Foster Care Provision for Unaccompanied Migrant Children:

Shortlist of Good Practices in Europe
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1. BACKGROUND

The shortlist of good practices is developed within the framework of the project FORUM – For Unaccompanied Minors - transfer of knowledge for professionals to increase foster care.

The FORUM project responds to the European Commission priority to ensure better protection and respect for the rights of all children in migration on EU territory through the development of a quality foster care service system promoting the exchange of expertise from countries where foster care is already developed toward countries where the foster care provision is still limited.

In recent years, the number of children reaching EU Member States has increased and many of them are arriving unaccompanied.

The existing European Union policies and legislation provide a wide framework for the protection of the rights of children in migration but the recent surge of arriving migrant children have exposed gaps and shortcomings in protecting their rights and the need for target actions to better protect children in migration has been highlighted.

The project is implemented within the EU recent policies and legislation framework for the protection of the rights of the child in migration: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – The protection of children in migration (2017); the Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors (2010-2014); The European Agenda on Migration; the Commission Recommendation “Investing in Children: Breaking the cycle of Disadvantages” (2013).

The 10th European Forum on the rights of the child: the protection of children in migration have underlined the need for targeted actions to better protect children in migration.

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

Because of Unaccompanied Migrant Children status and degree of vulnerability, child reception must be addressed taking into account that they need a legal guardian firstly and special care and attention secondly. Too often, range of solutions in project target countries - where the empowerment of legal guardian is still left behind - is limited to residential care without considering, as priority, the best interests of the child. Moreover, in these target countries, many of the key stakeholders do not consider Unaccompanied Migrant Children as being children before being migrants.

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2 http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=34456
Countries have been thus selected based on the number of Unaccompanied Migrant Children, on their experience on foster care and on the lack of practices on foster care. Based on the Report “Reception and Living in families. Overview of family based reception for Unaccompanied Minors in the EU member States³, the following targeted countries have been selected:
- Countries with high percentage of Unaccompanied Migrant Children claiming for asylum (Italy, Hungary and Austria)
- Transiting countries who are expected to increase the number of Unaccompanied Migrant Children or welcoming them through relocation policies (Slovenia, Hungary and Czech Republic)
- Partner from countries with experience in foster care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children (UK)
- Partner from countries with large number of migrant children in residential care (Spain)
- Partner with great expertise in advocacy who can channel project outcomes through EU member States (EUROCHILD, Belgium).

The project is built on three pillars: Advocacy, Transfer of Knowledge and Capacity building.

- **Advocacy** at local, national and European level aims at raising awareness and promoting foster care benefits not only for Unaccompanied Migrant Children but for the whole reception system.

In order to initiate foster care programs, key stakeholders from public and private sector managing reception system need to understand the potential benefits and risks of foster care.

The partner EUROCHILD has designed a toolkit to assist child rights advocates and other professionals in influencing the governments at national, regional and local level, to promote the development of better care services for unaccompanied and separated migrant children in the EU. The toolkit can be downloaded at FORUM Website: [https://forum-project.alberodellavita.org/materials/](https://forum-project.alberodellavita.org/materials/)

- **Transfer of knowledge** is meant from associations with sound experience in foster care toward associations with minor experience; the project has elaborated a guidance on minimum standard to be adapted at the national context through national standards for foster care services.

- **Capacity building** of professionals dealing with migration and child protection is crucial to extend good practices and standards to a wide range of key actors.

The project is coordinated by Fondazione L’Albero della Vita and implemented in partnership with European relevant organizations committed to improve the protection and reception of migrants and Unaccompanied Migrant Children: Accem (Spain), Organization for Aid to Refugees OPU (Czech Republic), Family Child Youth Association FCYA (Hungary), FICE – International Federation of Educative Communities (Austria), and Slovenska Filantropija (Slovenia).

