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The Unaccompanied Children In Europe – Issue Of The Project

Unaccompanied children or minors (UAMs), also known as Separated children, are defined as non EU nationals or stateless persons below the age of eighteen:

- who arrive in the territory of the Member States unaccompanied by an adult responsible for them (whether by law or custom) for as long as they are not effectively taken into the care of such a person;
- or, who are left unaccompanied after they have entered the territory of the Member States.

Therefore, the unaccompanied children are high risk targets for social exclusion and have specific needs which must be regularly reviewed (special attention must be also paid to those requiring special care, protection or treatment for their physical or mental health).

Statistics concerning unaccompanied children in the EU territory are uncertain, however since the nineties, the number of UAMs has consistently increased and today is a phenomenon affecting all EU member states.

Regardless of the reasons for their arrival in the EU territory – be it fleeing from their country in fear; being victims of trafficking and exploitation; looking for decent living conditions or crossing the border in order to join relatives – their status as children requires special attention.

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child\(^1\) states that "the enjoyment of rights stipulated in the Convention is not limited to children who are citizens of a State party and must therefore, if not explicitly stated otherwise in the Convention, also be available to all children - including asylum seeking, refugee and migrant children- irrespective of their nationality, immigration status or statelessness".

\(^1\) [http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx)
However, the support and hospitality offered to them varies considerably from one state to another, and research has shown that a number of EU Member States do not fully implement the fundamental rights of the child when dealing with the situation of unaccompanied, migrant and asylum-seeking children.

The European Commission Action Plan for unaccompanied minors (2010-2014)\(^2\) considers that the contents of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child should be placed “at the heart of any action concerning unaccompanied minors”\(^16\) and advocates a common EU approach on this issue based on the respect of the rights of the child, particularly the principle of the best interests of the child, “which must be the primary Consideration in all actions related to children taken by public authorities”.

Generally, the current EU standards do not provide the guarantees which should benefit these children in order to protect them.

“The primary consequence ensuing from the above-described practice is that a significant percentage of unaccompanied children living in the European Union are lacking protection, whether they never enter, or abandon the institutional reception facilities after a short or longer stay”\(^3\).

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\(^3\) “Unaccompanied children lacking protection in Europe”, Pucafreu Project Final Comparative Report, Pucafreu, Migrinter, CNRS, 2013

## What is Net for U?

“Net for U - Needs Tackling and Networks for Unaccompanied Children integration” (HOME/2011/EIFX/CA/1991) is a European project involving 7 partners and is coordinated by the Istituto Don Calabria in Italy, with the support of the European Commission, DG Home Affairs

The main goal of the project is to define an effective, multidimensional intervention programme aimed at improving the integration of unaccompanied foreign children, as well as ensuring that their needs and interests are met. One of the intended outcomes of the project is to strengthen both the individual social networks of unaccompanied children, and create new forms of cooperation, within and between services and stakeholders.

Unaccompanied Children are high risk targets for social exclusion and have specific needs which must be regularly reviewed (special attention must be also paid to those minors requiring special care, protection or treatment for their physical or mental health).

For these main reasons the primary purposes of the project are:

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European Commission

Directorate-General Home Affairs
Directorate B: Immigration and Asylum
UNIT B4: Financial Support – Immigration and Asylum
a.) to elaborate a knowledge-based intervention model to help improve the practices of both ongoing special needs assessment (in order to elaborate a coherent life-project for each child) and common family tracing procedures (in order to map familiar relationships – unless this goes against the child’s best interest – as possible emotional and physical care resources to sustain positive paths and wellbeing and/or to promote family reunification);

b.) to provide children with appropriate opportunities for training and education; social and leisure activities; and participation in cultural life where they live and thereby increasing opportunities for interaction with their peers and adults of the host society, and those belonging to the same national or cultural group, in order to provide occasions for the children to live their own culture, ensuring the respect of diversity together with the promotion of the integration in the collective life;

c) to build a permanent transnational cooperation amongst professionals, stakeholders, social workers and all other figures who work with unaccompanied children, to define international measures, to share positive practices concerning integration through individualised care plans so that they may respond appropriately to their individual needs.

The key outputs of NET FOR U project are:

- the Toolkit for a common approach to special needs assessment and family tracing;
- the Intervention Manual to build individualised programmes targeted at children (covering different areas: education, labour, family relationships, social and leisure);
- the Guidelines document for the establishment of a permanent network (NET FORUM) for a cooperative strategy between organisations and stakeholders at a local, national and international level to address the specific and common challenges.

**Beneficiaries and Connected Actions**

**Direct beneficiaries** - Young TCN (Third Country Nationals) unaccompanied children (about 40 per country, 240 in total) separated from both parents or from their ‘primary’ legal or the customary caregiver staying in the country under the supervision of the host state without undergoing asylum procedures, and that are in situations of vulnerability and exposed to multiple risks. The beneficiaries were involved through the assessment of their needs and family tracing pilot experimentation, the co-definition of their life-project, participation in language courses (2 per country), workshops (2 per country) and exchange events (2 per country) and evaluation of the support received. Specific attention was paid to the aspects of vulnerability (physical and psychological) and to the cultural, ethnic, religious diversity of the individual. The experience of the partners who work daily with the individual guaranteed the required awareness of the best interest and the rights of the child. The intervention experimentation was aimed at
creating favourable conditions for minors’ educational, social and cultural participation and empowering their capacities.

**Stakeholders** - Principal service providers targeted to TCN unaccompanied children and TCN youngster, NGO’s and associations working with the target, training professionals, social workers, psychologists, judicial authority, TCN migrants’ associations were involved several times in NET FOR U activities at a national and transnational level. In accordance with the long term experience of the project partners, and the literature and guidelines on the topic elaborated by different international and European institutions, different professional profiles were engaged in order to guarantee an integrated and multidisciplinary approach and to foster a rich mutual learning process. These persons were involved at different stages, such as: interviews during the first months; cooperation for a co definition of Life-projects; conduction of training courses and workshops; participation to the meeting aimed at create “local networks” on the topic.

**Interviews**

Interviews carried out by some of our partner organisations give a fascinating insight into the experiences and lives of unaccompanied foreign minors and those who work with them.

- **An interview with Marie Ortholary, a Family Tracing expert with the French Red Cross, from Association Diagrama France**

  How would you define the concept of ‘Family Tracing’?

  The mission to establish family ties (rétablissement des liens familiaux /RLF, in French) is a statutorily mission of the French Red Cross. It’s one of the oldest actions of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Its origins lie in giving support to families who are no longer together due to armed conflict and other violent situations. The RLF helps to restore or maintain the ties between family members and to clarify the fate of missing persons. Its scope of work has expanded over the years to that of natural or manmade disasters, and other situations requiring humanitarian response.

  RLF activities are carried out across the world within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which is composed of family tracing services in 178 national branches of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, and 80 delegations of the International Committee of the Red Cross in countries in conflict.

  The family tracing mission find’s its legal basis in the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the additional protocols of 1977, of which France is a signatory.

  **What are the objectives of family tracing?**

  The family tracing mission has four principle aims:
• Finding missing persons and letting their families know is our principle activity, accounting for 65% of our actions;
• Relaying family news through the Red Cross Messages service;
• Reuniting families and providing them with legal assistance to compile dossiers/files for family reunification;
• Allowing the victims of war to assert their rights, or for Asylum Seekers to testify about their deprivation of liberty in their country of origin.

When is family tracing carried out?

When people have been separated from their loved ones following specific situations, such as:

• Armed conflict and other violent situations
• Natural or man-made disasters
• Population displacement, notably, international migration
• Other situations requiring a humanitarian response

What is the procedure in place to carry out family tracing?

The French Red Cross’ family tracing service carries out tracing abroad for an applicant in France, and tracing in France for an applicant abroad, thanks to the international network of families.

In the same way that an unaccompanied foreign minor can apply to find their family abroad, his or her family members can also look for them in France.

The application should be made by the unaccompanied foreign minor themselves, with the aim of finding their next of kin and restoring family ties.

An application for family tracing is accepted when all other previous attempts to re-establish contact have failed.

When an application concerns a member of family as defined by costume, the application must consist of the necessary elements in order to initiate, guide and deepen the investigation (last known address, exact circumstances for a loss of contact, etc.) These elements are set:

• either, by the ICRC for an investigation in a country in conflict;
• or, by the national societies of the countries in peacetime for an investigation in their territory, and, according to their legislation.

How will we work on cases?

