



ACT-PROJECT

IMPROVING ACCESS TO
ALTERNATIVE CARE FOR
UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN
AGED 15-18



Comissió Catalana
d'Ajuda al Refugiat

RECOMMENDATION REPORT



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Published by: Nidos, Maliebaan 99, 3581 CH Utrecht

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This report has been published as part of the ACT project (January 2020 - December 2021).

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Co-funded by the
Asylum, Migration and
Integration Fund of
the European Union



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INTRODUCTION

There are a variety of reasons behind the arrival of unaccompanied children (UAC) in the EU. Regardless of their nationality or immigration status, they are children and should be treated first and foremost as such. Their common rights to special protection and assistance respected under UN instruments, EU Law and EU policy should be respected. According to the preamble of the CRC, for the full and harmonious development of their personality, a child should grow up in a family environment. Children who are temporarily or permanently deprived of their family environment are entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the state. Otherwise, alternative care should be ensured.

There is a general consensus amongst stakeholders in the EU that alternative care is better for most children. At this moment, however, only a small proportion of UAC in the EU live in alternative care. The majority are placed in institutional reception provisions. Nonetheless, alternative care systems have expanded in recent years in the EU. Such non-institutionalised systems have proven to be successful, cost-effective, less harmful and more beneficial for the development of the children than institutionalised care. However, these systems are still under-utilised for UAC.

The two-year ACT-project (January 2020-December 2021) is a cooperation between the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Italy, Lumos in Bulgaria, Associació Comissió Catalana d'Ajuda al Refugiat in Catalonia (Spain) and Nidos in the Netherlands. The project aims to improve the access to and increase the quality of alternative care arrangements for UAC aged 15-18, through providing actors (interested in) developing alternative care arrangements (different from residential care) in countries of project partners and other EU Member States with targeted training of their staff (guardians and other practitioners that work in alternative care arrangements) around transformation of care systems away from institutional care. It also aims at improving sustainability of offering alternative care in EU Member States.

A situational analysis has been carried out in every partner country, collecting information about the accessibility and quality of alternative care arrangements for UAC aged 15-18. The results are summarised in country reports¹, ranging from information on the general context, including the available forms of care, to current good practices, challenges and needs and recommendations. The opinion and advice from the children are crucial and were also included in these reports.

This report unites the recommendations on improving (access to) alternative care for UAC aged 15-18 provided in the country reports with the results of stakeholder meetings and an expert meeting that were organised online during the first year of the project. As a result, it provides an overview of possible elements for the general international- and tailor-made national trainings for Italy, Bulgaria and Catalonia for staff working in this specific area that will be developed within the ACT-project.

To provide an overview of the good practices and the needs for change in the different systems, SWOT analyses on the situation in Italy, Bulgaria, Catalonia and the Netherlands are included as annex to this report.

¹ The situation reports are available at www.nidosineurope.eu

1. STATE OF PLAY ON ALTERNATIVE CARE IN COUNTRIES OF PROJECT PARTNERS

Although initiatives toward promoting Supported Independent Living (SIL) and foster care have been piloted in **Italy** over the past few years, institutionalised care remains by far the most applied type of reception for UAC, even though proven not to be the most appropriate. There is still a need to document, standardise and replicate successful pilot initiatives throughout the country, and increase communication and cooperation between stakeholders. Moreover, in consideration of the fact that over 50% of the UAC currently hosted in Italy are 17 years old, it deems necessary to develop reception systems able to provide a solid bridge between childhood and adulthood, and equally sustainable overtime.

In Sicily (the main focus in this project), Italian and migrant UAC have in practice been accommodated in the same alternative care facilities the past year (mainly SIL comprised of 4/5 apartments in Palermo as of February 2020), but this arrangement will change in the future and they will probably be accommodated in separated housing because of the different sources of funding for SIL for Italians and for migrant UAC. The possibility of accessing SIL for UAC is very limited and it is not linked with their legal status, since all UAC in Italy are able to obtain a residence permit on the grounds of being unaccompanied and without an adult. The availability of SIL arrangements varies significantly from city to region, thus the number of UAC that are able to benefit from such an alternative care system is still not widespread in Italy.

