the protection of children in migration (hereafter European Commission Communication).²² The aim of the European Commission Communication is ‘to provide a series

of coordinated and effective actions to the pressing protection gaps and needs that children face once they reach Europe, ranging from their identification, reception, implementation of procedural safeguards, as well as establishment of durable solutions’.²³ The effective protection of children in migration should be guaranteed, with a focus on strengthening cross-border cooperation among the EU member states.²⁴ In order to provide durable solutions, including integration in a member state, the member states are among others encouraged 1) to provide equal access to inclusive, formal education, including early childhood education and care, 2) ensure timely access to healthcare, 3) provide support to enable children in the transition to adulthood (or leaving care) to access necessary education and training and 4) foster social inclusion in all integration-related policies, such as prioritising mixed, non-segregated housing and inclusive education.²⁵ In the case of children, best interest determinations should be carried out in order to determine the best appropriate course of action.²⁶

Protecting children is first and foremost about upholding European values of respect for human rights, dignity and solidarity. It is also about enforcing European Union law and respecting the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and international human rights law on the rights of the child. This is why protecting all children in migration, regardless of status and at all stages of migration, is a priority.

European Commission Communication (2017), para. 3.

¹⁶ Council of Europe, Report CG32(2017)07final, **Explanatory memorandum**, para. 170.

¹⁷ Council of Europe, Report CG32(2017)07final, **Explanatory memorandum**, para. 37.

¹⁸ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 2.

¹⁹ Lost in Migration Delegate booklet, Brussels, 11-12 April 2018, Background Note p. 11.

²⁰ See for more information: http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=34456.

²¹ See for more information: http://lostinmigration.eu/Conclusions_Lost_in_Migration_Conference.pdf.

²² European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final.

²³ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 3.

²⁴ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 3.

²⁵ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 14.

²⁶ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 11.

The social inclusion of all refugee and migrant children should be enhanced through education and training opportunities. Additional measures should promote the integration of children who would remain in Europe. Welcoming and inclusive societies should help refugee and migrant children grow up in a nurturing environment and provide them with support for their transition into adulthood. Participatory work with such children is vital to supporting their development and combating radicalisation. Integration through sport and promotion of diversity in media will help to build an inclusive society.

Council of Europe Action Plan on the Protection of Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe (2017), p. 4.

At the Council of Europe level, in 2016 the Secretary General identified a series of immediate, priority actions for member states and the Council of Europe in its paper **Protecting children affected by the refugee crisis: A shared responsibility**.²⁷ The Special Representative of the Secretary General on migration and refugees has initiated consultations within the Council of Europe and with other international and European organisations that are active in the field of protection of migrants' and refugees' rights on ongoing and future activities on refugee and migrant children with a view to the adoption of an action plan on refugee and migrant children.²⁸ In its thematic report the Special Representative highlights the need for education and integration measures for children, access to health services and the transition to adulthood.²⁹ These actions resulted in the adoption of the **Council of Europe Action Plan on the Protection of Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe** by the Committee of Ministers.³⁰ The Action Plan consists of three main pillars:

- Ensuring access to rights and child-friendly procedures;
- Providing effective protection;
- Enhancing the integration of children who would remain in Europe³¹

The third pillar is of particular importance with regard to this study. The two main priority areas of this pillar are to ensure that refugee and migrant children are provided with education and that that

they are provided with opportunities to participate in society.³²

In its conclusions on the protection of children in migration adopted by the Council of the European Union on 8 June 2017, the Council states that 'the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions or decisions concerning children and in assessing the appropriateness of all durable solutions; resettlement, integration or return depending on their specific situation and needs.'³³ Also, the importance of raising awareness and of the involvement of local communities in relation to the protection of children in migration is stressed.³⁴

The latest development is the adoption of the European Parliament resolution on the protection of children in migration (2018/2666(RSP)).³⁵ Twenty eight points of action are listed, urging member states to adopt and implement a holistic rights-based approach in their child-related policies.³⁶ Some of the other points listed are:

- to implement the principle of the best interests of the child for all decisions concerning children, regardless of their status;
- to guarantee that all children, and unaccompanied children in particular, have access to dignified accommodation and healthcare and to ensure full access to formal and inclusive education under the same conditions as children from EU host countries,

²⁷ Council of Europe: Committee of Ministers, **Protecting children affected by the refugee crisis: A shared responsibility**. Secretary General's proposals for priority actions, SG/Inf (2016) 9 final, 4 March 2017.

²⁸ Council of Europe: Committee of Ministers, **Thematic Report on migrant and refugee children**. Prepared by the Special Representative of the Secretary General on migration and refugees, SG/Inf(2017)13, 10 March 2017

²⁹ Council of Europe: Committee of Ministers, Thematic Report SG/Inf(2017)13.

³⁰ Council of Europe: Committee of Ministers, **Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe**, CM(2017)54-final, Nicosia, 19 May 2017.

³¹ Council of Europe: Committee of Ministers, Document CM(2017)54-final, p. 1.

³² Council of Europe: Committee of Ministers, Document CM(2017)54-final, p. 4-5.

³³ Council of the European Union, **Conclusions of the Council of the European Union and the representatives of the governments of the Member States on the protection of children in migration**, 10085/17, Brussels, 8 June 2017, Annex p. 3.

³⁴ Council of the European Union, Conclusions 10085/17 p. 3.

³⁵ European Parliament, **Resolution on the protection of children in migration**, 2018/2666(RSP), 25 April 2018.

³⁶ European Parliament, Resolution 2018/2666(RSP), para. 2.

- including preparatory measures such as language classes, in order to ensure that children integrate into the host societies;
- the essential role played by local and regional authorities, which are at the forefront of the reception and integration of migrant children, despite limited resources;
- to invest in psychological and psychiatric support and rehabilitation for the purposes of addressing children’s mental health issues.³⁷

Stresses the importance of building an individual plan based on the needs and other specific vulnerabilities of each child, taking into account the fact that children’s quality of life and well-being also require early integration, a community support system and having the chance to fulfil their full potential; takes the view that such an approach has also proven effective in preventing children from going missing [...] Takes the view that the Commission should enact infringement procedures against Member States in instances of protracted and systematic immigration detention of children and their families, so as to ensure compliance with children’s fundamental rights.

Council of Europe Action Plan on the Protection of Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe (2017), p. 4.

1.2 Lost in Migration, first edition: Working together in protecting children from disappearance

In January 2017, coinciding with the European Justice and Home Affairs Council, Missing Children Europe and the Maltese President’s Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society brought together 160 professionals and experts to discuss the child protection challenges that lead to disappearances of children in migration. This was done with the support of the European Programme on Integration and Migration (EPIM). Conclusions of this conference – entitled “Lost in Migration” – were endorsed by over 50 organisations and shared with national

and European authorities and are available at www.lostinmigration.eu. In February 2017, Members of the European Parliament submitted an oral question in plenary, calling upon the Commission to follow up on the recommendations of the Lost in Migration conference. In April 2017, the European Commission adopted the long-awaited guiding Communication on the protection of children in migration,³⁸ outlining³⁷ priority actions for the European and national level (see above). The policy cited the conclusions from the first edition of the Lost in Migration conference.³⁹

³⁷ European Parliament, Resolution 2018/2666(RSP), paras. 4, 8, 11, 16.

³⁸ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final.

³⁹ Lost in Migration I, access via: <http://lostinmigration.eu>.

1.3 Lost in Migration, second edition: From European priorities to local realities

In April 2018, Missing Children Europe and the Maltese President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society organised the second edition of the Lost in Migration conference. It took place with the support of the European Programme on Integration and Migration (EPIM), the Alliance for Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), the Brussels-Capital Region and the "Rights, Equality and Citizenship 2014-2020" Programme of the EU, and in cooperation with the Intergroup on Children's Rights of the European Parliament and the Urban Agenda for the EU. The aim of the conference was to:

- take stock of the progress achieved since the adoption of the European Commission Communication on the protection of children in migration;
- identify good/promising practices in the implementation of the commitments from the local level.⁴⁰

Prior to and as part of this conference, Missing Children Europe, the Urban Agenda for the EU and the University of Leiden partnered to conduct the present research project. It is carried out as a pilot study to investigate the progress achieved in terms of the protection of children in migration at the local level, especially in light of the guidance provided by the European Commission Communication, to identify examples of successful and promising initiatives as well as challenges in the implementation of European commitments and to draft initial recommendations.

At the conference the following conclusions were drawn by the attending parties from both the policy level and the on the ground practitioners:

- Since the adoption of the European Commission Communication, more investments have been made by member states and NGOs in support of children in migration in Europe in different domains, such as age assessments and projects by key partners. However, the gaps that are remaining are stark and implementation of many actions at national and local level is still lagging.

Conference participants asked via a poll system at the beginning of the event judged the progress achieved by the communication as "slow" and "urgent". Participants also highlighted the need for more awareness on the European Commission Communication, which otherwise would remain invisible to many important actors.

- One of the biggest gaps is the reception of unaccompanied children in migration. There continue to be different approaches in different countries, where there is a need for a consistent system for identification in an early stage of who the child is. The best way to do so is an immediate guidance and the appointment of a guardian. The best solution in favour of the child is mostly family reunion ("making Dublin work"). All of these solutions need to be guided by the best interest principle. The number of unaccompanied children that are coming to Europe is dropping, "so now is the time to invest in systems for entering and better support" (Sophie Magennis, Head of the Policy and Legal Support Unit (PLUS) of UNHCR Brussels).
- Many labels are used to identify children coming to Europe: "minors"; "migrant children", "refugee children", "unaccompanied and separated minors", "displaced children", "children on the move", etc. However, these labels cannot comprehensively represent a heterogenous group of children with different background, expectations, needs and vulnerabilities. Maud de Boer-Buquicchio (Un Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children and President of Missing Children Europe, highlighted the need to move from a system providing care based on general definitions, to a system that allocates resources and develops care plans based on an individual assessment and individual needs. Anna Maria Corazza Bildt, Member of the European Parliament and Co-chair of the Intergroup on the Rights of the Child, highlighted that the European Commission Communication moves towards this direction, however, the challenges remain in its implementation,

⁴⁰ Lost in Migration Delegate booklet, Brussels, 11-12 April 2018, Background Note p. 11.

especially at local level. Every child has the right to an individual life and care plan and an approach based on a long-term vision is needed.

- More support is needed, also in terms of financial support, to local organisations and authorities, who continue to be at the forefront of reception and integration efforts. While national governments hold the reins of immigration policy, managing the details of national policy typically fall to local and regional authorities, who are expected to provide a rapid response, often in the context of reduced resources and political tension and, in many cases, without a clear legal framework. Sandie Blanchet, Director of the UNICEF Office in Brussels, mentioned at the conference that local authorities have stepped up because there are no national actions. She mentioned Italy as an example, where the local authorities of Florence let undocumented children register for preschool and primary school, because this group of children has the same right to education as documented children.
- Others voiced concern for the actions taken so far. There is a need of policy coherence, to fill the gap between anti-trafficking policies and migration policies, but also to address lack of durable solutions and the hostile attitudes towards migration. This incoherence often pushes children to drop out of facilities, become homeless and thus potential victims of abuse and exploitation.
- Some participants be noticed that at this year's conference many voices remained unheard, such as actors working in the countries where children in migration come from and the children themselves. In general, it is strongly recommended that **children are included in the process of the design of the procedures to access effective international protection and integration options**. It is important to create processes and dedicate resources to ensure that children are involved in the design of services and also in policy-making.
- During workshops, multiple parties recognised that at the conference many of the European initiatives shared and highlighted were unknown by the attending parties. It was suggested to create a tool to support collaboration and dissemination of successful projects, such as a database to share information in a European platform that collects all NGO and government projects.

These conclusions and recommendations of the Conference point to a written statement in the Communication (**see below**) as well as to complement the analysis of this research project, which investigates the progress achieved in Europe since the adoption of the European Commission Communication; bundles conclusions from the second edition of the Lost in Migration conference; and reports the good practices and challenges at the local level in light of the Communication.

There is a wealth of knowledge and good practice in the Member States on the protection of children in migration, which needs to be shared at local and national level. However, further tangible improvements to the protection of all children in migration are needed to adequately address the current challenges. Therefore, a determined, concerted and coordinated follow-up to the key short-term actions set out in this Communication is required at the EU and national, regional and local levels, also in cooperation with civil society and international organisations.

European Commission Communication (2017), p. 16



2

Methodology

2.1 Aim of the study

This research takes stock of the challenges regarding the protection of the rights of children in migration and in particular the measures and practices regarding their integration in host countries, including state care, the appropriate responses and their implications for policy and practice. The aim of this study is to map the various initiatives currently existing and bring together the practices of key stakeholders from the local level who deal with migrant and refugee children in Europe.

“The ultimate aim is to sell the reality, not the dream, so we can share and work on what works and overcome the challenges.”

Federica Toscano, Missing Children Europe (2017)

2.2 Procedure

This study is conducted as part of the Partnership for the inclusion of migrants and refugees, who runs the secretariat of the Urban Agenda. In order to collect the data, the Partnership, supported by Ecorys, conducted interviews over the course of October 2017 to January 2018 (see for the interview topic list Appendix I). The investigative research gathered information from 14 cities and one nationwide organisation in Europe, to document the current progress and challenges experienced with the protection of and welcoming of refugee and migrant children in their communities. The 15 case studies represent over 20 different initiatives and services that offer lessons from the ground on protecting the rights and meeting the needs of children in migration, the results of this study are a useful resource to support national and EU level advocacy and test the progress achieved and gaps in policies to date.

The interviews were prepared by the Partnership. These interviews were either conducted through phone calls or e-mail and reports on the answers were written out. The reports were then sent to the Department of Child Law, Leiden University, the Netherlands. Two independent researchers analysed the data and drafted this report in cooperation with Missing Children Europe

Points of strength are the variety in respondent cities and interviewees that include 10 different countries across Europe and the wealth of information gathered through these interviews. In order to measure the progress of the local level in an unbiased manner, the interviews were not conducted by the researchers of this report. Such a methodology, has the disadvantage of being unable to ask follow-up questions and ask for clarifications. However, the respondents have been given the possibility to correct and integrate the draft text.

2.3 The Sample

2.3.1 Cities/Countries participating in this study

The cities that participated in this study are Antwerp (Belgium), Athens (Greece), Genoa (Italy), Ghent (Belgium), Glasgow (Scotland), Madrid (Spain), Milan (Italy), Ropazi (Latvia), Rotterdam (the Netherlands), Strömsund (Sweden), Tampere (Finland), Tilburg (the Netherlands), Trelleborg (Sweden), Vienna (Austria). Lastly, also one nationwide initiative was included, namely Nidos from the Netherlands, an organisation uniquely appointed and funded by the Dutch government for the guardianship of unaccompanied children. In Appendix II the exact initiatives, strengths and challenges encountered by the cities and organisations are set out per city/organisation.

2.3.2 Roles of the Participants

Most of the time, the interviewees worked at (a department of) the municipality of their represented city, which results in the sharing of on-the-ground initiatives and projects. Their roles varied and included among others, a social services project manager, a supervisor of the department for the support and social inclusion of migrants and refugees, a refugee and Roma mental health officer and multiple (junior) policy makers. By incorporating these voices in the study, the progress made in implementing European commitments at the local level can be evaluated. Their functions ensure that observations can be made at all levels of an initiative: from policy levels to practical on-the-ground implementation of the project (e.g. drafting project proposals to (applying for) funding, verifying the practical challenges and successes that were experienced in the implementation-phase of the project/initiative).



3

Results

Reflecting on real concerns about the situation of children in migration, the Partnership mobilised partners in 10 European countries to illustrate practices from across Europe on creating a safe and welcoming environment for them in local cities and communities. The 15 case studies of different cities and initiatives at the local level offer lessons from the ground on how services can ensure that children in migration get the necessary protection and (individualised) support they need to integrate and thrive in their host cities. These case studies help gather lessons learned from initiatives' implementation and (expected) outcomes and identify outstanding successes, as well as challenges and gaps.

This report is meant to be a useful resource to:

- Take stock of the progress achieved since the European Commission Communication on the protection of children in migration;
- Share and identify good/promising practices in the implementation of initiatives and commitments from the local level;
- Outline recommendations on the way forward.

It should be noted that the results of the second edition of the Lost in Migration conference – held in April 2018 in Brussels – complement the analysis of this research in setting the scene for the current gaps, challenges and progress achieved regarding the protection of the rights of children in migration and in particular the measures and practices regarding their integration in host countries. The outcomes of the conference have either confirmed or supplemented the results of this study and the conference therefore served the important purpose of both dissemination and verifying the results.

3.1 The Initiatives

As highlighted in the European Commission Communication, the European Union member states are encouraged to take key actions to respect the rights of children in migration and ensure their well-being and development. The Communication is divided in the following chapters, that respectively address the European Commission's identified areas of concern:

1. Addressing root causes;
2. Providing swift and comprehensive identification and protection;
3. Providing adequate reception in the European Union;
4. Ensuring swift and effective access to status determination procedures and implementation of procedural safeguards;
5. Ensuring durable solutions;

6. Respecting and guaranteeing for the best interests of the child (cross-cutting actions through more effective use of data, research, training and funding).⁴¹

The initiatives assembled from the 15 different authorities have accordingly been grouped. Immediately it became clear that there was a widespread provision of services, with almost all initiatives targeting the fifth area of ensuring durable solutions for children in their local communities. The themes that will be addressed in this section are: Integration and self-sufficiency of children and youth (para. 3.1.1); Education (para. 3.1.2); Housing and Accommodation (para. 3.1.3); Guardianship (para. 3.1.4) and lastly, Special Assistance and Measures (para. 3.1.5). In the following paragraphs, the recurring services and focuses among the cities and organisations will be discussed. In doing

⁴¹ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, specifically: "The principle of **best interests of the child** must be the primary consideration in all actions or decisions concerning children" (p. 3) and "the Member States are encouraged to: ensure that all children are provided with relevant information on their rights and on procedures, **in a child-friendly and age- and context- appropriate manner**" (p. 16) **emphases added**.

so, background information per local or national authority initiative have been drafted following their interview reports (see Appendices I and II). In general, the experiences of the cities and organisations indicated that similar challenges are faced, for instance with regard to the behaviour of civil society towards (child) migrants. Furthermore, it highlighted that there are various best practices that are useful to share and disseminate among European Union member states. In the city reports, the city's initiatives and the lessons learned from their implementation are described and these serve as a reference tool for further reading.