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³ NIDOS; SALAR, CHTB, 2015.
Fondazione L’Albero della Vita was founded in Italy in April 1997 and since its foundation, Fondazione L’Albero della Vita has committed itself to promote effective actions aiming at ensuring well-being, protecting and promoting rights, encouraging the development of children, their families and the communities to which they belong, both in Italy and in the world.

Accem: Accem is an NGO which works in promoting the defense of fundamental rights, the support and accompaniment of persons at risk of social exclusion, with a focus on asylum and migrations.

FICE Austria: FICE Austria is the national section of FICE-International. The vision is to create networks across continents worldwide to support actions and all those working with at-risk children, children with special needs and children and young people in out-of-home care. All activities aim to respect the personality, interests and needs of the child or the young person.

Organization for Aid to Refugees (OPU) has been helping refugees and foreigners in the Czech Republic for 25 years. OPU’s main activities include providing free legal and social counselling to applicants for international protection and to other foreigners in the Czech Republic, organizing training programs for both professionals and the general public, and other activities aimed at promoting integration of foreigners.

Slovenska filantropija is a non-governmental and humanitarian organization operating in public interest since 1992. Its programs are aimed at increasing the quality of life in the community and advocacy for the disadvantaged. Various activities are combined in program units Migrations, Volunteering, Intergenerational cooperation, Promotion of health, International and development cooperation. Areas of work of the Migration unit are psychosocial, integration, legal and learning assistance, leisure activities, awareness raising and advocacy for the rights of unaccompanied and separated children, asylum-seekers, persons with international protection and other migrants.

FCYA - Family, Child, Youth Association is a non-profit organization established in 1993 in Hungary. It aims to support the protection of children and strengthen families by fortifying, training and providing services to helping professionals. The association is also involved in numerous international research and training programs, it takes part to prestigious national and international conferences.

The Expert Partners are:

CORAM (UK): an NGO with great experience in foster care and providing care and support for migrant children. It runs expert group’s activities.

Fondazione ISMU: is one the most influencing research center on migration in Italy and Europe. It is member of the expert group.

EUROCHILD: is an advocacy network of organizations who promote the well-being of children. It supports the applicant in the advocacy activities and dissemination of project findings and results.
2. THE SHORTLIST OF GOOD PRACTICES

The Shortlist of Good practices is designed with the contribution of the expert group constituted within the project FORUM – For Unaccompanied Minors - transfer of knowledge for professionals to increase foster care; the Expert Group is composed of: Kamena Dorling, from CORAM CHILDREN LEGAL CENTER LBG – CORAM Intls(UK), a NGO with a great experience in foster care and providing care and support for migrant children; Giulio Giovanni Valtolina and Nicoletta Pavesi, from ISMU –Iniziative e Studi sulla Multietnicità, one of the most influencing research center on migration (Italy); Dr. Maria Herzog, expert on foster care (Hungary) and Dr. Muireean Ni Raghallaigh, Lecturer in Social Work, School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice, from University College Dublin (Ireland), author of one of the most relevant study on foster care system for Unaccompanied Migrant Children in Ireland.

The draft of the Shortlist of European Good Practices has been driven by the objective to demonstrate to key stakeholders in the countries with minor experience a number of good practices developed in experienced countries or experience of success, with the goal of highlighting the positive impact of foster care for the children in migration as well as for the national protection system.

Based on this assumption, the experts gathered data and they went through a literature review to select and capitalize a comprehensive and significant pool of good practices covering different national systems, including good practices from EU awarded project.