In **Spain**, the main competence on the reception of UAC does not belong to the Spanish government but to 17 autonomous communities. The reception of UAC in Catalonia (main focus in this project) one of these regions) is the sole responsibility of the Catalan Regional Government and, specifically, of its General Directorate for Child and Adolescent Care (DGAIA, in Catalan). Reception systems for UAC vary widely across the different regions, as each of them has its own competence in this matter.

The Catalan reception system is composed of 58 reception centres (1,206 places), 31 supervised apartments for adolescents from 16 to 17 years old (249 places) and 57 supervised apartments aimed at adolescents from 18 to 21 years old (221 places). However, the system is currently facing several challenges due to the increase in UAC arrivals.² As reported by the Catalan Children's Ombudsman, in Catalonia alternative care systems for UAC are underdeveloped and almost non-existent. Despite the increase in UAC arrivals in Spain since 2015, in June 2018 only 1% of the UAC under DGAIA were placed with foster families. In September 2018, the DGAIA launched a pilot project aiming to provide foster families for UAC.

Bulgaria is an entry country to the EU for those travelling from Turkey and is used as a transit country for many migrants and refugees aiming to reach Western Europe. Currently, Bulgaria relies on large scale reception facilities to accommodate UAC. The current legal framework would allow UAC to live outside these facilities in family or community-based care (such as small group homes and foster families), however these alternatives to reception centres are currently under-utilised for the target group and the number of places is limited. Most unaccompanied children are instead accommodated in Reception and Registration Centres (RRC) while waiting for a decision on their asylum application. Staff working in the RRCs have indicated that most children leave the RRCs soon after arrival to continue their journey across Europe. The children who do receive international protection status are

² Source: Director General for the Care of Children- Monthly statistical report- October 2020: https://treballiaferssocials.gencat.cat/web/.content/03ambits_tematicos/07Infanciaiadolescencia/dades_sistem_a_proteccio/2020_10_informe_DGAIA.pdf

usually transferred to small group homes along with Bulgarian children who are outside family-based care.

The Netherlands has a structured system on family-based care and small scale reception that is accessible to all UAC in need of it. Children aged 15-18 live in initial reception (POL) run by COA³ during their asylum application period. They will move to a different type of reception after a decision on their asylum claim has been made. At the POL, the guardian, together with the mentors of COA get to know the child and decide on suitable follow up reception, taking into account the asylum status and all other relevant factors. Children whose asylum claim has been rejected will move to small reception facilities (KWV) for this specific age group run by COA⁴. Children who receive a residence permit move to small living groups (24/7 guidance) or small living units (18 hours guidance per week) run by Nidos, depending on their independence. Since Nidos recruits their own reception families and is therefore not dependent on the general Dutch foster care system, Nidos does not face a lack of suitable families who are willing to take care of UAC.

³ Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers, a non-departmental public body of the central government that is responsible for the reception and guidance of adult asylum seekers in the Netherlands. COA also provides reception and guidance to UAC aged 15-18 during their first months in the Netherlands while awaiting the decision on their asylum claim, and to UAC aged 15-18 whose asylum claim has been rejected.

⁴ Exception: if a child without a residence permit is extra vulnerable, they can also be placed in small scale reception or in family based care.

2. NEEDS ON IMPROVEMENT FOR (ACCESS TO) ALTERNATIVE CARE FOR UAC AGED 15-18

2.1. From the perspective of the children

Besides the positive feedback from the children, which can be read in the situation reports, the children who were consulted gave their opinion on what could be improved in the care system available to them. Their suggestions are described below.

