Roundtable Debate

From Emergency to Sustainable Solutions:
Providing Family and Community-based Care to Unaccompanied Children in the EU

Committee of the Regions, Room JDE 51, Rue Belliardstraat 101, B-1040 Brussels.

Hosted by Mr Luc Van den Brande

1st March 2016 – 15h00 – 17h30

More than one in five of the migrants and refugees arriving in Europe is a child. An estimated 29% of those seeking asylum are children, and the number of those who arrive unaccompanied is rising dramatically.

The partners in the Opening Doors for Europe’s Children campaign are committed to the promotion and protection of children’s rights, in particular those at risk or in alternative care settings. According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, suitable alternative care has to be provided to all children who have lost parental care, including unaccompanied refugee and migrant children.

The majority of unaccompanied minors in the EU are placed in institutional reception centres, whereas alternatives exist. Institutions may hinder the long-term integration of refugee and migrant children into society.

Good practices exist in providing family and community-based care to unaccompanied minors. This round table aims to strengthen the links between those working to reform child protection systems in favour of family- and community-based services with those working specifically on the rights of refugee and migrant children. In particular it will address the following questions:

- What are the obstacles in both transit and destination countries providing adequate care for unaccompanied children?
- What lessons can we learn from existing practices in providing family- and community-based care and how can they be scaled up?

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1 IOM and UNICEF data brief, Migration of Children to Europe, November 2015
2 Source: Eurostat
3 In 2014, 23,150 unaccompanied minors applied for asylum in the EU. In 2015, in Sweden alone, more than 35,000 unaccompanied children applied for asylum.
4 Phase II of the Opening Doors campaign is expanding to include the following international partners: Eurochild, Hope and Homes for Children, FICE Europe, International Foster Care Organisation and SOS Children’s Villages International. [www.openingdoors.eu](http://www.openingdoors.eu)
• What is the role of international institutions, governments, public authorities and civil society and how can we foster collaboration between these stakeholders?

“Opening Doors for Europe’s Children” operates at EU level and in several countries across Europe, calling on the EU and national governments to prioritise the transition from institutional to family-based care. We believe that the end of institutional care for children in Europe is possible and within our reach – putting the best interests of children back at the heart of Europe’s child protection systems.

The Round Table will feed into the development of a policy position.

Programme

• 15h00 – 15h15: Welcome and Introductory Remarks
  o Luc Van den Brande, Member of the Committee of the Regions
  o Jana Hainsworth, Secretary General Eurochild, Coordinator of Opening Doors for Europe’s Children Campaign

• 15h15 – 16h00: Presentation of Good Practices in Transition and Destination Countries
  o Maria Iliopoulou, Deputy Mayor for Children of the Municipality of Athens
  o Elisabeth Hauser, Programme Director SOS Children’s Villages Austria, Stefan Bauer TG residential care home for unaccompanied children in Vienna’s 14.district
  o Liedewij de Ruijter de Wildt, Nidos, Netherlands

16h00 – 17h20: Debate and discussion: How can we move from emergency to sustainable care solutions for unaccompanied children in the EU?

  o Karin Fagerholm, Lawyer/Thematic Advisor, Save the Children, Sweden
  o Elona Bokshi, Senior Project Manager, European Council of Refugees and Exiles
  o Jan Jarab, Regional Representative for Europe of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
  o Bartolome Balcerzyk, European Commission’s DG Migration and Home Affairs
  o Margaret Tuite, Coordinator for the Rights of the Child, European Commission's DG Justice and Consumers
  o Marie-Anne Paraskevas, European Social Fund and Cohesion Senior Policy Officer, European Commission’s DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
17h20 – 17h30: Closing Remarks
  o Miriana Giraldi, European Affairs Representative, SOS Children's Villages International

A reception will be offered as of 17h30