3.1.1 Integration and self-sufficiency of children and youth

The European Commission builds on relevant EU initiatives taken to address the migratory challenges, including the Commission's Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals.⁴² Whereas that Communication focuses also on adults in migration, it points to integration as a dynamic two-way process, which means not only to expect third-country nationals to embrace EU fundamental values and learn the host language, but also to offer them meaningful opportunities to participate in the economy and society – thereby stressing that it should go beyond participation in the labour market.⁴³ It furthermore notes that successful integration policies facilitate participation and empowerment for everyone in the society of a member state.⁴⁴ Especially with regard to children, the European Commission Communication on the protection of children in migration recognizes that full protection of these children includes the aspect of integration.⁴⁵ Because recently arrived children may not yet have been able to acquire the needed skills and competences to fully and actively integrate in host societies, guidance and support

by States in the domain of integration are needed and encouraged.⁴⁶ In the European Commission Communication of 2017, the European Commission highlighted, lastly, that “[t]imely access to healthcare and an adequate standard of living are key to the integration of children in the host countries. The improvement of living conditions, measures to tackle child poverty and to ensure the provision of healthcare (including mental healthcare) are critical.”⁴⁷

Integration, however, is a broad term, so it is not surprising that there are various ways in which the participating cities pursue the integration of their foreign citizens. The city of Trelleborg for instance designed their reception system in such a way that the children are preparing for a self-sufficient life, thereby facilitating their participation and empowerment in society. The city of Trelleborg notices the positive effects of their integration approach and in pursuit of the goal of self-sufficiency of minors ensure regard for the various domains which foster successful integration and well-being in society. In the Action Plan on integration of 2016 the main themes were: education, labour market and vocational training, access to basic needs (such as housing and health care) and active participation and social inclusion.⁴⁸

“The overall objective of the approach used by the city of Trelleborg in receiving unaccompanied migrant minors is to integrate them into the society and making them self-sufficient and prepared to take their responsibilities. The entire reception system is designed to foster this objective.”

Coordinator of the Establishment Lines Affairs of the municipality of Trelleborg, Sweden.

⁴² European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 3.

⁴³ European Commission, **Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals**, COM(2016)377 final, Brussels, 7 June 2016, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁴ European Commission, Communication COM(2016)377 final, p. 4.

⁴⁵ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 2.

⁴⁶ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 12.

⁴⁷ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 13. Footnote 54 mentions that “[m]igrant children are exposed to a high risk of poverty. The integrated approach promoted by the European Commission warrants renewed focus in the context of integration.” See for more information the Commission Recommendation **Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage** (2013/112/EU), Brussels, 20 February 2013.

⁴⁸ European Commission, Communication COM(2016)377 final.

"The municipality has high expectations on unaccompanied migrant minors and on the success of their integration process and focuses its attention towards the following themes within the integration process:

- School, internship and other obligations;
- Accommodation;
- Health;
- Economics;
- Communication and conflict management.

Ensuring the abovementioned needs paves the way towards the accomplishment of an independent and self-sufficient life."

Coordinator of Establishment Affairs in the municipality of Trelleborg, Sweden.

Vienna and Tilburg both implemented the approach 'Integration from Day 1'. Their overlapping aim is to start preparing the youngsters in their city as soon as they arrive, even if there is still a chance they have to return to their countries of origin, or move to another city or State. In practical terms this means that the municipality puts the emphasis on starting the integration process of unaccompanied children from the first day that the children arrive in the city by ensuring that the children acquire the necessary skills to start working as soon as they receive the permit to stay in the country. The advantage of this approach for the well-being and protection of the children is multi-fold. First of all, the European Commission noted in an earlier Communication that creating the right conditions for swift and successful integration, is "also an opportunity, including on the economic front, as evidence shows that third-country nationals have a positive fiscal net contribution if they are well integrated in a timely manner, starting with early integration into education and the labour market."⁴⁹ The European Commission Communication of 2017 also encourages the integration of children "at the earliest stage, through mainstream and targeted measures, as this could be an important means to social inclusion and to minimising risks with regard to possible criminal activity and exposure to radicalisation."⁵⁰ Early Integration is in line with two key actions EU member states are encouraged to take according to the European Commission: 1. "Ensure, within a short time span after arrival, equal access to inclusive, formal education, including early childhood education and care and develop and implement targeted programmes to support it" and 2. "Ensure timely access to healthcare as well as to other essential public services to all children."⁵¹

The early integration approach as well as putting the focus on the children's self-sufficiency result in implementation of the two key actions called for in the European Commission Communication and is as such a great example of how these actions could be and are implemented at the local level.

Another type of integration measure (at the other end of the 'Integration from Day 1' initiatives), lies in continued support after turning 18 and becoming a legal adult. Many children arrive in the city when they are already approaching their 18th birthday. This means that even though they are not self-sufficient and integrated yet, they become legal adults and will soon lose the special protection and assistance granted to children. Many cities implement measures to ensure the 18 year-olds who are not yet self-sufficient can still receive the necessary care and assistance (financial, (mental) health and social) and this could protect them from going missing. The despair among children and youth was shared at the conference as one of the pressing issues: without any support or care from the governments, they will be excluded from social life, society and eventually disappear in search of a better life. Where the Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors (2010 – 2014)⁵² prescribes that children should be supported in their path toward successful integration in the host society, member states should acknowledge that young adults in migration have not lost their "particular vulnerability" when turning 18 years old and as such measures to support their integration into the host society are "essential".⁵³ More on the 'prolonged support' can be read under section 3.2 on good practices below.

⁴⁹ European Commission, Communication COM(2016)377 final, p. 3.

⁵⁰ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 12.

⁵¹ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 14.

⁵² European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final.

⁵³ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 14.

“CURANT aims to provide further support to unaccompanied children when they reach the age of legal adulthood, increasing their chances to fully integrate into society.”

Project Manager of the Municipality of Antwerp, Belgium.

Despite the divergent initiatives and approaches, ranging from free language and life-skill classes, filling out educational/vocational/internship desires, invitations to local activities and appropriate housing arrangements, almost **all cities** that participated in the interviews and the conference put a strong focus on the goal of children’s full integration into society – unless their return or transfer is in the best interests of the children – and so their reports and shared input during the conference provide the “series of coordinated and effective actions” to the pressing needs that children face once they reach Europe, called for by the European Commission, being the establishment of durable solutions.⁵⁴

3.1.2 Education

The European Commission provides clear guidance on the theme of education and elaborates on the importance of education in its Communication of 2017: “Early and effective access to inclusive, formal education, including early childhood education and care, is one of the most important and powerful tools for the integration of children, fostering language skills, social cohesion and mutual understanding.”⁵⁵ Also, it is important to pay attention to other dimensions of socialisation, including through leisure activities and sports.⁵⁶ In addition to providing education to children, the Commission stresses the importance of preparing teachers to work with children of diverse backgrounds through training.

During the interviews, numerous initiatives targeted the educational needs of children, including practical training such as free (and sometimes mandatory) language courses,⁵⁷ vocational training⁵⁸ and civic education courses⁵⁹ taught by public servants such as police officers, to introduce the children to the city in terms of culture and local facilities such public transport. These initiatives come with their own approaches – some are to steer the children towards a work-oriented mind-set,⁶⁰ others are to include needs assessments as to ensure the education is tailored to their level and needs.⁶¹ The overarching goal is for every interviewed city the same: to achieve full integration and realize the rights of all children and young adults in their territory, in line with international and European standards.

An example of tailoring the educational needs of children individually (hence, using an individualised approach) is from the Vienna Social Fund, which has established the “Clearing Platform.” This is a centre in which individual assessments of competences, skills and professional experiences are carried out for all asylum seekers. The centre then assesses which is the best type of education to provide for unaccompanied children (public school, professional institution, language course, etc.), taking into account their needs.⁶²

The Commission and the interviewees are mindful of the fact that many children will have difficulty to access education, even if they are physically able to attend a school.

Effective access to education and to any measures necessary to ensure such access (e.g. language classes), must be available to all children, even if they will be returned to a third country. Due to emerging risks of segregated education for children in migration, access to inclusive and non-discriminatory education is the key towards children’s integration in other areas of life.

European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 13

⁵⁴ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 3 [emphasis added].

⁵⁵ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 12.

⁵⁶ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 12.

⁵⁷ All interviewed cities confirmed to host this.

⁵⁸ See the city reports of Genova, Gent, Milan and Trelleborg in Appendix II for more information.

⁵⁹ See the city report of Milan, Italy, in Appendix II for more information.

⁶⁰ See the city report of Trelleborg, Sweden, in Appendix II for more information.

⁶¹ See the city report of Madrid, Spain, in Appendix II for more information.

⁶² See city report of Vienna, Austria, in Appendix II for more information.

“For many migrant minors it is still difficult to access smoothly into the Belgium higher education system and many opt in favour of a vocational training.”

**Welfare and Equal Opportunities Service –
Department of Social Cohesion, Welfare and
Health in the city of Gent, Belgium**

At the same time, “many children are not always assured early access to education, although this is their human right according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and fundamental for securing their future and wellbeing.”⁶³ To address these challenges, the Commission will continue to “prioritize children’s safe access to formal and non-formal education as well as reducing the length of time children’s education is disrupted.”⁶⁴ The Communication encourages both the European Commission and EU member states to “ensure that all children have timely access to inclusive formal education, regardless of the status of the child and/or of his/her parents.”⁶⁵ It further encourages member states specifically, to “ensure, within a short time span after arrival, equal access to inclusive, formal education, including early childhood education and care and develop and implement targeted programmes to support it.”⁶⁶

Efforts in the field of education are taken at the local level by almost all interviewed cities, ensuring that children regardless of status receive access to a tailored or appropriate form of education. In order for this theme to be successfully implemented, training for professionals who work with children,⁶⁷ regular grants to children for completing an education⁶⁸ and an individualised approach that establishes the individual educational needs per child⁶⁹ that aims to help and empower the child were key initiatives, that the cities of Tampere, Glasgow and Vienna recommend implementing in the local systems or approaches in other cities in Europe. As mentioned by the interviewee from the city of Trelleborg, the long-term benefit of investing in a child’s education, is the provision of the necessary tools to become independent and self-sufficient

“The Department’s main aim is to provide migrant minors with the necessary tools and means for completing their education, as unaccompanied minors usually arrive in Sweden without having completed the cycle of upper secondary education and in general having attended a shorter period of education. Addressing the education needs is the basis to ensure that the minors can subsequently become independent in the search for a job and an accommodation.”

**Coordinator of the Establishment Affairs at
the municipality of Trelleborg, Sweden**

3.1.3 Accommodation and Housing

The European Commission explains that “reception conditions for children in migration include safe and appropriate accommodation, as well as any necessary support services to secure the child’s best interests and well-being”, such as independent representation (see 3.1.4 Guardianship), access to education (see 3.1.2 Education), healthcare, psychosocial support and leisure (see 3.1.5 Special Assistance and Measures) and integration-related measures (see 3.1.1 Integration and self-sufficiency of minor and young migrants).⁷⁰ Therefore, as of 2017, member states are encouraged, with the support of the Commission and EU Agencies, to:

1. integrate child protection policies in all reception facilities hosting children, including by appointing a person responsible for child protection;
2. ensure and monitor the availability and accessibility of a viable range of alternatives to the administrative detention of children in migration;
3. ensure that an appropriate and effective monitoring system is in place with regard to reception of children in migration;
4. make full use of the forthcoming EASO guidance on operational standards and indicators on material reception conditions for unaccompanied children.⁷¹

⁶³ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 8.

⁶⁴ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 8.

⁶⁵ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 9.

⁶⁶ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 14.

⁶⁷ See city report of Tampere, Finland (Project Trust), in Appendix II for more information.

⁶⁸ See city report of Glasgow, United Kingdom, in Appendix II for more information.

⁶⁹ See city report of Vienna, Austria, in Appendix II for more information.

⁷⁰ European Commission, Communication (2017) 211 final, p. 8.

⁷¹ European Commission, Communication (2017) 211 final, p. 9.

To first reflect on point 2 on the encouragement to ensure alternatives to detention, it should be noted that one of the recommendations of the first edition of Lost in migration was to abolish detention of children in migration. During both conferences, Her Excellency Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, the President of Malta, reminded that despite the relatively big population of children in migration in the country, detention in Malta was completely stopped for children and families in 2013 and this improved significantly the quality of life for children and youth in Malta.⁷² Also, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in a recent Joint General Comment published in 2017 states that detention of children for immigration purposes violates the Convention on the Rights of the Child.⁷³

Still, the European Commission explicitly included guidance on the topic of (administrative) detention, after recognizing that in some instances, children have been accommodated in closed facilities “due to a shortage of suitable alternative reception facilities.”⁷⁴

“Given the negative impact of detention on children, administrative detention should be used, in line with EU law, exclusively in exceptional circumstances, where strictly necessary, only as a last resort, for the shortest time possible and never in prison accommodation. Moreover, where there are grounds for detention, everything possible must be done to ensure that a viable range of alternatives to the administrative detention of children in migration is available and accessible, including through support provided by the EU funds.”⁷⁵

In this research, none of the interviewees discussed the topic of detention. Whether there are still instances of detention can therefore not be concluded, but it was clear that the cities interviewed experience a lack of available houses and living arrangements. Innovative projects and initiatives dealing with the issue, in line with international and European standards, seem therefore important to highlight in this section. They regard a co-housing initiative of the city of Antwerp, foster care in the

city of Milan and special facilities, such as the “Manzanares” residence in Madrid and family-based care as provided by the Dutch guardianship authority, **Nidos**.

Cohabitation

The European Commission encourages member states to foster social inclusion in all integration-related policies, such as prioritizing mixed, non-segregated housing.⁷⁶ The city of Antwerp placed their focus on the combination of housing and integration, in line with the Communication, by

“The first provision, is the project of co-housing, that arranges for this group of young refugees to live together with local young people, called ‘buddies’, for at least one year. Different forms of cohabitation schemes are provided in the framework of the project: cohabitation in two-bedroom apartments, cohabitation of several refugee-buddy pairs sharing one community house and cohabitation in 16 modular (two-bedroom) units on one site. CURANT provides affordable housing.”

Project Manager of the Municipality of Antwerp, Belgium

designing a system in which young migrants and local youngsters share a house together.

In their extensive housing initiative, Antwerp also encountered some challenges that every city will have to consider before or while launching a similar project, or in general to learn from in matters of housing or integration:

- “The juridical framework for cohousing is complicated and administrative procedures are sometimes long and difficult.
- Maintaining the accommodations can sometimes imply several types of issues (things to be repaired, other maintenance problems etc). In this regard, the municipality must be careful on how it manages its housing service, as well as the landlord-occupant relationship that can develop between the refugees the refugees and the ‘buddies’.

⁷² Conference Minutes, Lost in Migration II, Missing Children Europe, 11-12 April 2018, Brussels.

⁷³ UN Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW), Joint general comment No. 4 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 23 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on State obligations regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return, CMW/C/GC/4-CRC/C/GC/23, 16 November 2017, paras. 5-12.

⁷⁴ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 8.

⁷⁵ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, pp. 8-9 [emphasis added].

⁷⁶ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 14.

- There are differences between young refugees and 'buddies' in terms of culture, age and readiness to reach an independent living. Some of the refugees have never lived alone before and have no cooking or cleaning skills. Nevertheless, almost all the current 30 pairs show positive developments; only three pairs left the project because of the difficulties they experienced.
- Finding appropriate housing, along with the correct match between buddies and refugees is still a challenge. "Communication campaigns need to be enhanced in order to make the project well-known and to attract landlords, enthusiastic buddies and refugees who voluntarily go ahead with the project."⁷⁷

Some of these challenges hinted that housing corporations and landlords might consider business interests over these individual children's and young people's needs. In this light, the Communication from the European Commission comes in, appropriately, highlighting the tip that "[t]o support Member States, EASO will in 2017 develop specific guidance on operational standards and indicators on material reception conditions for unaccompanied children, in addition to the guidance on reception conditions already developed last year that apply to all asylum seekers."⁷⁸ "The establishment of effective monitoring systems at the national level should also contribute to the good functioning of reception centres, making sure that business interests (for centres run for profit) do not prevail over child protection."⁷⁹

Foster Care and Special Facilities

The initiative concerning foster care was mentioned by the interviewee from Milan, Italy and in this city is carried out by the municipality alongside other organisations, including **Caritas**. Its aim is to promote family foster care, especially for young migrants aged between 16 and 17 years old. The city, however, is not the only one to experience lack of available foster families for unaccompanied children of this age range. During a workshop at the conference, the root causes for this shortage were discussed extensively among social workers and other practitioners. They pointed to the difficulties encountered by the families in establishing a relationship with the young migrants of this age – often the expectations exceed the reality in which many of the children find it hard to open up to their

foster family or build a relationship with them. For this reason, the initiative in Milan provides support groups to foster families in the hope that they will learn from each other's experiences and continue their invaluable work.

In the city of Ropazi, Latvia, the Orphan's and Custody Court that handles the cases of children in migration tries to find foster families as suitable living arrangement for unaccompanied children too. They experienced, however, that the help of mediating NGO, „Safe House“ improved the matching process of children and foster families and made it easier to win the children's trust and convince him or her that also the court is acting in their best interests. This NGO facilitates both interpretation assistance (and translations) and housing assistance for children in migration in Ropazi. With their help the city has been better able to consult with the children and make them an active part of the process of integration.

The city of Milan, Italy has an interesting system for housing and accommodation. The name of their initiative is '**Emergenze Sostenibili**' (translated as '**Sustainable Emergencies**') and it started in 2013. The project completely changed the reception system for unaccompanied children in the city of Milan: The municipality has noticed that unaccompanied migrant children have various and several capacities, which are different from their peers born and raised in Milan. Usually, the biggest divergences concern the levels of education received and the autonomy acquired. For this reason, migrant children need to be provided with diversified services and the facilities that were previously allocated were not adequate for the scope. Thanks to this initiative, now children have access to apartments with 5-7 people maximum, located in several areas of Milan. Also the city of Ghent has a similar housing facility in place, called 'transit houses'.⁸⁰

In another city, Madrid in Spain, the system is noteworthy, since a lot of attention has been paid by the city's administration to strengthen cooperation with other cities and ensure the well-being of its unaccompanied children through a harmonious and coordinated system. Particularly worth mentioning is their 'Manzanares', a residential facility for teenage minors which has been specifically adapted for unaccompanied children. The educational needs of the children, such as language classes and skills trainings, are verified and provided in a school

⁷⁷ Project Manager of the Municipality of Antwerp, Belgium. See the city report of Antwerp, Belgium, in Appendix II for more information.

⁷⁸ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 9.

⁷⁹ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 9.

⁸⁰ See the city report of Ghent, Belgium, in Appendix II for more information.

within the centre. During their stay, children are followed by educators, intercultural mediators and other professionals, to ensure the proper inclusion of unaccompanied children in the hosting society. The children remain in the centre until their situation changes – either reaching adult age, for the repatriation to the country of origin or for the end of the custody or any other reason.

The nationwide guardianship organisation Nidos in the Netherlands provides multiple reception facilities tailored to the children’s individual needs and best interests. The arrangements include:

- Foster families – all children who are under the age of 15 are immediately placed in one. There is no lack of foster families for children in migration in the Netherlands. Their policy is to match the children with families who have a similar cultural background;
- Small living units – as soon as children reach the age of 15, they are transferred to small-scale reception facilities (including family-based care) that comprise small living units, for families or for maximally 10 unaccompanied children above the age of 15, who are regularly visited by mentors;
- Safe houses – all children suspected to be at a high risk of becoming a victim of trafficking are placed in a safe house. There are also special permits available for known victims of trafficking and abuse, even though for these permits the victims have to file a criminal complaint and should be willing to witness, which can be a barrier to apply for many (suspected) children in this situation.