Bulgaria

Small numbers of UAC currently present an opportunity to develop good services. Current alternative care services exist under the child protection system, but access to these services is difficult for UAC. Survey responses from UAC showed a general positive attitude towards services they have received in Bulgaria, but many responded they did not know what alternatives would be beneficial. There is a desire for permanent placement – mainly given by children living in small group homes outside the reception centres. In general, there was positive feedback regarding the Safe Zones, however two children noted their stay in the RRC⁵ was the least helpful part of the care system and services in Bulgaria. In response to what UAC need, one child said: “More support and more individual approach”.

Italy

There is limited training of the operators of the reception structures, who are unable to read the needs and wishes of UAC. The rules are too restrictive, not shared, and do not take into consideration the specific needs and level of independence reached by the adolescent children. There is a lack of cross-cultural lenses to be able to understand the habits and cultures of UAC. There are also challenges linked with obtaining legal documentation: lengthy, complex and difficult processes. UAC experience difficulties in orienting themselves in such a bureaucratic system and need accompaniment in this. The compulsory basic education (learning the Italian language) is often not accompanied by a job training perspective.

Catalonia, Spain

Former UAC involved in the stakeholder meeting expressed that one of the challenges of the system is the recruitment of reception families. Another challenge is the need of a common knowledge between migrants and the local population. Until that happens, the access to services, especially when it comes to find a job or rent a house, will be almost impossible. There is also a need for trained educators and guardians, specifically in matters such as legal procedures. They also pointed out the need for guardians to share more information with the children in order to develop a closer relationship with them. The mentorship program is considered as very positive, as are the apartments for 4-6 children, that are a big improvement compared to the large-scale facilities and should be copied.

In addition, in June 2019 the DGAIA opened a specific reception centre providing assistance to girls who have suffered from gender-based violence, such as victims of forced marriages and trafficking in human beings. The center can accommodate up to 15 girls and is currently managed by the Idea Foundation⁶.

The Netherlands

UAC value the cultural similarity of the foster placement. However, former UAC appreciate cultural similarity less. Overall, both UAC and former UAC value similarity of language the most. Quality of

⁵ Registration and Reception Centres

⁶ Fundació Idea: <https://www.fundacioidea.net/es/>

reception is rated highest by children who live in family-based care, followed by children in small living units and small living groups. Children in larger facilities rate the quality of their reception lowest.

2.2. From the perspective of stakeholders

The situation reports describe both good practises and challenges and needs in the (access to) alternative care systems offered to UAC aged 15-18 in the countries of project partners. This paragraph focuses on the main challenges and the needs for improvement in these countries according to the different stakeholders that were involved in the project (through stakeholder meetings that were organised online).

Italy

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policies has launched forms of economic support aimed at young Italians while, at the level of the municipality of Palermo and some neighbouring municipalities, a series of measures are being activated which can also be accessed by young migrants and refugees who just turned 18, in particular aimed at housing autonomy in various forms (Housing contribution, Housing first, Housing led)

Main challenges include

- Difficulties in finding available foster families for UAC aged 15-18 as potential families are often oriented towards children belonging to a younger age group.
- Granting stability of operators in reception facilities as there is a high turnover also due to short-term contracts, financial instability and delays in payments of salaries. This is often caused by the unstable timeline for transferring funds to NGOs operating alternative care by local authorities, varying from a few months to about a year of delay.
- Individual projects for UAC are limited in time and often follow up is not funded by local authorities.
- Difficulties in ensuring support to care leavers (semi-independent, independent) once they turn 18.
- Still limited practice to make available for alternative care projects properties belonging to organized crime that have been repossessed by local authorities.
- Need for institutional recognition and inclusion of individualized projects for UAC by the municipal social services.
- Need to promote and fund awareness raising campaigns to recruit new foster families.

Needs in Sicily:

- UAC have to cope with major language and cultural barriers and need specific courses and adequate accompaniment that can facilitate their entry into the world of work - it is necessary to equip the actors who work with UAC with these skills.
- Provide operators with regular supervision that helps them to have a multi-cultural approach and to be able to understand UAC's behaviours.
- Strengthen the presence and skills of cultural mediators in reception structures.
- Deepen the knowledge of alternative care operators and volunteer legal guardians on the relevant legislation protecting UAC in order to be able to provide UAC with adequate support and accompaniment.