Firstly, the information gathered from the form in the application form is cross referenced with information in different data bases:

• Data collected by the Red Cross, or the International Committee of the Red Cross in the country where the search is being carried out:
  A list of; people who are unharmed, people who are deprived of their liberty, the deceased, and those who have made an application for family tracing.
• Lists of missing persons or lists of those who are unharmed and have registered on the familylinks.icrc.org website, during a catastrophe.
• Information shared by official institutions and other organisations.
• Other data published in the media, or on the Internet.
When possible, the Family Tracing Service personally follows the application for family tracing by asking volunteers to carry out research in the zone where the person sought is supposedly living, or in places where information could be collected. This includes the following activities:

- Going to the last known address of the person sought.
- Contacting the kin and neighbours of the person being sought.
- Consulting institutions and organisations likely to have information.
- Visiting camps in which the person sought is likely to have lived in.
- Checking the records of hospitals, morgues and cemeteries.

Furthermore, while researching in the concerned country, security measures are respected by Family Tracing volunteers and personnel. The contents of a family tracing file can only be passed on and exchanged within the International Network of the Red Cross by qualified and authorised Family Tracing personnel and volunteers. Over the course of the search only necessary information will be requested and shared.

**What happens once the missing person has been found?**

Once the missing person has been found, they can give their consent or not to pass on their details to the applicant. Consent must be given in writing. Whatever the decision, it will be respected.

**Is there any monitoring procedure in place? An evaluation?**

Applications made by unaccompanied foreign minors are given priority treatment by the Family Tracing Service. However, the processing of the application is flexible and can last many weeks, months, or even years. This delay varies according to the means available to our counterparts in the field, the accessibility to the territory and the number of applications received at the French Red Cross headquarters and worldwide, and information gathered from the applicant.

It’s difficult to estimate the success rate of family tracings. It also depends on the criteria mentioned above. Nevertheless, all bases are
covered by our counterparts in the field to try and find the individual.

Throughout the process, the Family Tracing Service informs the applicant on the progress of their application. As a result, it is vital to inform the Family Tracing Service if:

- Contact details change (telephone number, address, etc.)
- The Unaccompanied Foreign Minor learns of new information that could be useful in the search.
- The Unaccompanied Foreign Minor manages to establish contact the individual/s via other channels.

Account of an applicant

“When the war started on the 8th August 2008 between Russia and Georgia, I was working in the orchard in Kekhvi, Georgia. My parents were at home at that moment [...]. I then heard explosions and gun fire. I knew straight away what had happened” Giorgi, 16 years old.

The Family Tracing Service guided the minor through his application and helped him to gather the necessary information for research in the field. Once the information had been processed and analysed, his file was transferred to our correspondents in the field, in order to find the missing persons. The search is ongoing. As soon as the results of the investigations are known by the Family Tracing Service, the applicant will be informed of it immediately. To this day, the Family Tracing Service is waiting for a response from our counterparts.

Good Practice

When an unaccompanied foreign minor wishes to search for their family, the social worker accompanying the minor, or the minor themselves, can fill in an application form for a family tracing request. However, it is strongly recommended that the unaccompanied minor, accompanied by a social worker, comes, if possible, to a local Red Cross Unit, who will transfer the query to the Family Tracing Service located in the French Red Cross’ headquarters or directly to the Family Tracing Service.

Indeed, being able to talk directly with the beneficiary allows us to better document the query, and therefore, to multiply our avenues of research. This also allows us to reduce the delay between the first contact with the applicant and the sending of the query to the field.

- An interview with María Dolores Gabarrón Lax, a social worker at a foster home in Murcia, Spain, from Fundación Diagrama Spain

**María Dolores Gabarrón Lax** is a social worker in Ankaso-Alguazas centre and she takes part in the “Impulso” project, an employment and social inclusion programme. She has a degree in Social Work from the University of Murcia, and has had extensive training on intervention with immigrants and family mediation.

What are the expectations of minors when they arrive in Spain? Is confrontation with reality or immigration duel worked with the minors in your centre? How?

The main reasons for the children’s migration process are economic. In Spain minors have a clear economic motivation either to find a way to
escape from the precarious life situation in their own countries, or to help their families with the money sent. The economic problems of most of children's families are an factor in encourage them to emigrate so that they become the breadwinner in the family.

In addition, migrant minors who arrive in Spain have experienced a migration culture and the desire for a western lifestyle that is often transmitted by their own compatriots, mass media, gangs, etc. In many cases there is an overestimation of leaving their own country as the only option in life.

The culture shock they experience, along with the expectation impact of both the minor and the family of getting into a protection system in which they are considered minors and therefore unable to work and financially support their families, often leads to the minors becoming frustrated.

From the protection centres, coping with the reality and the expectations that once drove them to start the migration process is part of the work programme. It is a hard process that inevitably arises again; therefore it is fundamental that they receive psychological support from the protection system to overcome the migratory grief.

On arrival to the centre, an in-depth interview takes place, and as much information as possible is collected for the assessment of the minor. Subsequently, depending on each particular case, the practitioners work with the children at a psychological level conducting individual, and group therapy where the needs identified in each one are dealt with, such as phobias, fears, impulse control, etc.

In addition to the psychological interventions, we work with the minors on acquiring basic social skills, supporting them to overcome their adaptation to the host society, thus minimizing culture shock, adjusting their expectations to the reality in which they find themselves.

Is contact between the minors and their families encouraged? What type of contact is made? For what purpose? What barriers or obstacles exist?

One of our objectives is to promote relations between the minor, the family and the educational team of the centre.

In the case of migrant minors from the Maghreb there is frequent contact with the families, but this work is difficult in the case of children from other areas such as the sub-Sahara, and often leads to no contact or location of the family.

Family data is obtained, essentially, through interviews and daily contact with the minor. Currently we do not have other mechanisms to collect this information so we consider this as one of the areas for improvement through the development of actions to facilitate family tracing.

Many of the children arriving in Spain have family support in our country with whom a contact that favours the involvement of the relatives in the process of adaptation and social integration of minors is established. Thus, children that have close relatives willing to be involved in the care and education of children, may visit them at the weekends or holiday periods. Because of this, minors have the opportunity of receiving support, preventing an uprooting of family and enjoying family contexts. It is in these cases where the possibility and desirability of family reunification is studied.

Moreover, it is important to have this family support not only during their stay at the centre, but also when the minors turn eighteen, which is the time of an independent life.
In addition to the family tracing in the country of origin, the main obstacles that we face in our relationship with the family are the language barriers. However, children keep contact with their families regularly provided by the Centre.

**What are the most appropriate ways to promote their social and employment inclusion into society? What actions have proven to be ineffective in this regard?**

The pathways for the social inclusion of children inevitably go mainly through language skills and training.

In any event, the first objective is the acquisition of the minimum language skills to be inserted in the education system. In the vocational training field, the migration project motivation plays a fundamental role, since in those cases of economic reason, frequently occurs a clash between their expectations and actual conditions already mentioned above. This is one of the most common reasons for minors’ rejection to schooling.

Linked to this rejection, the minors often have a large schooling deficit and/or illiteracy even in their home countries, so that school adjustment is particularly difficult.

Therefore, flexible and tailored training strategies, adapted to their needs in alternative resources, such as initial Vocational Training Programme, are necessary.

This type of training is a very suitable option for most minors, since the average age is around 16 years old, they usually have very low levels of qualifications and the training allows them to approach the world of work through the learning of a profession, giving them the opportunity to gain work experience.

Tell us about the social integration process of children in their immediate environment (response of the host society, participation of children, cultural differences, etc).

The migratory movement assumes structural changes in society that require innovation and reform to transform the mindsets and beliefs of our society that often include misconceptions about people from other countries.

Awareness of society and the value of what cultural diversity provides in relation to global migration and particularly to unaccompanied minors, becomes necessary.

From our protection centre, coexistence between the local people and foster children is encouraged but we find difficulties as minors tend to relate to others from the same origin country.

**In which cases do you consider the reunification in the country of origin as a convenient measure?**

According to the current legislation on foreigners, the best interest of the child is the priority and the main principle, so that, the return to their own countries would only be appropriate in the case in which the conditions for the effective family reunification of the child are given, or if there would be an adequate protection services in the country of origin.

Returning is a sensitive measure that requires an individual assessment of the personal and family circumstances both in the country of origin and in ours, taking into account factors such as the chances of having a normal and socially integrated life, thus preventing from being forced into marginalization and exclusion.

The main obstacle for the accomplishment of these assessments is little or lack of information on the situation of the country of origin. It is
essential to establish mechanisms for locating the families through partnerships with institutions of those countries.

**What professional competences do you consider necessary to work with unaccompanied migrant minors?**

Due to the urgent demand for answers to this phenomenon from the point of view of the minors’ protection, a network of diversified resources for the reception, care, autonomy, and so on, has been established in Spain. Mediators and educators from the countries of origin have been incorporated to the protection services, and a response has been given to practitioners’ training needs, as this represented an unknown field until relatively recently.

It is necessary to keep on adapting to the minors’ migratory phenomenon, to the new minors profile, new circumstances, new needs, new countries of origin, etc. Therefore, training for practitioners is a permanent process.

