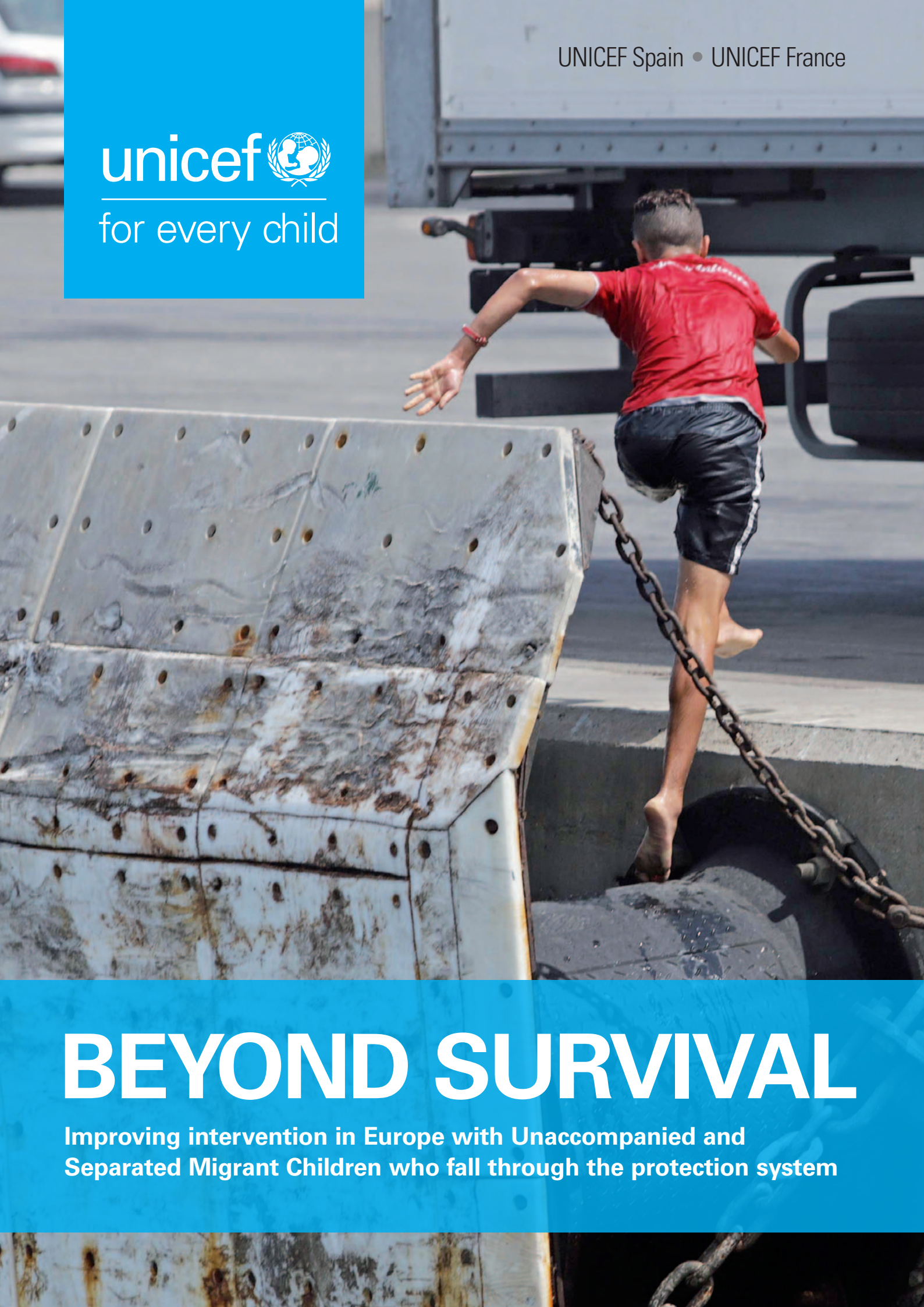


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BEYOND SURVIVAL

Improving intervention in Europe with Unaccompanied and Separated Migrant Children who fall through the protection system

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Key definitions

Unaccompanied children

"are children [...] who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so¹"

Separated children

"are children [...] who have been separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members²" .

Children in street situations

(or children living in the street) is used to cover *"(a) children who depend on the street to live and/or work, whether alone, with peers or with family; and (b) a wider population of children who have formed strong connections with public spaces and for whom the street plays a vital role in their everyday lives and identities. This wider population includes children who periodically, but not always, live and/or work on the street and children who do not live or work on the street but who regularly accompany their peers, siblings or family in the street. Regarding children in street situations, "being in public spaces" is understood to include spending a significant amount of time in the street or in street markets, public parks, public community spaces, squares and bus and train stations. It does not include public buildings such as schools, hospitals or other comparable institutions³"*

Alternative care

"relates to the protection and well-being of children who are deprived of parental care or who are at risk of being so⁴"

Trafficking in children:

"The UN Trafficking Protocol defines the term

"trafficking in persons" as follows: (a)

"Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;

(b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used; ... (art. 3).

The three key elements that must be present for a situation of trafficking in persons (adults) to exist are therefore: (i) action (recruitment ...); (ii) means (threat ...); and (iii) purpose (exploitation).

International law provides a different definition for trafficking in children

(i.e., persons under 18 years of age). The "means" element is not required in this case. It is necessary to show only: (i) an "action" such as recruitment, buying and selling; and (ii) that this action was for the specific purpose of exploitation. In other words, trafficking of a child will exist if the child was subjected to some act, such as recruitment or transport, the purpose of which is the exploitation of that child⁵"

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Introduction

Children who fall outside the safe-keeping of their families are living in the streets throughout the world, and are in dire need of protection. This phenomenon, usually associated with developing countries, also exists in Europe. Over the past 30 years, unaccompanied and separated children have moved from developing countries to European countries to escape difficult situations (linked to conflicts, natural disasters, social and economic crisis, or difficult personal family circumstances) and in search of a better life and prospects. This phenomenon has required European child protection systems to overstretch and try to adapt to the specific protection needs of these children. These efforts have not always been successful or in the best interests of children. In European countries, as well as in countries of origin or transit, unaccompanied and separated children are often falling through the protection system due to the lack of responses adapted to the needs of these children. However, some intervention models have been tried out and can be successful. This report aims to propose an intervention model for the care and protection of unaccompanied and separated children in the street, and provides examples of positive practice from various European countries.

In most European countries, the protection and social integration of unaccompanied and separated migrant and refugee children poses serious challenges linked to the increased number of arrivals of children, overstretched protection systems, lack of trained professionals, administrative barriers, lack of quality data and effective monitoring tools, discrimination, etc.

Some groups of unaccompanied and separated children have acute protection needs, due to their personal backgrounds or living conditions, such as children living in the streets, children exploited by traffickers, children who are victims of addiction, or unaccompanied teenagers. Interventions and

strategies developed by governments are often not effective enough in addressing their needs. These children often do not stay at accommodation centres, move from one European country to another, and fall outside child protection systems.

These children face particular risks due to their difficult living conditions and the lack of an appropriate institutional response to their specific needs. Children have to develop strategies to survive. Their poor living conditions greatly impact their development and their physical and mental health. These children are usually not enrolled in education or training activities and may become victims of economic or/and sexual exploitation. Some children are pushed to commit offences or criminal acts such as burglaries, theft, bag snatching, drug selling or drug moving, and may also be involved in violent acts or other risky behaviour, bringing them into regular contact with the police and the justice system.

These children also have to face racism and discrimination from the local population and in the media.

When they turn 18, the situation of these children is aggravated if efficient social inclusion measures are not in place. Local initiatives have been developed by governments and practitioners in different locations, such as street education or alternative education programmes, but these measures have often shown limited results and are not durable solutions. Child protection authorities and social workers still face unaddressed difficulties when dealing with this particular group of children, which sometimes leads to frontline workers become overwhelmed and demotivated.

One of the main risks for these children is when governments implement immigration-oriented programmes rather than child protection programmes, leaving their needs unmet in terms of access to services, protection, and social and economic integration.

In European countries, there is a strong demand from professionals and authorities to identify new models of intervention to better protect these groups of children and to share existing good practice. UNICEF decided to bring experts together and organize a joint international workshop on unaccompanied and separated children living in the street in Madrid in December 2019 under the leadership of UNICEF Spain and UNICEF France, who were particularly concerned by the issue at a country level. The purpose of the workshop was to share good practice and challenges and to jointly develop a plan of action for lasting solutions for unaccompanied and separated children in acute vulnerable situations who fall through the protection system. The event was successful and brought together around 50 experts and practitioners from public and private institutions and organisations in nine European countries.

This report contains the main conclusions from the workshop:

- i) Overview of key risks faced by these children;
- ii) Proposal for an “Integrated Intervention Model for the Care and Protection of Unaccompanied and Separated children living in the street”;
- iii) A selection of positive practice from European countries.

No successful action in protecting these vulnerable children will be effective without first changing the narrative and discourse surrounding these children, in addition to the ways society sees them. Children living in the street is neither a natural nor a social trait, and such a situation should never be accepted.

They are children, and have to be seen and treated as such.

Many of them are **adolescents**, and they have the right to be accompanied emotionally, physically and socially during their adolescence.

They are victims, and cannot be blamed for living in the street. They are living in a frightful environment and are scared for their lives.

Based on all these results, **UNICEF calls on** States and other players working at a local, national and European level to take **determined action** to address the urgent needs of these vulnerable children in four key areas:

- 1) Addressing documentation and legal aspects;
- 2) Ensuring safe and protective environments;
- 3) Providing affective references;
- 4) Building new narratives with and about unaccompanied and separated migrant children living in the street.

This call for action is even more urgent in the context of the COVID-19 emergency and post-emergency, as social marginalisation and discrimination against vulnerable children may grow in the coming years due to the expected social and economic crisis. The current health crisis has revealed even more the gaps in terms of public response and social protection of the most vulnerable children and families. Child protection systems in European countries have not been spared by this assessment. This crisis will be successfully overcome only if no child, and particularly the most vulnerable, is left behind.

UNICEF calls on States and other players working at a local, national and European level to take determined action to address their urgent needs.

1. Key principles and risks faced by unaccompanied and separated children living in the street

The fact that there are currently children living in the street in Europe reveals a failure in their protection and a violation of their rights. Even when they are in an irregular situation, it must never be forgotten that they are children nevertheless. If living in the street is hard for an adult, it is much more harmful for children, as they have fewer resources and are still developing their bodies and their minds. It is necessary to understand the magnitude of the harm that these children suffer.