The organisation’s position is laid down in the Dutch Civil Code (1:247 Civil Code), which implies that Nidos is legally empowered to intervene if the child’s development is stagnating or is threatened in any way. The approach of Nidos, adopted by the Netherlands, enables key actors in the system to arrange covenants on how to cooperate on issues such as guardianship and reception (as well as other themes and issues). Nidos only works with professional guardians who operate all over the Netherlands and who are responsible for every aspect of the life of the child.⁸¹

3.1.4 Guardianship

Independent representation, such as lawyers and guardians, is included in the mentioned necessities for safe and appropriate reception of children in migration.⁸² As further specified by the European Commission:

“[g]uardians play a crucial role in guaranteeing access to the rights and in safeguarding the interests of all unaccompanied children, including those not applying for asylum. They can help build trust with the child and ensure his or her well-being, including for integration, in cooperation with other actors. Guardians can also help prevent that children go missing or fall prey to trafficking. There are currently major shortcomings in the functioning of the guardianship systems in some member states, particularly as regards the number of suitably qualified guardians available and the speed at which they are appointed. Where needed, guardianship institutions should be strengthened. Guardians need to be recruited in sufficient numbers, to be appointed faster and to be better equipped to fulfil their tasks. There is also a pressing need to develop and exchange good practices and guidance among guardians and guardianship authorities in the Member States. That is why, in 2017, a European guardianship network will be established.”⁸³

To ensure that guardians for all unaccompanied children are “swiftly in place”,⁸⁴ the European Commission highlighted in their Communication as one the key actions for member states, to strengthen, with the support of the Commission and the EU Agencies, the guardianship authority/institution at the national and local levels.

Example 1: The Netherlands

Nidos⁸⁵ is a nationwide independent family guardian organisation. Under Dutch civil child protection law, Nidos fulfils the guardianship task for unaccompanied minor asylum seekers. The nationwide approach of Nidos, adopted by the Netherlands, enables key actors in the system to arrange covenants on how to cooperate on

⁸¹ More information regarding nationwide guardianship systems is found in the next section (3.1.4 Guardianship). See also the interview report of Nidos, the Netherlands in Appendix II for more information regarding the approaches taken by this organisation.

⁸² European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 8 [emphasis added].

⁸³ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, pp. 9-10. It continues on page 10 that “The Commission’s 2016 proposals to reform the Common European Asylum System recognise the

fundamental role of guardians for unaccompanied children and seek to reinforce specific safeguards applicable to children. The proposal for an Asylum Procedures Regulation aims to strengthen guardianship systems in member states, while the new Dublin Regulation should secure rapid determination of the Member State responsible for the child’s application for international protection” [emphasis added].

⁸⁴ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 11.

⁸⁵ For more information, see: <https://www.nidos.nl/en/uitgeleucht/nidos-annual-report-2016/>.

issues such as guardianship, reception, the Dublin convention, return, integration and aging out. A good example of such a cooperation is the development of a practical guide by Nidos in cooperation with the association of Dutch local authorities in order to ensure a smooth transition in housing, income, work/education, social network and guidance (if necessary) for unaccompanied children who turn 18. The Dutch system has also enabled the development of a specific methodology on addressing the specific needs of the target group of unaccompanied children. This includes important topics such as culture-sensitive guidance, guidance on the perspective of the child (return/integration), small scale reception (including family-based care), stability in the environment of the child, ensuring safety and screening of (potential) victims of trafficking. In order to provide guardianship for the children, Nidos only works with professional guardians who operate all over the Netherlands and who are responsible for every aspect of the life of the child (housing, education, etc.).

Nidos is also a training institute for the Netherlands and the EU, working on concepts of professional and specialised guardianship, small scale reception and systematically spreading and sharing knowledge and providing professional training in working with unaccompanied children. Nidos initiated the European Network of Guardianship Institutions (ENGI) and it also worked – mostly as applicant – on many European projects focusing on unaccompanied children (e.g. guardianship and reception) in the past years. It has ongoing contacts and cooperation with the European Commission and its agencies in this area of work. Nidos experienced multiple advantages of their guardianship system at the national level and is of the view that a nationwide system could serve as inspiration in other cities. Advantages highlighted are that a nationwide system:

- Enables the development of specific knowledge, tools and experience on the target group;
- Offers a standardised type of care to all unaccompanied migrant children, wherever they are located on the state’s territory;
- Makes the search for host families (with similar background) more feasible increasing the chance of well-matched placement in family-based care.”⁸⁶

⁸⁶ See the interview report of Nidos, the Netherlands, in Appendix II for more information.

Example 2: Belgium

There is a functioning national regime which applies to the whole territory of Belgium. A clear description of the qualities and duties of their guardians is provided by the Federal Department of Justice and assigns a guardian to “every unaccompanied migrant minor:

- Assisting them during legal processes;
- Ensuring their health, well-being and providing psychological support;
- Following their introduction into the education system;
- Supporting them in the housing and accommodation processes;
- Following their interview processes during asylum application. The guardianship starts ‘from day one’. In fact, as soon as a police officer identifies an unaccompanied migrant minor, he/she is obliged by law to notify the Department of Justice.
- Guardians are trained for their role. The ratio of kids to an individual guardian can vary; this much also depends by whether the guardianship is provided by a single individual or by an organisation. Currently, there is a shortage of guardians: this is why specific initiatives are being carried out to recruit more guardians.”⁸⁷

The guardianship policy of Belgium is fully in line with the European and International standards and recommendations regarding guardianship for children in migration. The overview of the tasks and requirements each guardianship system should uphold is therefore presented for other cities to check their compliance.

3.1.5 Special Assistance and Measures

Focus points for the protection of children in migration are often their most visible needs, such as the provision of food and subsistence, finding an appropriate place to stay or ensuring they go to school during the day. The second edition of the Lost in Migration conference showed that efforts are still needed to ensure that children in migration receive the necessary support to overcome psychological problems, trauma and preventive (mental) health care:

⁸⁷ Quote by the Welfare and Equal Opportunities Service of the Department of Social Cohesion, Welfare and Health in the city of Gent, Belgium. See the city report of Gent, Belgium, in Appendix II for more information.

“There is a lack of understanding in care or health and traumas are not recognised from the beginning. We should invest in this.”⁸⁸

The European Commission noted that “vulnerabilities and special protection needs, including healthcare needs, should be better systematically and individually assessed.”⁸⁹ As of 2017, with the support of the Commission and the EU agencies, the Commission encourages member states to “ensure that all children have timely access to healthcare (including preventive care) and psychosocial support.”⁹⁰ With regards to special assistance and measures, this part of the study looked into the specific approaches to ensure children have prompt access to “healthcare, psychological support and leisure” which the European Commission recognizes as the necessary support services to secure the child’s best interest and well-being.⁹¹

Antwerp’s CURANT Co-housing Project is a good example of a specific approach to a very visible need, namely housing, that incorporates support for a subtler and more individual need, namely mental health care. A point of strength in the city’s project is that it offers psychological support where the children in need live. A psychologist is made available for refugees three days a week, for individual and group counselling. Designing and implementing integrated solutions that deal with a visible need and a need that might otherwise be overlooked is an approach that could work also in many other cities. In fact, Madrid also combines their special housing facilities with the provision of access to health care and mental health professionals.⁹² In the specific case of mental health the interviewee from Antwerp mentioned an additional challenge. Since young refugees are not always keen on psychological training and coaching for housing and job search, the **availability of a psychologist alone** might not be effective enough. A more active approach to motivate and engage children in migration and to mobilize them to actively use the mental support they need, is crucial.

An active programme for mental health that overcomes the hesitation of migrants towards psychological help can be found in Ghent’s MindSpring. This ad-hoc training for especially developed for migrants focuses on mental health

through psycho-education. It was initially designed for adults, but the Centre of General Wellbeing adapted the programme to the needs of children resulting in MindSpring Junior. The programme is provided in the language of the migrants, by a mix of professionals and volunteers all trained to work with the programme and with children. The content of the training focuses on concepts such as identity, networks and kinships and future expectations. The availability of a mental health programme that is optimised for children and at the same time optimised for their migration context is a good example for other cities. Active dialogue and exchange of knowledge between the mental health workers in European cities will allow the developing of even more effective and evidence based programs.

In Athens, a Child and Family Support Hub was established by the NGO SolidarityNow. This hub provides support to particularly vulnerable groups such as refugee/migrant women and children between 2 and 17 years old. In urban settings these groups are often at risks of abuse, exploitation and violence. The municipality of Athens contributed to the staffing of the hub, both in terms of the necessary equipment and human resources. This way an area was created where women and children would be supported also psychosocially. It is the experience of the local government of Athens that this support helps the smooth integration into Greek society.

Another aspect of special assistance is the need for the child to be properly informed. Especially in the “Return-Project” of Stromsund, Sweden, this point was made in relation to the possibility of rejection during the asylum procedure. The asylum process and the possibility an individual’s application being denied are lengthy and emotionally/psychologically tough, especially for the children involved. After such a long process, children have spent considerable time in the host country and it can be at times problematic to inform them in case the asylum permit is not granted. Therefore, professionals should also be well prepared for a possible rejection. They can then ensure that the children are properly informed about all the possible scenarios in advance. This can reduce the occurrence of children going missing in case of denial of the asylum permit, for example.

⁸⁸ Conference Minutes, Lost in Migration II, Missing Children Europe, 11-12 April 2018, Brussels.

⁸⁹ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 6.

⁹⁰ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 8.

⁹¹ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p.8.

⁹² See the city reports of Antwerp and Madrid in Appendix II for more information on the (mental) health care provision in combination with a housing project.

3.2 Examples of Good Practices

From the information provided by the municipalities, three recurring approaches stood out, namely early integration, an individualised approach and prolonged support. These approaches led to a positive effect on the well-being and integration of (unaccompanied) children in local communities across the EU and can serve as starting points for (future) projects regarding children in migration, of any kind and anywhere. These three approaches were shared at the second edition of the Lost in Migration conference on 11 April 2018. Members from the European Parliament endorsed these points in the European Parliament resolution of 3 May 2018 on the protection of children in migration (2018/2666(RSP)) (see also above).⁹³

3.2.1 Early Integration

The European Commission stated that early integration of children is crucial to support their development into adulthood:

“Early integration of children is crucial to support their development into adulthood. It is a social investment and essential factor contributing to societal cohesion overall in Europe. Integration of children at the earliest stage, through mainstream and targeted measures, is also important to minimise risks with regard to possible criminal activity and exposure to radicalization. Given that recently arrived children may not yet have been able to acquire sufficient skills and competences to fully and actively integrate in society, in particular for transition into further study or the labour market, children in this transitional phase should be provided with guidance, support and opportunities for continuing education and training. Furthermore, as is the case for children in State care who are EU nationals, mechanisms and processes need to be in place to help prepare children in migration in State care for the transition to adulthood/leaving care.”⁹⁴

Multiple cities, such as Genoa, Tilburg and Vienna have implemented specific initiatives in support of early integration of children in migration. In the city of Vienna, Austria, the focus has been put on starting the integration from day 1 of arrival of unaccompanied children in the city – even before it is determined whether they can stay in the city or country. Vienna’s implemented integration initiatives focus on the thematic areas Housing (1), Education (2) and Refugee Empowerment activities (3). All these initiatives combined ensure that the integration process is such that young people achieve to acquire the necessary skills to start working, as soon as they receive the permit to stay in the country. The city of Vienna has experienced that the ‘Integration from Day 1’-strategy makes use of the unique motivation and enthusiasm of recently arrived children. Postponing integration efforts is undesirable, since the initial enthusiasm may fade if the child has to wait before he or she can start interacting with the city and all the city has to offer for settling and building a future. It is an approach Vienna recommends to be applied also in other cities in Europe.

Notably, the city of Tilburg has implemented an approach looking at making children participate before starting their integration. Exchanging views with the migrants themselves before finalising the methodology of the integration process proved very useful. Apart from it being an essential children’s right to effectively participate in decisions affecting them,⁹⁵ the city also sees the advantages for the municipality when the participation leads to more efficient and effective determination of the child’s individual needs. As a result, the city obtains insight in the specific needs that individual children can have and is able to create a targeted programme for an individual child to support him or her while in the care of the city. Also, it provides an opportunity to set goals with the child for their future and motivate the child to reach these goals (which progress can be evaluated at a later stage).⁹⁶ This way of proceeding has potential to be scaled up to other European cities.

⁹³ European Parliament, Resolution 2018/2666(RSP), para. 3.

⁹⁴ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 12. See also: “[f]amily tracing and family reunification/unity procedures are often protracted or start too late. Such procedures should be carried out irrespective of the child’s legal status, with the involvement of a person responsible for child protection or the child’s guardian once appointed. For asylum applicants, transfers based on the family unity provisions in the Dublin Regulation are under-utilised and sometimes take many months to be implemented. Concerted efforts should be made to speed up family reunification procedures, prioritising unaccompanied and separated children. Where children are transferred across borders within the European Union, whether pursuant to the Dublin Regulation or otherwise, close cooperation between

the authorities responsible for the child’s wellbeing in each Member State is essential. Member states should make full use of existing cooperation channels, for example through Central Authorities provided for in the Brussels IIa Regulation.” European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 10 [emphasis added].

⁹⁵ UN General Assembly, **Convention on the Rights of the Child**, 20 November 1989, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1577, Article 12.

⁹⁶ A clear example and easy tool to use in this regard is the “Establishment Line” that the city of Trelleborg introduced (see Figure 1).

3.2.2 An Individualised Approach


Children in migration comprise a heterogeneous group with their own experiences, expectations, needs and development. Systems that have regard for the individual child prove more successful for the integration and well-being of children in our society. Multiple cities, such as Tilburg, Rotterdam, Stromsund and Trelleborg have implemented specific initiatives that give all individual children in migration an opportunity to participate, be heard and be helped with their problems, needs and wishes (for the future).

Involving children and youth as well as handling an individualised approach, includes hearing children regularly, addressing the specific needs and expectations of each individual child and working towards their integration and independence/self-sufficiency. One example that could be helpful to other cities, is the 'My Establishment Line' sheet that the Department of Labour Market of the municipality of Trelleborg, Sweden, uses. In this

sheet, children and youth fill out their goals and plans and together with a social worker will be supported to successfully work towards the written goals. In Trelleborg, very positive experiences exist regarding the Establishment Line project, as it proved an effective tool that helped in fostering an independent approach. The interviewee in Trelleborg recommends such a sheet to be implemented in more cities in Europe.

“Throughout the integration process, constant support is provided to the children by the municipality. Staff within the Department of Labour Market plans so-called ‘Establishment Lines’⁹⁷ in cooperation with children themselves. It is very important that the minors are involved in the design of their Establishment Line, so that they are effectively participating in their integration process. Establishment Lines also have a backward-looking planning with milestones, a structure which makes it easier to reach the final goal.”⁹⁸

Figure 1 Example of an Establishment Line



TRELLEBORGS KOMMUN

INDIVIDUAL (YYMMDD-XXXX)
NAME (YYMMDD-XXXX)
RESPONSIBLE YOUTH COORDINATOR

DATE
2017-12-07

DATE FOLLOW-UP
2018-03-08

SECRETARY UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

My establishment line

	When?	When?	When?	When?	When?	When?	GOAL	
Go to scheduled meetings	2017-12-07	Take responsibility for my labor market planning	2017-12-07	Take responsibility for my study planning	2017-12-07	Actively search for accommodation	2017-12-07	19 years, qualified to care program, 8 grades
								20 years old, apply for study scholarship (CSN)
								Move to own appartment and be self-sufficient

NOTES

School, internships and other obligations:

Accommodation:

Health:

Economy:

Communication and conflict management:

DATE	SIGNATURES
2017-12-07	

⁹⁷ See Figure 1.

⁹⁸ See the city report of Trelleborg, Sweden, in Appendix II for more information.

“One key issue has been and still is, that children never have the possibility to share their own perspective. By providing them with information since day 1, meeting them frequently at the youth homes and scheduling talks minors could be able to, but without it, it is often the case that other stakeholders speak on behalf of the minors, such as lawyers and professionals. This leads to situations where the actual interest of the minors is unheard – even in cases where the minor who wanted to go home.”

Elisabeth Lindholm from the municipality of Stromsund, Sweden

The city of Rotterdam, the Netherlands, also implemented a system worth mentioning, namely the framework of regular monitoring of the status and conditions of unaccompanied children close to 18 years old, in order to ensure a smooth transition to their adult age:

“The monitoring framework comprises of a series of regular meetings between the city administration and external partners in charge of ensuring the well-being of unaccompanied minors with a migration background. During the monitoring meetings, the city of Rotterdam examines the individual dossiers of unaccompanied minors that are turning 18, six months in advance. The assessment is run over several aspects, including school, financial conditions and a social network. The general focus of the monitoring is to ensure that minors have a good start and that the transition to adulthood is facilitated.”⁹⁹

The municipality of Tilburg, another city in the Netherlands, also implemented an approach focused on their individual needs:

“The overall approach that the municipality has towards migrants, without distinction of age, is to consult them before starting the process of integration. In doing so, the city is sure that the activities and services targeting them are strictly related to their needs.”¹⁰⁰

Whether or not a project is aimed at the assessment of the individual child, for instance assessing whether he or she should return to his/her country of origin or obtaining the best possible solution within the existing rules, it should be noted that only through **involving** the child him or herself,

it is possible to know whether the child’s needs are accurately addressed. It was experienced in multiple cities that the expectations, needs or challenges a child has, were sometimes different from what a guardian or other official **expected** him or her to have.¹⁰¹

3.2.3 Prolonged Support

For children approaching the age of 18 and legal adulthood, the European Commission’s guidance is clear: “As is the case for children in state care who are EU nationals, mechanisms and processes need to be in place to help prepare children in migration for the transition to adulthood/leaving care.”¹⁰² One of the key actions EU member states are encouraged to take is therefore to provide support to enable children in the transition to adulthood (or leaving care) to access necessary education and training.¹⁰³ However, one of the most important issues highlighted in this research, is that the majority of interviewees (and thus municipalities across the EU) experienced the problem of young migrants reaching the age of 18 years – and becoming legal adults – yet often not being self-sufficient or independent yet. Specifically, for these young adults, systems and mechanisms need to be in place that will ensure the provision of continued financial, material and emotional support, for instance by extending guardianship systems, systems of assisted living and support to finish an education, building up a social network and finding a job, after children turn 18 (hence, prolonged support). Even though the European Commission Communication makes no specific reference to the action of ‘prolonged support,’ some of the interviewed cities recommended to establish young-adult-sensitive support systems. The city of Rotterdam, for instance, provides individualised assessments for children before they

⁹⁹ See the city report of Rotterdam, the Netherlands, in Appendix II for more information.

¹⁰⁰ See the city report of Tilburg, the Netherlands, in Appendix II for more information.

¹⁰¹ See, for instance, the city report of Stromsund, Sweden, in Appendix II for more information. Also, an approach that carefully considers the voices of children themselves would be in line with the obliga-

tions under Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is a positive obligation for all countries in Europe (UN General Assembly, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12).

¹⁰² European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 12.