The Shortlist of Good Practices covers the following topics:

- MATCHING & RECRUITMENT
- FOSTERING FOR INTEGRATION AND RESPECT OF OWN CULTURE
- NEEDS OF TRAINING FOR FOSTER CARERS
- MONITORING
- SUPPORT IN THE CHILD AGEING OUT

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4 2013, Foster Care and Supported Lodgings for separated Asylum Seeking Young People in Ireland, Banrandos and the Health Service Executive.
3. THE GOOD PRACTICES

List of good practices selected

1. A pool of foster careers is recruited which allows the best possible match to occur.
2. The assessment process for prospective foster carers is set out clearly, including the qualities, skills or aptitudes being sought or to be achieved.
3. Children / Young people have a placement that allows them to both adapt to the new society and maintain connections with their own culture, taking their own wishes into account.
4. Foster carers are adequately trained to be able to provide a good balance between emotional support and practical help, depending on the needs and wishes of the child / young person.
5. Foster carers possess the self-awareness necessary to offer the best possible care and emotional support.
6. Foster carers are able to provide individualised care to teenagers, paying attention to not only the vulnerability but also to resilience and strength.
7. Foster carers understand the asylum and immigration system with which the child / young person must engage and are able to support them.
8. Foster families are able to help maintain links with the child / young person’s family of origin where it is appropriate and possible.
9. Foster families are provided with training and support.
10. Foster carers are subjected to regular monitoring and placements are reviewed regularly. Within these reviews the voice of the child / young person is heard.
11. Foster carers work with other stakeholder to prepare children / young people for life after care.
Description of the Good Practices

1. A pool of foster careers is recruited which allows the best possible match to occur

Matching – selecting the foster carer or foster family that is the best fit for a specific child - is widely regarded as a complex endeavour. Many different factors need to be considered in order to identify the best possible foster placement for a given child.

In Ireland, social workers working with unaccompanied migrant children identified a range of factors that where considered when matching, including ethnicity, culture, language, religion, geographical location, educational needs, health needs, family composition, carer’s links to the community, children’s hobbies, contact with family members, and the views of the child.\(^5\)

However, in most countries, optimum matching is hindered by the availability of foster placements. A pan-European study published in 2015 found that the Netherlands\(^6\) was ‘the only country that does not face a lack of suitable families who are willing to take care of unaccompanied migrant children. It has a structured system of foster care for unaccompanied children, whereby foster care is available to all unaccompanied migrant children, through a system which is nationally applied and laid down in policy by the Ministry of Security and Justice. In the Netherlands, Nidos, the national guardianship institution for unaccompanied migrant children recruits its own foster families and is therefore not dependent on the general Dutch foster care system, thus suggesting that such an approach might be useful elsewhere as well.

In France, “DEPARTEMENT ARDECHE\(^7\) and ADOS SANS FRONTIERE\(^8\)” have developed a system of “sponsoring”\(^9\) families – a form of foster care. The idea of sponsorship - co-produced within a working group involving professional actors in the care of children and associations in the social and charitable sectors - aims to provide 20 young people with a family. This welcome will be accompanied by the “Pluriels” association, which will be flanked by families and young people with a 24-hours support.

In Greece, the METAdrasi’s innovative action “A Home for Human Rights” (METAdrasi – Foster Care for unaccompanied migrant children\(^10\)) seeks to provide unaccompanied migrant with the opportunity to be hosted by families. This project developed after an exchange of expertise with organizations in the Netherlands, Italy, Belgium and France. METAdrasi proceeded with creating a record of families that would be interested in providing temporary accommodation for unaccompanied children. Priority was given to families that speak the same language as the child, have a similar cultural background and would be able to

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\(^7\) http://www.ardeche.fr/1214-mineurs-non-accompagnes.htm

\(^8\) Association pour favoriser la relation, sous forme de parrainages, entre les mineurs non-accompagnés de 16 à 18 ans et la population gardoise (http://adossansfrontiere.collectif-citoyen.fr/2017/12/lardeche-recherche-des-familles-pour-accueillir-des-mineurs-migrants/)

\(^9\) “Le parrainage est un dispositif qui permet d’héberger et accueillir à titre bénévole un mineur non accompagné chez soi (texte du code de l’action sociale).”

undertake the responsibility to offer a family environment until such time as the child could be reunited with his/her family (homo-cultural foster care).