Key principles

Children who fall through the protection system in Europe present a number of specific characteristics that must be understood in order to provide them with the attention they deserve:

- **They are children and right-holders.** It is often forgotten in many public discourses, but they are children, which means they have special rights, as recognized in the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989). Due to their age and to the stage of their development, they still need support in many areas of their lives. States are duty bearers and are bound due to their international human rights obligations to protect all children with no condition of nationality. Article 20 of the UNCRC states that *“child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State.”* So EU States shall in accordance with their national laws ensure alternative care for such children.

- **They are adolescents.** Taking childhood as a whole, adolescence is relevant as it is the stage in which personal autonomy, belonging and identity are developed. Children living in the street are in the main adolescents, with the usual drives to explore limits –their own and those of the society– to find their way in the world and to be able to express their personality. Adolescents living in Europe with their families try drugs and alcohol, get into arguments and challenge authorities, but they have adult references that accompany them through these processes, highlighting the negative effects of substance use in their lives, mediating in conflicts and providing limits –and appropriate consequences– when needed. However, without adult supervision, those drives can lead to dangerous results: trying drugs can lead to addictions, minor conflicts can escalate into fights and penal measures, and challenging authorities can lead to the abandonment of protection systems and entering a life of survival through illegal activities.

- **“Children living in the street” is neither a natural nor a social trait, and it should not be accepted as one.** There are natural traits: children can be taller or shorter, or they can have a lighter or a darker skin colour. There also exist social differences, as nation of origin or mother tongue. Children will always show natural and social diversity, in a world that is variable and diverse. However, that cannot lead to the acceptance of “children living in the street” as a natural or social category –although some discourses tend to do so. The fact that they are living in the street is a social consequence of multiple factors, but it can be avoided. There will always be children speaking different languages or having various nationalities, and that is enriching, but there could be a world in which children do not have to live in the street in order to survive.

• **They are victims.** The Convention on the Rights of the Child states clearly that every child has the right to be cared for, and that public administrations and governments must step in when they are not in the care of the family. Thus, the fact that they are living in the street is not something they should be accused of, especially when it is a consequence of many other violations of their rights (in their countries of origin, with insufficient resources available to them; often in their families, as they did not feel safe in many cases; and in the reception countries, as a consequence of failed child protection systems and migration policies that consider them foreigners rather than minors). They also live in fear, and while they should be protected against every form of violence and negligence they are often at risk of becoming victims of exploitation, trafficking, abuse, etc., which may even lead to their disappearance.

• **Scared children can do scary things.** With all the situations that these children have suffered, they are afraid, and very often they have had to deal with traumatic experiences. All that can lead to behaviour patterns which are dangerous for themselves and for other people. In many cases they may become “offenders” from the legal perspective, but it is often forgotten that those offences derive from severe neglect and even exploitation.

Risks faced by unaccompanied children living in the street

Children living in the street face diverse risks. Some of the risks or unmet needs are so basic to survival that these children live in a permanent state of fear, and that affects their day-to-day behaviour and their development as human beings.

• **The lack of civil status/legal documents** is a major concern. When children do not have documents to prove their identity or

The fact that they are living in the street is not something they should be accused of, especially when it is a consequence of many other violations of their rights.

age, article 8 of the CRC states that States should assist children in re-establishing their civil identity, whereas few European States actually do so. Even when children have civil status documents to prove their age, authorities sometimes tend to reject their validity and their authenticity and tend to apply age assessment methods, which are not always reliable. Being deprived of legal identity means limited access to health, education and protection. Children without proper civil status/identity documents live with permanent insecurity, and the fear of being arrested and detained, treated as adults or returned to their countries of origin. They know that those difficulties will increase when they become adults (without legal permits for residence and work). Their future plans then become extremely short term, a question of weeks, even days. Knowing that they cannot access care and basic services without proper identity documents, these children may try to register under several false identities or aliases. The obstacles they face in order to have their documents recognized or re-established by institutions create even greater vulnerability for these children.

• **Discrimination** is mounting against children living in the street. The language of hate is increasing in the media and among political forces, as well as in the general public, which criminalises these children. During recent years it

They are afraid, and very often they have had to deal with traumatic experiences. All that can lead to behaviour patterns which are dangerous for themselves and for other people.



has become evident that some professionals, institutions and public are restricting the access of these children to their rights due to their differences (appearance, nationality, language...). Stigmatisation creates a feeling of rejection in the children, who tend to self-isolate with peers in similar circumstances and become involved in illegal activities in order to belong. Under these strains, children can develop their own prejudices against the people of the country, police forces or the protection system, making it much more difficult to build trust with them, leading to a loop of mutual distrust.

- **Their basic human needs are not covered.** Without adult protection, these children have little nutritional food, inadequate clothing and inappropriate hygiene, which makes them more vulnerable and easy to identify, leading to further discrimination. Moreover, they are sleeping in the street, where they cannot sleep well because of the dangers: the fear of aggression and of bad weather. They do not have a safe place, a home to

return to every night, a shelter to recover from the day, a locker to keep their belongings in (their documents, their pictures, etc.).

- **Children living in the street suffer specific health problems, both physical and psychological.** At the physical level they often have illnesses that go untreated for long periods and they suffer injuries that do not receive the treatment that they require. At the psychological level, all the circumstances mentioned previously imply a constant lack of safety, which creates anxiety, and those experiences add to psychological problems that remain undiagnosed and untreated, especially trauma and its consequences. Substance use and abuse needs to be understood as a way of coping with the harshness of life in the street, an informal “self-medication”, something they need in order to survive fear and trauma. However, the drugs they use are becoming increasingly harmful and addictive in recent years, and unless they follow a

programme to give up their use, success in quitting might be very limited.

- As mentioned before, **scared children can do scary things**. Children living in the street find themselves in **very dangerous situations**. They can become involved in conflict with the law, entering the domain of juvenile justice, with a large spectrum of actions ranging from small conflicts in the street, to stealing and drug-dealing in order to survive, to being recruited by informal or organised criminal networks. It must be acknowledged that these children can also become offenders, making it more difficult to see them as the victims they are. This is particularly complicated when these children become involved with dangerous networks: the line that separates being used and abused and becoming an abuser is blurred, and requires a solid analysis from the perspective of Children's Rights.

- **Trafficking and exploitation are a reality among these children**. When they find no healthy relationships to rely upon, they can become victims of criminal networks, especially when they have a desire to send money back to their families or to make money in order to have a better life. They may start with lesser offences, like transporting illegal material or committing petty theft, but they can also be subjected to other forms of trafficking, including sexual exploitation –particularly when they need the substance they are addicted to. While many national justice systems are quick to condemn these children when they commit offences, it is striking how few cases of trafficking are identified, in contrast with the actual situation faced by many of these children.

- The **child protection measures are insufficient** in many cases, as children remain living in the street. There are still many cases of

administrations that do not allow immediate access to protection measures, that implement the age assessment process prior to protection and that do not provide the legal documentation that grants effective access to many of their rights. There are still many situations in which these children are not listened to, particularly because they need to communicate in their own language and in their own ways, and there is not always a professional with the skills and time to do it. There is a serious lack of housing facilities, which leads to saturation in the centres, undermining the possibilities of making the children feel safe in them. In general, there is a lack of other basic resources: a lack of funding; professionals who are seriously committed to their work but with insufficient training and an overwhelming work overload; and an insufficient number of specialised workers, from cultural mediators and street educators to social workers, mental health workers and specialised and independent lawyers that understand the living conditions or circumstances of these children.

- The active, unpredictable mobility of these children, their **inadequate identification**, and the **nonexistent or limited cooperation and communication** between national services and institutions, and transnational cooperation and communication between countries, only leads to further problems for the intervention.

For full development not only basic needs are required. Research and practice over decades has demonstrated that the human brain is configured to work in human relationships. Without a safe and protective environment that includes healthy interpersonal interaction a child cannot achieve their highest potential. However, children living in the street experience deep loneliness –even within peer groups– and also face severe drawbacks in these areas:

There are still many cases of administrations that do not allow immediate access to protection measures, that implement the age assessment process prior to protection and that do not provide the legal documentation that grants effective access to many of their rights.

- **The lack of affective adult**

references. In normalised lives, adolescents explore their identity with the support of adults: their parents, members of their family, teachers, other affective references such as trainers or educators, etc. They make mistakes –poor choices, inappropriate behaviour, emotional outbursts– and those adults provide the support and limits needed by them in order to be able to learn from the experiences and do things better progressively. However, children living in the street do not have those references; in fact they have usually suffered from bad treatment by adults (in their families, in their countries of origin, in their contact with some members of the police or of protection services, in criminal networks, etc.), so it is much more difficult for them to trust new adults, even well-intended professionals and volunteers. That means that they have very few possibilities of feeling supported and accepted, and without that integration will be very difficult.

- **The lack of normalised friendships.**

Children living in the street can see other children of their age living normalised lives: living with their families, attending school, taking part in leisure activities, having their first romantic relationships. However, children living in the street have other pressing issues: survival, where to sleep every night, avoiding difficult situations, dangerous networks, etc. However, they have the same aspirations, although these appear to be beyond their reach.

- Without other affective references, children living in the street are left mainly with **unhealthy interactions among peers.**

They find their support in other migrant children, who usually do not enjoy greater safety or healthy habits, but just the opposite. For example, contrary to common belief, most of these children did not sniff glue in their countries of origin, it is something they begin while living in

Europe. In order to survive they join informal groups of children in a similar situation, and those groups, while they provide some protection and a sense of belonging, are usually very unhealthy for them, with exposure to dangerous habits, strong hierarchies imposed through violence, illegal activities, and sometimes the first contact with exploitation and criminal networks. In fact, those groups can be manipulated or exploited by young adults who may use children to commit crimes for them, as the legal consequences are less severe, or to exploit them. The strong influence of the group has influenced the work of some organisations, as interventions with individual children are often thwarted if the group perceives them as a risk to its own operation.

- **Culture shock.** Unaccompanied and separated children experience in a much harsher way the differences between their culture of origin and the unexpected social norms, cultural organisation and general way of life in the countries they reside in. Without adult references, they struggle to understand behaviour in the societies they experience, and they are also misinterpreted, due to the inadequacy of some of their own behaviour in the new human environment.

- A feeling of **rootlessness** is also common, as they are angry at their countries for the lack of opportunities, but they also have difficulties in belonging to a new place, as they often feel unwelcome or poorly treated.

- A **mismatch of expectations** between their situation and the habits of European Child Protection services leads to difficulties for protection services regarding children who are not seeking help.

Children living in the street also face some serious challenges that affect their ability to integrate within their new societies.

In normalised lives, adolescents explore their identity with the support or adults. Children living in the street experience deep loneliness, even within peer groups.



- The **effects of trauma in cognition** are usually overlooked. With all the traumatic experiences they have suffered, these children have their brains so accustomed to survival and to fear that they have difficulties with concentration, and that affects their capacities to learn new contents and skills, such as learning a new language or following a professional training course. They also show reduced self-awareness, which leads them to take decisions against their own interests. In some cases dissociation is so severe that they have trouble remaining consistent in their social interactions, and lose important relationships.