¹⁰³ European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 14.

turn 18 to provide them with a smooth transition and good start as adults, including referral to the same assistance as other youth's their age could.¹⁰⁴ Other interviewed cities that provide prolonged support to children in migration are Antwerp, Tampere, Genoa, Trelleborg, Vienna and Ghent. See their city reports in Appendix II for more information on their prolonged support efforts.

The European Commission endorses the earlier Communication "Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance"¹⁰⁵ in which the need

for self-reliance applies to unaccompanied young adults as much as to other forcibly displaced people and the approach to them should therefore similarly be to let their actual vulnerabilities prevail over legal status, in full respect of international and human rights law, when designing interventions.¹⁰⁶ As such, cities that implement(ed) prolonged support systems for vulnerable young adults in need of state care will not only benefit from the abovementioned advantages for their citizens, but also act fully in line with international and European standards.

3.3 Key Findings in Relation to Challenges

The challenges the authorities of the participating municipalities and organisation have experienced – and sometimes still experience – could be divided into two categories: challenges for the children and challenges for the cities (in implementing their initiatives for instance).

3.3.1 For children in migration

- It can be a struggle to adapt and integrate into the new society, even if both the child and the authorities start the process of integration with the best intentions. The authorities of Trelleborg noticed that children often have different expectations about a life in Sweden, that are difficult for them to change. They often have a picture of the country in mind that does not correspond with the reality. For Trelleborg, the work-oriented mind-set in the integration process of unaccompanied children proved an effective approach to tackle this issue and overcome the challenge. Therefore, they recommend other cities to consider a similar approach too.

"In the co-housing project, the municipality of Antwerp learnt that many refugees have a low educational background, therefore they struggle to adapt to the new living situation, often showing signs of frustration. Additionally, some refugees still experience difficulties after CURANT (could we explain very shortly that CURANT refers to the co-housing system?) in finding appropriate housing, job and education, also once they received the assistance of the consortium partnership."

Project Manager at the Municipality of Antwerp, Belgium.

- Dependence and difficulties after the children turn 18 (and become legal adults). For them specifically, it is important to recommend European cities) to foster prolonged support after children turn 18, by extending systems of assisted living (such as foster care, co-housing and/or special group homes for unaccompanied children), guardianship and education, as well as by helping them in building up a social network and learn how

¹⁰⁴ "Therefore, once they are 18, former unaccompanied children can still receive assistance from the city department in charge of youth policy. Former unaccompanied children can also, just like any other citizen of Rotterdam, make a claim for social support under the Wmo 2015. Social support under the Wmo 2015 is divided in three categories: social and personal functioning, finances and self-care and health. The support offered is however upon request: if no request is done, the former unaccompanied child will not receive support. This is an important distinction with the type of support which is ensured until the age of 18." See the city report of Rotterdam, the Netherlands, in Appendix II for more

information.

¹⁰⁵ European Commission, *Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance*, COM(2016)234 final, Brussels, 26 March 2016, that defines self-reliance on page 4 (footnote 13) as: "Self-reliance is the ability of people, households or communities to meet their basic needs and to enjoy social and economic rights in a sustainable and dignified way."

¹⁰⁶ European Commission, Communication COM(2016)234 final, p. 4.

to search for and find a job. Note that even if there is extended support until 21 or 22 years old, still full integration and self-sufficiency may not have been fully achieved – especially with regard to finding appropriate (independent) housing, that remains a challenge according to multiple cities’ experiences.

“Most of the unaccompanied migrant minors who arrive in Finland are asylum seekers. Due to changes in legislation, family reunifications take place very rarely. Also for this reason, it is very important to support minors also after they turn 18. The city of Tampere follows the prescription by extending the support to young unaccompanied migrants until they reach the age of 21. The city provides unaccompanied young migrants with social and health care services, as well the access to education and other types of support. When the unaccompanied minors turn 18, the city of Tampere ensures the provision of the so-called aftercare support. Even though not all cities in Finland have opted to provide this service, the framework of assistance also covers unaccompanied young people in the age between 18 and 21 years old that are moving to Tampere from other cities.”

The After-care Social Department of the city of Tampere, Finland

3.3.2 For the cities

- The funding and financing of all projects and care measures for young newcomers in the country/city.
- The management of projects and initiatives and the cooperation with the multiple actors involved.
- The different needs of young migrants and refugees and their differences with the local culture and local youngsters (different that what is previously expected).

“It would be important to have the presence of an institution in the country coordinating the work of all involved ministries, institutions and public organisations working with [children in migration].”

Chief of the Orphan's and Custody Court in the municipality of Ropazu, Latvia

- The non-participation of most citizens, which makes building a social network quite difficult, as well as the negative attitudes of neighbouring cities towards children in migration in the case of Tilburg.¹⁰⁷

“There are differences between young refugees and ‘buddies’ in terms of culture, age and readiness to reach an independent living. Some of the refugees have never lived alone before and have no cooking or cleaning skills. Nevertheless, almost all the current 30 pairs show positive developments; only three pairs left the project because of the difficulties they experienced.”

Project Manager at the Municipality of Antwerp, Belgium

- The difficulties in creating a stable environment. The municipality of Athens, for instance, highlighted that the Centre they have set up, was a first attempt to integrate the multitude of services, that were previously delivered separate by multiple actors. However, this Centre faced issues with regards to stability and being able to cope with difficulties in implementation by the team.
- The challenge to effectively disseminate a project or initiative and making it known by the (prospective) users. Ensuring that migrant children and families know where to go for which services can be a big struggle if clear information is not provided to them. This dissemination issue also again highlights the need to ascertain the needs of every individual (child) in migration. If a city knows what the child needs, it can work to provide these needs and give accurate advice on which initiatives, projects and centres or hubs to pay a visit.

¹⁰⁷ See the city report of Tilburg, the Netherlands, in Appendix II for more information.

4 Conclusion and Recommendations



The European approach to (unaccompanied) children in migration at a local level

This study mapped the approaches taken by local governments in Europe to protect and integrate (unaccompanied) children in migration through interviews with field workers and policy makers in fifteen European cities. The assessment of basic needs – food, shelter, health care (including mental health), the provision of education and extra support in the form of vocational training and integration activities– seem to be the focal point of many local authorities that participated in the study, which is a promising overall finding.

Early integration, individualised approach and prolonged support

The study defined three examples of good practices that should ideally be part of any European city's approach to unaccompanied minors in migration. First, integration into the local society should start the day the child arrives. If integration efforts are initiated only after the child obtains a residence permit, not only will valuable time be lost, but also these efforts will be less effective. Secondly, an effective approach is an individual approach. The assessment of the best interests of the individual child is one of the vital steps that should take place right at the start of any local government involvement with the child. Every child will reflect different experiences and cultural challenges that need to be taken into account when devising an individual approach. In order for projects and initiatives aimed at children's protection and integration into the local community to succeed, it is important that those safeguarding the children participate in the process and that the approach, project or initiative has regard for the children's specific needs. Third, to maximize long-term effectiveness of programs tailored for minor migrants, support should be provided throughout the transition into adulthood. Most unaccompanied minors who arrive in Europe are close to legal adulthood and yet these children are oftentimes not yet self-sufficient or independent. It is therefore necessary to provide a smooth transition into adult support services. Minor and adult programs should be aligned in a way that no information or time is lost during this transition. Prolonged support can be given in many different ways, such as by extending systems of assisted living (i.e. foster care, co-housing and/or special group homes for unaccompanied minors), guardianship and education, as well as by helping young adults in building up a social network and searching for and finding employment.

Involvement of civil society, citizens and communities

Citizens' involvement and cooperation is generally limited and scarce in nearly all the initiatives and cities according to authorities participating in the study. Indeed, the recommendations made at the end of the 2018 Lost in Migration conference call for greater public awareness. An important finding is that some cities encounter difficulty in managing the expectations of foster parents, host families and 'buddies' of young migrants (especially between 15 and 17 years old). Oftentimes, establishing personal relationships with youngsters when co-habiting or hosting them can be very complicated or difficult.¹⁰⁸ Good support systems for host families and buddies need to be implemented to ensure continued participation.

The way forward

By taking into account these initiatives, significant progress has been made at the grassroots level and further disseminated to other cities and countries. Still, true integration and connection with local citizens takes time. Time, flexibility, as well as the exchange of support and learning between project staff and other professionals continues to be necessary.

Whereas all cities undoubtedly follow international and European standards and guidelines for the implementation of protection measures for children in migration, it is unclear which standards are exactly followed. Did all cities use the European Commission Communication in their efforts to improve and strengthen local strategies to children in migration? It is difficult to ascertain whether initiatives meet the minimum standards set by the European Commission Communication, are implemented systematically, especially at the local level.

In conclusion, we recommend the European Commission support the further dissemination of the projects – and other successful projects not covered by this study – to EU member states. This could take the form of a toolkit of good practices and practical guidelines. We also recommend continuous monitoring of and research into the gaps and challenges in the integration of children in migration. Finally, we recommend that the European Commission continue supporting the initiatives and good practices identified by this study in order to ensure that these efforts will not vanish from lack of funding.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ See, for instance, the city report of Vienna, Austria, in Appendix II for more information. Here the interviewee indicates that in her city, "the total number of families involved in the programme should have been around 100, but only 20 families were eventually engaged."

¹⁰⁹ As mentioned on European Commission, Communication COM(2017)211 final, p. 16: "the Commission will support [her member states] in the actions outlined in this Communication, including by

providing increased training, guidance, operational support and available funding. The cooperation among EU agencies will also be reinforced, as well as cooperation with national authorities, United Nations agencies and civil society organisations active in the field. The Commission will closely monitor the follow-up of the actions set out in this Communication and will regularly report to the European Parliament and the Council" [emphasis added]. If this is verbatim you can stet my edits. Not sure what the emphasis added in brackets refers to...

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Appendix I – Interview Topic List

Summary Table with an overview of the initiatives and projects per city

PAGE	City	Initiative
	Antwerp (Belgium)	Co-housing for unaccompanied young refugees and local young people
	Athens (Greece)	The Blue Dot Scheme and Child & Family Support Hub
	Genova (Italy)	Protection System for Asylum and Refugee Applicants (SPRAR)
	Gent (Belgium)	Guardianship, (Psycho)Education, Assisted Living and Transit Houses
	Glasgow (United Kingdom)	Guardianship, Housing and Education
	Madrid (Spain)	Ensuring the well-being of unaccompanied minors through the regional system (and its cooperation with other cities)
	Milan (Italy)	Housing initiative “Emergenze Sostenibili”
		Financial assistance in the form of “Chudiamo il cerchio”
		Foster Care
		First Assistance in the Welcome Centre
	Ropazu (Latvia)	Reception of unaccompanied minors at the Asylum Seeker Center
	Rotterdam (the Netherlands)	A monitoring framework for the integration process of unaccompanied migrant minors approaching 18
	Stromsund (Sweden)	‘Returning Unaccompanied Minors (2014-2015)’ & ‘The Best Interest of the Child (2017-2020)’
	Tampere (Finland)	Project TRUST
		Aftercare Support
	Tilburg (the Netherlands)	Child participation before starting the process of integration
	Trelleborg (Sweden)	The ‘Establishment Line’ and ‘Labour Market Process’
	Vienna (Austria)	“Integration from Day 1” through:
		■ Housing
		■ Education
		■ Integration Activities
	Nidos (the Netherlands)	Guardianship

Appendix II – The Cities

Co-housing for unaccompanied young refugees and local young people in Antwerp

Summary

CURANT is a co-housing project for unaccompanied young refugees who live together with local young people, called 'buddies', for at least one year. Once unaccompanied children reach adulthood they are no longer entitled to subsidised shelter, reception classes, customised trainings or the support of a legal guardian. This group of young individuals is very often unqualified, lacking education, employment or job training, and therefore has a higher chance of protracted dependence on social welfare. CURANT aims to provide further support to unaccompanied children when they reach the age of legal adulthood and increase their chances to fully integrate into society. In order to help young refugees, CURANT proposes different types of support such as co-housing, independence training and psychological help. In total, at least 75 refugees and up to 135 refugees should benefit from CURANT in the programming period 2016-2019

City: Antwerp, Belgium

Target Group: Unaccompanied young adults, aged 17-22, with refugee status or subsidiary protection

Implemented by: Social Services Department of Antwerp (OCMW), in collaboration with a consortium of six partners: Jes vzw, Atlas Inburgering en Integratie, Vormingplus Antwerpen & Solentra. The University of Antwerp (CeMIS) is responsible for evaluating the project.

Funded by: European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) as well as OCMW and its implementation partners.

Timeframe: 2016-2019

Key Topics:

Accommodation and (co)housing, independence training, integration and Psychological support.

Accommodation & co-housing through a buddy system

CURANT aims to provide further support to unaccompanied children when they reach the age of legal adulthood, increasing their chances to fully integrate into society. The first provision is the project of co-housing, which arranges for this group of young refugees to live together with local young people, called 'buddies', for at least one year.

CURANT provides affordable housing and different forms of cohabitation schemes are provided in the framework of the project: cohabitation in two-bedroom apartments, cohabitation of several refugee-buddy pairs sharing one community house, and cohabitation in 16 modular (two bedroom) units on one site.

One of the most innovative aspects of CURANT is the buddy system. **Buddies** are local young people between the ages of 20 and 30 years old who volunteer as flatmates. One of CURANT's partners is in charge of selecting the buddies and matching them with young adult refugees.

Buddies help their refugee flatmates, but are also given significant guidance throughout the project. Through this system, CURANT aims to create social interactions between newcomers and buddies that are on a more relatable peer-to-peer level as opposed to the interactions between a caregiver and caretaker. Furthermore, the program involves private **citizens and NGOs** in ensuring the wellbeing of unaccompanied migrant minors. For example, one provision involves renting 40 houses and apartments in the community. Neighbours also participate in the furnishing of living modular units, and can join community events. Citizens involved receive prior training and grants and they do not have to be citizens of the city of Antwerp.

Independence training

CURANT also offers individually tailored guidance and counselling focused on education, employment, independent living, language, leisure and social integration. This integrated approach aims to empower young refugee adults by developing their resilience, independence and general life skills. The project aims to help the target group by establishing a network of supportive contacts and dealing with trauma, including from war. One of the expected outcomes is that young refugee adults will become less dependent on social welfare and follow their own paths in life.

Psychological support

Another point of strength of the project is that it offers psychological support. The project team has a psychologist available for refugees three days a week for individual and group counselling.

Challenge:

Young refugees are not always keen on psychological training and coaching for housing and job searches. But these activities are compulsory, while Dutch classes are not. Sometimes refugees do not recognise the benefits of these activities in the long term.

Integration and Independence

Successfully integrating young refugees into society contributes to a more harmonious urban community. In order to start the process of integration into local society, securing accommodation is key. Other services that foster this aim are psychological support, independence training and network-building through, for instance, the buddy system. One of the expected outcomes of Antwerp's initiative is that young refugee adults will become less dependent on social welfare and follow their own paths in life.

The social worker from OCMW is in charge of coordinating the integration process, including maintaining connections with all the social workers following young refugees in different life areas. OCMW aims to appoint only one social worker per young refugee from OCMW and provide them with more expertise about the target group. Right now, however, there are still many different facilitators working with the same individual.

Lessons Learned

The good practices of CURANT lay in the multiplicity of provisions and regulations, e.g. CURANT provides accommodation and psychological support and at least one social worker is appointed to each refugee. However, in implementing the project, CURANT also experienced challenges:

- Regardless of the appointing of one social worker per young refugee from OCMW, many different facilitators work with the same individual. **There is an issue of effective case management.** This issue must be tackled in the short term.
- Many refugees have a low level of education, therefore they struggle to adapt to their new living situation, often **showing signs of frustration.** Additionally, some refugees still **experience difficulties after CURANT** in finding appropriate housing, employment and education, even after receiving the assistance of the consortium partnership.

The co-housing project and other initiatives in Antwerp have led to the following lessons, which could be beneficial to other cities:

- **Flexible team:** Due to changing situations during the implementation of the project, the team involved must be flexible.
- **Listening to the refugees' concerns** before starting a project is also very important. Indeed, they can point out what they really need, what is useful for them, as well as general feedback.
- **The implementation phase of the project is very time-consuming:** CURANT initially aimed to involve 75-135 refugees and 75-135 buddies (roughly 150- 270 people in total). The project is still expected to reach this number of participants, but significant time is needed to coordinate the allocation of houses and tenants.

Refugee Women and Children and the “Blue Dot Scheme” and Child & Family Support Hub in Athens

Summary

The nation-wide ‘Blue Dot Scheme’ is an initiative that the NGO SolidarityNow, together with the municipality of Athens, implemented in Greece with the aim to identify families, mainly women and children at risk, including unaccompanied and separated children and sexual- and gender-based violence survivors. The Blue Dot Scheme provides psychosocial support, information and appropriate referrals on medical care, accommodation and other services. Within the Blue Dot Scheme, SolidarityNow, with the support of the Municipality of Athens, has established a new Child and Family Support Hub in the city. The Hub aims to provide services to particularly vulnerable groups such as refugee/migrant women and children (aged between 2 and 17) in urban settings. Through its projects, the city of Athens is trying to address the gap of inadequate services for migrant children and women.

City: Athens, Greece

Target Group: Migrant children (between 2 and 17 years old) and women.

Implemented by: SolidarityNow and the municipality of Athens

Funded by: UNICEF

Timeframe: The programme was renewed on 30 October 2017 for another 6 months.

Role and Organisation: Supervisor of the Department for the Support & Social Inclusion for Migrants and Refugees

Key Topics:

Integration, protection, empowerment, skills, psychological support, accommodation and housing and health

‘Blue Dot Scheme’

In cooperation with UNICEF, SolidarityNow implements a nation-wide project called ‘Blue Dot Scheme’ aiming to serve the most vulnerable migrants by providing access to a comprehensive package of support services, including the provision of information, basic psychosocial support and legal aid. The project is implemented in Attica (the region encompassing Athens), Central Greece and Northern Greece, in both urban settings and campsites. The main goal has been to create a safe space for women and children, where multiple services are integrated and provided in one building. Through the department for the Support & Social Inclusion of Migrants & Refugees, the Municipality of Athens was able to offer space at 45 street Maizonos in Metaxourgio. Shortly after, a proposal was made to the international organisation of UNICEF to create a center where Athens could provide immediate relief to vulnerable groups. With the help of all stakeholders, SolidarityNow was able to establish this new Child and Family Support Hub in the city. The hub fulfils the aforementioned goals of providing support services to particularly vulnerable groups such as refugee/migrant women and children between 2 and 17 years old at risk of abuse, exploitation and violence, especially in an urban setting. The Municipality of Athens contributed to the staffing of space, both in terms of the necessary equipment and human resources. The hope was that by supporting women and children psychosocially, these efforts would help smooth their integration into Greek society.

The programme is organised around several approaches: structured prevention, protection, and empowerment activities for women. It includes activities such as focus group discussions on life skills development and resilience building and specialised counselling on childcare, breastfeeding, personal hygiene etc. Alongside these services, it also provides structured recreational and psychosocial activities for children, including providing safe space for youth, supporting parents, assessing vulnerability and raising awareness. The programme involves community outreach to facilitate social cohesion and integration, including through intercultural events and other community-based initiatives.