Professional competencies in related areas, such as psychology, education, social education, social work, social integration, etc, are necessary for the intervention in this context, but, from my experience with other professionals, one of the prerequisites is the personal involvement with the minors.

It is necessary to highlight the awareness raising towards the circumstances that motivate these minors to come to Spain, accompaniment in the process of integration, supporting and encouraging them, and a personal involvement that inevitably arises from a strong professional vocation led to the intervention with children at risk of social exclusion, and more specifically the group of unaccompanied minors.

**Any other suggestion for the intervention?**

We cannot forget that we are talking about unaccompanied migrant minors that arrive in our country and are part of the minors’ protection system, but not all children who come to our country are within this system.

In addition to the minors identified, there are others who are completely unprotected. We have no reliable data on the number of children who are outside of the protection circuits. These are minors who slip away from their shelter homes, or who lived in the streets in their home country and have now made this lifestyle choice as a way to stay in our country, starting a life of crime and marginalization in the street.

It can be very positive for these minors to promote projects addressed to street education, as it might be a link for the child protection system through informal education.

- An interview with practitioners working with UAMS, in Hamburg, Germany from the Christian Association of Youth Villages

  **Team Meeting of educators and social workers of major social service provider and operator of group homes for unaccompanied minors in Hamburg**

  **Do you, and, if so, how do you address the subject of Family?**

  Practitioner (P): it is not planned. Only if it comes up in a conversation with the minors, if they are there and feel like talking about it, will we address the subject. We recently placed a world map in our office and we have noticed that the youth have started to talk about their flight trajectory to Germany. That is how it all starts. I
do not intentionally address the subject. If the youth begins to talk one could pick them up at that point. There is no assessment form to capture this information.

**P**: Family related questions are asked if we have to apply for their residence permit. This is where we ask questions about the mother's and father's name, etc., where do they live, when were they born? We ourselves don't ask specific questions, but we have to ask these questions for the authorities. This information about the parents' names will only be placed on the coversheet of the case file. But in my practical work, I do not raise the subject of family on my own; only if they wish to talk about it.

**P**: This approach also results from the fact that the youth are living in multiple identities concerning what they have experienced at the outer and internal borders of the EU and concerning their experience in the so called “Erstaufnahmeeinrichtungen” (shelters of first access). That's where they have applied for asylum and have been questioned in a particular way with respect to information concerning their parents. And they have previously been "advised" to reveal only certain information. Therefore, this highly sensitive subject it not our first priority when the young people reach our facility. The first step is to establish a relationship of trust. Also we want them to accept that the political circumstances have forced them to live with multiple identities.

**P**: I can only confirm this approach. In the end, I don't really care if what a youth tells me is the "truth". I actually do receive information but it's the information that the youth willingly provides. Everything else would seem quite risky. I want to avoid opening a door which should have maybe remained closed.

**P**: The youth often say that their parents are dead because they believe that is required of them. Their parents might expect from them to provide for their income, however as a social worker we are asked to promote the educational development of the youth which constitutes a certain conflict of interest.

How does the documentation and the communication with the referring agencies/authorities work?

**P**: We have the obligation to write a "pedagogical diary" about twice a week. However, one is open as to which information needs to be documented. We are free to write what we deem important. I don’t feel under pressure what to write.

**P**: When it comes to the best interest of the child, I would say that we are confronted with a certain dilemma when it comes to communicating with the Office of youth welfare services who is our supervisory agency...we currently have a girl from Afghanistan who goes to school here in Hamburg. Her parents managed to travel to a state in Eastern Germany, from Greece. We decided that the girl should stay in Hamburg to pursue her educational path as opposed to being united with her parents in a large accommodation center in a new location. In cases like that we face great difficulties as to which information we should - or are obliged to – pass on to the authorities.

**P**: Yes, we always have to be in close cooperation with each other since it is our responsibility to safeguard the best interest of the child. We have to decide if we pass on certain information immediately, or if we should wait some time to carefully determine how the situation could be solved. These situations are quite unsettling.

**P**: In an ideal case one has a cooperative case manager at the authorities with whom one can also talk informally. One could decide for instance, that one waits until the young woman has received a residence status of her own so that she does not need to be reunited with her
parents. Or one decides in certain cases to not fully comply with one’s responsibility to report.

**P:** Or in some cases it is the other way around. The Office of Youth Welfare Services approaches me and decides that the intervention needs to be stopped because the mother of the young individual has arrived in Germany.

**What happens after a “successful” reunification?**

**P:** Well, what does a “successful” reunification mean? That is quite an ambivalent term. Does it represent a success when a young female UAM has to leave the group home and leave behind her educational support system to join her family in a different German state? In this case there was no leverage to negotiate with The Office of Youth Welfare Services. It was therefore decided that the girl had to join her mother.

**P:** We do it the same way. One of the minors is in regular contact with his parents via skype, we send e-mails and in emergencies we also provide phone contact. In some cases we are in contact with parents, however mostly with aunts and uncles who have come to our office. With some of them we have established quite a regular contact. These relatives live here in Hamburg but don’t have the financial means to accommodate the youth in their homes. The relatives at times have been in Hamburg for a long time and the contact is very close.

**P:** One staff member of the Office for youth welfare services took the effort to design a “genogram” to obtain an overview when we took in two cousins into our group home.

**P:** It becomes evident that definitions of “family” are very different than they are here in Germany.

**P:** Everything that I am saying here is based on what I was told by the minor. I don’t categorically say that everything that a youth tells me is correct. This ambiguity makes our work more difficult and complicates the effort to build relationships of trust with the youth.

**P:** But maybe we just have to accept this ambiguity, we know about the phenomenon of multiple identities and we don’t need to hear “I swear by my mother that this is the truth (laughs)”. Maybe later we will find out that things have happened differently.

**P:** After 1-1.5 years different stories begin to emerge. I had a minor who came to apologise for having told me things that were not true. He said I am sorry for not having told the
truth but I had to tell this story because I was advised to do so...the minors are being advised by people who tell them, if you go to this country you have to say this and this. If you do so you get support and maybe asylum. If the young people start to trust us they eventually come out with the truth.

P: But of course, there are also conflicts with parents. It is important for us to discuss certain conflicts by involving the parents, for instance a situation in which we deemed it more effective for the daughter to remain in Hamburg and not be reunited with her parents in Eastern Germany. We also take and accompany the minors to the large accommodation centers (where adults are housed).

How can family networks be used to support the emotional needs of the youth? Have you faced situations in which family contact is best avoided?

P: Oh yes! In the case of the Kurdish families who sent their kids in the late 1980s. They used the minors for drug trafficking.

P: Yes, there are individual cases. For example, a young woman who has decided not to join her family in a large accommodation center. She wanted to escape from all the coercion. She wants to lead an independent life. It was all very dramatic and it was decided amongst everybody that this young woman would be taken away from her family and would be accommodated in a group home for UAMs due to the numerous conflicts with her parents, uncles and brothers. This way, the young woman had the opportunity to gain a certain distance from her family. But now she is back in contact with her family. During the whole process however, she was very closely assisted by us.

P: I find that there is quite a fine line – viewed from an ethical point of view. For who do I - as an individual - lie? Where is the limit? This is a difficult question to answer. And viewed from an educational perspective: If I ‘play the game’ what do I really do for the youth? In reality I shield them from the real processes in this society. There is a great likelihood that these constructed narratives will be revealed at some point and the youth will be in serious trouble. This often happens when it is least expected and least ideal for the youth – I have experienced quite a few of these coincidences in my career. Can I take on this responsibility? Or how do I manage to appropriately prepare them for these realities whilst still working on establishing a relationship of trust with them. I find this to be an enormous challenge.

P: I would like to introduce another perspective. If we are committed to a family focus in our work we are ultimately bound to a legal system which undermines this emphasis. Even in situations where a mother or sister is dying back home and the youth wishes to visit her to say goodbye, he will not be able to do so. Due to the limitation of free movement, a family oriented approach to our work is de facto, impossible. Only a small minority can claim individual reasons of political persecution. In the majority of cases socio-economic reasons cause parents to send their children away to protect them from discrimination and life-threatening situations and to give them the possibility to access education. That’s why, in theory, it would be possible to grant the minor the right to free movement and to visit their families. But this is not allowed. I find this to be an enormous problem and a great hypocrisy behind an approach that claims to strengthen family relations and family tracing and that asks for solutions for reaching this goal. For me, the first step would be the freedom of movement to provide possibilities to stay in contact with the family. There are some biographies in which contact was only possible after 10 years. During all these years the minors
have said that they wish more than anything to once more sit down with their family around a table and eat together. And this would be possible. If we step out of our set system: Why is this not possible?