- They usually have **low education levels**, especially in contrast to their peers in European countries. In many cases they are illiterate in their own language, having to rely on their memory skills in order to learn the new language or other skills. Those who attended school in their countries of

origin usually dropped out early, so they have not integrated learning skills such as reviewing or academic problem solving.

- Suffering the effects of trauma and having a low education level lead to significant **difficulties in the acquisition of the new language**.

Moreover, as they learn in informal situations they may incorporate expressions that are perceived as vulgar or offensive, deepening the rejection of some parts of society. However, there are also cases of children on the move who can speak several languages and still have many valuable skills, even when they have faced trauma.

- **Insufficient schooling in the European countries** means that all these problems remain unaddressed. When there are delays in schooling (sometimes for months) or barriers preventing access to formal education (particularly for children between 16 and 18),

Children living in the street have the same aspirations as other children of their age, however, they have to focus on finding food or a place to sleep.



precious time is being lost. In addition, the scarcity of educational resources adapted to the specific needs of these children means that they often become demotivated and drop out.

- **Unrealistic perspectives about the destination country and life in general** also pose a problem. Much of the information they have received in their countries of origin is false due to the interests of specific groups, including migrants wishing to tell a story of success. After having lived in the street for some time these children consider themselves independent and they want to work, usually to help their families. However, they have very low employability until they settle down, learn the language and develop new skills. Particularly when they are living on a day-to-day basis, it is very difficult for them to commit to long-term processes, such as those

required to achieve proficiency in the language and the required skills.

- Very often, children living in the street **lack a migration plan or lose it after encountering so many barriers in the host country**. In some cases they wanted to emigrate to Europe based in the narratives of former neighbours or idealised perspectives that are very different from the reality they experience, or due to pressure from their families. In other situations the children embarked on their trip through a set of coincidences, being unoccupied and wanting to try new experiences. They often refer to their decision as a one-way trip, not daring to face the shame of returning to their country of origin unless they are successful and economically solvent. In order to continue their development they will need to start defining their personal goals, with the support of caring adults.

- Frequently, there is a serious **lack of adequate information** in a form that is culturally appropriate for them and linguistically understandable, and also a **lack of implementation of the right to be heard**. These children have taken serious decisions in their journey to Europe, and they need to be informed of their rights and the limits they face, and they must be listened to with regards to decisions that affect them.

The scarcity of educational resources adapted to the specific needs of these children means that they often become demotivated and drop out.

2. Call for action: towards an integrative model of intervention for the care and protection of unaccompanied children in the street

Children living in the street are diverse in their origins, needs and expectations. However, they all face similar problems. Therefore, States and other players must work at local, national and European levels in four main areas:

1. Addressing documentation and legal aspects.
2. Ensuring safe and protective environments.
3. Providing affective references.
4. Building new narratives with and about unaccompanied migrant children living in the street.

■ AREA 1: ADDRESSING DOCUMENTATION AND LEGAL ASPECTS

Providing documentation

Documentation is the point of access for most children's rights: protection, education, health, residence, etc... In many countries the lack of accepted documentation is one of the biggest problems in any intervention: in some countries the documents from the countries of origin are questioned regarding validity, in other countries only children who seek asylum are considered subjects requiring protection. In most countries the process takes so long that many children become discouraged and move to another country, only to return some months later to begin the whole process again. However, the

CRC states in article 8 the right to possess proper documentation.

- The child must be informed in a child-friendly and trustworthy way of their rights and options regarding the recognition of their civil status/identity documents and the age assessment process, in order that they understand the full process and its implications.
- Once informed, the child must be heard at every point in the process that affects them, especially during the identification procedure.
- Authorities must initiate the procedures swiftly in order to have the children properly identified and get access to provisional protection with the shortest possible delay.

- The benefit of doubt should be applied, in accordance with the presumption of minority, assuming that the child is a minor and has the right to be protected as such until a final decision has been made regarding status as a minor.
- States should ensure that their decision can be reviewed by an independent body or suspended pending appeal.
- When a child's identity documents are missing or have been irregularly obtained on their behalf, authorities must adopt flexible measures in the best interests of the child. Authorities should provide appropriate assistance and protection, with the aim of re-establishing the child's identity.
- National authorities should refrain from using medical methods based on, inter alia, bone and dental analysis, which are inaccurate, which have large margins for error and can be traumatic.
- National authorities must provide temporary protection –and temporary documentation– to every child until their identity is confirmed with other documentation from the country of origin or through the accepted legal procedures.
- The law should explicitly provide an exemption from the need to have a residence permit to live in a regular situation in the country as a minor. Otherwise, national authorities must provide a residence permit to every child that is identified within their territory so that children can have access to all their rights: protection, education, health, etc.
- Every country must adjust its legislation in accordance with the Convention of the Rights of the Child, granting all children at risk in their territory, including unaccompanied children, access to protection, independently of their nationality or the state of their documentation, and not necessarily linked to asylum procedures.

- Identification must never be used for pushbacks or the forced return of the child to the real or suspected country of origin. The return of a child to their country of origin must only take place voluntarily and duly reported as an express request by the child through the provisions ordered by the law, and after a thorough process that ensures their return to their family or to protection facilities that meet all the necessary standards and act only in their best interests. Effective firewalls between child protection services and immigration enforcement should be ensured.

Addressing legal and penal issues

Migrant children living in the street face legal and penal issues related to their activities and difficulties. Their rights must be ensured at two levels: as victims and as offenders, through the full provision of child-friendly justice, as outlined in article 40 of the CRC. That means that in every process children must be informed of their rights and must understand what is being said through appropriate linguistic and cultural translation.

The fact that these children are living in the street and that they do not have positive adult references makes them particularly vulnerable as **victims**. However, they are often perceived as “potential offenders” even when they have not done anything wrong, just because they are migrant children living in the street. In addition, when they are victims of any crime, they are sometimes perceived as responsible for the aggression that they have suffered. Nevertheless, they should be protected with all the power of the rule of law against all forms of violence:

- **Aggression:** from adults, from peers in similar groups or from any other people or group, including public administrations and authorities such as Child Protection Officers or the police.
- **Sexual abuse:** many children reveal that they have suffered sexual violence while living in the street, especially at night, from both peers and adults.

They are particularly vulnerable as victims: aggressions, sexual abuse, trafficking and exploitation, and racism and xenophobia.

• **Trafficking and exploitation:** these children are victims of trafficking, ranging from very informal situations (being exploited occasionally in petty crimes or in sexual contact in exchange for money or other goods) to semi-structured groups (in which older children or young adults exploit them, abusing their feeling of belonging) to highly organised international networks (in which children are manipulated through videos and social media, in situations in which they find it difficult to escape, as there is always the possibility of the exploiters sharing videos or pictures of the children in difficult or illegal situations with their families or other peers)⁶.

• **Racism and xenophobia.** The discourse against children living in the street is increasing in some social movements, political parties and mass media, and they are becoming a target group for hate speech. A strong legal response to this expression should be implemented, in order to ensure their rights as children.

On the other hand, migrant children living in the street may resort to violence and to illegal activities as a way of survival (sometimes influenced or even exploited by peers or by adults, as seen previously). Nevertheless, they are still children, which means they have rights as offenders in juvenile justice procedures:

• **Right to legal assistance and to a fair trial:** even when they infringe the law, all children have the rights recognised in the CRC and by national and local laws. Those include the right to the presumption of innocence, the right to be heard, effective participation in the proceedings including information about their rights in a language they can understand (including translation) and legal and other appropriate assistance, among others⁷.

• **Restorative justice whenever applicable.** In many cases, these children start committing minor crimes, not fully aware of the

consequences of their actions. Restorative procedures allow child offenders to become aware of the impact of their behaviour on the victims and to participate, together with the community, in the resolution of the matter with the support of a third party, both in formal and informal settings.

Developing and strengthening networking and collaboration at every level

Having migrant children living in the street is new in European countries, and societies are still trying to understand and address this phenomenon. The high mobility of these children, as well as the severe problems they endure, make interventions particularly difficult. Therefore it is crucial to **develop and strengthen networking and collaboration at every level**, starting from documentation and legal aspects, but spreading to all other domains (protection, health, education and training, etc.). The objective of this collaboration needs to be twofold:

• On the one hand, it is necessary to improve the collection of data about these children, so they can be identified within the various services inside every country and transnationally. The individualized data should be treated, with due respect for privacy, in clusters, so that a larger map of trends can be drawn up and policies can be developed to address the specific situation, only for protection purposes (excluding immigration enforcement or control and other uses of data that might go against the best

Migrant children living in the street may resort to violence and to illegal activities as a way of survival. However, they are still children, they have the rights as offenders in juvenile justice procedures.

interests of children). That is why public administrations, particularly those that assume guardianships, must ensure that every child entering their child protection centres is adequately registered and formally placed under their guardianship from the time they appear.

- On the other hand, only by using the data can the intervention be consistent and efficient. Children that move frequently often start a wide variety of processes in the legal, educational and interpersonal domains, dropping them when they believe they will have better prospects in other place or country. That means that unless some relevant information is shared, every team must start the entire process from the beginning, losing valuable time that could be used during the intervention, especially when there are situations regarding trafficking and exploitation.

Networking and collaboration should happen at least within and between all the following levels, as each one complements the work of the others:

• LOCAL:

- Municipalities (and regions): they have these children in their cities and spaces, and local outreach is the first step.
- Police forces: they are in contact with these children, especially in relation to having them as offenders and as victims, and they are often the professionals empowered to transfer children in the street to child care facilities. Effective firewalls between child protection and immigration enforcement should be ensured.
- The members of the judiciary: they take decisions about these children, and they need information from other players.
- Social services are usually the entry point of these children into the protection system, and

they can obtain information from many other resources, especially Child Protection and Asylum, if needed.

- Health services, including mental health, can make assessments about the risks and needs of these children, especially regarding substance use and abuse.
- NGOs and civil society can be highly specialised in interventions with these children, and can mobilize resources rapidly.

• NATIONAL:

- All the ministries involved should share policies, especially those in charge of identification, the judiciary processes, Child Protection, Asylum and Refuge.
- A national system should be in place in order to coordinate information and policies among cities where there are children.

• TRANSNATIONAL:

- Formal networks: the high mobility of these children between countries and the fact that some of them become victims of international trafficking and exploitation networks requires transnational networks, such as the Europol network on child trafficking, to be involved, led primarily by official government agencies, particularly in relation to coordination between agents.
- Informal networks: the direct work of many NGOs provides them with very practical information, from identification of individual children to trends and experiences. In informal networks they can share good practice, lessons learnt and even coordinate transnational interventions, including families and the countries of origin.