Lessons Learned

Points of strength:

- **The creation of an integrated framework of services and activities.** Over time, this has substantially contributed to the education and entertainment of children of all ages and to the improvement of families' daily lives. Through creative activities and programs for women and children, this integrated approach promoted the development of individual personalities, as well as the empowerment of individuals with a view to facilitate their integration into European societies.
- **Collaboration with other stakeholders.** Right now, the Centre is well known as a hub offering multiple psychosocial services. As such, it receives referrals from a number of private and public organisations. In addition, the close collaboration with the Municipality of Athens has proven to be very useful for the efficient and effective management of several cases and, more generally, for the collaboration with other public sector interests.

Critical issues:

- **The creation of a stable environment.** As the Centre is only an initial attempt to integrate a multitude of services which were otherwise delivered separately, challenges arose in creating a stable environment and an integrated team able to cope with all the difficulties.
- **The dissemination of the project.** It also took some time for potential beneficiaries to learn about the existence of the Centre. Nevertheless, the Centre has proved capable of ensuring the services which the beneficiaries are looking for.

One lesson from the city of Athens that is instructive for other (European) cities is that a joint collaboration with relevant stakeholders, public and private, is important for the success of a project. Furthermore, successful dissemination of the project and its activities is very important to captivate and involve different kinds of stakeholders.

The Protection System for Asylum and Refugee Applicants (SPRAR) in Genova

Summary

The city administration of Genova aims to successfully integrate all unaccompanied minors. Within the framework of the national system for the reception of refugees (**Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati**, or SPRAR), local implementation focuses especially on children. In its approach, the city of Genova does not make a distinction between those children that are asylum seekers and those with another status. This way no children are neglected by the system: all receive a guardian from day one and are supported in their educational and vocational development, including in learning the Italian language. The main challenge is twofold: First, the transition to adulthood ends the support for those who were not asylum seekers, since adults fall under SPRAR only if they are asylum seekers. Follow-up for this group is thus very important. Secondly, the city administration discovered that different types of unaccompanied minors have different expectations and therefore, need different types of support. The city of Genova stresses the importance of investing in the reception system for unaccompanied minors even when the issue does not seem urgent. Cities that follow this advice should be better equipped in the case of a major influx of unaccompanied minor migrants.

City: Genova, Italy

Target Group: Unaccompanied migrant children within the ages of 15 to 18 years old. The city of Genova rarely deals with children below this age.

Implemented by: The city of Genova

Funded by: Government and ANCI

Timeframe: Since 2007

Contact Person: Danilo Parodi, Directorate for Social Policy Social Services, Severe Marginality Area, dparodi@comune.genova.it

Key Topics:

Education, Language and Job Orientation; Involvement of citizens; Transition to adulthood; City administration expertise

Unaccompanied minors in Genova

In Italy, cities are in charge of implementing the national system for the reception of refugees, namely the SPRAR system ("Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati"). Big urban centres in Italy, such as Genova, have seen migration influxes for a long time. In 2016, 97 projects throughout the country within the SPAR framework were specifically dedicated to children. The strategy adopted by ANCI and the city of Genova was to extend the SPRAR framework to all unaccompanied minors with a migrant background, regardless of whether they were seeking asylum or not. The city of Genova hosts yearly around 300 unaccompanied migrant minors and there are, as of today, 250 children hosted in city facilities, either reception centres or structures dedicated to education and assistance.

Appointment of a guardian

Since 2007, the city of Genova has focused on minor asylum seekers by providing **guardianship from the first day**, recruiting professionals that help the children with their education and helping them focus on learning the Italian language as well as orienting them within the job market. The overall aim has been to offer a path towards integration. While originally lawyers served as guardians, it is now possible for a **voluntary guardian** to come from the broader civil society. Voluntary guardians take care of children without compensation, after receiving a proper traineeship.

Transition to adulthood

Social workers following children ensure there is a gradual transition of services for children as they approach legal adulthood at 18 years old. Once the young migrant becomes an adult, he/she is transferred to separate ad hoc facilities. If they are asylum seekers, they can transition towards the SPRAR system for adults. However, if unaccompanied migrant children who are not asylum seekers turn 18, they cannot transfer to the adult SPRAR system. These children will therefore not receive the same kind of support.

Lessons Learned

Genova teaches that **different types of migration require different types of support**. For example, an unaccompanied migrant minor from Albania usually leaves an existing and supportive family to try to work in Italy. Such a profile is different from a child coming from, for example, Gambia. The municipality learned that different situations and individuals require different strategies, since it is one thing to move under the pressure of teenage rebellion, but is a whole other thing to escape from violence, poverty and conflicts. Consequently, different children react differently to the support and assistance offered from the administration. The SPRAR system is more suitable for unaccompanied minors coming from situations of desperate poverty, while it is less effective for children who move from relatively stable contexts. Nonetheless, the municipality of Genova has some lessons it would like to share with other (European) cities, namely:

- For local public authorities it is important to **start addressing the issue of integration of unaccompanied migrant minors, regardless of the urgency**. For example, the fact that the city of Genova started to focus on the integration of migrant families early in 2001 and the integration of children in 2007, proved beneficial. By the time the number of arrivals increased, the city of Genova already had structures to start the integration processes in place and possessed the experience to manage the situation.
- It is also important that the city administration possesses the **appropriate in-house expertise**, as it needs to supervise and guide the actions of external associations from third sectors; this guiding role cannot be done without the necessary knowledge on how to manage inclusion policies.

Guardianship, (Psycho)Education, Assisted Living and Transit Houses in Gent

Summary

The city of Gent identified a set of individual measures, under different thematic areas: guardianship, housing and living, education and so-called **MindSpring Sessions**, an ad-hoc training for migrants and programme on mental health and psychoeducation. Part of the measures are implemented at the national level, part at the level of the Flanders region and part are initiatives of the municipality of Gent only.

Key Topics:

Guardianship, accommodation and housing, training, mental health and psychological support and education

Guardianship

There is a functioning regime (national system) which applies to the whole territory of Belgium. The Federal Department of Justice assigns to every unaccompanied migrant minor a guardian who has the following duties with respect to the children:

- Assisting them during legal proceedings
- Ensuring their health, well-being and providing psychological support
- Following their introduction into the education system
- Supporting them in the housing and accommodation process
- Following the progress of their asylum application. The guardianship starts 'from day one'. In fact, as soon as a police officer identifies an unaccompanied migrant minor, he/she is obligated by law to notify the Department of Justice.
- Guardians are trained for their role. The ratio of children to an individual guardian can vary; this ratio also depends on whether guardianship is provided by a single individual or by an organisation. Currently, there is a shortage of guardians: this is why specific initiatives are being carried out to recruit more guardians.

City: Gent, Belgium

Target Group: Unaccompanied migrant minors 16 and 19 years old, the largest group arriving in Gent

Implemented by: The initiatives discussed are the result of a mix of interventions made at national, regional and city level. **MindSpring Junior** and **transit houses** are initiatives conceived and implemented at the city level. The role of the municipality in the mentioned initiatives is to coordinate and allocate funding and bring relevant stakeholders together. Other actors involved in the initiatives are:

1. The Centre of General Wellbeing: an independent body that gets part of the funding from the municipality of Gent;
2. The Public Centre for Social Welfare: a body from the federal government that allocates money to social welfare. It is part of the municipality, although it depends on the federal government (which provides the funding);
3. IN-Gent: an organisation that provides education (language classes and integration courses) for newcomers. It also has a project for minors (age 16 to 18) where the organisation provides an integration course (called Mid Spring) to youngsters and organises activities to bring the young refugees together.
4. VZW Jong organises activities for youngsters and has a programme for refugees.

Funded by: the Flemish Government and in some cases the municipality of Gent

Contact Person: Welfare and Equal Opportunities Service – Department of Social Cohesion, Welfare and Health in the city of Gent

Housing and living (Assisted Living and Transit Houses)

When an individual receives recognition of refugee status (or of the need of subsidiary protection), they are expected to leave their temporary accommodation (e.g. refugee shelter) within two months. However, the conditions of the housing market in Gent are currently not very favourable. As a general federal policy (Fedasil), unaccompanied minors can live on their own once they turn 17 years old (sometimes even from the age of 16). For this reason, the Flemish Government assigns a counsellor to each unaccompanied minor over the age of 17; this is a measure in place for all young individuals from vulnerable backgrounds. It is a system of assisted living: the counsellor accompanies the child for the year they are 17 to 18 years old. The counsellor monitors that the child is wisely using the monthly allowance received from the Federal Government (Fedasil) on daily life expenditures. Once children turn eighteen, they are turned over to the general system of financial assistance provided under social welfare. Nevertheless, the municipality of Gent has a specific project (Ankerkracht), which extends the assistance to youngsters who are between 16 and 25 years old. This project has been in place since 2014, originally as an ESF funded project. The provided assistance goes beyond the Flemish framework of assisted living from 17 to 18 years old. Due to the influx of asylum seekers, the municipality of Gent has implemented a temporary system of transit houses. The system targets individuals who must move from their initial accommodation within two months following the recognition of their status as asylum seekers. These people can live in transit houses assigned by the municipality for the few months needed to search for a new accommodation. Moreover, people receive additional professional guidance during the search. The system of transit houses was developed during the migrant influx of 2015-2016.

MindSpring sessions

MindSpring is an ad-hoc training for migrants, a programme on mental health and psychoeducation. It is designed for adults, but the Centre of General Wellbeing has also developed a version for children (MindSpring Junior). MindSpring is provided in the language of the receivers, by trained people (i.e. usually a mix of professionals and volunteers) and is organised by the Centre of General Wellbeing. The training focuses on concepts such as identity, networks and kinships, future expectations, etc. The initiative was developed during 2015-2016 and it was funded partly by the municipality of Gent and partly by the Flemish Government. At this moment, no more financing is received by the Flemish Government, so the municipality of Gent is paying the total cost.

Education

Concerning the integration of unaccompanied minors into the Belgian education system, there are different approaches for primary and secondary schools. Children who are in primary school are directly integrated into the education system and supported with appropriate assistance to ensure they catch up. Primary schools receive extra funding if they have a certain number of registered newcomers: as a consequence, newcomers are often concentrated in a few schools. On the other hand, if the children are in secondary school they are assigned to a system of reception classes, which last one year, in order to learn the local language. After having completed the reception classes, children are assigned to follow-up coaches. This system was already in place for other newcomers, not only refugees.

“It is a loss of potential for society: some of the minors opt out for vocational schools, while they may have the capacity to attend higher education.”

Employee at the Welfare and Equal Opportunities Service in the city of Gent

Lessons Learned

Regarding the effort towards integration into **the education system** there are still areas for improvement.

- The high dropout rate from school after reception classes is a signal that the approach towards the integration into the education system could be better tailored
- For many migrant children it is still difficult to transition smoothly into the Belgium higher education system and many opt out in favour of vocational training
- Migrant children may need further training beyond language classes
- The extensive funding provided so far has made it possible to finance this set of activities; however, authorities will stop allocation of resources in 2018.
- The community is involved in most of the thematic areas discussed. With reference to guardianship, volunteers can, for example, sign up and receive the training; with reference to housing, volunteers help by offering support in searching for a house, doing activities together, homework, etc. Overall, the city works in cooperation with a set of NGOs which mobilise a network of volunteers
- Overall, the federal **framework of guardianship** is a well-established and functioning system in the city of Gent. MindSpring and MindSpring Junior are initiatives that other cities could also implement, specifically in the service of unaccompanied migrant minors
- The experience of the city of Gent also suggests that it is important to ensure that **support to children continues after they turn 18 years old**, by extending the system of assisted living and by helping them build up a social network.

Guardianship, housing and education in Glasgow

Summary

The Glasgow City Council takes care of the integration process of unaccompanied migrant minors arriving in the city from the first day the children arrive in the city. The Council, in collaboration with other stakeholders, implemented several initiatives targeting migrant children. These initiatives, which are implemented in the context of the integration process of the young migrants, are presented below, divided by the thematic areas: guardianship, accommodation and housing, education and peer-to-peer mentoring. In particular, Glasgow's housing options are remarkable in the city's approach to unaccompanied migrant minors.

Key Topics:

Integration, guardianship, accommodation and housing, education and peer-to-peer mentoring.

City: Glasgow, United Kingdom

Target Group: Unaccompanied migrant minors, even if some initiatives are targeting all children.

Implemented by: Glasgow City Council, alongside the Scottish Guardianship Service, the Scottish Refugee Council, Red Cross and Freedom from Torture and several NGO's that are contracted to provide different services.

Contact Person: Keith Moore-Milne, Team Leader/Mental Health Officer Asylum & Roma children & Families Team, keith.moore-milne@glasgow.gov.uk

Guardianship

The Glasgow City Council Social Work service has a specialist Asylum & Roma Team which appoints a social worker to every unaccompanied migrant minor from the very first day he/she arrives in the city. A Guardianship service is also provided by the Scottish Guardianship Service. It supports children during the legal asylum process, acting also as independent advocates on their behalf. Glasgow City Council financially supports migrant minors until they complete their full-time education (it could be up to when they are 25 years old). This means that they provide a regular allowance, housing support, clothing and emotional and practical support from their social worker.

Accommodation and housing

Glasgow City Council social services provides several kinds of accommodation for unaccompanied migrant minors who arrive in Glasgow:

- Children under 16 years old can live in Children's Residential Care Homes. These structures have a very high cost (£225k per annum, per person), which is fully covered by the municipality of Glasgow. The city of Glasgow currently has 18 unaccompanied migrant minors living in these units.
- Youngsters from 16 to 18 years old can live with families from the new 'Families for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children' programme. Families who want to care for this age group and open their homes to them are assessed beforehand. Currently, 20 families have just been to the adoption and fostering panel and another 10 are expected. The city contracted with a variety of NGOs to provide accommodation and support to young people over the age of 16. The structures provided are called "Supported Accommodation" and they have permanent staff working in them. They have a high cost, (up to £30K per annum, per person), which is fully covered by the municipality.
- Unaccompanied migrant minors can also live in a Student Accommodation.¹¹⁰ The city has just started using these facilities, which are located near a local university. Young migrants living in the structures share the accommodations with 500 other students.
- Young unaccompanied migrants also have apartments at their disposal. The provision is mixed – some through local housing associations, some from the private sector. External support is provided by NGOs, which are contracted by Glasgow City Council to give a specific number of hours of support.

¹¹⁰ For more information see: <http://freshstudentliving.co.uk/property/foundry-courtyard/gallery>.

- A specific project that provides accommodation services to unaccompanied migrant minors is called the **'Campus Project'**. It consists of a specific residential unit for young migrants over the age of 16. The structure is staffed. The city of Glasgow rents the building from a private landlord, but a local NGO is contracted to provide the services in the building.
- The project called **'Laverockhall Street'** consists of a block of apartments, specifically for young people who are asylum seekers. NGOs support the young people through visits. They organize outings and their own social workers provide external support too.
- The municipality of Glasgow offers support, through financial help and other kinds of benefits, to families who have offered their homes to relatives arriving in Glasgow. The initiative is targeting unaccompanied children (also known as "Dublin III cases")¹¹¹ who have a family member or a sibling who is legally present in the country. Last year, the city of Glasgow had 27 children under this status.
- In October 2016, the city of Glasgow recently refurbished an old homeless flat unit for 19 Eritrean/Ethiopian girls, as an 'emergency' response to the 'Calais Crisis' in France, when thousands of young asylum-seeking children were accommodated throughout Europe. This facility was set up in just two weeks. The facility is now closed and all of the young people have been moved to new student accommodations.

Education

It is mandatory to attend school for all young people under the age of 16 years old. After turning 16, they can choose to go either to college or to high school. The majority of children usually decides to go to college, primarily due to the presence of language courses provided there. Young migrant children in Scotland receive regular grants for completing their education, which are provided by the local authority and the Scottish government.

Peer-to-Peer mentoring

The last project of the City Council is called **'New Young Peers Scotland Group'**,¹¹² which aims to train young people who are asylum seekers – some still in the city's care – to provide a peer mentoring service to new arrivals.

The main actor of these initiatives is the Glasgow City Council. However, alongside several NGOs that are contracted to provide different services (in particular for some accommodation projects), other stakeholders involved are the Scottish Guardianship Service, the Scottish Refugee Council, Red Cross and Freedom from Torture. Citizens are not directly involved in most of the initiatives. However, a certain number of foster families is available to host and care for unaccompanied migrant minors.

Lessons Learned

There are lessons from the experiences with minor and young refugees in Glasgow that perhaps can also serve as inspiration for other projects and cities. To start with the good practices:

- **Starting the integration process from the very first day** that the children arrive in the city results in a useful and successful approach. In Glasgow, every unaccompanied migrant minor is immediately assigned to a specialist social worker, starting from the very first day they arrive in the city.
- **The variety and mixture of disposable accommodations available** is a useful element of the integration process. In the city of Glasgow, the accommodation service offers different choices of structures to unaccompanied minors.
- There is one major critical issue in the housing initiative of Glasgow, namely the location of the accommodations offered. Some of the previously used accommodations were located in isolated areas of the city. The program observed that young people living there were unhappy and that the areas where the structures were located were potentially unsafe for them. The lesson here is that the location of accommodations and services offered are important elements to take into account. The impact that location and setting has on young people must not be underestimated.

¹¹¹ With reference to the Dublin III Regulation (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=O-JL:2013:180:0031:0059:EN:PDF>)

¹¹² An introductory video can be found here: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/sixiwkqf2roj1kw/New%20Young%20Peers%20Scotland.FINALmp4?dl=0>.

Ensuring the well-being of unaccompanied minors through the regional system (and its cooperation with other cities) in Madrid

Summary

The interview focuses on the role of the regional administration of Madrid. It first outlines the functioning of the system ensuring the well-being of unaccompanied minors. It then focuses on the measures that have taken place in the region of Madrid, implemented via cooperation between the regional administration and the cities.

Key Topics:

Cooperation between the regional administration and the cities, protection and well-being, needs-adapted facility

The Spanish Framework

In Spain, regions (i.e. **Comunidades Autonomas**) are in charge of ensuring the protection and well-being of minors in need. If a minor in need can be traced to a family living in Spain, then the case is followed by the local administration of the city where the relative resides. The regional administration cooperates with the city when it comes to these dossiers. The cases of unaccompanied minors are fully within the purview of the regional administration. The same applies to unaccompanied migrant minors. In 2014, the Spanish Government approved a national protocol¹¹³ detailing the procedures of intervention with relation to unaccompanied migrant minors, with the aim of coordinating the approaches of relevant institutions. The protocol outlines legislative provisions regarding the localisation of unaccompanied migrant minors, their identification, the determination of the age, their registration and their assignment to a recognized public entity for the protection of minors.

Protection measures for unaccompanied (migrant) minors

The city of Madrid hosts the **Centre of First Reception, or "Residencia de Primera Acogida."**¹¹⁴ It is a diagnostic centre that hosts minors for their first short stay—ones between 15 and 17 years old in "Hortaleza" and ones less than 15 years old in "ICE." This stay can vary between a few days and several months and lasts on average six months. During this time, the centre assess the basic needs of the minors in terms of food, clothing and accommodation, as well as psychological support.¹¹⁵ The personnel of the centre follow each case individually and identify the support needed and any follow-up actions that should be taken. The centre additionally assesses whether minors have a family or, in the case of migrant minors, whether there is a possibility of being integrated back into the country of origin.