In France, the « Service d’accueil des Mineurs Isolés Etrangers du département du Pas-de-Calais » employs 1,900 foster families that can receive a total of 5,950 children. These families are French families who mostly take care of French children but can also foster non-French children. The recruitment of families with the same cultural backgrounds as unaccompanied migrant children is considered to be near-impossible given the limited availability of resources. Moreover, this is also not considered to be in the best interests of the children. The foster families that are being used are all professional foster care families, employed by the department. They have signed an ‘agreement’ confirming that they are capable of being a foster parent. The ‘service familial’ of the department supports the families. The department is also exploring the possibilities to work with voluntary families in the future.

2. The assessment process for prospective foster carers is set out clearly, including the qualities, skills or aptitudes being sought or to be achieved.

In the program “Jugendhilfe Süd-Niedersachsen” in Germany, the requirements both for host families and for the organization and its employees have been laid down in a performance description. This contains the process unaccompanied migrant children undergo, basic requirements and the profile of host families (both German and multicultural families are being recruited), the way families are recruited, educated and assisted in their job, and what all this means for the Youth Support Agency and the social workers responsible for the project.11 In Ireland, the National Standards for Foster Care (mentioned above) stipulate that foster carers must undergo a comprehensive assessment of their ability to carry out the fostering task and must be supervised and supported by a professionally qualified social worker to enable them to provide “high quality care”. The Standards also set out that foster carers must “participate in the training necessary to equip them with the skills and knowledge required to provide high quality care” and that they must participate in regular reviews.12

3. Children / Young people have a placement that allows them to both adapt to the new society and maintain connections with their own culture, taking their own wishes into account.

Being able to find a balance between one’s new culture and one’s culture of origin is optimal in terms of psychosocial well-being. When considering the culture of an unaccompanied migrant children during the placement making process, it is important to consider the extent to which a prospective foster family can facilitate this. It may involve efforts to engage in ‘cultural matching’ whereby a young person is placed with a carer from their own ethnic group. Alternatively, it may involve a placement with a family of a different ethnicity, including a family from the majority ‘host’ population. Either way, the important thing is that the

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12 Ireland’s National Standards for Foster Care can be found here: https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/National_Standards_for_Foster_Care.pdf
wishes of the young person vis-a-vis culture are taken into account and that the carers are adequately equipped, through training and through resources available to them, to facilitate integration in the hosting society while keeping the link with the culture of origin. Foster carers should also be adequately equipped to deal with discrimination and racism that the young person in their care may experience.

In Italy, “WELCOME REFUGEES ITALIA: fostering projects for refugees and unaccompanied migrant children”14 is a project that aims to promote cultural change and a new model of hospitality. The association believes that family hospitality is the best way to facilitate the social inclusion of refugees in the country, contributing more than any other intervention to overcoming vulnerability and hardship and encouraging expression of personal potential, participation and the achievement of well-being. The project believes that for an unaccompanied migrant children reception within a family can be a decisive moment of the journey towards full autonomy: living with local people is the best way to become part of a community and get to know the social and cultural context of the community more quickly. Unaccompanied children can more easily create a network of social relationships, improve the knowledge of the language, reactivate human and professional resources, invest in his or her own life project: resume studying, find a job, attend a professional training course. The association promotes a model of acceptance that, precisely because it is based on exchange, encounter and mutual knowledge between migrants and Italian citizens, can contribute to fighting prejudices and discrimination. The belief is that reception in families is good for everyone: not only for refugees or unaccompanied children, but also for citizens who decide to open the doors of their homes. Those who host a migrant at home have the opportunity to learn about a new culture, help a person to build a project of life in Italy, become a more aware and an active citizen, activate new bonds of community.

In Italy, the Municipality of Verona has developed a project called “HOMO-CULTURAL FOSTER CARE”.15 The Centre for Family Foster Care and Solidarity has for some years launched an important initiative, unique in Veneto and with very few comparisons in Italy, which provides the unaccompanied migrant child with a family of the same cultural background. This form of foster care allows a child to find in the foster family an environment similar to that of the family of origin, from a cultural, linguistic and religious point of view. Thanks to European funding (European Integration Fund 2011 - action 8) the Department of Social Services, Family and Equal Opportunities in partnership with the Association of Mediators and Cultural Mediators Terra dei Popoli, has consolidated the project on care and protection of children of different cultures, creating a permanent hub involving social workers of the Municipality, cultural mediators and numerous communities of migrants.