- Document a mapping of services in the area, share it with the actors and keep it updated.
- Provide training to operators and guardians on active listening, mediation, and on how to build a relationship of trust with the child.
- Work on the motivation of the actors who support UAC, select motivated operators and keep them so.
- Strengthen the presence and role of volunteer legal guardians and recognize their key role in building a meaningful relationship with the child.
- Define protocols with the institutional actors (social services, local courts) and with reception centers in recognizing the role of legal guardians even for the UAC who turned 18 and are benefitting from the *prosieguo amministrativo*.
- Enhance the support to foster families in the individualised educational project for minors
- Build a safe space where the UAC can express his/her wishes and concerns and define clear and practical plans for his/her future.
- Establish a monitoring system of alternative and regular care by an independent party to evaluate the impact of individual projects activated for fostering independence so that corrective actions can be put in place in a timely manner if needed.

Bulgaria

The Safe Zones are seen as an example of positive practice because there is a team of experts available to children, including psychological services, interpreters, legal aid, social workers. Establishment of safe zones has resulted in positive aspects for children. However, the safe zones are within the RRCs, rather than an alternative form of non-institutional care.

One main challenge in providing alternative care to UAC aged 15-18 is the age group of the children, who are older adolescents, which creates difficulties recruiting foster families. Feedback to service providers indicates that foster families are less willing to care for older adolescents. Legislative changes would be required to introduce more flexible options for family-based care (such as guest families) which may be more appealing to potential foster carers. It is important for the children to feel safe and supported, this can be achieved with families close to their culture. But it is also good to spend time in Bulgarian environment to ensure integration. The government agencies need financial support and increased capacity to improve access to alternative care for this group of children.

Suggestions on how access to alternative care for UAC aged 15-18 could be improved in Bulgaria:

- Improving regulations around guardianship to professionalise guardianship and ensure that proper time is allocated for this role. Ensure support is provided to guardians by a team of professionals and a network of guardians.
- Providing psychological support to children.
- Involving all actors in improving care for UAC, including State Agency for Child Protection (SACP), State Agency for Refugees (SAR), Agency for Social Assistance (ASA), mayors and municipalities, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, etc.
- Undertaking integrated assessments of the best interests of the child.
- Creating a community-based care service outside the reception centre which is more integrated in the community. Or enabling access for UAC to existing community-based care during their asylum application period. These services should have a smaller capacity but with similar services to those currently provided in the safe zone, such as access to a range of

health, education, legal and support services based on the needs of the individual child, with assistance from social workers through a case management based approach.

- Ensuring that children have access to services from the day they arrive and are identified, and throughout their asylum procedure.

Needs in Bulgaria:

- National standards should correspond to European standards, but legislation needs to be adapted to the Bulgarian situation for reception and services, creating an opportunity for families from the community to be involved.
- Investment in human resources capacity, including specific training, professional foster care, partnerships with families from the migrant and refugee community. This also includes increased capacity of the Child Protection Department (CPD) under the ASA through the provision of specially trained social workers to conduct best interest assessment and analysis.
- Develop a coordination mechanism to encourage cooperation and exchange of information between NGOs and institutions on existing projects, and sharing of good practices.
- Provide access to community services which are family-oriented and which can address specific needs of UAC.
- Assessment to decide whether to adapt and improve the current child protection system or to develop a new system in parallel which is specific to UAC.
- Publicity and communication plan to the community to raise awareness about the needs of UAC.