City: Madrid, Spain

Target Group: Unaccompanied (migrant) minors of 16-18 years old. Also, children of 11-15 in some cases. Once the children turn 18, they are no longer within the competence of the regional administration, but there are specific programs in place for young refugees of 18-21 years old.

Implemented by: The Region of Madrid, in cooperation with cities' administrations and personnel of the facilities where the children are assigned. Madrid also implements a project of collaboration with cultural mediators.

Time Frame: The number of unaccompanied migrant minors arriving in Spain has been increasing since 2005. The diagnostic centres were established in 2008. A subsequent migration wave started in 2015, resulting in an increasing number of migrants coming from backgrounds different than traditional ones.

Contact Person: Esther Abad Guerra, Head of the Child Protection Area in the General Directorate of Family and Minors, esther.abadg@madrid.org

¹¹³ Resolución de 13 de octubre de 2014, de la Subsecretaría, por la que se publica el Acuerdo para la aprobación del Protocolo Marco sobre determinadas actuaciones en relación con los Menores Extranjeros No Acompañados, Boletín Oficial del Estado, n. 251, p. 83894, 16/10/14.

¹¹⁴ See: http://www.madrid.org/cs/Satellite?c=CM_InPractica_FA&cid=1132041353977&idConsejeria=1109266187278&idListConsj=11_09265444710&idOrganismo=1109266227712&language=es&pagename=ComunidadMadrid%2FEstructura&pv=1132041736469&sm=1109170600517.

¹¹⁵ There is also another centre of this kind – the Centre Isabel Clara Eugenia – which follows the cases of children until 14 years old.

Once the assessment procedures of the Centre of First Reception are completed and the appropriate support strategy is identified, unaccompanied minors can be moved to one of the several **Residence Centres for Minors**, present in the area of Madrid.¹¹⁶ These living units serve minors above the age of 12 and ensure their needs while supporting them in reaching autonomy and personal and professional independence. Among these facilities, the **Centre for Cultural and Social Adaptation (i.e. Centro de Adaptación Cultural y Social C.A.C.Y.S.) "Manzanares"** is a residential facility for teenage minors which has been specifically adapted for unaccompanied migrant minors. The centre assesses the educational needs of the minors, and then provides language classes and skills trainings, which at a school within the centre. During their stay, minors are followed by educators, intercultural mediators and other professionals, to ensure the proper inclusion of unaccompanied minors in the hosting society. The minors remain in these centres until their situation changes – either they reach adulthood, repatriate to their country of origin or custody is ended for another reason.

Prolonged Support (>18 year old youngsters)

There are also specific programs in place for minors between 18 and 21 years old. The actions of the regional administration start focusing on ensuring that minors can be self-sufficient when they are 16 years old in order to prepare them for when they turn 18.

Role of the Regional Administration & Key Actors

The Region of Madrid takes care of the protection and well-being of unaccompanied migrant minors, in cooperation with cities that host the aforementioned facilities. Within the region of Madrid, city administrations cooperate with the personnel and the resources of the facilities where the minors are assigned. On top of this, cities can implement initiatives of their own. The city of Madrid, for example, has implemented a project of collaboration with cultural mediators. Associations and NGOs can also partner with the regional administration, for example in offering courses to improve skills. In general, private citizens are not involved in the domain of the protection of migrant unaccompanied minors. The average age of migrant children makes it difficult for them to be integrated into local foster families.

Lessons learned

Despite many efforts by Spanish authorities to arrange tailored and needs-based care, the interviewee in Madrid explained that the migration trend has changed over the years and that nowadays, migrants who arrive in Spain intend to move on to other EU countries. These expectations make it difficult for the Spanish authorities to ensure the success of traditional actions of inclusion of children and migrants in general because the target group is less motivated to comply. To this extent, it is necessary to ensure that unaccompanied minors see the officials and the professionals of the regions as people who are supporting them, rather than as obstacles in their path towards another EU country.

- Two positive features are the prolonged support until young adults turn 21, which often helps the youngsters in their development to adulthood and self-sufficiency, and the extra measures taken, such as the psychological support, cultural mediators and specialised educators provided in the special housing facilities for children in migration in Madrid and surrounding regions.

But two big challenges for the administration remain:

- The identification of age is one of the key preliminary steps to ensuring targeted support
- The regional administration is struggling to devise a new approach to face the shift in migrant intention, to ensure, for example, that the educational needs of migrant unaccompanied minors are met. This issue has been raised to the national ministry, so that it can then be discussed at the multi-national level. Cooperation between EU members is needed, as children can go missing in one member state and then be detected in another while still remaining under the purview of the country of arrival.

¹¹⁶ For more information, see: http://www.madrid.org/cs/Satellite?c=CM_InfPractica_FA&cid=1132041353977&idConsejeria=1109266187278&idListConsj=1109265444710&idOrganis mo=1109266227712&language=es&pagenome=ComunidadMadrid%2FEstructura&pv=1132041737799&sm=1109170600517

There is one major critical issue in the housing initiative of Glasgow, namely the location of the accommodations offered. Some of the previously used accommodations were located in isolated areas of the city. The program observed that young people living there were unhappy and that the areas where the structures were located were potentially unsafe for them. The lesson here is that the location of accommodations and services offered are important elements to take into account. The impact that location and setting has on young people must not be underestimated.

Four Initiatives focusing around housing, financial assistance, foster care and first assistance in Milan

Summary

In Milan, several initiatives for unaccompanied minors have been implemented. These projects have been divided by thematic area: housing, financial assistance, foster care and first assistance. The points of strength and issues encountered during the implementation of the projects have been shared by the city and could serve as lessons for other European cities.

Key Topics:

Accommodation and housing, financial assistance, foster care and first assistance

Accommodation and housing

The name of the initiative is **'Emergenze Sostenibili'** and it started in 2013. The project completely changed the reception system for unaccompanied migrant minors in the city of Milan. The municipality has noticed that unaccompanied migrant children have different needs than their peers born and raised in Milan. Usually, the biggest divergences concern the level of education received and the autonomy acquired. For this reason, migrant children need to be provided with diversified services and the facilities that were previously allocated were not adequate for the scope. Thanks to this initiative, now children have access to apartments with 5-7 people maximum, located in several areas of Milan. Children have also access to civic education courses: the aim of these classes is to make them feel they are citizens of the city. The courses are held by public servants, such as police officers and so on.

This initiative is still ongoing and it targets young unaccompanied migrants: formerly, the targeted age range was between 16 and 18 years old, but it was subsequently lowered to include young people 15 years old.

Financial Assistance

The name of the initiative is **'Chudiamo il cerchio'**. It targets young people who are turning 18 years old and who need additional financial assistance (the municipality's support for unaccompanied migrant minors ends when they turn 18). Money is made available by a special national fund – **'Fondo nazionale per l'infanzia e l'adolescenza'** – which allocates financing for projects and initiatives aiming to promote social rights, quality of life, and personal development and achievement of children and adolescents. The fund was established by a national law.¹¹⁷ Funding assistance can be used by migrant youngsters for various reasons: to pay for accommodations, vocational training, etc. An educator and a social worker are appointed one or two months before they turn 18 to every child who has requested to be part of the programme. They assess whether the young adult needs further financial assistance and what they need it for. They are also responsible for monitoring how the money is spent.

City: Milan, Italy

Target Group: Unaccompanied migrant minors. Milan receives and hosts mainly 16-18 year olds, thus many projects target them specifically.

Implemented by: The municipality of Milan, in partnership with other organisations such as NGO's.

Timeframe: Since 2013, even though the Welcome Center started at the beginning of 2018.

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¹¹⁷ Legge 28 agosto 1997, n. 285 1, which can be found here: https://www.minori.it/sites/default/files/legge_1997_n_285.pdf

Foster care

The initiative concerning foster care is carried out by the municipality alongside other organisations, including Caritas. Its aim is to promote family foster care, especially for young migrants aged between 16 and 17 years old. Indeed, lack of availability of foster families for unaccompanied minors of this age range was detected in the city of Milan. This shortage is due to difficulties encountered by the families in establishing a relationship with young migrants of this age. For this reason, the initiative provides support groups to foster families.

First Assistance

At the beginning of 2018, a new service targeting unaccompanied migrant minors will be established. The Welcome Centre will have between 10 and 15 places for migrant children. Inside the same initiative, other services will be provided, such as immediate healthcare. The centre will be a temporary reception point, with the final aim to redirect migrants to other permanent facilities.

Milan's Citizens

Citizens are directly involved in some initiatives, in particular concerning socio-educational facilities such as 'La Fanciullezza'¹¹⁸. This project addresses the need for protection and guardianship of children in emergency situations. Each structure hosts four children, with the objective of re-creating a familial ambience. This initiative has always received the support of volunteers.

Lessons learned

There are different types of migration flows, which require different kinds of support by the city. Milan finds that a differentiation has to be made between migrants arriving in the South of Europe and the ones going to the North. The two groups have very disparate characteristics, which need to be taken into account at a local, national and European level when planning and implementing reception systems. However, at the European level, there is currently a lack of attention towards migrant flows arriving to the South of Europe, while the attention seems to be focused on North receiving countries.

"There must be a differentiation between the reception systems and the same consideration should be devoted to both types of flow, in order to give an adequate support to countries and cities."

Barbara Lucchesi, First Aid Office of the Municipality of Milan

In Milan's Projects some points of strength that can be highlighted and are helpful for other European cities are:

- **Individual-oriented initiatives.** The initiatives proposed are targeting the single child and not the entire group of unaccompanied migrant minors. In this way, the attention is focused on the individual needs. This approach proved to be very useful and efficient.
- **Cooperative work between civil society and local authority.** Cooperation between relevant stakeholders is very beneficial for the establishment and implementation of initiatives aimed at the integration of migrant minors in the community. However, the success of such cooperative work is time-consuming and difficult to achieve.
- **The transition to legal adulthood.** Children usually arrive in Milan when they are between 16 and 17 years old, yet after they turn 18, the guardianship ends. There is not enough time for these children to complete their education and/or learning process, as usually all educational courses last at least three years. After the migrants turn 18, there is only one way to keep them under the municipality's guardianship, which is the so-called '**Proseguio amministrativo**' (administrative extension), established under the Italian national law. The extension of guardianship needs to be approved by the Juvenile court, which assess whether there is need for longer supervision or integration of the young migrant. If it is approved, the young migrant will be monitored until he/she is 21.

¹¹⁸ For more information see: <http://www.fanciullezza.org/>.

Reception of unaccompanied minors at the Asylum Seeker Center in Ropazu

Summary

The local administration of Ropazu, Latvia, set up an Asylum Seeker Center (ASC). In this center, the Orphan's and Custody Court works to protect the rights and interests of unaccompanied minors. Although the numbers of unaccompanied minors in migration in Ropazu are low when compared to other European cities, the local administration takes an active approach aimed at integration of these children among local youth. The court provides unaccompanied minors in the center with food, access to health care and legal representation. Local educational institutions provide educational opportunities. All these activities aim at the protection and development of the child while fostering their integration in Ropazu. A clear example of the approach in practice is the opportunity for children to take part in sports activities together with the local population.

City: Ropazu, Latvia

Target Group: Unaccompanied migrant minors.

Implemented by: The Orphan's and Custody Court, in close co-operation with the State Border Guard, the Office of Asylum Affairs, the involved ministries and public organisations.

Funded by: The State of Latvia and local administration of Ropazu.

Contact Person: Ingrida Zunde, Chief of the Orphan's and Custody Court, barintiesa@ropazi.lv.

Key Topics:

Reception and accommodation, the provision of subsistence, educational opportunities, medical care and legal representation

Reception and accommodation

In accordance with national legislation, in the city of Ropazu the protection of the rights and interests of unaccompanied minors (UAM) is ensured through the permanent function and day-to-day work of the Orphan's and Custody Court. The interests of UAM are represented by the Orphan's Court as long as the child stays in the Asylum Seeking Center. After receiving a decision on refugee status or alternative status, the interests of UAM are represented by the guardian appointed by the Orphan's court or by the head of the child care authority. If the child is accommodated in the ASC with his/her relative, then the relative can be appointed as a legal representative if he/she is suitable for this during the time the UAM resides in the ASC. The Orphan's Court in this case provides a supportive function. Other courts do not advocate for the interests of UAM, only issue decisions in accordance with national and international laws. The main action taken by the Ropazi county Orphan's and Custody Court is the reception of unaccompanied minors at the Asylum Seeker Center, set up by the local administration.

Support by the local administration

An unaccompanied minor is hosted at the ASC until appropriate foster families are found for them. The local administration takes care also of the provision of the necessary means of food, educational opportunities, medical care and legal representation in relations with the institutions and courts. Furthermore, unaccompanied minors have the opportunity to study at local educational institutions.

Key Actors and Civil Society

At the ASC, unaccompanied minors can participate in various activities together with the local population. In the summer of 2017, the Ropazu district municipality arranged (local) Sports Games for Mucenieki county inhabitants, where the ASC is placed. Almost all children living in the ASC took part in the activities, meaning 20 children attended. At that time, there was only 1 UAM accommodated in the ASC and the interviewee was happy to fully participate even winning prizes in several sports disciplines, including football, as member of a team with local youth. UAMs, who are staying at the ASC, also visit the Multifunctional Center in Ropazi District, located in Mucenieki, where different leisure time activities are provided for local young people. This center is located not far from ASC and the children have access without any restrictions. NGO's work together with the ASC to help unaccompanied minors in addressing various day-to-day issues. For example the NGO "Safe House" is reported to provide interpretation assistance and housing assistance. Since the overall aim of the NGO is to help the child together with the fact that it addresses the language barrier UAMs tend to approach the NGO with a more trustful attitude. Civil society organisations can therefore be very helpful in assisting the Court and work towards common solutions if problems arise. The "Foster Families' Union" also assists in looking for foster families to host the UAMs.

The Transition from Minor to Adult

When the UAM receives legal status in Latvia he/she continues to be under the custody of the Orphan's and Custody Court until he/she becomes adult. When the child becomes a legal adult (thus reaches the age of 18 years) and has the right to stay in Latvia, he/she will receive support in looking for housing and employment opportunities. Mentors coming from the NGOs, such as "Safe House" and the Red Cross, also stay engaged.

Lessons learned

- It would be valuable to have a single institution in the country coordinating the work of all involved ministries, institutions and public organisations with unaccompanied minors.
- In the process of finding appropriate housing (such as foster families) interpretation services that reduce the language barriers between the Court and the children are important for winning the child's trust and improve the children's chances of participating in decisions affecting them (such as their future reception conditions).
- Special funding is needed, in the form of a State support programme for municipalities, for unaccompanied minors to integrate into society.

A Monitoring Framework for the integration process of unaccompanied migrant minors approaching 18 in Rotterdam

Summary

The city of Rotterdam implements a framework of regular monitoring of the status and conditions of unaccompanied minors close to 18 years old, in order to ensure a smooth transition to their adult age. The monitoring framework comprises of a quarterly meeting between the city administration and external partners in charge of ensuring the well-being of unaccompanied minors with a migration background. The dossiers are individually considered for the case of children who are turning into adult citizens, six months in advance. Furthermore, the city of Rotterdam coordinates a policy meeting four times a year, to discuss structural problems which may require precise and coordinated actions.

Key Topics:

Transition into adulthood, Individual approach.

City: Rotterdam, the Netherlands

Target Group: The city's actions primarily target children approaching 18 years old, in the transition to legal adulthood. There is, for example, no specific attention for children before 16 years old.

Implemented by: Monitored by the city of Rotterdam; Nidos implements the system of protection together with its subcontractors Timon and Enver.

Timeframe: since 2016

Contact Person: W.D. (Wouter) Verheij, junior policy advisor of the city of Rotterdam, wd.verheij@rotterdam.nl

Dimensions of the assessment

In the monitoring meetings several aspects are assessed, including whether the child is going to school, whether he or she can access student housing; financial conditions of the minor are also examined, as well as the existence of a network and social ties. Access to health is also considered. The general focus of the monitoring is to ensure that children have a good start and that the transition to adulthood is facilitated.

Other stakeholders

Partners involved in the process include Nidos, the organisation in charge of the guardianship of children in the territory of the Netherlands and other contractual partners of Nidos, such as Timon and Enver, which take part in the meetings. Several departments of the public administration of the city of Rotterdam are also involved, as officials operating in the domains of education and of housing also participate. As mentioned, Nidos, is an important actor within the system of protection of unaccompanied migrant minors. It is an NGO which, on behalf of the national government of the Netherlands, is in charge of the guardianship of children. Moreover, Timon and Enver, which are Nidos' subcontractors, are in daily contact with children. In this monitoring framework, the city of Rotterdam provides support. The accommodation service to children (not only for children with a migrant background but also for other social groups) is provided in shared living groups or small living units or also via the involvement of foster families.

Rotterdam's Citizens

Civil society is not yet involved in the framework of regular city meetings. On the other hand, foster families are involved in ensuring the accommodation of migrants. However, the participation of families has to be ascribed to the general system of protection of migrants in the whole territory of the Netherlands, as coordinated by Nidos. This involvement cannot therefore be associated with particular actions of the city of Rotterdam.

After the eighteenth birthday

Relatively to other field of actions, the city of Rotterdam provides to migrant children the same type of services it provides to other citizens, under the political commitment that the city of Rotterdam does not make distinctions between 'Rotterdamers'. Therefore, once they are 18, former unaccompanied minors can still receive assistance from the city department in charge of youth policy. Former unaccompanied minors can also, just like any other citizen of Rotterdam, make a claim for social support.¹¹⁹ Social support is divided in three categories: social and personal functioning, finances and self-care and health. The support offered is however upon request: if no request is done, the former unaccompanied minor will not receive support. This is an important distinction with the type of support which is ensured until the age of 18.

Lessons Learned

Rotterdam is currently evaluating the impact of the monitoring framework, to assess its success and the limitations faced. However, some elements can be mentioned as points of strength of the current system:

- **Providing support to children in their transition towards adulthood** is a key action: under the current framework, children move from receiving assistance on a continuous basis to the complete absence of any assistance once they turn 18 years. Unless they make a claim for social support under the Wmo 2015.
- The **regular monitoring meetings** represents the baseline type of actions that cities should implement in order to tackle the integration of migrant children.

¹¹⁹ Under Dutch law the Wmo 2015.

The 'Returning Unaccompanied Minors (2014-2015)' initiative in Stromsund

Summary

The city of Stromsund has focused the attention on how to manage and address the case of unaccompanied migrant minors who do not receive the permit to remain in Sweden. In this regard, the city has implemented a project named **'Returning Unaccompanied Minors (2014-2015)'**. The project consisted of a feasibility study based, among other data, on the collection of information about the experience of cities and relevant stakeholders in Sweden. The study assessed what practices are implemented in those cases where children do not receive a permit to stay. It also aimed to gather recommendations. Its success was celebrated through the start of another national project in cooperation with the Swedish Migration Agency, namely: **'The Best Interest of the Child 2017- 2020'**.