However, in their asylum cases the youth indicate reasons that prevent them from returning to their country of origin?

P: These are socio-economic reasons. Today, the tendency is no longer to construct individual reasons of political persecution in a request for asylum. Even those who prepare the asylum request with the youth have understood that this is absurd. In the past, we had 9 year old children, who had to describe their individual political persecution during their asylum procedure. These children began to wet their beds at night. This is absurd. Where does this leave the best interest of the child? Even the National Office of Migration and Refugees has recognised this, they have demonstrated their commitment to make the asylum procedure more child friendly – put some candy on the table and so on... but at least they are addressing the issue. The youth report: we are coming from Iran, we have worked in a „Bergwerk“ at the age of 11, we have carried stones for years, we want to go to school, we want our right to free movement, we want to access our right to personality development. What they request in this context is not a residence permit in line with the asylum law (Asylverfahrensgesetz) but rather with the residence law (Aufenthaltsverfahrensgesetz) claiming health related and humanitarian reasons. So there has been a shift in the reasons that young people base their claim to residence on. So one could say, if one really wants to promote a family-centered approach, one should grant the right of mobility to the youth so that they can be in contact with their families. Right now, they are unable to have this contact unless their families manage come to Europe. But only a small minority of family members is in Europe. Most of them remain outside of Europe. Allowing for mobility would change our work significantly.

What do the parents expect from their children? Do most expect their children to send home money, or is it just a stereotype?

P: Today this is not so much the case anymore. This was more relevant in the past. However, I do see significant expectations from the parents at least in those cases in which one knows where the families are and where contact exists. There are expectations that the young person gets a good education and goes on to university. There are other parents that might expect that there is enough support in Germany and that their daughter doesn’t need to work too hard. So there is a great variety of expectations and assumptions.

P: Yes, I believe there is a great array. There are those parents who do have the economic resources to send their children. However, I feel there is an increase again of parents who have invested their savings into their children’s transit to Europe and who have very clear ideas of how the youth should support their younger siblings and other family members.

Does this potentially lead to the wish of the youth to avoid contact with their families?

P: A minor who was recently able to travel to Iran, said that it was very nice to see his mother but that the visit has also triggered great conflict. The youth has a younger brother back in Iran who has to work under the most difficult conditions which obviously leads to serious tensions between the siblings. The younger brother says, you can go to school, you can do your „Abitur“ (most advanced school degree in German school system) and have all the opportunities. The family’s money is not sufficient and the father says you have to work in Germany, the streets are paved with money over there. You have to
support us here in Iran. However, if the youth would do that he would not be able to achieve his educational goals. At the same time he doesn’t receive any kind of acknowledgement for what he has achieved over here at least not from his father and his siblings. Maybe from his mother. After this trip he said, he is not sure if he wants to be exposed to this treatment again, it was too difficult for him.

**P:** I believe that very few young people are not interested in having contact with their families. The family is everything. One expectation can also be that the young person will get the rest of the family to Europe because they don’t have a future back home. The transit from Afghanistan is very expensive; it costs a few thousand euros per person. We have one minor in our group home who is a goatherd and who took four years to come over here. He walked and took busses and was stranded in Russia for a long time. He could not come in a plane and pay traffickers to get a false passport. This is the exception however; most youth come from families with more resources.

**Have you experienced cases in which minors were sent back and where this decision did not go along with the best interest of the child?**

**P:** I don’t know of any cases of deportation to their country of origin. I just know of cases of reunification here in Germany. Some of these cases where young people had to leave Hamburg to join their families in remote towns in Eastern Germany have been very dramatic and disgraceful. I have declared some of these cases as a threat to the child's welfare. The authorities have ignored these requests. In order to further pursue this agenda I would have needed to do so as a private person. I decided not to do so because there are too many cases to pursue. But that was extremely touching and extremely wrong.

**P:** I think the practice of deportation has changed since the 1990ies and has become more lenient. If it comes to deportations it would happen after the youth has reached the age of 18.

**Do you know of cases in which a reunification with their families in their country of origin would be in the best interest of the child?**

**P:** I don’t really think about that because I cannot judge at all about the local situation in the respective countries of origin. I think if I really knew what happens in these places I might see this differently. So the question doesn’t really occur. The youth are here and that is the situation I have to deal with.

**P:** In most cases I cannot judge the situation based on the narratives of the youth. Many of them are quite introverted and don’t tell me much. I only get a tiny piece of what is going on it the wide spectrum of what is going on in their heads. The majority of them process their thoughts on their own. So there might be a few of them, where psychologically a return to their country of origin would make sense but I really can't fully judge.

**What are the prospects for these minors?**

**P:** The numbers of UAM have changed significantly. In the mid 1990s the numbers were very high. Around 2003/2004 the number decreased to around 20 UAM a year in Hamburg, today we have 20-30 UAM arriving each month in Hamburg. Also, the countries of origin have changed. We have received quite a few girls from Kenya whose chances to stay and get asylum are not very high. The same is true for Egypt. These are countries that we can fly to for vacation. That is different from countries in civil war like Afghanistan and Somalia. It is a very insecure legal situation. We have to see how the authorities will deal with the new rise in the numbers of refugees.
Do you cooperate with agencies and NGOs in other EU countries like Greece?

P: Unfortunately not. We have family members sitting in Athens and it would have been helpful to have a contact down there to assist the family members in coming up to Germany.

P: It would actually be very useful to have the youth be briefed early on as to what they can expect here in Germany. I have one youth who is currently doing an internship at a grocery store and who is completely surprised that he has to work on Saturday. This is a result of a misguided construction of what to expect in Germany. I continue to observe that the youth is not being informed correctly of the realities of the system they come into.

P: On the one hand that is true. On the other hand they are very well informed that the socio-economic situation here in Germany is far better than in Greece, Hungary or Italy. That's why this desire to come here is understandable.

Partners Reports

Summary reports from our partners tell us more about the situation of Unaccompanied Minors and what their legal situation is in Germany and France. To read the full report please visit http://www.oijj.org/en/partners-reports

Summary of National Report for Germany prepared by CJD-Eutin Hamburg

1. Introduction

The appropriate service provision for unaccompanied minors (UAM) and the focus on the “best interest of the child” constitutes an ongoing challenge for policy makers, government and youth service agencies, communities and social workers. In Germany, the service delivery is further complicated by a federal political system which grants discretion to the 16 “Bundesländer” (states) with respect to the accommodation of UAM. Due to this administrative structure, there are significant differences between individual states in the provision of services to this target group.

The German project partner CJD Hamburg + Eutin conducted a series of 20 interviews with professionals who are working with the target group of UAM. In addition to interviewing social workers and representatives of direct service providers CJD also spoke to advocacy groups, international organizations as well as representatives of government agencies.

A key reason for the vulnerability of the target group is their separation from their family environment. Therefore, the family focus of the study – and the related themes of family tracing and family reunification – was of great interest to the interviewees. Although practitioners recognize the importance of family relations the interviews demonstrated that these relationships are amongst the least formalized domains of interventions. However, interviewees alluded to the upcoming revision of the Dublin II legislation, which specifically emphasizes the obligation of EU-member states to protect the family unit with related implications to needs assessment and service provision.

2. Numbers of UAM and Countries of Origin

According to the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), the number of UAM filing for asylum in 2011 amounted to 2,126
– compared to 1,304 in 2009. Out of this number, 714 were below the age of 16 and 1,412 were 16 or 17 years old. The main countries of origin of UAM in 2011 were Afghanistan (1,092), Iraq (199), Somalia (103) and Syria (84). 11.6% of UAM were granted asylum in accordance with Art. 16a of the German constitution (Grundgesetz) and 28.4 % received subsidiary protection based on humanitarian reasons. The remaining youth who do not fall under either of these protective paradigms commonly receive a limited permit to stay (Duldung) – which represents a “temporary suspension of deportation” and which goes along with limited rights and access to services (§ 60a AufenthG). Including all individuals who are currently awaiting their court decisions or who have a temporary status, it is estimated that between 5,000 and 10,000 UAM are currently residing on German territory.

3. Challenges of Family Tracing

The reasons why UAM have arrived on their own in Germany can roughly be categorized into four scenarios:

1.) The UAM arrive alone because their parents are no longer alive and often times have been the victim of violence in the UAM’s country of origin.
2.) The UAM have been separated from their families during their flight.
3.) The UAM have been sent by their parents to escape from their countries of origin for economic or political reasons.
4.) Domestic violence and abuse in the family have been key reasons for the flight of the UAM.

From a social services point of view these particularities of family relations need to be carefully assessed and understood on a case by case basis to provide the youth with services that correspond to the individual “best interest of the child.” However, an accurate assessment of family relations is complicated by the fact that most UAM fear repercussions for their asylum request and for their families at home when they reveal details on their family lives. In fact, many UAM are briefed by traffickers – and families themselves – to deny the existence of their families and consequently have to juggle two narratives about their families. On the one hand, the narrow legal parameters which would secure a permit to stay urge the youth to suppress overt contact with their parents/families. On the other hand, most youths yearn for family contact even in those cases where dysfunctional family dynamics might have led to their escape.