Information sharing, networking and collaboration is crucial to have consistent and efficient interventions.

■ AREA 2: PROMOTING AND DEVELOPING SAFE AND PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Every child needs to experience safety in order to develop their full potential. Living in the street is one of the least safe experiences they can have. In order to rejoin the path towards full development, these children need to come into contact with people, resources and situations in which they can feel safe and protected. This can be achieved through three interrelated elements: outreach programmes, long-term programmes and sufficient, qualified professionals at every level in the intervention.

Ensuring access to basic needs of children through outreach programmes

Migrant children living in the street have urgent basic needs (protection, health, nutrition, education) that must be addressed through outreach programmes implemented by public administrations –or in collaboration with NGOs. Without them, the children's survival is at risk, so it is a prior condition for other interventions. Only when children have their basic needs covered can they start to consider long-term programmes or bonding with protective adults. These activities can take place in the street or in low-threshold programmes, in which children can come into contact with services and safe adults for a number of hours or days, and during that time professionals can evaluate their specific needs and requests and can provide further action. It is

important to consider that while in many places this kind of service is offered to adults in situations of homelessness, very few of them are child-friendly or oriented to the specific needs of these children, and thus dedicated programmes are required. The most important of these needs are the following:

- **Nutrition.** Children living in the street usually eat very poorly. It is important to offer them hot meals (especially during cold times) and fruit and vegetables.
- **Shelter.** Low-threshold accommodation facilities are key to starting any process. The rules need to be very simple and feasible for the children, so they can comply with them. At the same time, there must be flexibility from the shelter, for example, accepting groups and even young adults in order to host individual children who would not enter alone.
- **Lockers to keep their belongings safe.** Life in the street is very dangerous, and children find huge satisfaction in having a place to store their few belongings safely, with lockers and places to charge their phones and have access to Wi-Fi.
- **Hygiene.** In the street there are few opportunities to wash, especially during cold months. Therefore, hot showers and washing machines are appreciated by these children.
- **Adequate clothing.** Although these children usually manage to have some clothes, they seldom have spare clothes for when they get dirty and they need to be washed, so providing them with appropriate items is recommended.

Every child needs to experience safety in order to develop their full potential. These children need to come into contact with people, resources and situations in which they can feel safe and protected.

While short-term interventions are needed for initial contact and for ensuring the basic survival of migrant children living in the street, well designed long-term interventions are required in order to create realistic chances of recovery and integration.

- **Physical health.** Health professionals such as doctors and nurses can provide valuable in situ health care in a way that is acceptable to these children, beginning with evident needs (injuries, illnesses) and also offering more in-depth care, such as full check-ups, vaccinations and other health interventions.

- **Education.** Although it is difficult to provide formal education while these children are living in the street, they certainly welcome informal education through outreach programmes, and getting access to formal education can be an element valued by children when encouraging them to accept protection measures and leave the street.

- **Protection.** While proper protection means getting children off the street, in outreach programmes there is a protection perspective that helps them consider and in many cases accept being referred to formal protection services.

- **Legal assessment and support.** The fact that there are children in the street is a consequence of them having suffered serious violations of their rights. This means that a lawyer is needed to study the situation of the child, to defend their rights, and to provide support for a potential improvement of their situation (problems usually relate to documentation, residence and work permits).



In the intervention with migrant children living in the street, professionals are a key factor. This is difficult work, with children experiencing extreme situations and presenting very challenging behaviour.

Providing safe spaces for children through durable solutions

While short-term interventions are needed for initial contact and for ensuring the basic survival of migrant children living in the street, well designed long-term interventions are required in order to create realistic chances of recovery and integration. Usually child protection services have resources adapted to children who have suffered very difficult situations but are not living in the street. Therefore, some aspects of the programmes need to be tailored to the specific needs of these children, while other elements can be used from interventions taking place with all children.

- **Safe and protective environments.** After all the difficult experiences these children have suffered, they need to be safe and feel safe, with reliable adults, and be heard with regards to all issues in order to start recovering. The *Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children*⁸ provide a framework to ensure the basic aspects of long-term interventions.

- **Trauma-informed intervention.** The protection of these children cannot be properly understood unless the intervention is based on a solid perspective regarding trauma, its consequences and indicators, and how to deal with it at every level. As explained in point 2.6., all professionals – not only doctors – must have a good knowledge of trauma, so they can interpret and react to the behaviour of these children in a safe and protective way that allows healing.

- **Mental health services.** In order to continue with their lives, these children need specific help, and mental health services become effective only when they start to experience some degree of stability. Within the framework of an intervention taking trauma into consideration, individual processes for recovery from trauma and substance abuse can take place.

- **Small centres/community based centres.** It has been repeatedly proved that large centres lead to institutionalisation, and these children particularly need to develop a sense of belonging. There has been a tendency to keep them together in large numbers in order to take full advantage of the few professionals who speak their languages. However, those efforts have proved to be inefficient, because personalisation becomes very difficult. Therefore, a strong emphasis must be placed on finding solutions in order to generally have small groups of children.

- **Foster families.** In some cases these children arrive initially in cities where they have some relatives or members of their communities of origin. In those cases they usually try to stay with them, but these families also have difficulties. It has been suggested that possible programmes with foster families merit further exploration, and there have been some experiences of this, particularly for children during the initial phases, who have not spent a long time in the street. It has to be trained foster families, which are recognized/registered by public institution.

- **Participation.** These children have taken decisions in their lives that have led them to their present situation. Participation, understood as offering them the chance to reflect and give their opinion about the issues that affect them, must be a core element in the methodology, as it will help them to make better choices with the support of trusted adults.

Sufficient and qualified professionals at every level

In the intervention with migrant children living in the street, professionals are a key factor. This is difficult work, with children experiencing extreme situations and presenting very challenging behaviour. For the intervention to be successful at least two areas must be addressed: working conditions and professional training.

Professionals need to have **adequate working conditions**, including (but not limited to):

- **Sufficient staff for the work load.**

Understaffing is one of the critical problems, meaning that professionals are overworked, leading to burn-out, high staff turnover and lower performance.

- **Adequate labour conditions.** Working with these children can be very demanding, so the professionals must at least have contracts that allow for job stability, with appropriate wages and enough rest and conciliation (especially when they have special shifts involving nights, weekends or holidays).

The key to the intervention is the interpersonal interaction between the children and the professionals. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that professionals are trained and regularly refreshed with the latest developments, including:

- **Good knowledge of Developmental Psychology, including Attachment Theory.**

Childhood and adolescence are very complex phases, with many processes interacting. Professionals must be able to understand the stages of each child, and particularly how they relate to adults from their own interaction history (attachment).

- **Good understanding of trauma, its identification and ways of intervention.** In

recent decades there have been groundbreaking advances in models that explain trauma and its consequences, and every player must receive professional refreshing. This needs to include how aggression emerges from fear; dissociation as a way to survive (the brain selectively –and unconsciously– leaves out overwhelming experiences from the awareness of the child); and substance use and abuse as a form of coping with difficult situations (a way of “self-medication” that causes its own harm and problems), especially when suffering sexual exploitation.

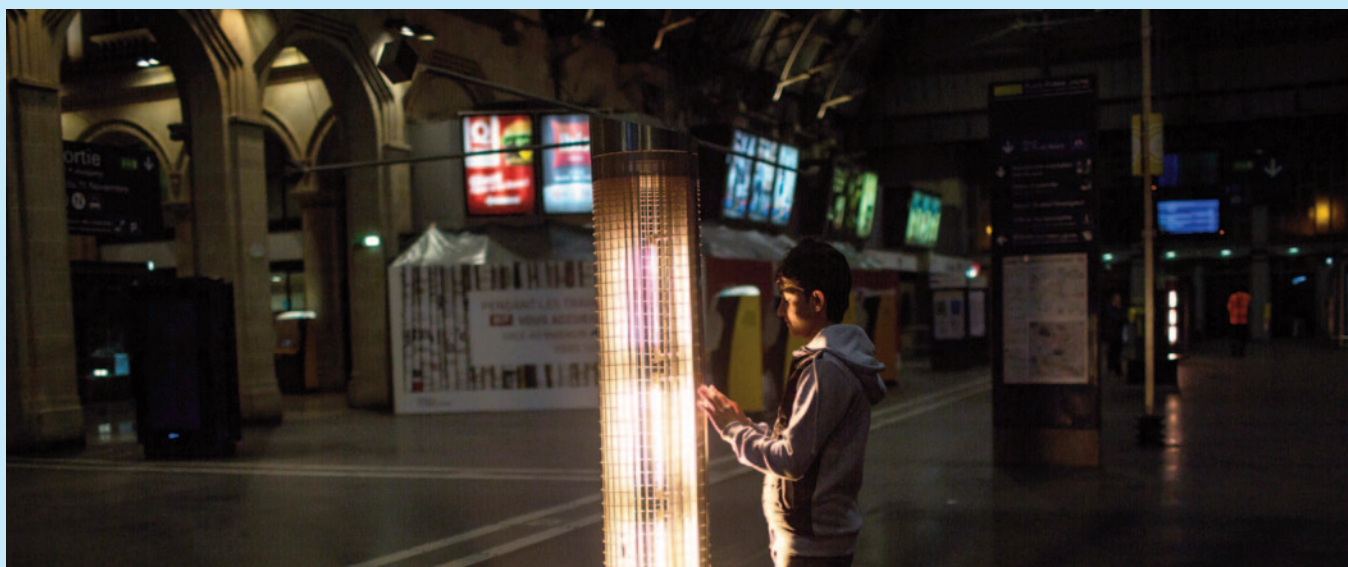
- **Specific skills for dealing with substance use and abuse.** Once substance use and abuse by these children is understood as a coping mechanism for surviving trauma and stressful experiences, every professional must develop relevant basic skills regarding this issue, from detection to safety rules, and ways of relating to them when they are under the effect of those substances. Apart from those skills, mental health professionals need deeper understanding of the problem based on the latest research and practice.

- **Training in identification of the risk of exploitation and trafficking.** Exploitation and trafficking is not only a risk, but a reality for many children living in the street. Therefore, every professional working with these children needs to be able to identify risky behaviour, dangerous networks and the ways to refer and intervene regarding these children. Regular activities need to be implemented in order to prevent and detect these situations.

- **Training in the identification of international protection needs.** Professionals need to be able to identify the international protection needs of children living in the street, particularly in cases of exploitation and trafficking.

- **Interviewing skills.** Professionals need to know how to interview children in a child-friendly way that respects their rights as children, so they can provide the information needed to ensure their protection.