In France, the “Service d’accueil familial du département de Paris” works with 110 foster families all over Paris. 90% of them come from North Africa, mainly from Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, and have been in France for a long time. These foster families are able also to host unaccompanied migrant children.

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14 http://refugees-welcome.it
15 http://terradeipopoli.altervista.org/affido-omoculturale.html
According to the service, the family does not have to support or promote a specific religious orientation due to the fact that they work for a public service. Families receive €1,300 per child per month, which is financed by the department.

In Switzerland, Association Tipiti, situated in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, receives mandates by the Central Government to place young unaccompanied children into foster families and has experience with hetero-cultural placements (placements involving unaccompanied migrant children being placed with families of a different cultural background to their own). The organization works with a system training, support and monitoring 40 children in 28 families.

4. Foster carers are adequately trained to be able to provide a good balance between emotional support and practical help, depending on the needs and wishes of the child / young person.

In 2012, the results of a study on fostering unaccompanied asylum-seekers youth were published in the UK.\textsuperscript{16} The research concluded that “there is no doubt that good foster care can make a positive difference to the lives of many unaccompanied young people. At its best, it provides for warm family-like relationships that can be transformative for young people and foster families alike”. It was also concluded that “by being adaptive, flexible and willing to share, many foster carers and young people had managed to create a network of family-like relationships that helped young people to settle, thrive and explore life within and beyond the placement”. Drawing on that same study Sirriyeh (2013)\textsuperscript{17} points to the importance of the practical responses of carers, particularly immediately after a young person’s arrival. Welcoming young people and providing rest and refuge by making food, showing them around the house and how to use appliances and allowing them to rest. Beyond that, celebrating events in young people’s cultural traditions and organising family social activities around the interests of the young people helped to produce positive relationships, with food practices playing a particularly important role in the extent to which young people felt a sense of belonging. Generosity of foster carers, and small gifts that they provided were seen by young people as indicators that foster carers cared about them. Young people often looked for ways in which foster carers went ‘beyond duty’ to do something they would do for their birth children, thus allowing young people to feel a sense of really belonging within the family.

In Italy, the on-going Profuce project operates in different cities.\textsuperscript{18} This project consists of a two-year program, financed by the European Commission. The organization “Istituto degli Innocenti” is heading the project in Italy, in cooperation with the City of Florence, and the non-profit Villaggio SOS in Vicenza. Greece and Bulgaria are also participating in the project. Profuce is launching recruitment campaigns to find foster families, with a total of 280 parents to be involved in the project. It includes training for social workers and for families. The training is using the “Alternative Family Care” method (ALFACA), developed by Nidos, a Dutch NGO. The method focuses on dealing with cultural differences, as well as psychological problems and


\textsuperscript{18} https://www.istitutodeglinnocenti.it/content/profuce-prendersi-cura-dei-ragazzi-arrivati-da-soli-europa-grazie-alaffidamento-listituto-0
focusing on the child’s best interests. With this method, the focus is placed on certain aspects of a child’s life, such as a strong bond with their family of origin and their own country.