Catalonia, Spain

The mentoring program initiated by the DGAIA and run by the ICAA is seen as a best practice. It is a social intervention tool whose objective is to establish relations between UAC and locals (mentors) to connect the children to the host society. It also helps the children improving their linguistic skills. The tandems have a minimum duration of six months renewable to a year and there has to be at least one weekly meeting between the mentor and the child. The tendems are being monitored by a professional and mentors go through an interview and are informed about the foster system in Catalonia. There are 135 active tandems in 2020 in Catalonia. The mentoring program is important since Catalan society gets involved in it and it also helps to recruit future foster families. This way, the big mutual ignorance between UAC and the Catalan society can be improved.

Another good practice is the opening in July 2019 of an Immediate Care Centre⁷ located in Collserola (near Barcelona), with holding capacity for 50 children. A pioneering and pilot initiative that is currently managed by the Red Cross in order to reduce the long stays of UC in police stations, while waiting for their identification and referral process to the child protection system.

In addition, in June 2019 the DGAIA opened a specific reception centre to provide assistance to girls who have suffered from gender-based violence, such as victims of forced marriages and trafficking in human beings. The center can accommodate up to 15 girls and is currently managed by the Idea Foundation⁸.

⁷ <https://govern.cat/salaprensa/notes-premsa/352402/treball-afers-socials-families-obrira-centre-pioner-atencio-immediata-als-joves-que-emigren>

⁸ Fundació Idea: <https://www.fundacioidea.net/es/>

Needs in Catalonia:

- One of the biggest challenges faced by the reception system in Catalonia, is the need for changes in legislation that hinder the processes of obtaining the residence as well as other documentation.
- There is also a need to create communication strategies to end all the rumours and stigmas faced by UAC. This is crucial since it hinders their inclusion in the society and makes it difficult to move towards alternative reception models, such as families.
- Another challenge is the need for coordination between the different territorial agents in order to be able to provide comprehensive care to the migrant child.
- Regarding capacity building needs, the meeting participants who work directly in the reception system pointed out the need of receiving specific training on different aspects such as the detection of human trafficking or mental health disorders so that they can detect mental illnesses and send the children to specific hospitals or also to the social services.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the collected information about the accessibility and quality of alternative care arrangements for UAC aged 15-18 (through a situational analysis, desk-based research, stakeholder meetings and consultation of the children), the following recommendations for improvement have been identified.

Italy

As an outcome of the stakeholder meeting held in Sicily, which included the Ombudsman for children and adolescents, reception center managers and staff, psychologists, cultural mediators and volunteer tutors, a series of actions have been identified as the key to improvement. The main areas for improvement identified are summarized below:

- Change the procedures of the reception system: work immediately for planning in the direction of autonomy, enhance the Siproimi and the holistic approach.
- Provide more specific training of operators with respect to this new project.
- Strengthen the accompaniment in the search for work and placement of UAC in internships through the activism of operators and institutional support as fundamental elements for entering the labour market.
- Support a cultural transformation of services in the area so that they are equipped to be able to treat the foreign child as an interlocutor; at the moment, one-to-one accompaniment is required to ensure access to the services.
- Ongoing training of guardians on issues such as legal procedures and types of residence permits. Improve the way information is shared with guardians, and make sure that information is actually valid and up to date.
- Culturally appropriate psychosocial support made available for children, but also for tutors and operators.
- Redevelop the empty spaces available to create new apartments and alternative hospitality communities and autonomy paths.

Bulgaria

During the stakeholder meeting held in Bulgaria, participants provided suggestions on how access to alternative care could be improved in Bulgaria. Suggestions included:

- Assessment to decide whether to adapt and improve the current child protection system or to develop a new system in parallel which is specific to UAC. General view from stakeholders was that this should be built into the current system, but that there is a need for additional human resources capacity.
- Develop a coordination mechanism to encourage cooperation and exchange of information between NGOs and institutions on existing projects and sharing of good practices.
- Amend guardianship policies and processes to allow for introduction of professionalised guardians with a small number of children for each guardian. This would need to be led by relevant government authorities.
- Ensure all relevant stakeholder are involved in trainings and implementation of improvements.