Key Topics:

Reception and Return, Best Interests of the Child, involvement and Representation

'Returning Unaccompanied Minors (2014-2015)'

In 2015, Sweden received 162.877 asylum seekers, of which 35.369 were unaccompanied minors. The city had started to host asylum seekers at refugees centers and at NGOs' facilities, already before this wave of migration.¹²⁰ Before 2015 the city had begun to examine the scenario of what measures can be implemented for the well-being of unaccompanied migrant minors in case the asylum permit is denied, studying how to properly prepare their return to the country of origin. This happened after the city experienced the first cases of unaccompanied minors being denied the permit.

The city decided to internally run a feasibility study, since a preliminary literature research proved that no relevant initiatives had previously focused on recommendations on how to address children in such a situation. No recommendations were available. This feasibility study was part of Stromsund's launched project **'Returning Unaccompanied Minors (2014-2015)'**, which aimed to manage and address the case of unaccompanied migrant minors who do not receive the permit to remain in Sweden, as well as to assess what practices are implemented in those cases where children do not receive a permit to stay and gather recommendations on this topic. To collect the information, Stromsund sent out a survey to all the departments of social services within the public administration of Swedish cities (290 were contacted and 172 replied) in the feasibility study. The city also ran interviews with children themselves as well as with professionals involved. Based on the findings of the study, 4 booklets¹²¹ were drafted, namely:

- The first booklet concerned the overall methodology that cities should follow in taking care of UaMs;
- The second booklet focused on the dialogue between children and professionals and on how to best communicate;
- The third booklet focused on the issue of cooperation across stakeholders on local, regional and national level;
- The fourth booklet drafted a map of the asylum process, namely an infographic scheme showing and exemplifying the functioning of the asylum process for the subjects involved.

City: Stromsund, Sweden

Target Group: Usually unaccompanied children between the age of 16-18; the youngest unaccompanied minor in the municipality of Stromsund is 11 years old.

Implemented by: The Swedish Migration Agency and the County Council of Jamtland. Also, an advisory board of the project comprising of UNHCR, UNICEF, the Children's Ombudsman, the Migration Agency, Save the Children, the County Council of Stockholm and other national organisations competent on the subject of unaccompanied migrant minors. Furthermore, officials from the government and the police are within the Advisory Board to the project.

Funded by: AMIF

Timeframe: since 2014

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¹²⁰ Data from the Swedish Migration Agency.

¹²¹ For more information see: <http://www.begripligt.nu/publikationer.shtml>.

'The Best Interest of the Child 2017-2020'

Stromsund's research proved successful and other European cities showed interest in the results. Based on the positive experience of the study, the Swedish Migration Agency started a partnership with the city of Stromsund, with the objective of developing a new project on national scale: **'The Best Interest of the Child 2017-2020'**.¹²² This project is financed by AMIF. The Migration Agency asked the officials involved in the previous feasibility study to share the expertise gathered and to travel across the country to educate professionals in the field. As part of the cooperation with the Migration Agency, the city is going to organise training for professionals in each of the cities that are willing to participate, at least 3 times. The city of Stromsund is directly in charge of the project and provides support teams that will assist at least 15 other municipalities in Sweden.¹²³ The support teams guide the personnel in targeted cities and help them in best addressing unaccompanied migrant minors who are eventually sent back to their country of origin. The intention is to adjust the training to the specific needs of each municipality. The Migration Agency will also develop online courses.

"The intention is to adjust the training to the specific needs of each municipality. The Migration Agency will also develop online courses."

Elisabeth Lindholm from the city of Stromsund

The goal for the whole initiative is to facilitate cooperation between stakeholders within a municipality and also with regional and national authorities, as well as to enhance the competences of professionals and stakeholders. In doing so, the project provides knowledge on the existing legal framework and best practices on how to correctly inform children. Among the key pieces of legislation that are taken into account, there are the temporary laws that came into force in July 2016, concerning both migrant children and competent stakeholders. The laws dictate the new rules about the issuing of temporary permits for refugees of the duration of 14 months, after which a renewal request can be submitted (nowadays refugees cannot be granted a permanent permit). The laws also discipline the case of family reunions. In implementing the project, the city is elaborating on the information made available by the Migration Agency, producing accessible material which is available to professionals in an easily understandable format. The information regards for example what alternatives can be presented to migrants in case the permit to stay in Sweden is not granted and also what children can study while waiting for the administrative process.

Lessons Learned

Ensuring the reception and inclusion of migrants has been difficult, since the system in Sweden was not ready for the number of asylum seekers that arrived. Some of the lessons learned in Sweden could be beneficial to other cities who face similar (system) challenges:

- One key issue has been and still is, that children never have the possibility **to share their own perspective**. By providing them with information since day 1, meeting them frequently at the youth homes and scheduling talks children could have this space, but without it, it is often the case that **other stakeholders speak on behalf of the children**, such as lawyers and professionals. This leads to situations where the actual interest of the children is unheard – even in cases where the minor wanted to go home.

¹²² For more information see: <https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-Migration-Agency/News-archive/News-archive-2016/2016-08-16-The-new-temporary-law-has-entered-into-force.html>

¹²³ On a national basis, there is an advisory board that provides expertise to the team. The board is composed of several members, such as UNHCR, UNICEF, the Child Ombudsman, the Migration Agency, Save the Children, the County Council of Stockholm and other national organisation competent on the subject of unaccompanied migrant children as well as officials from the government and the Police. The city states the importance of having private organisations as part of the board.

- It is necessary to start the **discussion about what happens in the case of rejection during the asylum procedures**; rejection is a scenario that can take place and professionals need to be prepared accordingly. The asylum process is lengthy and emotionally/psychologically tough for the children involved: the process may take 556 days before a first answer is released from the migration agency and in the case of appeal (which can be done two times), it may take one additional year. After such a long process, children have spent considerable time in the hosting country and it can be at times problematic to inform them in case the asylum permit is not granted. Therefore, if professionals are well prepared also about the case of rejection, they can then ensure that the children are properly informed about all the possible scenarios in advance (i.e. also about the possibilities they have). This can reduce for example the occurrence of children going missing in case of denial of the asylum permit.
- It is important to **involve the children**, inform them, as they are the one that have to eventually take the decisions, based on the best information. It is necessary to ensure consistency in the information that the various professionals and stakeholders provide to the children. Coordination and cooperation between stakeholders is also important (e.g. between the decisions of the Migration Agency and the actions of professionals following minors from day 1). The objective is that the children are able to **obtain the best solution possible, within the existing rules**.
- It is crucial that **professionals keep aside the emotional engagement**, for the benefit of children who need to be instructed with correct information and with reasonable expectations about the asylum and migration regime. Professionals need to be personal with unaccompanied minors, not private.

Project TRUST and Aftercare Support in Tampere

Summary

Most of the unaccompanied migrant minors who arrive in Finland are asylum seekers. Due to changes in legislation, family reunifications take place very rarely. For this reason, it is very important to support children even after they turn 18. The city of Tampere has therefore extended the support to young unaccompanied migrants until they reach the age of 21. The city provides unaccompanied young migrants with social and health care services, as well as the access to education and other types of support. When the unaccompanied minors turn 18, the city of Tampere ensures the provision of the so-called aftercare support. Even though not all cities in Finland have opted to provide this service, the framework of assistance also covers unaccompanied young people in the age between 18 and 21 years old that are moving to Tampere from other cities.

City: Tampere, Finland

Target Group: Unaccompanied migrant minors and young people between the age of 18 to 21 years old.

Implemented by: University of Tampere

Funded by: The Finnish State and the city of Tampere

Organisation: The After-care Social Department of the city of Tampere

Key Topics:

Reception, integration, guardian, independence, (social) support and assistance.

Legal and Societal Context

In Finland, most of the unaccompanied migrant minors who arrive are asylum seekers. Following what was indicated in the section 33 of the Reception Act (746/2011), in Finland a representative must be appointed to unaccompanied minors that are asylum seekers.¹²⁴ In Tampere, the local court assigns every unaccompanied migrant minor a guardian who takes care of bureaucratic issues and the asylum process. With regards to housing needs, the existing system in Finland foresees the possibility that unaccompanied asylum seekers minors are accommodated in 'group homes' or in supported housing units for the duration of the asylum application process. Unaccompanied minors can also be accommodated in folk high schools or in private homes. When unaccompanied minors receive a residence permit, the assistance to them is provided in a 'family group home' or in other forms of supported housing.¹²⁵ Basic everyday care is organised and carried out within such living units. Group homes and family group homes are established with the cooperation of companies from the third sector. At the moment, the city of Tampere has a group home hosting 7 asylum seeking minors and a family group home for children with residence permits.

As acknowledged by the recommendations included in the Integration Act (1386/2010, i.e. 'Kotoutumislaki'), it is very important to support children even after they turn 18. In light of the significant number of asylum seekers who cannot be reunified with their own families, the city of Tampere extends the support to young unaccompanied migrants until they reach the age of 21. The city provides unaccompanied young migrants with social and health care services, as well as access to education and other types of support. This support could also be regarded as the Aftercare Support Initiative.

Aftercare Support

When the unaccompanied minors turn 18, the city of Tampere ensures the provision of the so-called aftercare support. Not all cities in Finland have opted to provide this service. This framework of assistance also covers unaccompanied young people in the age between 18 and 21 years old, that are moving to Tampere from other cities

¹²⁴ Information sourced from <http://kotouttaminen.fi/en/unaccompanied-minors>, 26.1.2018.

¹²⁵ Further information can be found on the website Finnish Immigration Service, Migri, [http://migri.fi/documents/5202425/6246482/Children%20asking%20for%20international%20protection%20\(en\)/3682e692-2046-49ad-aaf0-a3c04e47136b](http://migri.fi/documents/5202425/6246482/Children%20asking%20for%20international%20protection%20(en)/3682e692-2046-49ad-aaf0-a3c04e47136b).

Project TRUST

Another initiative, called TRUST, is launched by the University of Tampere.¹²⁶ The project aims to find solutions to the problems of social care and support for unaccompanied migrant minors. TRUST attempts to bring together the experience of teachers, care providers, child workers and youth workers – all actors that attempt to enforce the social support of children. TRUST aims to build the understanding of the issue and develop the practical tools to support unaccompanied minors in their new home country.

At the core of the project the emotional dimension of unaccompanied minors in their daily life is observed. The project focuses on the development of practices that can serve the purpose of identifying and acknowledging a place where unaccompanied minors can feel **a sense of belonging**. The project conducts experiments and pilots, employing multi-sited ethnography as an approach. It learns how children build up and use their capacities as transcultural subjects and it studies how people who are taking care of refugee children recognize and react to situations as well as how they translate lessons learned into their care practices. These analyses have great potential to inform policy makers on suitable schemes for child protection and integration in Finland and in Europe.

Tampere's Citizens

The cooperation between the municipality and citizens is present, but only to a limited extent. The city does not depend on volunteers or the third sector.

Lessons Learned

- The **pitfalls surrounding the systems implemented to ease the transition from minors to adults**. Even though, as mentioned, the city of Tampere continues to support young migrants after they turn 18 years old, many elements still exist that could be improved within the system of aftercare support, especially concerning housing and the support to young migrants in building their own social and professional networks in Finland.
- **Appointing only one social worker per child**. In the city of Tampere, only one social worker is assigned to each unaccompanied minor. The social worker follows the case of the children even after they turn 18 years old. This has proven to be a successful way of working, since the assigned professional is aware and informed about the needs of the children they follow. In this way, the social worker can be very helpful during the integration process of the children. Ensuring that each child is monitored and supported by only one social worker is an approach that could also be replicated in other cities in the EU.
- The different stages of the reception process – from the assistance within the group homes until the provision of aftercare for over 18 years old migrants – are organised by a single actor, the city of Tampere and not by other external subjects. This has proven to be a good approach for guaranteeing the quality of service and for addressing the needs of the unaccompanied migrant children, during their whole transition from unaccompanied asylum seekers to young individuals living independently within the Finnish society.

¹²⁶ For more information see: <http://www.transculturaltrust.net/>.

Child participation already before starting the process of integration in Tilburg

Summary

The approach used by the municipality of Tilburg is to consult the (unaccompanied minor) migrants before they start the process of integration. This meeting happens very soon after the arrival in Tilburg (ensuring an 'Integration from Day 1' approach) and highlights the specific needs an individual in migration might have. The city's strength lies in the integrated approach and cooperation of the municipality with relevant stakeholders that can foster the integration in the city. Particular attention is devoted to initiatives concerning education and accommodation services.

Key Topics:

Involvement and Participation, integration from Day 1, Accommodation and Housing, Education and Extra Training

About the Project: Participation and Needs-based

The city of Tilburg is currently carrying out several initiatives targeting unaccompanied migrant minors. The number of projects and initiatives soared during the last years, due to the recent increase in the overall number of migrants present in the city. The overall approach that the municipality has towards migrants, without distinction of age, is to consult them before starting the process of integration. In doing so, the city is sure that the activities and services targeting them are strictly related to their needs. In addition, the municipality has designed an overall bottom-up and local-based approach towards migrants.

Accommodation

The accommodation service offered to unaccompanied migrant minors by the municipality of Tilburg is different compared to one available in other cities. The municipality assigns one accommodation to every unaccompanied migrant minor arriving in the city of Tilburg. The accommodation unit will remain the same throughout the period in which the migrant is under the city's responsibility. This is made possible thanks to the agreements that the municipality has with several asylum organisations. Once the accommodation is assigned, the process of integration can start. This also implies that the integration process of the child starts from the first day that he/she arrives in Tilburg.

Education and Extra Training

The municipality offers support to unaccompanied migrant minors for what concerns their **education and/or their working career**. In this regard, young migrants can choose between a wide range of educational and working patterns. Indeed, they can decide to follow pre-bachelor and/or university courses, or to start working. The job is usually assigned based on the migrant's specific qualifications and capabilities, with the support of the municipality of Tilburg.

The municipality of Tilburg offers **language courses** to unaccompanied migrant minors, in order to better integrate them into the society and to help them in completing their education or finding a job. As a first step, the child's language level is evaluated and it will determine which course he/she will follow.

The city of Tilburg provides basic orientation courses to the **Dutch society** targeting migrants arriving in the city. In addition, specific courses on the city of Tilburg are also offered. Citizens are closely involved in this initiative: every migrant is supported by a 'buddy', who is a citizen of the city of Tilburg and who is assisting him/her during his/her everyday life. This initiative targets both children and adults.

City: Tilburg, the Netherlands

Target Group: Some of the initiatives mentioned specifically target unaccompanied migrant minors, while others are designed for all migrants without distinction of age.

Implemented by: The municipality is the key initiator of all the initiatives targeting migrants in the city of Tilburg. However, it cooperates with the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA), NGOs and local associations. The welfare system targeting unaccompanied migrant minors involves the support of other local health care institutions. In addition, the University of Tilburg is engaged in programmes concerning the education of unaccompanied migrant minors.

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In addition, the municipality of Tilburg **involves unaccompanied migrant minors** in the everyday life of the city **through voluntary activities**, such as giving support during fairs, sport activities, etc. This approach is utilised as a way to better integrate children into the local community.

Key Actors

The **municipality** is the key initiator of all the initiatives targeting migrants in the city of Tilburg. The municipality, however, cooperates with the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (**COA**), **NGOs** and **local associations**. The local associations and NGOs are engaged in the reception and integration process. The welfare system targeting unaccompanied migrant minors involves the support of other **local health care institutions**. In addition, the **University of Tilburg** is engaged in programmes concerning the education of unaccompanied migrant minors.

Citizens of Tilburg are also engaged in the integration process of unaccompanied migrant minors. One of the initiatives mentioned above involves the participation of citizens, who are assisting migrants during their everyday life.

Lessons Learned

The city of Tilburg learned the following lessons regarding the integration of (unaccompanied and/or minor) migrants in their city:

- Having an exchange of opinions with the migrants themselves before finalising the methodology of the integration process, resulted to be very useful. This way of proceeding should be taken into account also by other European cities.
- It is important to create an integrated system of reception, with the involvement of several stakeholders for specific tasks (such as education and housing services).

Point of strengths:

- **Starting the integration process from day one.** The integration process of unaccompanied migrant minors starts immediately as they arrive in Tilburg.
- **Integrated work between all relevant stakeholders.** Cooperation between all stakeholders resulted to be very useful and efficient for the integration process of unaccompanied migrant minors.

Critical issues:

- **Keeping the children in the same environment.** Sometimes it can be difficult to convince the central authority not to reallocate migrant children in other cities, but to let them stay in Tilburg. Indeed, the process of integration is easier and more successful when the child stays in the same local community.
- **Evaluating the children's experiences.** The assessment and critical evaluation of the unaccompanied migrant minor's experience during the reception and integration process can be challenging. It is often difficult to determine whether the process has been traumatic for the child.
- **The mind-set of neighbour cities.** The behaviour of neighbour cities can also be an issue. It is critical to ensure that they have a welcoming mind-set.

The 'Establishment Line' and 'Labour Market Process' in Trelleborg

Summary

In its approach to unaccompanied young migrants, the city of Trelleborg emphasizes the work-oriented mind-set, which allows young migrants to achieve a good level of self-sufficiency and integration into its society. Unaccompanied minors usually arrive in Sweden without having completed upper secondary education and in general having attended school only for a shorter period of time. Addressing the education needs is the basis to ensure that the children can subsequently become independent in the search for a job and accommodation. Trelleborg thus aims to provide migrant children with the necessary tools and means for completing their education. The municipality has high expectations on unaccompanied migrant minors and on the success of their integration process: the entire reception system is aiming at integrating them into society, making them self-sufficient and prepared to take their responsibilities. In order to do so, the city focuses its attention on various themes within the integration process.

City: Trelleborg, Sweden

Target Group: Unaccompanied young migrants, usually between 16 to 21 years old.

Implemented by: The Municipality of Trelleborg and many departments of the city administration, including the Department of Labour Market, the Department of Education and the Department of Culture and Leisure.