4. Ensuring the Best Interest of the Child in Family Tracing

In a letter to the European Commissioner for Home Affairs, the International Committee of the Red Cross (IRC) states that family tracing should stem from “a genuine wish from the child to search for his or her family members” and that “restoring family links” should be a “humanitarian goal as such...separate and distinct from any family tracing in the context of asylum determination or return procedures.”

Once it is established that family contact is wanted and in the best interest of the child several paths can be chosen. The International Red Cross (IRC) in collaboration with its local partners is most prominent in re-establishing contact in regions with limited access to communication technologies or in so-called failed states. Although the IRC International Search
Services remain in demand, an unpublished study by the organization has found that most youth are in contact with their parents and families facilitated by tools of new media including Facebook, e-mail and mobile phones. Some interviewees have reported that the youth have had emotional breakdowns after speaking to their family in their home countries. In cases where the young person was closely supported in establishing family contact, he or she tended to better process the emotional impact.

5. Family Reunification and Voluntary Return

Many interviewees have reported on the increase of requests to international search services for family tracing within the territory of the EU. However, the interviewees also stated that UAM are extremely fearful of being sent back to Greece or Italy to reunite with their families.

Despite certain favorable legal regulations, the numbers of family reunifications on German territory remain very limited. Although the parents of UAM are exempt from the strict income and self-sufficiency rules for other migrants, family reunifications are complicated by two legal restraints. First, the UAM needs to have a permit of residence or needs to have an approved asylum status and secondly, the UAM needs to be under the age of 18 (§ 36 Abs.1 AufenthG). Due to very lengthy asylum procedures and the low numbers of approved asylum appeals these two conditions can hardly ever be met leading to only 9 family reunifications with UAM in 2007.

Some interviewees have reported on successful family reunifications in Germany. In these cases, the parents of the UAM have arrived in Greece or Italy and were able to join their unaccompanied children. However, the process reportedly is very time-intensive and can take up to one year. The interviewees have demonstrated that family reunification often depends on the personal engagement of the individual social worker who takes the initiative to seek cooperative partners in other EU member states and devotes time to intensive bureaucratic procedures.

Some interviewees have stated that the voluntary return of a youth to his or her home country should not be excluded as an option. Although there are a number of humanitarian programs that support the voluntary return of UAM and provide them with assistance upon arrival the number of UAM who return voluntarily to their home countries remains low. Despite hardship and loneliness in Germany, most UAM fear the return to violence, poverty and the lack of perspectives in their home countries and hope to benefit from the opportunities they expect in Germany.

6. Key Recommendations for Need Assessment and Family Tracing

Streamlining of services for UAM in all German states: This recommendation applies to the particularities of the German administrative system and aims at dismantling a two-tier system which differentiates between UAM under 16 and over 16 years of age in some states. All UAM under the age of 18 should be accommodated in youth facilities and should be appointed a legal guardian.

Extended period of clearing tailored for the target group: Well-trained staff needs to have sufficient time to obtain a more in-depth
knowledge of the individual’s flight motivation and family situation. Based on this assessment, legal options need to be explored that correspond to the individual context of the UAM. The “one size fits all” approach of applying for asylum fails to acknowledge the multitude of flight reasons – some of them rooted in severe economic need and abuse rather than political persecution.

**Training and familiarization for staff and legal guardians:** While practitioners might be experienced in working with youths in general it is paramount to improve intercultural competencies – which at times means leaving one’s own comfort zone. The competencies should also include a broader knowledge of the individual countries of origin, of legal particularities and of assessment tools for identifying mental health needs.

**Institutional cooperation:** While the social worker tends to be viewed as the “the good cop” with the “best interest of the child” in mind, the immigration office is often perceived as “the bad cop” with the primary objective of deporting the UAM. However, an effective approach to servicing the “best interest of the child” can only be found if these entities cooperate closely from the very beginning.

**Holistic Approach to Service Provision:** There needs to be an integration of services that address the socio-economic and the emotional needs of the youths. A pure focus on legal proceedings and educational development does not account for the psychological needs of the UAM. On the other hand, an emphasis on psychotherapy will be ineffective if it is not connected with social contacts, recreational programs, and a meaningful structure outside of the therapy context.

**Transition from Youth Services to “Independence”:** Many interviewees have brought up the difficult transition from a relatively tight network of protection when under the wings of the Office of Youth Services and the “free fall” for some UAM when they turn 18 and are released from these structures. The difficulties of the transitional phase are mainly rooted in the narrow legal parameters for schooling and vocational training for the target group.

**Summary of National Report for France prepared by Association Diagrama**

**1. - Definition - legal framework**

Article 1 of the Council of the European Union resolution of 26 June 1997 defines the unaccompanied minors as “all third-country nationals below the age of eighteen who arrive on the territory of the Member States unaccompanied by an adult responsible for them whether by law or custom ... and minors who are nationals of third countries who are left unaccompanied after they have entered the territory of the Member States”.

The young age and the isolation of these children put them in a situation of important vulnerability. As such, they are considered as children at risk and are under the protection of the law on foreigners and also under the French and international standards of child protection. **Unaccompanied Foreign Minors (UAM) are subjected to different legal conditions than adults** and they require appropriate care.
2. - The historical evolution of migration of unaccompanied foreign minors in France

Independent migration of UAM is starting in the 1990s, although France has previously received foreign children through specific programs of Asylum (since 1980). The phenomenon becomes more important by the end of the century and in the early 2000s.

- **1980s**: arrival of young Yugoslavs (Gypsies and Roma mostly from Bosnia and / or Serbia);
- **1990s**: more young people from Eastern Europe, and also arrival of UAM from the Maghreb (especially Morocco), Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa and China;
- **Early 2000s**: resurgence of migration and in this case, of delinquency (2001 – pillage of parking ticket machines in Paris by Romanian children);
- **Year 2002**: influx of Chinese minors (Paris).

3. - Profile of Unaccompanied Foreign Minors (UAM)

In April 2013, the Ministry of Justice accounted for about 9,000 of UAM in France. Some departments are particularly concerned with the reception of Unaccompanied Foreign Minors and register a strong concentration on their territories; that’s especially the case of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Recorded UAM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Seine-Saint-Denis</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Nord</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’Ille-et-Vilaine</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Rhône</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reception of Unaccompanied Foreign Minors is spread between regions in an uneven way and this, for several reasons:

- The geography and the attractiveness of some areas;
- The presence of communities;
- Hospitality and openness traditions;
- The activity of the networks organizing the arrival of young people.

The following chart shows this distribution (Source: Ministère de la Justice (Présentation DPJJ - Les mineurs isolés étrangers : La situation en France - Données générales - Perspectives, 11 avril 2013):
a) Main nationalities, gender and age of minors:

- The countries of origin of these children are mainly:

**Asia**: Afghanistan, Indian subcontinent, China;

**Africa**: DRC, Angola, Guinea, Chad, Mali, Nigeria;

**Maghreb**;

**Middle East**: Palestine, Iraq;

**Europe**: the Balkans, Russia.

Regarding the profile of Unaccompanied Foreign Minors welcomed in France and in order to have a better idea on it, it is interesting to have a look at representative data collected in 2010 by the Observatoire Départemental de la protection de l’Enfance (Paris) – Regional Observatory for Child Protection.

1,274 UAM were attended until 30 June 2010, and they had the following profile:

- **Age**: 773 aged between 15 and 17 years and 426 aged between 18 and 20 years;

- **Coming from**: Afghanistan 125 (30%), 44 from Pakistan (11%), 40 from Mali (10%), 25 6% from Bangladesh and 24 from Algeria (6%) ... etc. (data based on the reception of 411 UAM during January/June 2010)

  - A total of 31 nationalities have been identified in the first half of 2010, against 57 in 2009.

- **Gender**:

  - 773 UAM aged between 15 and 17 years; 88% boys and 12% girls;

  - 426 UAM aged between 18 and 20 years; 71% boys and 29% girls.

b) Types of the causes of migration

- **Angélina Etiemble’s study**

  The French researcher Angélina Etiemble set up in 2002 a classification of *Unaccompanied Foreign Minors* arriving in *France*, which has been, with certain nuances, an applicable theoretical and practical reference for the rest of the destination countries.

  Angélina Etiemble notes the difference between

  - “exilés” (children forced to run away from a situation of conflict in their country of origin);

  - “mandatés” (children who migrate with the task to create an income and finance the household economy);

  - “fugueurs” (children who have escaped or abandoned their family context which is often collapsed);

  - “errants” (children who were often trying to survive individually or in group in their country of origin);

  - “exploités” (children who are victims or are under control of sexual, criminal or labour exploitation networks).

