



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

EPIC - EUROPEAN PRACTICES FOR INTEGRATION AND CARE

Improving alternative forms of care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children

No. 863767

Recommendations from the e-Roundtables



RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

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

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

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

Adopt and promote the following recommendations

1. TAILOR-MADE SUPPORT

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

2. SPECILISED SUPPORT

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

3. INTEGRATION

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

4. JOB PLACEMENT

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

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

5. INVOLVEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY

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

6. ALTERNATIVE CARE

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

7. TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

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