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Key Topics:

Integration and self-sufficiency, through: School, internships and other obligations, Accommodation and housing, Health, Economics, Communication and conflict management

Integration

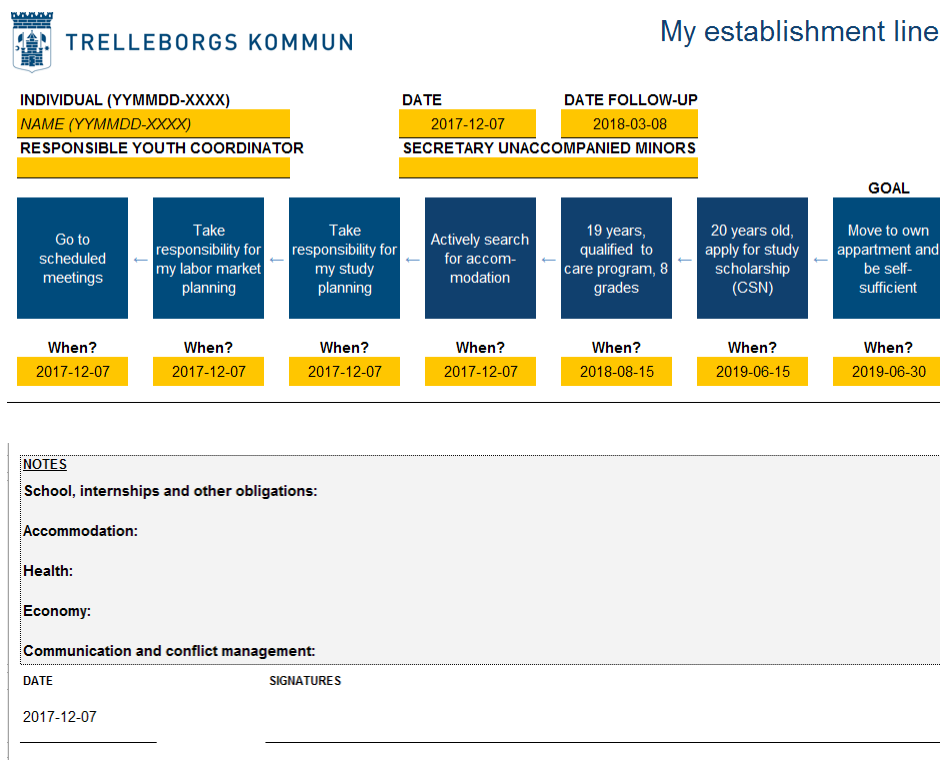
The overall objective of the approach used by the city of Trelleborg in receiving unaccompanied migrant minors is to integrate them into the society and make them self-sufficient and prepared to take their responsibilities. The entire reception system is designed to foster this objective and the Department of Labour Market of the city is responsible for the implementation of the integration process. The Department's main aim is to provide migrant children with the necessary tools and means for completing their education, as unaccompanied minors usually arrive in Sweden without having completed upper secondary education and in general having attended school only a for shorter period of time. Addressing educational needs is the basis to ensure that the children can subsequently become independent in the search for a job and accommodation. As a first step in the integration process, dedicated staff from the municipality carry out an evaluation of the needs of every single unaccompanied migrant minor. The scope of this assessment is to be able to orientate children in the local society. In this regard, the municipality particularly focuses on the will of the child and on the objectives that he/she wants to achieve in Sweden. Based on his/her will and needs, the municipality assesses which is the most suitable education or work for him/her. Regardless, children are obliged to go to school full time until they turn 18 years old: only in that moment, they can decide whether to continue their education or start working. Throughout the process, staff from the municipality monitors and assesses whether the child is accomplishing his/her goals.

The municipality has high expectations on unaccompanied migrant minors and on the success of their integration process and focuses its attention towards the following themes within the integration process:

- School, internship and other obligations;
- Accommodation;
- Health;
- Economics;
- Communication and conflict management.

Ensuring the above-mentioned needs paves the way towards the accomplishment of an independent and self-sufficient life.

Figure 1 Example of an Establishment Line



The Establishment Line

Throughout the integration process, constant support is provided to the children by the municipality. Staff within the Department of Labour Market plans so-called 'Establishment Lines' in cooperation with children themselves (See fig. 1). It is very important that the children are involved in the design of their Establishment Line, so that they are effectively participating in their integration process. Establishment Lines also have a retroactive planning with milestones and a structure which makes it easier to reach the final goal.

Orientation and establishment meetings concerning accommodation are held between the children and dedicated staff from the municipality. The meetings ensure a systematic follow-up of children, from the moment they arrive in Trelleborg until they are fully established in society. In this way, the municipality can assess and decide in which type of facilities the child will stay, always taking into account his/her needs. Children up to 16/17 years old are usually living in formal accommodation, where permanent staff is working with them. Usually, there are 10 young people living in each facility. Younger children with special needs can also live in foster families, who are selected and investigated beforehand.

If unaccompanied migrants are older than 16 years old, they can move into apartments, where they live by themselves or with other young people. Though this is only possible if certain conditions are followed. These types of facilities are also designed in line with the mindset of the city, which focuses on becoming independent.

'Labour Market Process'

The municipality has developed a 'Labour Market Process' which aims to provide citizens with flexible competences needed to be able to search for jobs, according to what the job market has to offer. The initiative is under the responsibility of the Department of Labour Market of the municipality of Trelleborg. This service is also addressed to unaccompanied minors, given the city's goal to integrate them in the Swedish society. The staff members working on these initiatives are specifically trained and possess ad-hoc qualifications: they can be 'Labour Market Secretaries' and 'Labour Market Recruiters'. Through 'Labour Market Secretaries', young people can receive help planning and be followed up in the process towards the goal of being self-sufficient. The content of the planning revolves around the following elements:

- Current status (i.e. arrival, accommodation, responsible coordinator, school, occupational planning)
- Skills (i.e. language, educational background, work experience)
- Agreement (i.e. how the individual actively contributes to its surroundings)
- Follow-up (determined jointly)

Labour Market Secretaries and Recruiters aim to improve the skills of unaccompanied minors. The process may involve study guidance and vocational guidance for upper secondary school or adult education, lecturing at folk high school and folk university, study visits or lectures about the labour market. The process may also entail guidance on writing CVs and personal letters, how to find summer jobs, how to use job sites and recruitment trainings. Most of the unaccompanied minors managed to have internships and summer jobs, several have had a mentor while working and some of them found part-time work during their studies.

Civil society

Civil society has an important role, especially with regards to leisure activities and the employment process. Through the Department of Labour Market, the municipality established a collaboration with over 600 unique local and regional employers. They can contribute to giving young people access to employment or starting their studies that will lead to employment. Swedish cities (similarly to many European cities) are facing a competence gap. On the one hand, companies are in direct need of skilled labour, to make sure that the local and regional economy can grow and flourish during the ongoing economic boom. On the other hand, there is a growing number of unemployed citizens without neither formal education nor documented skills, but lots of informal knowledge and, in the case of migrants, often several years of working experience. Citizens are of course the key actors in the system and the employers are indeed crucial for the accomplishment of the integration process.

Lessons Learned

The participation of migrants and their contribution to the workforce is needed to guarantee the proper functioning of the welfare state. The city of Trelleborg has been trying to overcome the traditional approach used in social services. The limit of such an approach is that it creates a custody culture. It builds a sense of dependency, where responsibility is reduced and where the effective inclusion is delayed. Therefore, Trelleborg wants to share the following good practices:

- Based on the experience of the city of Trelleborg, most of the young people possess the quality and skills and do not need social care. To be successfully integrated in society, they need an education and a job instead. It is important to change the traditional approach and focus on a work-oriented mindset. **By listening to the needs of children, the city of Trelleborg can tailor a more effective approach.** If cities organise their actions with a labour market perspective, they can foster a culture of self-responsibility and rapid efforts, while directing the focus on self-sufficiency.
- The mindset of the municipality towards unaccompanied migrant minors, which is work-oriented and aims at the full integration of children into society, could be used as inspiration in other European municipalities. This type of approach resulted to be successful in particular because it prepares migrants to be self-sufficient. In general, the use of a **work-oriented mindset** in the establishment and integration process of unaccompanied migrant minors resulted to be successful.

Apart from good practices, Trelleborg also experienced some challenges:

- **Migrants' high expectations on Sweden.** Migrant children often have a picture of Sweden in their mind that is not corresponding to reality. Usually, it is difficult for them to change their expectations. A work-oriented mindset proves effective in addressing this issue.
- **Transition toward the adult age of 21 years old.** According to the Swedish law, unaccompanied minors must be independent after they turn 21 years old. Regardless, the search for independent accommodation can sometimes be difficult, considering the housing shortage existing in Sweden.

The Department of Labour Market in the city of Trelleborg is currently running a project where 14 other Swedish municipalities have the opportunity to learn from and implement the way we work. The Department has developed a method for the dissemination of the information, including a method for change, which supports change in cities much more different from Trelleborg. The project is being followed by an independent researcher. The researcher is analysing the changes in the municipal way of handling questions regarding the Labour Market Process and the planning of 'Establishment Lines'. A book will be published on this subject as all cities can gain from this effort.

“Integration from Day 1” in Vienna

Summary

The municipality of Vienna is currently starting the integration process of unaccompanied migrant minors from the first day that the children arrive in the city. Its integration initiatives focus on the thematic areas Housing, Education and CoRE activities. All these initiatives combined ensure that the integration process is such that youngsters achieve to acquire the necessary skills to start working, as soon as they receive the permit to stay in the country.

Key Topics:

Integration, accommodation and housing, education and Centre of Refugee Empowerment (CoRE) activities

Housing

The city provides available houses composed by a set of one to maximum three flats each, which can host up to 15 people. The accommodation is supervised 24 hours a day by staff who has received special training. The initiative is managed by NGOs under the supervision of the Municipality of Vienna (a lot of new flats were opened because of the increased demand).

Education

The name of the initiative regarding education and the integration process is “Integration from day 1”. Within this initiative, the municipality of Vienna starts the integration process of unaccompanied migrant minors from the first day that the children arrive in the city. The process is composed of several stages: the first one involves the assessment of the children’s educational and language background. In this context, the Vienna Social Fund has also established the “Clearing Platform”. It is a centre in which individual assessments of competences, skills and professional experiences are carried out for all asylum seekers. The centre then assesses which is the best type of education to provide for unaccompanied migrant minors (public school, professional institution, language course, etc.), taking into account their needs.

Young people up to 15 years old are obliged to go to school. When they turn 16, they can decide to go to the so-called “Youth College”,¹²⁷ which was established in mid-2016. The aim of the college is to help young people to be prepared for secondary school, vocational training or a permanent job. Young migrants attend the College for 3 to 12 months, depending on their level of education. After this period, the migrants have several choices concerning their future: they can decide to attend high school, professional institutions, language courses or vocational training. All educational courses are assigned by the Clearing Platform.

The city of Vienna offers migrant minors and adults special language courses that are completely free. This initiative started in 2016.

Integration activities

The municipality of Vienna is also carrying out a project called CoRE,¹²⁸ which is sponsored by the European Commission. It is a programme for integration opportunities, which sets up activities for migrants. The project is meant to support the implementation of innovative approaches and methods in integration work. The city of Vienna aims to build upon existing services to allow for the even faster and more needs-oriented integration of the refugees.

City: Vienna, Austria

Target Group: All asylum seekers in Vienna, with a focus on young people and unaccompanied migrant minors. The Youth College is targeted at children and young adults until 22 years old.

Implemented by: Vienna Social Fund and alongside it other partners such as NGOs, the Municipal Authority for Youth and Families (MA 11) and the Municipal Authority for Integration and Citizenship.

Funded by: Vienna Social Fund (and CoRE by the European Social Fund)

Timeframe: since 2015

¹²⁷ For more information see: <https://www.wien.gv.at/english/social/integration/start-wien/youth-college.html>.

¹²⁸ For more information see: <http://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/Vienna>.

CoRE will **address integration challenges** by implementing innovative solutions. The project aims at providing refugees with integrated support to facilitate their integration in Vienna, by focusing on three aspects:

Firstly, CoRE is an empowerment fabric jointly planned, utilised and operated by public institutions, NGOs, civil society initiatives and refugees. By pooling resources and knowhow and by making refugees equal partners instead of passive beneficiaries, it helps to initiate smart transformation processes for the whole integration system.

Secondly, CoRE is a physical infrastructure in the form of a CoRE building, which will be adapted to the needs of the project. The CoRE building will be a location that offers community spaces as well as service spaces. Through new forms of cooperation of a broad range of Stakeholders, CoRE will be the venue for a variety of integration activities to take place.

Thirdly, CoRE is a think tank, which monitors, analyses and innovates policies and develops and tests new solutions.

Excerpt from the CoRE website

The main actor of the initiatives mentioned above is the Vienna Social Fund, which is the coordinator of all the projects. Alongside it, there are other partners, such as NGOs (which are implementing the languages classes, for instance), the Municipal Authority for Youth and Families (MA 11) and the Municipal Authority for Integration and Citizenship. The initiatives are not privately financed. The European Social Fund provides financial support for the Project CoRE.

Vienna's Citizens

Families participate in the hosting of minors up to 18 years old. When the programme started, 20 families hosted unaccompanied minors. A lot of families provided support by taking care of minors in their spare time. Moreover, some migrants from the third generation flow, who arrived in Vienna during the '90s, are becoming volunteers, helping the municipality during the reception process of unaccompanied migrant minors. In reaction to the migrant crisis of 2015, other volunteers gave their support for several initiatives, but not for a long period. From 2016, the number of volunteers sharply decreased.

Lessons Learned

Vienna's approach towards unaccompanied migrant minors proved to be successful especially because the **process of integration starts from the first day that the children arrive in the city**. And the following points of strengths serve as recommendations for other cities:

- The municipality of Vienna is currently starting the **integration process of unaccompanied migrant minors from the first day that the children arrive in the city**. This method proved to be successful.
- The integration process is such that youngsters achieve to acquire the **necessary skills to start working**, as soon as they receive the permit to stay in the country. This method should be applied also in other cities in Europe.

The main difficulty in Vienna occurred within and for foster families, leading to the following experienced challenge:

- Often **host families or foster families**, have very high expectations of young migrants. However, especially when hosting youngsters of 15/16 years old, personal relationships can be very complicated and difficult to establish. In Vienna, the total number of families involved in the programme should have been around 100, but only 20 families were eventually engaged.

Guardianship by Nidos in the Netherlands

Summary

Nidos¹²⁹ is the national guardianship institution for unaccompanied children in the Netherlands. It works to improve the situation of unaccompanied children and separated children in the Netherlands and in the EU, working on concepts of professional and specialised guardianship, small scale reception (including family-based care) and systematically spreading and sharing knowledge. Nidos is also a training institute, providing professional training in working with unaccompanied children. Nidos initiated the European Network of Guardianship Institutions (ENGI); it also worked – mostly as applicant – on many European projects focusing on unaccompanied children (e.g. guardianship and reception) in the past years and it has standing contacts and cooperation with the European Commission and its agencies in the area of work.

Key Topics:

Guardianship on national level, small scale reception, family-based care, cultural mediation

Country: Netherlands (nationwide institution)

Target Group: Unaccompanied minor asylum seekers in the Netherlands

Implemented by: Nidos Foundation, together with the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND), Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA), Repatriation and Departure Service (DT&V), other (inter)national organisations and local authorities/organisations.

Timeframe: since 1992, but the cultural mediation pilot since 2016

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Guardianship organisation at the national level

The nationwide approach by Nidos enables key actors in the system to arrange covenants on how to cooperate on issues such as guardianship, reception, Dublin, return, integration and aging out. A good example of such a cooperation is the development of a practical guide by Nidos in cooperation with the Association of Dutch local authorities in order to ensure a smooth transition in the field of housing, income, work/education, social network and guidance (if necessary) for unaccompanied children who turn 18. The Dutch system has also enabled the development of a specific methodology on addressing the specific needs of the target group of unaccompanied children. This includes important topics such as culture-sensitive guidance, guidance on the perspective of the child (return/integration), small scale reception (including family-based care), stability in the environment of the child, ensuring safety and screening of (potential) victims of trafficking.

Professional Guardians

In order to provide guardianship for the children, Nidos only works with professional guardians who operate all over the Netherlands and who are responsible for every aspect of the life of the child (housing, education, etc.). The professional guardians are always educated in social work and are registered in the Dutch quality register for youth care workers. In order to stay registered, they have to develop and educate themselves on a yearly basis. On top of this, the guardians are being trained on working with unaccompanied children within Nidos itself. Nidos works according to their own methodology, developed on their vision on working with unaccompanied children. The key methodological principle of the vision is to prioritise the needs of the individual child. Intercultural communication and culture-sensitive guidance are leading in this vision. One of the tasks of the guardians is guiding the child according to their perspective. This can either be integration or return. Regarding integration, guardians are responsible for the transition of the child to adulthood and independence, handing over responsibilities from youth care towards social care at 18, if necessary.

¹²⁹ For more information see: <https://www.nidos.nl/en/uitgeleicht/nidos-annual-report-2016/>.

Placement in family-based care

Reception in a family with the same cultural/ethnic background who can provide safety, basic needs, attention and structure in daily life, gives a child a good chance of normal development and natural recovery from deprivation, loss and trauma. On top of this, members of such families are able to offer comfort and guidance to the child, drawing on their own experiences with migration and integration and are aware of the stress buffers needed when fleeing, processing trauma and mourning. And, finally, placements as these contribute to maintaining the cultural identity and the native language of the children. This makes remigration easier whenever this should be the case.¹³⁰ The EU-funded Alternative Family Care (ALFACA) e-learning and handbook on providing family-based care can be of help.¹³¹

Cultural Mediation

Nidos started a cultural mediation pilot in 2016 and the experiences so far have been very positive. The cultural mediators bridge language difficulties and offer support in overcoming cultural differences. In the context of guardianship in the Netherlands, the main goal of a cultural mediator is to improve the interactions between unaccompanied children and the guardians and other care takers. Mediators are very easily trusted by the children because of their similar cultural background and their independency, which works positively on the child's well-being. Beyond increasing mutual understanding, the cultural mediators are also involved in research and in the development of interventions in the case of culturally sensitive trauma. Nidos is in the process of integrating cultural mediation in their guardianship. In 2018 Nidos will continue working towards the professionalization of cultural mediators by developing an official training programme for them.

Other stakeholders

Apart from Nidos, the other key actors of the guardianship system in the Netherlands for unaccompanied children are the national government (for the financing aspect), Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND), Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA), Repatriation and Departure Service (DT&V), other (inter)national organisations and local authorities/organisations. Within this system, Nidos is a private organisation, separate from the national government. As prescribed by the Dutch legislation, Family Court judges must assign every unaccompanied minor arriving in the Netherlands to the responsibility of Nidos. Nidos has the same responsibilities, obligations and power as a parent. The guardianship stops when the parents are able to have authority over the child again or when someone else (for instance a family member) becomes the guardian of the child. By law, the guardianship ends when the child turns 18 years old. As Nidos is part of the Dutch child protection system, it has to fulfil the requirements of the Dutch quality label for youth protection. For this purpose, Nidos is being audited by a specialised institute on a regular basis.

Lessons Learned

- There are multiple **advantages to the Guardianship system at the national level**, namely:
 - It enables the development of specific knowledge, tools and experience on the target group;
 - It offers a standardised type of care to all unaccompanied migrant children, wherever they are located on the state's territory;
 - It makes the search for host families (with similar background) more feasible, increasing the chance of well-matched placement in family-based care.
- **Small scale reception:** based on its experience, Nidos notes that it is much better for children to grow up in family-based care, or small scale reception facilities located preferably in a normal house and that the placement of children should preferably be in families of the same or similar background.
- Use of **cultural mediation** could improve the interactions between unaccompanied minors, their guardian and other care takers.

These are all lessons that could serve as inspiration in other cities.

¹³⁰ Paragraph 2.1.2 handbook ALFACA, to be found on www.engi.eu, under ALFACA.

¹³¹ Paragraph 2.1.2 handbook ALFACA, to be found on www.engi.eu, under ALFACA.