5. Foster carers possess the self-awareness necessary to offer the best possible care and emotional support.

Various studies have pointed to the emotional needs of unaccompanied migrant children, needs that arise from their pre-migration experiences, their experiences of migration and transit and from their post-migration situations, including difficulties that unaccompanied children have in trusting those around them. This distrust poses many challenges for carers, but perhaps most especially for people who are providing care for unaccompanied children in their own home. It requires such carers to be understanding, sensitive and self-aware in their responses. Ní Raghallaigh’s (2003) study of foster care for unaccompanied children in Ireland, mentions an example of experienced carers who referred to the difficulty of fostering someone who did not open up about their experiences. The carers stated: “We make a point of trying not to delve into their past. … What we say to them is, ‘look, you know, if there are any issues that come up for you as a result of what happened in your past that you really need to talk to us about, we’re here, we’re ready to listen. … But don’t feel that you have to tell us your past’. … The curiosity that we all have, or my curious nature would be to ask, ‘well, tell me what has brought you to here’? But, in a sense, we feel that we have to respect their need for privacy.” (p.76).

6. Foster carers are able to provide individualised care to teenagers, paying attention to not only the vulnerability but also to resilience and strength.

Studies in both Ireland and in the Netherlands have pointed to a number of coping strategies and sources of resilience among refugee and unaccompanied migrant children people. These include acting autonomously/independently, performing at school, perceiving support from peers and parents, maintaining continuity, participating in a new society, and use of religious faith.

This is an important point to be taken care as unaccompanied migrant children usually enter the care system when they are teenagers. Entering foster care as a teenager is likely to pose challenges for many, and there may be particular challenges in this regard for unaccompanied children. For example, in a study by Kaukko & Wernesjö (2017) unaccompanied migrant children talked about being ‘reversed’ into childhood, having had more agency and responsibility prior to leaving their countries of origin and during

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their journeys to Europe. A similar point was raised by young people in a study conducted by De Graeve and Bex (2017)\textsuperscript{23} in the Belgian context where unaccompanied children sometimes found it challenging to be asking permission for things having made decisions by themselves during their migratory journey. This points to the fact that carers need to recognise and respond to, not only the vulnerability of unaccompanied children but also their resilience and resourcefulness.

7. Foster carers understand the asylum and immigration system with which the child / young person must engage and are able to support them.

The international literature refers to the stress experiences by unaccompanied migrant children as they negotiate the asylum and immigration systems. Given this stress, it is crucial that foster carers are able to support them in relation to this.

While this support might take various forms, often depending on the extent to which young people are willing to disclose details of their asylum claim to their carers, an English study by Wade et al (2012)\textsuperscript{24}, highlighted the support that foster carers in this regard. They helped young people to be able to tell their stories and sometimes accompanied them to their asylum hearings. Carers required to show empathy and understanding and it required young people to show a high level of trust in their carers and an ability to be open. These activities required a high level of trust and openness from the young person and trust, empathy and understanding from the foster carer. One carer said: “Because I knew him much better I decided, with his immigration solicitor, that I would do his statement...We had a three-hour session, with some breaks, where we literally went through the whole thing... We kind of prepared for it and we did it and it was difficult, but he was OK with it. And I think it means [that] I’ve got that level of knowledge now that you wouldn’t normally have.” (cited in Sirriyeh & Ni Raghallaigh, 2018\textsuperscript{25}).

8. Foster families are able to help maintaining links with the child / young person’s family of origin where it is appropriate and possible.

Maintaining contact with family members is of huge importance for unaccompanied migrant children, when having such contact is considered to be safe and appropriate, taking into account the wishes of the child. Such contact is likely to be by telephone, using What’s App or via skype, although occasionally social services may be able to bring a child from one jurisdiction to another to meet family members. Social workers should provide foster carers with guidance regarding this contact, ensuring that foster families are able to support children who may feel upset or lonely after their contact with family members. Maintaining contact with family members will be of particular importance in situations where unaccompanied migrant children are likely to be reunited with their families.


In **Greece**, the NGO METAdrasi has developed a foster care project especially for very young children who are likely to be reunited with their family in another EU Member State. Since February 2016, 13 children have been placed in foster families, and five of them were subsequently reunited with their families in another EU Member State.  