- **Deep listening skills.** Children living in the street have already suffered from indifference in



their countries of origin and throughout the migration process. Their interests and opinions have been disregarded too often. Therefore, professionals aiming to have a positive impact on them must be able to make them feel listened to and understood. That involves developing and using various communication strategies, including non-verbal methods (while living in the street these children have learnt to identify a person's attitude just through their body language, and professionals need to be able to convey respect and care towards them from the first moment of interaction).

• **Basic understanding of cultural elements and how to address them (cultural mediation skills).** Cultures are apparently consistent from the inside, but not from the point of view of an outsider. Professionals need to be able to interpret cultural elements, both regarding the culture of origin of the children and the culture receiving them, and to give advice in a meaningful way (for example, how respect is expressed in each culture, or the cultural expectations in specific situations).

• **Knowledge of the legal environment relating to child protection.** Professionals who do not work directly within child protection (education, health, leisure activities, etc.) need to have a solid grasp of the child protection mechanisms, including referral, identification of vulnerable children and the procedures to access diverse services, among other elements.

• **Basic knowledge from a Child's Rights**

Perspective. A basic knowledge of the Convention of the Rights of the Child and all the relevant aspects is needed by every professional in order to develop appropriate practice in every area.

It is worth stating that these aspects need to be covered for professionals at all levels of intervention, from direct interaction to policy-making and communication, in accordance with their role. These would include, as a minimum, those in the following roles.

- Police.
- Judiciary.
- Municipalities.
- Social services.
- Health system, including mental health.
- Education.

• NGOs and civil society (in initial programmes, long-term programmes and communication and advocacy). It must be noted that when intervention involves volunteers, they must also enjoy these conditions, adapted to their particular situation, in order to collaborate in a meaningful and effective way.

The promotion of ongoing research undertaken by universities and social sciences experts, and also by public administrations and civil society, is recommended in order to better understand the situation and needs of these children, which develop in different and sometimes unexpected ways.

■ AREA 3: PROVIDING AFFECTIVE REFERENCES FOR CHILDREN

Ensuring affective adult references for children

Migrant children living in the street often express deep loneliness and experience isolation and exclusion. They feel that adults have failed them: they say that their families did not provide for their needs, so these children left their homes; the adults in their countries of origin did not offer them opportunities (study, training, future jobs, etc.), so they fled; and in many cases they have experienced difficulties and even harm caused by adults, ranging from insensitive border procedures to ineffective protection services, and even trafficking and exploitation by criminal networks.

On the other hand, interactions with their peers have been ambivalent when not directly harmful: children survive in the street by joining up with other children, but they often report that those relationships have been based on dominance and manipulation, forcing an unhealthy loyalty to the group and making life unthinkable outside it. That is why children so often move in groups, benefiting from a resource such as a specific shelter or food support by an organisation for a short time, but moving again before any of its members starts bonding with safe adults in that resource.

Consequently, it is only when these children feel they can trust some adults can they decide to stay in one programme and start their process within the protection system. Therefore, providing affective references must be a core objective of any intervention, and these should come from as many areas as possible:

- **Legal guardianship:** In its General Comment no. 6, the Committee on the Rights of the Child requests States to appoint a guardian or adviser as soon as the unaccompanied or separated child is identified, and to maintain such guardianship arrangements until the child has either reached the age of majority or permanently left the

territory and/or jurisdiction of the State, in compliance with the Convention and other international obligations. Guardianship should be an integral part of the national child protection system, which equally protects all children on the territory, regardless of their nationality and/or migration status. Once an unaccompanied and separated child is identified, a guardian should be immediately appointed to represent the child's interests in various initial procedures and act as a link between the child and service providers to ensure the required continuum of care required. There should be no differences in the mandate of a guardian based on whether the child is a national or a foreigner. National law should provide the legal basis for guardianship and define the authority responsible for it. Guardians are key to the protection of children who are temporarily or permanently deprived of their family: their role is to ensure that the child receives care, accommodation, education, healthcare, and other services the child needs and is entitled to as a child. The guardian accompanies the child during the various procedures, complementing the child's limited legal capacity and safeguarding the child's best interests. It also supports the child to nurture positive family relations in line with the child's best interests. Guardians are involved in any long term durable solution for the child. In practice however, guardianship entitlements for unaccompanied and separated children in Europe differ from one State to the other. Such an authority can be centralized at national level, or decentralized at local level.

- **Educators.** Affectivity, understood as the skill of creating positive affective experiences for each child, should be a compulsory competence required for all educators. With a combination of warmth and healthy boundaries, educators can help these children to lower their guard and start to bond with them. Through repeated contact (either in the street or in residential care), children begin to trust them, their consistency in applying the rules and commitment to their welfare. Although good management of affectivity is important for all professions, in the case of educators it is indispensable.

• **Cultural mediators.** With their knowledge of each of the cultures, cultural mediators are essential in order to provide initial understanding and to show the children that they are reliable. There are two main areas in which their contribution is necessary. Translation to and from the language of origin, needed from the beginning, from explaining the intervention to setting norms or giving instructions. However, plain translation is not enough in the long term. These children need to learn the culture, what is considered acceptable and unacceptable and why, and relate it all to their own culture or origin (for example, in many African and Asian cultures children show respect during a serious conversation with an adult by keeping their eyes low, especially during an admonition; however, in many European cultures they are expected to look in the eyes of the adult, and when they fail to do so they are considered as “disrespectful”; without proper explanation this experience can be disturbing for the children, who are trying to “behave” and instead they are being told that “they are not behaving well”). These posts can be better covered by professionals with a deep knowledge of the countries of origin of the children, who speak their language and have experience of the subject. It has been pointed out that sometimes former migrant children living in the street can work or volunteer in these positions, with very good results.

• **Mentors.** Apart from professionals, migrant children living in the street could need adults that are interested in them on a personal level, that care about their well-being just because they know them, that can offer them a relationship in which they can feel valued, and that can guide and accompany them in navigating cultural and social aspects of life e.g by showing them around, going shopping with them or celebrating local holidays with them. They interact with very few children, sometimes just one, in order to develop

that special relationship. Mentors usually collaborate on a voluntary basis within programmes developed by the child protection authorities. Strong safeguards are required to ensure that mentors trained in child safeguarding, pass criminal checks and act on the best interests of the child.

• **The families of origin.** Experience shows that working with the family is crucial for the process of these children when it is in their best interests. With the excuse of obtaining the legal documentation for the children, contact can be healing in many ways, as long as it is done in a way that is culturally appropriate, and always with the support of cultural mediators. Virtual meetings can easily be arranged and can be very useful in order to introduce purpose into the lives of these children. They can see the involvement of their families of origin, how affected they are by their experiences, and they can start to develop new narratives (maybe their family did care about them, but did not have the means or skills to show it). This contact can also be helpful to break “the prison of lies,” the stories they have created for their families, either to avoid worrying them, or to avoid shame if they told them the truth about living in the street. Through positive accompaniment, families can exert a good influence on the children and their processes.

Once these children have affective adult references, they can abandon harmful relationships with peers and start developing healthier interactions with other young people in their environment. That is why it is important to facilitate their contact with fellow students in their education and professional training, with young people they meet during leisure time (sports, music, theatre, etc.), with people from their neighbourhoods. In the end, their affective networks need to have people of their own age in order to develop symmetrical friendships that lead to full integration.

It is only when these children feel they can trust some adults can they decide to stay in one programme and start their process within the protection system. Therefore, providing affective references must be a core objective of any intervention.

■ AREA 4: BUILDING NEW NARRATIVES WITH AND ABOUT UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN LIVING IN THE STREET

Human beings are narrators. They tell stories about who they are, where they come from and what their hopes and expectations are. They also tell stories about other people, placing them in specific categories that make the world easier to understand. Migrant children living in the street are subject to narratives, and many of these are destructive and dehumanize them. Very often the stories these children build around themselves do not help either. That is why building new narratives is a core element in the intervention with and around these children.

Developing new narratives against discrimination

This document intends to be an example of a new narrative about unaccompanied migrant children living in the street. It presents the difficulties these children face in their everyday lives, but also the opportunities that can allow them to resume a meaningful life which goes beyond survival. Some of the main **messages** can be taken from the **overview of the situation of children who fall through the protection system in Europe** at the beginning of this document, and can be summarised as follows:

- **They are children, and they have rights (defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child).**

- **They are adolescents.** Just like other children, they have the right to be accompanied, emotionally, physically and socially, during their adolescence

- **“Children living in the street” is neither a natural nor a social trait, and it should not be accepted as one.**

- **They are victims** (they are particularly exposed to the risks of substance abuse and trafficking).

- **Scared children can do scary things** (including becoming involved in trafficking situations and also coming into contact with the justice system as a result of conflict with the law).

These messages, combined with proposals for better interventions with migrant children living in the street, must be given, as a minimum, to the following **audiences**:

- **The children themselves.** Apart from each child developing their own new narrative, they also need new narratives to understand the situation they are in as a collective in order to reframe unhelpful myths (and avoid spreading the phenomenon). They often receive information from several sources, some of which is false and creates problems for them.

- **Families of origin.** They usually have unrealistic perspectives about their children that need to be reframed: they might be expecting them to quickly pay back the debt they took on by being sent to Europe, or they might think that they will find a job quickly even when they are

Very often they are subject to destructive narratives that dehumanize them. Sometimes, the stories they build around themselves do not help either. Building new narratives is a core element.



too young to work. Children can have become enmeshed in a prison of lies, and their families may believe them if they have no other information. Families need to understand that their children are in a very difficult situation and that they need to react in a supportive way.

- **Media.** Some media have served to amplify biased and dangerous messages from several sources about these children. In order to avoid stigmatisation and aggression, the media need to become aware of the full picture regarding the situation, and of the consequences of reporting in a biased way.

- **General public.** Specific campaigns need to be aimed at the general public, in order to provide a solid Child Rights perspective and sound and respectful information regarding these children, their situation and their needs.

- **Public administrations.** They need to be aware of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and how it should be applied to migrant children living in the street. They also need to hold a common position, with a coordinated response to this complex issue.

- **Municipalities and neighbourhoods.** The inhabitants of cities where these children live need to receive constructive information from their municipalities, as well as the necessary mediation when conflicts arise, and keys to understanding the intervention.

- **Police.** They play a crucial role in the intervention, as they are often the first adults with

whom these children interact in dangerous situations. When they are aware of the specific circumstances of these children and their rights, they can become key in their protection, not only in how they behave in the street, but also in the investigation of crimes or trafficking.

- **Legal professionals.** These children need sound advice and defence in all legal procedures, from documentation to conflicts with the law, from a Child Rights perspective. Legal professionals need to better understand these children in order to help them, including the psychological effects of trauma and substance abuse, which can affect their decisions and their actions.

- **Social services.** They need to be aware of the particularly difficult situation these children are in so that they can begin procedures that are effective for their protection, looking beyond their apparent independence.