The line between these categories is certainly instable and absolutely variable all through the migration process of the unaccompanied children.

The Unaccompanied Foreign Minors are generally brought to France:

- Either by an alleged member of the family who let them alone when arriving at France;
- Or come alone in order to find a distant
member of the family (this is often a source of problems for the child who does not feel well in this family and will run away).

- Or by a smuggler, this is often the case for those who will have to pay a debt of servitude for the family in the country which is threatened by the network.

4. Support for unaccompanied foreign minors

a) Framework of action:
In France, the Departments, by the law of 5 March 2007 (Law on the Prevention of Crime), are responsible for Child Protection. In this context, they must "prevent difficulties faced by minors temporarily or permanently deprived of the protection of their families" and "to ensure their support." whatever their nationality.
It is important to note that departments are not responsible for the care of young adults beyond 21 years old; this is the role and obligation of the State.

b) Support:
All young person who is declared as being a minor by court judgment is supported, until he comes of age, by the Child Protection Services of the General Council (Services de Protection de l'Enfance du Conseil Général).

All children reaching eighteen can also be protected as a "young adult" under Temporary Young Adult Support (Accueil Provisoire Jeune Majeur - APJM). This additional support, which allows helping them to reach autonomy, may, under certain conditions, continue until the age of 21.

During the reception and guidance, the UAM is accompanied on several aspects: legal, social, medical...etc., such as accommodation, personal circumstances, social security and medical assessment of their needs, asylum, among others.

The stages of care: Unaccompanied Foreign Minors are hosted by the Regional Centre for Social Actions (Centre Départemental d’Actions Sociales) or an association guides them to this kind of Centre. Therefore, minors are placed in an emergency reception centre for 5 days and then placed in a specialized structure, welcoming only unaccompanied foreign minors. They can be also received by host families.

Note: This is a standard scheme for French Departments but this is variable depending on the case, because each case is different.

5. The Ille-et-Vilaine Department situation

It is clear that the support and care of unaccompanied foreign minors in France, during the last fifteen years, is a phenomenon that has grown considerably, especially in some cities or departments like Paris, Seine-Saint Denis and the Ille-et-Vilaine, which at a national level are the most affected by this problem.

96 Departments in France
Total supported UAM (sept.2011): 6.106
Ille-et-Vilaine represents about 1.5% of the French population (977,449 people for 65 million over the country) and receives approximately 5% of the 6,000 unaccompanied foreign minors in France accounted for by the Ministry of Justice September 2011. This situation has an important impact on the regional budget of this Department as shown on the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Number of UAM Sept.2011</th>
<th>National rank</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>1,637</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26,80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seine-Saint-Denis</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16,37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ille-et-Vilaine</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5,48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhône</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3,58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nord</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2,88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of the Interior

CONCLUSION

So, Unaccompanied Foreign Minors continue to arrive massively at host and support institutions. The guidance and orientation is essential for the best adaptation and integration of these minors on the French territory.

In times of fiscal restraint, these young people do not clearly appear as a priority for the State. Along the hard research and exchanges conducted with professionals and experts, we could see that Unaccompanied Foreign Minors situation remains as a taboo topic.

Case Studies

Case Studies from Spain, Greece and Germany allow us an insight into what it’s like to work with unaccompanied children, from when they first arrive in Europe and once they’ve settled in to their new country.

1.) Testimony from a volunteer social worker at Smile of the Child, Greece

Immigrants, first stop Greece

Thoughts of an immigrant: "You have children and you have no home .... because of the everyday explosions heard from bombs, because some of your friends and relatives ' never return ' home, because you feel strong , but there is nothing to offer and do not know what else to do in order to find food and feed your family every day .... so what do you do? You decide to be brave, you decide to hold on to life, to be saved and to save your children: you are forced to
leave your country, a country full of war and poverty... and search for a new home "....

Greece is often a transit country for immigrants, refugees and their children, who are trying to go to a country usually in central or northern Europe for "a better life", but remain in Greece without "existing" anywhere. This is because if they obtain legal documents then they lose the opportunity to leave for their final destination.

A "modern" way to try to live with dignity, if you are an adult immigrant/refugee and have children, is to part with your children and make an "official call" from another European country. In the best case scenario, your children, who continue to live with known or supposed relatives in Greece, are accompanied by adults with official documents at Athens International Airport in order to "catch a flight" and come near you. The pay rate of the adult escorts fluctuates: from very high to quite friendly prices. If you're lucky and the border control "does not catch them", they will be able to take off and come to you. Otherwise....

Since the beginning of this year (2013) the "National Helpline for Children SOS 1056» has been asked numerous times through court orders to make site interventions at Athens International Airport as adults of foreign origin attempted to travel with minors also of foreign origin to another country, presenting valid documentation that did not however correspond to their holders.

After a debriefing of the judicial authorities and social services and agencies, begins the lengthy process for the "reunification" of the family.

But, what happens to these children until the lengthy process is completed and they are able to travel safely and legally in the country where their family is located?

**To be continued....**

I met 4 year old T. and 6 year old P. at the offices of the Border Control at Athens International Airport; not an ideal place for children.

The two brothers, of Syrian origin, were accompanied by their adult compatriots that held documents which did not correspond to the minors. Their purpose was to travel to a country in central Europe, where, according to reports, their mother was. Their journey and hopes were stopped abruptly at passport control at the airport.

When you have to confront childhood fear and terror, there is little you can do: you have to be patient and accept children’s feelings, without trying to turn them around, at least not immediately. Besides, why should they trust me? Neither one had seen me before, or even understood what I was saying to them, since they could only speak Arabic. At this point the contribution of an interpreter-translator for our Association was very significant, since she explained to the children the next steps.

After some time trying to communicate through pantomime and painting, we departed from the Border Control Department with the tears of the 6 years old P. still flowing, while little 'Miss T.' approached me for the first time: by speaking in
Arabic, she gave me her hand. Of course I did not understand anything of what she said, but I realized that "something had changed".

The ride to the hospital where the children were to undergo preventive medical supervision until the relevant judicial and police authorities investigated the case was difficult, as symptoms of nausea of the little girl forced us to make many small stops. When we finally arrived and the children settled in their hospital rooms, the roles were reversed: the 4 year old was crying heartbreakingly seeking her mother, a word one understands easily since it is common to most languages while and P. was melancholic but strengthened out of necessity in order to tenderly console T. Very soon our volunteers came who would be with them all night, offering invaluable "human" services.

That evening, the two children slept in the same bed, embracing each other tightly, looking for a little caress and a little rubbing on the back. Pretty soon we received information that their mother had been found in Brussels and had filed a request for reunification.

After spending the next few days in the hospital, the children are now hosted at one of the 'Smile of the Children' houses before leaving for their final destination: their mother.

2.) Testing of the toolkit and elaboration of individual life-projects, Fundación Diagrama, Spain

The group of unaccompanied migrant minors has different characteristics and needs, being different in origin, culture, language and family situation, as well as individual aspects. Although generally there are two reasons for which they have migrated. In some cases it was their own choice, but in many others, the families themselves make the decision, even by financing the costs of the trip, in the hope that the minor could help them financially in the future.

For some of the children in care, the intention to migrate is driven by a clearly defined migration project, based on improving the quality of life for themselves and their families. In other cases, we observe a change of that migration project, by which minors arrive in Spanish territory, expecting protection as a minor and thus have their basic needs met.

Not forgetting the individualities of each minor, there are certain common characteristics most of them share: They are in a situation of distress, without family in our country; some of them are in vulnerable situations without any documentation; there are differences in cultural practices and customs; and many have a low level of education, due to early withdrawal from the school system.

The use of needs assessment and family tracing tool will be adapted to the specific characteristics of minors who are in our centres, in order to
design individualised intervention plans that aim to achieve the following objectives:

- Providing a context and an educational process that promotes the development of the minors, in terms of needs, deficits and specific conflicts presented.
- Safeguarding the basic rights of the children in care, offering activities, educational resources and training that promotes integration through processes tailored to their situation.
- Facilitating the full inclusion and integration of children into their usual relationship environment, in most cases to prepare them for emancipation.

Implementation of programmes directed to the integration and the social inclusion of minors.

The intervention with unaccompanied migrant minors, in general, intends to encompass individual and social intervention. At the individual level it aims to develop the intellectual, cognitive, affective, emotional, physical health aspects, as well as eventually enhance the minors’ capabilities related to resilience. It also aims to promote family, school and work integration and adaptation to the protection centre.

For a comprehensive development it’s necessary to include a component in preparation for the future, favouring autonomy. This will be reached through different programmes, workshops and activities that are included into the educational general plan for the minors. Below there is a description of the four main programme components.