9. Foster families are provided with training and support.

In a small scale study undertaken in the **UK**, carers identified five areas of need which unaccompanied migrant children in their care have had, including cultural needs, needs relating to speaking English / communicating with a language barrier, needs relating to learning about life in England, needs relating to young people’s status as asylum seekers, and advocacy needs. Information, training and support was required in relation to each of these needs, with carers suggesting that social workers, personal contacts, other carers, local refugee support organisations and the internet all acted as sources of support and information. In 2016 the UK government commissioned training for foster carers and support workers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children who are at risk of going missing from care. 1,230 people were trained and independent evaluation of the training showed that participants felt more confident following the training and 99% of participants said that the course had assisted them in their role in looking after these children. In November 2017, the government announced it would commission a further 1,000 training places.

Under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Program, the EU co-founded a follow-up action project whereby Nidos (**the Netherlands**), in cooperation with Minor N’dako (**Belgium**), Jugendhilfe Süd Niedersachsen (**Germany**), OPU (**Czech Republic**), the Red Cross in **Denmark** and KIJA (**Austria**), developed a training program with supportive and online materials for professionals working with host families who take care of unaccompanied children. The training consists of different modules on recruitment, screening, matching and guidance of the host families.

As part of the ‘Children in Exile’ project, (Pflegekinder in Bremen (PiB)), foster families in **Germany** receive a guide, the ‘Small A-Z for PiB foster parents’ which has been specially written about unaccompanied migrant children and informs the families on important subjects relating to this target group.

In **Italy** the laws n. 184 (04/05/1983) and n. 149 (28/03/2001) relate to foster care. These laws set out that Municipalities have to organize training for supervisors and people who intend to become foster families. Social services have the responsibility to support and supervise foster families during foster care.

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10. Foster carers are subject to regular monitoring and placements are reviewed regularly. Within these reviews the voice of the child / young person is heard.

In Italy, all foster care projects are monitored by social services (it is provided by law). Sometimes, there are organized self-help mutual-aid groups of foster families, in which different experiences are shared. See for example: “AMICI DEI BAMBINI (Ai.Bi), Progetti MI AFFIDO A TE and BAMBINI IN ALTO MARE”. In these projects several forms of support are provided: psycho-pedagogical support from the AiBi Association; an economic contribution from the Municipality; the monitoring of the project by the Social Services.

In Ireland, regular reviews of placements of children in foster care are conducted by social workers, with the views of children sought in these contexts. In addition, the Health Information and Quality Authority has a statutory remit to monitor and inspect the providers of foster care services. HIQA conducts its inspections against the National Standards for Foster Care. The Standards state that children’s views must be heard when decisions are made which affect them or the care that they receive. In addition, a child’s version of the National Standards for Foster Care is also available.

11. Foster carers work with other stakeholder to prepare children / young people for life after care.

In Italy a lot of third sector organisations have programs for unaccompanied migrant children providing specific actions to prepare young people for the transition to adulthood. In the project “Mai più soli – Cidis Onlus” several actions are implemented with the aim to help children in looking for work (through apprenticeship, for example) and in looking for homes when they are 18 (through social housing, for example). The National Government has developed some projects to help migrant children in the transition to adulthood: for example, the project “Percorsi” of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, establishes a “personal endowment” for each child involved. This endowment includes a) training opportunities to improve the chances to find a work; b) an economic support for the child to participate in a 5-month internship; c) a grant for the organization where the child works to offer monitoring during the internship. These projects are supported by Government (at national or regional level) or by third sector organizations, and are developed through the networks of organizations in which foster families or residential care facilities for unaccompanied migrant children are involved.

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31 https://www.aibi.it/ita/attivita/affido/#1505379818504-442b5ad6-e357; https://www.aibi.it/ita/category/bambini-in-alto-mare/
32 https://www.hiqa.ie/areas-we-work/childrens-services
33 Ireland’s National Standards for Foster Care can be found here: https://www.dcya.gov.ie/documents/publications/National_Standards_for_Foster_Care.pdf
34 The Children’s Book about Foster Care: https://www.dcya.gov.ie/documents/publications/The_Childrens_Book_about_Foster_Care.pdf