- **Health services.** Well-informed health professionals can identify these children when they are brought to their facilities for injuries or illnesses, and can activate child protection mechanisms in a protective way, also taking into account mental health aspects.

- **Universities and other training and research institutions.** Having migrant children living in the street is a new phenomenon in Europe, but it has existed for a long time in other parts of the world. Exchange of information, developing specific research, and training for future or current professionals in this domain should be a major role of universities and professional schools.

Providing development perspectives for the child: accompanying life projects

The narratives of the migrant children living in the street are changed by the situations experienced by them. For an intervention to be successful, it must provide experiences that allow these children to develop healthier and more realistic perspectives. It is important to be aware that these reflections will primarily occur once the child feels safe enough –once the other three areas are covered at least in part.

- **Rehabilitation from substance abuse as a first step.** In the cases where there is currently substance abuse, the first step is acknowledging the problem and undergoing a process to understand the mechanisms of substance use. That means that these children need to accept support from professionals in mental health and other areas and be willing to process the painful experiences they have suffered. It must be remembered that substance use and abuse is a very harmful way of “self-medication”, a resource they have discovered in order to survive extreme events in their lives. Unless they find better ways to cope with those experiences, substance use will be a serious impediment to consistent progress beyond mere survival. They need to work on narratives in which they can develop their own resilience.

- **Reflecting on their life history.** Even when they do not have the problems of substance use, for example when they are identified very early during their lives in the street, migrant children need to process and find narratives about their own life history, how their lives were in their country of origin, what happened to them to make

them leave, and their experiences during their journeys and in their current situation. When they have a clear view of how their life has developed, then they can start making informed decisions about the next steps, such as accepting support, learning the language or studying. While adults tend to order their life stories through speaking about them, for adolescents and youths it is usually easier to use art and other expressive means: drawing, painting, creating their own songs and plays, etc. It is thus useful to keep various channels of expression open.

- **Meaningful participation.** Migrant children living in the street have a long history of feeling unheard –had they felt listened to within their families and countries of origin, they might have stayed. They have also lived for some time making their own decisions, with a certain degree of independence. Therefore, taking into account their opinions and participation is crucial, and it might help when they need to accept decisions made by law or by external agents if they at least feel respected in some issues that are important to them.

- **Acquisition of the language of the culture.** While translators and cultural educators are important in the early stages, learning the language of the culture is key to developing good prospects. This requires meaningful learning, a combination of practical expressions they can start to use on an everyday basis, with more complex elements such as grammar and writing, for long-term proficiency in the language. The way these children speak affects the perception of society, for better or for worse, and when they can successfully express themselves, they can tell their history in a better way.

- **Developing social and cultural skills.** Linguistic skills are essential, but they do not guarantee full integration. Migrant children need to learn the social and cultural ways of the place where they live, especially forms of showing respect and acceptable ways of dealing with conflicts. While language can be acquired more easily through practice, without always a deep reflection, culture

For an intervention to be successful, it must provide experiences that allow these children to develop healthier and more realistic perspectives.

needs to be addressed explicitly, with explanations and examples of socially acceptable behaviours.

- **Education and professional skills.** Migrant children living in the street have suffered traumatic experiences, have usually received a very low level of education in their countries of origin and have been living on their own, without strict timetables and rules, so it is clear that they need education that is tailored to their capabilities. This means that they need to follow studies and professional training adapted to their real skills, through an approach that covers not only their weaknesses but also their strengths. As they have strong expectations regarding employment, their education and training must be clearly oriented towards the markets and towards real employability: they need to feel that they are taking steps in the direction of taking control over their lives, and they must perceive their own prominence in their own professional lives.

- **Healthy leisure.** While education can feel quite demanding, leisure activities are a very easy way to introduce healthy elements into the lives of these children: respect, following safe rules, healthy interactions with peers, etc. From sports to music, to dance, to theatre or to cooking, for example, these activities require engagement with others in a respectful way while enjoying the process. It means bringing them back to being “just children” for significant periods of time in their lives.

- **Addressing the issue of life when they become adults.** The narratives these children develop are seriously incomplete if they cannot include a vision for after they reach 18 years of age. If some rights are granted until that age but not afterwards, the integrity of those narratives becomes dangerously compromised: why study, behave well or quit consuming if when they are 18 they will be back in the street? There are three areas that require specific attention:

- ✓ **Providing legal residence permits that allow study or work when they turn 18 years old.** In order to start the process of rewriting their lives through better decisions, these children need to know that their efforts will make a difference, that the hard work they have to undertake in order to

give up living in the street will provide them with a better outcome than if they did not try. Thus, ensuring that when they are 18 years old they can obtain proper documentation that allows them to continue their education or start working is of paramount importance.

- ✓ **Providing support during the time that is necessary.** In European countries young people do not become financially independent until after several years of education and training, often well after they are 18, with support from their families and the State. These children need some commitment to their future on the part of institutions for a number of years after they become adults, in order to have realistic prospects.

- ✓ **Offering job opportunities.** Apart from support regarding housing, food and education, these children need to recognise that their efforts will be rewarded with real jobs which will lead to their effective emancipation and economic autonomy. After all, they travelled to Europe in order to build a future for themselves (and, in many cases, also to support their families in their countries of origin).

- **Addressing the root causes in countries of origin is essential.** Prevention measures need to be implemented in countries of origin to ensure that children feel safe, protected and are provided with life prospects. This requires stronger investment from governments in education, healthcare, social welfare, child protection and employment opportunities, and information campaigns about the reality and risks of unaccompanied migrant children travelling to European countries.

The situation of unaccompanied migrant children living in the street is very difficult, so only through coordinated actions can the various players deal with it successfully. As seen previously, the core areas consist in addressing documentation and legal aspects, creating safe, protective environments for these children, providing them with affective references and building new narratives for and about them. A holistic approach that includes all these dimensions has the potential to ensure better lives for these children from a Child’s Rights perspective.

3. Selected positive practice

Although there are still many aspects to address, good practice can be identified in most areas. The proposed model can be achieved, because significant elements have already been implemented by a variety of players. Short summaries of some key experiences aim to provide ideas for policy makers and for relevant agents that intervene with migrant children living in the street. This good practice was identified during the International Workshop held in Madrid on December 3rd and 4th 2019, organised by UNICEF Spain and UNICEF France together with UNICEF PFP (Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division, Geneva). Many other examples could have found their way into this short list, but due to the synthetic nature of this document the following selected examples of positive practice have been retained. These examples have been selected because they meet one or more of the following criteria: feasibility (the possibility to replicate them in other places without incurring excessive expense), regularity (the practice is maintained over time) and innovation (the practice is new or different from what is usually done).

■ AREA 1: ADDRESSING DOCUMENTATION AND LEGAL ASPECTS

Providing documentation

Documentation is one of the core problems for migrant children, and poor prospects for receiving it is one of the main reasons for children dropping out of the protection system. Documentation depends on national laws, which sometimes do not provide precise guidelines regarding these children, and on public administrations, which often have very long procedures. Apart from professionals and organisations outside public administrations informing the children about their rights, no integral good practice has been identified in national laws or public administrations in relation to this point, and that should be a matter for reflection.

processes, the Judiciary in some courts in France has started working under the policy of having the same judge ruling on all the procedures in which a certain child is involved as an offender. Children recognise the judges and feel safer with them, which has proven to be important in the serving of sentences⁹.

• **Safe centre for children who are victims of human trafficking – NGO Esperanto (Belgium).**

Through a combination of legal support and safe housing (in a place that is kept secret and with effective protection measures) in a small centre, the NGO Esperanto offers holistic intervention for children who are presumed to be victims of human trafficking. The aim is to welcome, secure and stabilise them; to ensure a follow-up regarding their status; and to help them to integrate in Belgium (through education, language learning, and their physical and psychological well-being). A project for introducing this kind of centre in other European Union countries is in progress¹⁰.

Addressing legal and penal issues

• **“One child, one judge” policy – Judiciary in France.** In order to facilitate legal and penal

• **Transnational coordination for obtaining children’s documentation -- NGO Fundación Raíces (Spain) and NGO Wasata Sans Frontières**

(Morocco). When the Spanish NGO starts to work with a child in Spain, it contacts the Moroccan NGO with their explicit authorisation, so children themselves can provide contact information and details about their family. The family is notified regarding the situation of the child and receives instructions in order to obtain the legal documentation required in Spain and to send it in a suitable manner. This action is usually accompanied by social mediation between child and family¹¹.

the participation of various municipal agents, municipal and autonomous region security forces, Child Protection services, social welfare, health services, work-market integration services and education, civil society, etc. That variety provides a holistic view, social awareness and joint responsibility among the various agents from the different public administrations, improving intervention at each level¹².

Developing and strengthening networking and collaboration at every level

- **Collaboration between various players.**

Intervention is always more consistent when different players collaborate. Most public administrations and civil society organisations find various ways to work together, usually in informal ways, through personal contact. However, when collaboration is formalised, the intervention improves notably. For example:

- **Collaboration between the Social Emergency Unit and the police in Stockholm (Sweden).** Collaboration ranges from formal meetings for sharing information to accompanying police officers in the street, facilitating communication from a social welfare perspective and the efficiency of the police.

- **Coordination between all players happens when a department within the public administration takes the lead.** While in many cities, regions and countries there is usually some level of coordination, usually informal, when the public administration takes the lead the coordination is wider (it involves all relevant players) and more efficient. For example:

- ✓ **The Municipality of Barcelona (Barcelona, Spain) hosts coordination tables** with all levels of intervention, the city of Barcelona and the region of Catalonia. Those tables involve

- **Collaboration between NGOs from different countries (including countries of origin).** There are numerous examples of collaboration and networking between NGOs, usually related to specific cases (identifying specific children, providing information for follow-up, facilitating the documentation process). These contacts are mostly between professionals and have a technical rather than a formal perspective.

- **International collaboration between police forces and Europol.** The Swedish police has taken part in an international project with police forces in France, Germany and Morocco in order to have better intervention protocols and share information about migrant children, especially about victims of trafficking, as they happen to be the same children in different countries. Training has been highly relevant, but also communication with the mass media. This collaboration is focussed on the protection of children against trafficking, and it is not used for immigration enforcement and forced return.

- **European Guardianship Network (EGN).** EGN is a network of guardianship authorities and agencies, (local) authorities and international and non-governmental organisations. EGN aims to promote guardianship and improve guardianship services for unaccompanied and separated children in EU Member States by exchanging good practice, expertise and other relevant information, and sharing ideas and cooperation on common challenges and cross-border work¹³.

- **National network of lawyers and legal practitioners in France.** The NGO InfoMIE has gathered a network of lawyers specialized in the legal framework relating to unaccompanied minors. This network aims at sharing experiences, case-law, models of intervention and guidance on how to re-establish civil status documentation.