Social Skills Workshop
The module has 3 different areas that allow the minor to develop, step by step, specific social skills. The areas are:
- Social skills area.
- Communication area.
- Assertiveness area.

Basic Habits For Autonomy
The contents of this action for unaccompanied migrant minors are:
- Personal care.
- Room cleaning.
- Shared room cleaning.
- Eating and dining room.
- Social interaction.
- Home management.
- Time management.
- Most common domestic accidents.
- Family responsibility.
- Documentation.

Active Job Search Workshop
The following activities are developed with the minors:
- Job hunting training.
- Teaching new technologies for job hunting.
- Coordination with job-seeker services.
- Information about health, hygiene and work risk prevention.
- Labour mediation.
- Support to companies for contract management.
- Most-demanded job sectors’ identification.
- Support in the job-seeking process.
Life Skills Programme
The module is divided into 4 areas:
- Time management area.
- Decision making area.
- Vocational training and work area.
- Information area.

Creation of a local network with organizations, institutions and other stakeholders.
According to the needs of the minors who are part of our protection centres, one of the aspects to be promoted is the institutional area. The objective is to facilitate and enhance collaboration and coordination of the centre with the public authorities as well as with the various agencies which contribute to the provision of services to minors. Below there is a description of the activities developed by the minors within the local environment.

Public Libraries Network
The minors learnt how to get to the library, how to use it, how to become a member, different activities to be done, like studying, reading, etc. Once a month they had a compulsory activity at the library.

UCAM Basketball Team
The minors went to watch basketball matches of UCAM basketball team, which is part of the most important national basketball league (ACB league). The objectives were promoting sport support and enjoying a healthy leisure time.

Real Murcia Football Team
The minors went to watch football matches of Real Murcia Football Team, one of the historical football clubs in Spain. The objectives were promoting sport support and enjoying a healthy leisure time. Also the minors visited the team museum and facilities.

Nueva Vanguardia Football Team And Sangonera La Verde Football Team
Training at different regional non-professional football teams in Murcia. The objectives were encouraging team work, acquiring healthy habits and promoting physical development.

University Of Murcia
The minors participated in a workshop on digital identity, whose lecturer was a university professor of the Educational Department. The objective was to learn about good practices on social networks.

Floridablanca Secondary School And Mariano Baquero Secondary School
The minors attend compulsory secondary education at a centre in Murcia. There is a close collaboration between the educational centre and the residential home with regards to information, teaching materials and transport.

Local Sport Facilities
The minors went to the public local facilities several days a week, such as swimming pool and sports hall.

Calasparra Youth Hostel
The minors participated regularly in activities at Calasparra Youth Hostel, such as trekking, adventure sports, and other cultural and touristic resources of the region.
An interview with three UAMs, in Hamburg, Germany from the Christian Association of Youth Villages

Could you tell me something about yourselves?

UM1: My name is N. and I am from Afghanistan. I came to Germany one year ago and now go to school to learn the language. I am preparing for my ‘Hauptschulabschluss’. In Afghanistan I went to school for 8 years. I learned English and Maths. I lived in Kandahar for 4 years and then moved to Herat.

UM2: My name is S. and I am from Afghanistan. I am 17 years old and I have been living in Hamburg for 19 months. I am preparing for my ‘Realschulabschluss’ and attend additional German language classes twice a week. I live in a group home for UAM with three boys from Somalia and India. We get along well. In Afghanistan, I was taught by a private teacher and then went on to school for 4 years. I lived in the Eastern part of Afghanistan. In my village there were not so many schools (laughs). My father and mother are uneducated, so my brothers and I had to be taught by a private teacher.

UM3: My name is D and I am also from Afghanistan. This year I want to finish my ‘Realschulabschluss’. I’ve been in Germany for two years. I didn’t go to school in Afghanistan, but went in Iran for six years. Then I left Iran for Germany.

What did you know about Germany before you came here?

UM1: I was thinking about Germany, I thought it was a very nice country because I have seen a movie. I said, I will go to Germany and I will learn, and I will work, I will be a good doctor. When I came here I saw it is a very nice country. But I realized that it is very difficult to become a doctor, it takes 7 or 8 years, now I don’t want to become a doctor.

Where are your families?

UM2: My parents and my brothers are in Afghanistan. My grandmother and my uncle are in Germany but I live by myself in a group home.

UM1: I am here without my parents. My sister and her husband live here but I live by myself in a group home. I have my sister here, but I have a hunger for my mother and my father. I miss my family.

UM3: I live all by myself in Germany in a group home for UAM.

Interviewer: Are you in contact with your family?

UM1: Yes, I am in contact with my mother by telephone but not by the internet. I have internet access but my family doesn’t. My mother doesn’t know facebook and things like that. She does not even know how to write a number, how can she know about facebook? But my mom knows how to cook very well (laughs). I miss my mother, I haven’t seen her
in 4 years.

**UM 2:** I am not in contact with my family. I haven’t seen my mother, father and brothers since 2 years. It is very difficult to maintain contact. Where my parents live there are no cell phones or anything like that. You have to go to the next city and call from here. In the village there is no network.

**UM3:** I call my mother every second month. She is in Iran and with a phone card of €2.50 I can talk to her for 50 minutes.

**UM1:** When you call Afghanistan it costs €3 to talk for 15 minutes, it is much more expensive.

**What experiences have you had during your transit through other countries?**

**UM3:** In Iran you are not allowed to go to school if you are from Afghanistan. You have to pay €300 to be allowed to go to school. If you don’t pay, the police comes and takes you back to Afghanistan. Iran is a horrible country. I hate it. That’s why I have left Iran for Germany. From a friend I heard that you can go to school in Germany and that you can get your passport in 1 to 2 years. But I still have a “Duldung”\(^4\). Otherwise everything is good, I am very happy in Germany. I go to school and next year I want to start an apprenticeship. I would really like to fly to Iran once to see my mother. I miss my family so much. I have been in Europe since 3 years, thereof 1 year in Greece.

**UM1:** I don’t want to speak about Greece. I have spent 3 months in jail in Greece. 3 months and 10 days. When I said, I want to go to a camp they said ok, but only if you don’t go to another country or another city. I said ok and I signed a paper and went to a camp. A lawyer told me that I should wait for one year and then I could go to join my sister in Hamburg. I waited for one year and then the lawyer said no. So I paid money to a trafficker to come here. The lawyer said your sister doesn’t have a passport and that doesn’t work.

**UM2:** When I think of Greece...there you have to pay €5 for one day to be able to live in a camp. If you don’t have money you sleep on the street with no food. Then the police come and you have to pay a fine to be in the street. It is horrible in Greece! The police came and wanted to have my passport. When I said, I don’t have a passport I had to go to jail.

**UM3:** They beat you in Greece. I still have pains in my back. The police beat you with bats.

**So, you all came on your own without waiting for the Greek authorities?**

All: Yes!

**Did you know anybody in Hamburg?**

**UM2:** I don’t know why I came here. But I find Hamburg better than other cities.

**UM3:** Yes, Hamburg is the best city. One also calls Hamburg the “heart of Europe”

**UM1:** Hamburg gave me a place to stay, Hamburg lets me stay here and know I want to give something back. I want to become something and give back.

**UM2:** You have to pay taxes (everybody laughs).

**UM1:** Yes, of course, that is guaranteed.

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\(^4\) Limited permit to stay – „temporary suspension of deportation” with limited rights and access to services
What don’t you like about Germany?

UM3: The asylum issue makes me nervous.

UM2: Yes, that’s the same for me – issues of passport and asylum. In the beginning I was told wait for 18 months and then you get your passport. You can go to Berlin and pick it up. Now I have waited for 20 months already. I only have a 6 months “Duldung”. There were a lot of promises but nothing came true. I cannot concentrate on my schoolwork, because I constantly think about that. That’s why I got bad grades in maths and political sciences. I feel ashamed that after 19 months I still haven’t mastered physics and political sciences. Normally I know the solutions but if I sit in a test my thoughts start to wonder...that’s why my grade are not good....I just want to hear a “yes”, “yes” you can stay! Family problems, passport problems, school problems, it’s too much for me.

UM1: I like it here but I miss my family that’s why I am unhappy.

UM3: 1.5 years ago my asylum request was rejected. Since then I haven’t heard anything from the authorities. I only get a “Duldung” every 6 months.

What are your future plans?

UM1: I want to become a policeman.

UM3: I want to work as a carpenter. I have worked in Iran as a carpenter for 1 and a half years. I had contact with a carpenter in Germany. He said, I could write an application, when I am done with my school. But nobody wants you if you only have a “Duldung”. I wish that I will get my passport sooner so that I can see my family. Then I come back to start my apprenticeship.