■ AREA 2: PROMOTING AND DEVELOPING SAFE AND PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Ensuring access to basic needs of children through outreach programmes

- **Outreach work in the street.** There are public administrations (usually municipalities) and civil society (NGOs, but also informal groups) working directly with children in the street. This intervention proves to be very useful for both children and the services that want to work with them, as it allows for the detection of specific problems and also of changing trends.

- ✓ **Projects CivicoZero – Save the Children Italy (Rome, Catania, Milano and Torino, Italy).** Each project works with: 1) mobile units in charge of outreach activities aimed at contacting vulnerable minor migrants, such as those sexually exploited or forced into work, trafficking, criminal activities and drug dealing; the mobile units also provide psychosocial counselling, cultural mediation and primary legal assistance. 2) a low-threshold day centre in charge of providing legal assistance, socio-sanitary support, cultural mediation, recreational and training activities, the search for job opportunities, and basic needs for unaccompanied children, such as clothes and showers. The centre represents a protected space as an alternative to the street. CivicoZero centres are child-friendly spaces where Save the Children provides various services and children can use them freely¹⁴.

- ✓ **Programa para la Prevención de la Delincuencia de Menores Extranjeros en Situación de Calle en Ceuta (PREMECE), Programme for the Prevention of Delinquency of Foreign Minors in Street Situation in Ceuta – Child Protection**

Division of the Municipality of Ceuta and University of Málaga, Spain. With a team of psychologists and street educators fluent in Moroccan Arabic and with specific training, this programme works with children in street situations, while at the same time it coordinates all the relevant players (police forces, reception centres, the juvenile justice system and health services). It has increased their protection and reduced their victimisation¹⁵.

- ✓ **NGO “Hors la Rue” (Paris, France).** Since 2004, “Hors la Rue” has conducted outreach work to identify minors at risk (unaccompanied minors, recently arrived youths, youths in begging families, youths likely to be victims of human trafficking, etc.) and in socially and domestically precarious situations. “Hors La Rue” proposes social and educational guidance through individual follow-up and group activities, directly addressed on the street and in a day-centre located in Montreuil. The NGO activities aim at facilitating access to healthcare, education and protection while strengthening the psychosocial capacities of the children. “Hors la Rue” also conducts advocacy activities at a national and international level in order to increase the awareness of decision makers regarding the difficulties faced by these children and adapt child protection mechanisms to the realities of the most vulnerable ones¹⁶.

- ✓ **Servicio de Detección e Intervención con Menores No Acompañados/Servei de Detecció i Intervenció a Menors No Acompanyats, SDI (Service for the Detection and Intervention with Unaccompanied Minors) – Municipality of Barcelona (Barcelona, Spain).** It is a service for the detection and individualised intervention with migrant children and youths in the streets of the city, and it works for their integration in centres that work with them.

- **Health services in outreach programmes.**

Many outreach programmes have health professionals (mainly nurses) that can provide health care in the street. For example:

- ✓ **Médecins du Monde (Doctors of the World)**

France, in France. Vulnerable people, including children in street situations, can freely access Doctors of the World clinics and centres in France at no charge. They are received and can see a health professional for a consultation or a medical assessment prior to referral. They receive support with the administrative procedure to access health insurance. Outreach programmes provide them with nursing care, medical consultations and information/prevention. Though three dedicated programmes in Paris, Nantes and Rouen, the NGO works with UASC in street situations, providing access to health care and health insurance, and securing recognition of their rights through medical and psychosocial consultations. The NGO also advocates the recognition of UASC as children at risk, asking for them to be taken into care within the

mainstream child welfare services¹⁸.

- **Low-threshold programmes.** Migrant children used to living in the street may find difficulty in adapting to the rules of residential care at first. That is why this kind of programme is very important: with very few rules that have to do with safety and respect, they provide a safe space where children can rest, meet some of their needs and, after a time, begin contemplating other possibilities (such as entering the protection system). These programmes often offer a combination of shelter, food, showers, washing machines and new clothes, lockers and professionals that can make an initial assessment of their needs and start educational and health interventions with children¹⁹.

- ✓ **CASP (Paris, France).** This organisation works with migrant children in the streets of Paris, offering them support in medical and social aspects and providing a low-threshold open centre for having lunch, getting a shower and sleeping at night. The teams always have an educator on hand who speaks their language¹⁹.



Providing safe spaces for children through lasting solutions

• **Residential care programmes.** There is a wide variety of centres that offer long-term stays for migrant children. It is generally agreed that small centres, with a capacity for 8-10 children, are one of the best options, because they allow for more personalisation and a better follow-up. There are examples in every country.

✓ **Children cooking with supervision – FEDASIL (Belgium).** In those reception facilities where this is possible, children are allowed to prepare their own meals, with supervision from the educators. During that time children might find it easier to relax and tell their personal stories (“My mother used to

cook this”) in a way that develops their feeling of belonging and their bonding with educators²⁰.

✓ **Zootherapy – FEDASIL (Belgium).** As migrant children have had so many experiences of maltreatment and abuse by adults and also by peers, a programme was implemented to work through therapy with animals as a way to develop healthier relationships. The idea is that animals do not judge, and these children can feel empowered when they can take care of other living beings²¹.

✓ **Pilot project for migrant children from Northern African countries – Nidos (the Dutch national independent guardianship institution, the Netherlands).** Nidos is responsible for all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the Netherlands. In recent years the Netherlands has seen an increase in the arrival of children from Northern African countries. Nidos initiated a pilot project catering for the needs of these children. Specialised small living units were set up as places where the children can unwind and get some rest, with very intensive guidance. The pilot is in close cooperation with the Dutch Reception Agency (COA) which runs the institutional reception for children above 15 years of age arriving in the Netherlands. Together with the guardians of Nidos, COA can register children for the pilot project. The daily guidance is done by employees with a similar background to the boys, and they are experienced in dealing with severe and challenging cases²².



• **Programa de Psiquiatria Transcultural (Transcultural Psychiatry Programme) – Hospital Universitario Vall d'Hebrón (Vall d'Hebron University Hospital) (Barcelona, Spain).** Mental Health care of unaccompanied minors should be delivered through a psychosocial approach, avoiding unnecessary psychiatric assistance. This is achieved through multidisciplinary teams working in coordination with the third sector and specialised programs such as the Vall d'Hebron's Transcultural Psychiatry Programme. This involves both prevention and promotion of mental health. In cases where clinical assistance is deemed

necessary, specialised programs will provide culturally competent assessment and intervention, supporting the public mental health network.

- **Building a bridge towards the mainstream Child Protection System, NGO “Voluntarios por Otro Mundo” (Cádiz, Spain).** Urgent family-based solutions are offered when migrant children are rejected by the Child Protection system on the presumption of being adults. The project also seeks to facilitate rapid legal support for investigating cases and, if applicable, challenging the decision and redirecting the child towards the Child Protection System at the earliest opportunity.

Sufficient qualified professionals at every level

- **Training for professionals.** Most NGOs and many public administrations provide some kind of training for educators and professionals who are working directly with migrant children living in the street. There are some cases of successful training given by universities or by experts.

- ✓ **Training in Cultural Competence and Community Mental Health Agents – Hospital Universitario Vall d'Hebrón (Vall d'Hebron University Hospital) (Barcelona, Spain).** One of the main goals of the Transcultural Psychiatry Programme is to deliver training for professionals, including in person and on-line courses organized for diverse areas (primary health care, mental health care, forensic professionals, etc.), particularly aimed at developing cultural competence and raising awareness about cultural aspects of health interventions. Additionally, there is a new project in progress which provides training for Community Mental Health Agents. They work with people from these children's cultural communities, in order to help them become active mediators in physical and mental health issues²³.

✓ Professional training of guardians – Nidos (the Dutch national independent guardianship institution, the Netherlands).

Nidos' guardians are all professional social workers holding a bachelor's degree in social work. Nidos provides introduction courses to all newly employed guardians and complementary training for all guardians. The training offered by Nidos covers a broad spectrum of subjects that are specifically relevant for unaccompanied children. They include how to work and communicate with the children while taking into consideration their different cultural backgrounds, their family situations, and the possibility that the children have been exposed to acts of violence, and how to deal with trauma. Guardians are aware that the needs of unaccompanied children might be different from those of national children, including aspects regarding religion, accommodation and food. An important component of the training relates to the asylum procedure. While each child who applies for asylum has the right to be assisted by a lawyer, the guardian is tasked with ensuring that the lawyer supports the child through the process²⁴.

• Specific training on migrant children living in the street for police forces:

✓ Police Academy in Stockholm (Sweden).

Future police professionals receive specific training by police officers that are working directly with migrant children living in the street, and it is an activity that has been very well received.

- ✓ **Security forces in Ceuta and Melilla (Spain).** After receiving training, collaboration with child protection and civil society has increased.

- **Official guide for the initial health examination of Unaccompanied Migrant Children created by the Health Council of the Government of Andalusia (Spain).** This is a joint effort between public administrations, health specialists and civil society that provides social advice for medical examinations, including detecting signals of trafficking and exploitation²⁵.

■ AREA 3: PROVIDING AFFECTIVE REFERENCES FOR CHILDREN

Ensuring affective adult references for children

- **Educators open to listening to these children and what matters to them.** Most professionals are aware of the importance of having enough time to listen to these children, who often feel very lonely.

- **Former migrant children as part of the educational team – NGO Paideia (Madrid, Spain).** This NGO works with unaccompanied minors and incorporates former migrant children in their educational teams. This helps the young adults to develop professionally and become fully integrated. The initial results are promising²⁶.

- **Associations of former unaccompanied migrant children (Spain).** Former migrant children that have become adults have created several associations in Spain with the goal of supporting children in similar situations to those

they suffered themselves. They are also starting to do advocacy work and communication with the media.

- **“Tutoria Volontaria”, legal guardians – coordinated by the Autorità garante per l’infanzia e l’adolescenza, the Italian Independent Authority for Children and Adolescents (in collaboration with civil society, such as the NGO INTERSOS and UNICEF Italy).** In Italy, based on Law n. 47/2017²⁷, private citizens that fulfil a series of minimum conditions as described in the guidelines from the Italian Independent Authority for Children and Adolescents can become volunteer guardians for unaccompanied minors. To become a volunteer guardian (“tutore volontario”), candidates need to participate in training promoted by the regional Authorities for Children and Adolescents, and their designation is then confirmed by the Juvenile Court. A volunteer guardian acts as the child’s legal representative until they become of age, and represents the child’s best interests, thus ensuring that the child’s rights are respected and recognised, with



the child's active participation. So far this model has proven to be positive, since it entails the active engagement of the local community and the creation of relationships between guardians and unaccompanied children based on trust, care and mutual enrichment²⁸.

• **Project for Legal Assistance specialising in Minors and Youth (Proyecto de Asistencia Jurídica especializado en Menores y Jóvenes) – NGO Fundación Raíces (Spain).** Fundación Raíces understands that every social intervention aims to address a problem originating in the violation of one or more rights. That is why every social intervention must be supported by a legal defence demanding restitution. In Fundación Raíces every child has a reference adult for social aspects and a lawyer that remains throughout all the processes affecting that child, creating trust and a personal bond which is particularly necessary for long legal procedures²⁹.

• **Involving families in the educational process– NGO Paideia (Madrid, Spain).** With the justification of giving instructions to complete their documentation, children consent to virtual interviews with their families, with the support of an educator from the country of origin for the child, the family and other educators. In that way

the parents assume their role as parents, the educators are validated as carers in the European country and children feel more supported, increase their expectations and accept commitments to their education. Regular contact is maintained throughout the whole educational process, and also after the documentation application has been completed. In this way, whenever it is possible, work is being done through visits to the families in the country of origin, because when solid information about the family and its social situation is available, the individualised educational programme with the child is more effective³⁰.

• **Transnational Social Mediation -- NGO Fundación Raíces (Spain) and NGO Wasata Sans Frontières (Morocco).** The Spanish NGO tries to facilitate and support contact of the child with their family in their country of origin, as long as the child wants this. In the case of children from Morocco, the Moroccan NGO contacts the family and both organisations coordinate online or telephone meetings between the child and their family that can take place regularly. This practice benefits both parties: families know the people who are supporting their children, and at the same time children keep in contact with their roots and their family references, involving them in their migration process.



■ AREA 4: BUILDING NEW NARRATIVES WITH AND ABOUT UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN LIVING IN THE STREET

Developing new narratives against discrimination

- **Communication and advocacy.** Most civil society organisations and many public administrations produce declarations when there is news about migrant children living in the street, from their websites to press and social networks, providing information that is more accurate and respectful towards these children.

- **Media.** There are some initiatives that aim to debunk myths, stereotypes and fake news that circulate regarding migrants in general and unaccompanied migrant children specifically³¹.

- ✓ **Fundación Por Causa (Spain).** With high-profile journalists and researchers, this Foundation based in Spain publishes reports and articles developing new narratives about migration. They also organise an International Symposium on Migration Journalism³¹.

- ✓ **Maldita Migración (Spain).** A website coordinated in part by OXFAM Intermón in Spain, aiming to debunk fake news about migration issues³².

- **Campaign “#YoSíTeQuiero” (“I do love you”) by Save the Children Spain (Spain).** Campaign that combines a positive affective message with the key Children’s Rights ideas of respect for Unaccompanied Migrant Children and their rights in Spain, with the support of public references through social networks³³.

- **Football matches between migrant children and police officers (Municipality of Madrid, Spain).** In order to reduce stereotypes both among police officers and among children (who have often suffered in the hands of the police forces in their countries of origin and distrust police officers as a rule), some matches were

organised, and were considered a success by both parties (and by civil society players).

- **Servicio de Gestión de Conflictos de Ámbito Social en el Espacio Urbano / Servei de Gestió de Conflictos d’Àmbit Social a l’Espai Urbà (SGC) (Conflict Management Service for the Social Domain in Urban Spaces) – Municipality of Barcelona (Barcelona, Spain).** This Service analyses and intervenes in situations for the improvement of citizen coexistence, particularly for the integration within the city of new Child Protection services and centres when they are starting up, with the aim of providing good insertion within the social sphere with community intervention³⁴.

Providing development prospects for the child: accompanying life projects

- **Project “For my future” – FEDASIL (Belgium).** Children who have little chance of being allowed to reside in Belgium once they reach adulthood can participate in one week sessions during which they are informed about the various possibilities with regards to their future, as well as being encouraged to reflect upon their own futures, and the role they and their networks have in decision-making about their futures³⁵.

- **Professional training adapted to the skills and needs of unaccompanied migrant children (Basque Country and Catalonia, Spain).** Modular training with short modules, many hours of practice as apprentices and easy placement within in the work market. They can

be started while they are under 18, and when they become adults they can either start working or continue their training, with an official title for each module that can be counted towards wider certification.

• **Projects and documents for participatory practice with migrant children – Save the Children Italy.** With the present work Save the Children wants to promote and disseminate good participatory practice with migrant children arriving by sea. The participatory activities were developed in order to support, on the one hand, information and legal advice activities and, on the other, to promote Save the Children's approach and methodology, focused on migrant children's participation and the right to be heard in all contexts regarding reception³⁶.

• **Project “Asegurar el Derecho a la Información de los Menores No Acompañados-ADIMENA” (“Ensuring the Right to Information for Unaccompanied Minors”) – MIGRINTER and the Observatory on the Migration of Minors of the University of Poitiers (Université de Poitiers) (France), several Spanish universities and the NGO “Voluntarios por Otro Mundo” (Cádiz, Spain).** This project, led by a professor from the University of Poitiers, aims to provide information to migrant children about their rights and the possible legal situations they may face in Spain and in France, to help them be informed and take safer decisions. Through group workshops migrant children receive information adapted to their age and understanding which is particularly related to their rights in migration and asylum procedures.



1. Committee on the Rights of the Child (2005): *General Comment No. 6 (2005): Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children outside their country of origin*. CRC/GC/2005/6. Geneva: United Nations. CRC /C/GC/21. Page 6.
2. Ibidem.
3. Committee on the Rights of the Child (2017): *General comment No. 21 (2017) on children in street situations*. Geneva: United Nations. CRC /C/GC/21. Pages 3-4.
4. UN General Assembly (2010): *Guidelines for the alternative care of children, resolution adopted by the General Assembly*, page 1.
5. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2014): *Human Rights and Human Trafficking*, Factsheet n°36.
6. See the definition of “trafficking in children” in the definition section.
7. Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019): *General comment No. 24 (2019) on children’s rights in the child justice system*. CRC /C/GC/24. Geneva: United Nations.
8. United Nations General Assembly (2010): *Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children*. A/RES/64/142. New York: United Nations.
9. The legal document supporting this practice is “*Ordonnance n° 45-174 du 2 février 1945 relative à l’enfance délinquante*.”
In principle, and in application of this order, children’s judges are assigned to geographical areas and work in both civil and criminal matters. With regards to migrant children in street situations, this does not work, since they do not have fixed addresses, so the files are assigned progressively to potentially different judges each time. The idea of this positive practice is to establish an internal rule within the court to ensure that once a child has been in contact with a judge, the latter will be assigned in both criminal and civil cases involving the child. This allows continuity; the children recognize the judges and feel safer with them.
10. <https://www.esperantomena.org/>
11. http://www.fundacionraices.org/?page_id=48
12. <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/en/>
13. <https://www.egnetwork.eu/>
14. <https://www.savethechildren.it/cosa-facciamo/progetti/civicozero-roma>; <https://www.savethechildren.it/cosa-facciamo/progetti/civicozero-catania>; <https://www.savethechildren.it/cosa-facciamo/progetti/civicozero-milano>; <https://www.savethechildren.it/cosa-facciamo/progetti/civicozero-torino>
15. <https://ocspi.wordpress.com/proyectos-ocspi/premece/>
16. <https://horslarue.org/>
17. <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/infancia/es/canal/servei-de-deteccio-i-intervencio-menors-no-acompanyats>
18. <https://www.medecinsdumonde.org/fr/pays/france/migrants>
19. <http://www.casp.asso.fr/>
20. <http://fedasil.be/en>
21. Ibidem.
22. <https://www.nidos.nl/en/>
23. <https://www.aulavallhebron.com/>
24. <https://www.nidos.nl/en/home/voogdij-en-gezinsvoogdij/guardianship/>
25. *Guía para examen de salud inicial de menores extranjeros no acompañados (MENAs)* / [Coord.: Gloria Andérica Frías; Authors: Mercedes Rivera Cuello... et al.] (2019). [Sevilla, Spain]: Consejería de Salud y Familias. https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/export/drupaljda/Gu%C3%ADa_MENA2019_DEF_0.pdf
26. <https://asociacionpaideia.org/>
27. <https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:legge:2017-04-07;47!vig=>
28. <https://www.garanteinfanzia.org/content/come-diventare-tutore-volontario>
29. http://www.fundacionraices.org/?page_id=48
30. <https://asociacionpaideia.org/>
31. <https://porcausa.org/>
32. <https://migracion.maldita.es/>
33. <https://www.savethechildren.es/actualidad/yositequiero-sensibilizaci%C3%B3n-menores-extranjeros-no-acompanados>
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Annex: list of participants

Belgium

- Esperanto (NGO)
- Fedasil (Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers)

Denmark

- Danish Red Cross
- The Danish Centre against Human Trafficking

France

- Cabinet Daoud (Lawyer)
- Comillas Pontifical University
- Framtidstaget France (NGO)
- Hors la Rue (NGO)
- Mairie de Bordeaux - CoRIST
- Syndicat de la magistrature
- Trajectoires (NGO-Research)
- UNICEF France
- CASP – Paris (NGO)
- Ville de Paris – DASES

Italy

- Intersos (NGO)
- UNICEF Italy

Morocco

- Association Bayti (NGO)
- UNICEF Morocco
- Wasata Sans Frontières (NGO)

Netherlands

- Nidos (NGO)

Norway

- Municipality of Oslo: Child Welfare

Spain

- Ajuntament de Barcelona - Instituto Municipal de Servicios Sociales
- Ajuntament de Manresa –Espai Jove
- Asociación Paideia (NGO)
- Ayuntamiento de Madrid – Policía Municipal
- Ararteko (Basque Ombudsperson office)
- Comunidad de Madrid – Dirección General de Infancia, Familias y Natalidad
- Consejería de Bienestar Social y Salud Pública de Melilla
- Consorci de Serveis Socials de Barcelona
- Cruz Roja Española – Comunidad de Madrid
- F. Javier Romeo-Biedma and Pepa Horno Goicoechea (consultants). Espirales Consultoría de Infancia
- Fundación Raíces (NGO)
- Hospital Universitari Vall d'Hebron - Community Psychiatry Unit
- Médicos del Mundo (ONG)
- Save the Children Spain (NGO)
- UNICEF Spain
- Universidad Pontificia de Comillas
- Universidad de Málaga - Servicio de Protección de Menores de Ceuta
- Voluntarios Por Otro Mundo (NGO)

Sweden

- Consultant Maria Von Bredow (children on the move and child trafficking)
- Habibi (NGO)
- Stockholm Region - Swedish Border Police
- Stockholm Region - Social Emergency Unit

International organizations

- UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments)
- UNICEF Geneva - Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division