UM2: I am interested in technical professions. What is an Airbus? I want to do an internship. I am trying since 1.5 years to get an internship at Airbus. First time, they told me you only have 3 months “Duldung”. Then I sent it again and she said you don't have a report card, and then she said, why do you want to do an internship with us. I said, I like the appliances, I like the company, but then she asked for a report card again and said I can't work there. She told me to try again next week.

Interviewer: Are your parents happy/proud that you are here?

UM3: When I talk to my mom, she asks are you going to school are you doing your Abitur, are you going to university. She doesn’t know what all this means. Then I tell her, yes, yes (laughs). She has never been to school. She doesn’t know, that it is more difficult to go to school than to go to work.

UM2: I feel happy when my parents and my brothers are happy. I am not sure if I will be a good man in the future. In English “family” stands for: father and mother, I love you.

UM1: Yes, my mother is proud of me. Mama is always Mama.

Interviewer: Do you see your future here in Germany/Hamburg or elsewhere?

Everybody: here in Hamburg!

UM1: I want to go back to visit. Then I definitely want to come back to Hamburg.

Interviewer: Are you satisfied with the

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5 Most advanced school degree after 13 years of school attendance in Germany
way the school works?

UM3: Yes, it’s okay, but half of my class is from Afghanistan. We are always speaking in our Afghan language, we are not learning German. The rest are from Poland, Guinea. That is our problem. The schools often have a particular aisle on which you find all "integration classes", separated from the others. You only have foreigners in these classes.

- Interviewer: How could this be resolved?

Teacher: the class size should be reduced; the average is now 25 students. That is too much for students who are new. The groups should be made smaller and students mixed better. I have seen schools with designated aisles for integration classes and the German students are located in different floors, so there is no integration but they are segregated. So they remain amongst themselves. They use their mother tongue to get back the feeling but don’t have contact with Germans. They rarely have German friends.

Good Practice

Short reports from Germany and Spain detail some of the proven techniques used when working with unaccompanied minors and their results.

1.) CJD Hamburg + Eutin: Theatre project with unaccompanied minors addressing questions of identity, flight and growing up in a world of diversity (November 2012- November 2015)

‘Gott und die Welt und ich’ – ‘God and the World and Me’

This is the title of a three year cooperative project between the CJD Hamburg + Eutin and the Thalia theatre, one of Hamburg’s most renowned theatres. The project started in November 2012 and brings together unaccompanied young refugees and youths with a migration background on stage. The project aims to raise awareness of the diversity in the city and the hardship and the life paths of young refugees coming to Hamburg. The project is financed by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and by the Department of Culture of the City of Hamburg.

A young woman from Afghanistan states: “I have never been to a theatre in my life but I want to give it a try”. The theatre project aims to give a voice to unaccompanied young refugees and wants to give them the opportunity of exchange with other young people. During the three year project, various theatre performances will emerge based on the interviews and improvisations by the youth. These performances will be integrated into the programme of the Thalia theatre.

The young participants are attending languages schools in Hamburg and have been clients of CJD social and educational counselling services. Most of them are refugees from regions of conflict such as Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq; some are from Latin America, Africa and Europe. All of them have only recently arrived in Germany.

Many of the young people have experienced incredible hardship. The theatre project allows them to elevate some of the burden by transforming their experiences into dance and performance and by giving voice to what could not be said otherwise. According to the head of the project Kirsten Sass, the project aims to look at the “cultural past” and the “cultural now” and
encourages them to “deal with one’s identity”. In addition, the young people should be inspired to look at common themes in their lives beyond all the obvious differences. Because, ultimately, they are all young and curious about life.

The Thalia theatre provides professional support: Anton Krause, assistant director of the theatre has worked with young people for many years. „Of course, it is quite a new experience to have to go without language in the initial working stages. But performing in theatre requires other means of expression anyways. It is a fun experience to observe how the courage and trust of the group is gradually growing.”

So far, the young people have performed on six occasions in the theatre at schools and at cultural centres, which have revealed an insight into their search for the “gate to the world”. This gate is not easily opened, neither to the outside nor to the inside, but the young people are pursuing their search by asking: “Who do I want to be?”, “Who or what is cool?”, “Who am I with my friends?”, “What remains when I am alone?”, “How do I find love or how does love find me?”, “Where does life take me?”, “What does ‘home’ mean to me?”, “Can I open doors when I am without language and unable to understand?”. The young people have the courage to approach their inner selves behind the gate and to question and explore this element of themselves.

2.) Fostering project for unaccompanied migrant minors with ages ranging from 13/14 to 18 years old, requiring specific protection, Fundación Diagrama, Spain

Context
This project started with the expectation of being a positive proposal in the Region of Murcia for the fostering of unaccompanied migrant minors with ages ranging from 13/14 to 18 years old, requiring specific protection.

The protection centre Ankaso, is located at Calle 2 de Mayo 12, in the town of Alguazas (Murcia). This is a local resource situated in a small town with a rural character, but very close to the city of Murcia.

Objectives
A brief overview of the general objectives of the centre:

- Facilitating the compliance with protective measures in custody or guardianship.
- Organizing the home reception coexistence according to the purposes stated in the current juvenile law, safeguarding the rights of the child.
- Promoting the social and cultural integration of minors, in their alternative usual relationship environment (town, district, parish) and progressively, based on their Individual Educational Project, incorporating them to the standardized services and activities.
In addition to these objectives, in the centre other specific and operational objectives related to each of the areas of intervention with the minors are set, for example improving the psychosocial competence of minors, by learning several fundamental cognitive skills for an adequate social and personal adjustment.

**Description**

The protection centre offers the following services:

- **Residential care**: Residential service, subsistence, clothing and personal hygiene.

- **Health care**: Monitoring the health developments of the minors, early detection of potential physical and psychological problems, hygiene and health habits, nutrition control, vaccination control and coordination with local health institutions.

- **Education follow-up**: Individual educational development process monitoring with minors at schooling age, supporting on school work-home and providing of all the necessary resources, materials and equipment for being part of the educational system. In those cases in which, due to their age, the minor is not attending school, all the necessary resources for a vocational training will be provided.

- **Occupational activities**: Programmes of good employment habits are created, and the minors will participate in occupational programmes for their social employment inclusion, according to their age.

- **Psychosocial and therapeutic support**: Support for psychological and psychiatric conflicts that obstacle the development of the minors’ personality, maturity process or socialization capability. For this, all the normalized local resources will be used, as well as the services of the Department of Family, Equity and Childhood for assessment, diagnosis and therapy.

- **Family work and social care**: Working with the family will be promoted, adapted to the age and characteristics of the minors, taking into account that the minors who are in residential care are unaccompanied and migrants, and they usually do not have relatives in Spain. Nevertheless, contact with the family in the country of origin will be encouraged.

- **Cultural and leisure activities**: Activities with the minors that promote leisure and culture are planned and carried out.

- The daily life of the centre revolves around a set of planned educational and structured activities to cover the different...
areas of personal and social development of minors.

The set of activities carried out can be grouped into different areas depending on the objectives that want to be achieved. The different activities are in relation to the following areas:

- Residential area.
- Health area.
- Education area.
- Occupational area
- Psychosocial and therapeutic area.
- Family and social environment area.
- Cultural and leisure area.

**Outcomes**

During 2013, a total of 33 minors attended the Ankaso-Alguazas centre with an age range of 15-17.

The following table shows the country of origin of the minors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Total of minors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Total of minors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivory Coast</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During 2013 there were a number of minors who left the centre for various reasons:

- Being over 18 years old: 8
- Family reunification: 1
- Voluntary leaving of the centre: 3
- Prosecutor resolution: 2

**Professionals Involved**

The educational team is comprised of qualified professionals with university degrees, such as, degrees in psychology, education, social work, social education, etc. The professionals involved are:

a) The coordinator or head of the centre.

b) Team of educators for the educational performance, working directly with the minors.

c) Specialized professionals in direct care, in the school, occupational and labour, psychological, educational and social
areas, as well as any other areas deemed necessary for the best performance of the functions of the centre.

Institutional partners
The public institution with a direct link to the functions covered by the Ankaso-Alguazas centre is the Minors’ Protection Service of the General Department of Social Policy of the Government of the Region of Murcia.

Project Partners

Istituto Don Calabria
(IT) Coordinator of the project
http://www.csben.it/

Europe Peace Youth (UK)
http://www.europeaceyouth.org

Fundación Diagrama (ES)
https://www.fundaciondiagrama.es

Association Diagrama (FR)
http://www.associationdiagrama.fr

Synergia (IT)
http://www.synergia-net.it/en/

Christian Association of Youth Villages (DE)
www.cjd-eutin.eu

The Smile of the Child (GR)
http://www.hamogelo.gr/1.2/

International Juvenile Justice Observatory (IJJO) (BE)
http://www.oijj.org/en