Catalonia, Spain

The following recommendations for improvement of (access to) the alternative care system for UAC aged 15-18 were identified:

- Keep increasing the number of foster care in apartments and dismantling large scale facilities.
- Keep encouraging the project for foster families both collaborative and in weekends and holidays.
- Create new strategies through publicity campaigns in order to recruit foster families for UAC.
- Develop specific trainings for those who take part in the foster system in issues such as legislative process and documentation, detecting human trafficking, country origin and in detecting mental health problems and drug addiction.
- Develop strategies to recruit foster families and workers from different cultural backgrounds that match with the children so that they can have cultural references that have already taken part into the foster's society.
- Increase the effort of the institutions responsible of the welcoming in working hand in hand with different city councils in order to create response coordinated actions.
- Support strategies that help fighting the stigmas and dehumanization that UAC suffer in Catalonia.
- Increase the number of social workers and educators per unaccompanied child.

The Netherlands

The alternative care system that is available in the Netherlands for UAC aged 15-18 is quite mature. There are no restrictions for UAC to enter this system. Alternative care, both small scale reception and family-based care, is available for all UAC in need of it. However, as shown in this report, there is always room for improvement in different parts of the system itself. Nidos is aware of this and working on improvement is part of the daily work. One example is that the family-based care department is currently planning to organise regular thematic meetings for the families who take care of UAC in cooperation with Nidos.

Getting UAC aged 15-18 into family-based care is still a desire and challenge. Initiatives in the Netherlands regarding access to alternative care therefore mainly focus on this topic.

4. TRAINING NEEDS

During a 2-day online expert meeting in October 2020, the knowledge gained from the first phase of the project was combined with experiences from international experts on providing (access to) alternative care to UAC aged 15-18. Experts from Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands and Greece shared their good practises to inspire the first exploration of training needs. This resulted in a first draft of the training needs, that was further improved during several complementary bilateral meetings between Nidos and project partners. The outcomes are summarised below.

Italy

- Training on the development of the child as a person, starting from human rights convention and CRC with linkages to national legislation on child protection. Training should also include case management/educational plan and how to accompany the child to adulthood.
- Improvement of the skills of the people who support children, with special regards to the ones who do it on a voluntary basis in Italy: legal guardians, support families, foster families. Training should also include cultural knowledge, active listening and communication skills
- Training on the SIPROIMI⁹ system, services and resources available to empower UAC transitioning to adulthood, as well as different types of alternative care arrangements available and how to access them.
- Training around building strategic networks among relevant stakeholders who are key in the development of UAC.

It will be crucial for to have all relevant stakeholders, including staff working in SIPROIMI, social workers, court personnel, prefecture, etc. represented in the training. Agreements will have to be made with the different authorities and registries to ensure participation. The Ombudsman can support this. The training can be tested in Palermo for potential replication in other areas of Italy.

Bulgaria

- Training on the profile of UAC, so that those working with them will have a better understanding and therefore be able to respond better to their needs. Based on information provided by stakeholders working with UAC in Bulgaria, these children can mostly be categorised into three groups:
 1. The majority of UAC in Bulgaria who are focused on their next move and will only stay up to one month. Approach here is centred on basic needs, enabling the child to land on their feet after a probably difficult journey and traumatic experience.
 2. UAC who have relatives in Europe and are trying to reunify through Dublin procedures. These children will stay longer in Bulgaria but are only focused on the reunification procedure rather than integration in Bulgaria. For these children the approach is around working out a medium-term individual plan for their time in Bulgaria, focusing on life here while they wait and access to services which will be helpful to them even after they move on.
 3. The group who apply and receive status to stay in Bulgaria. This group are usually Syrians as other nationalities are usually not given status. These children are staying long term and will likely turn 18 in Bulgaria. For this group the focus is on individual planning, providing services and support to prepare the child to adulthood and independent life in Bulgaria, as well as

⁹ Accommodation centers for (formerly called SPRAR) for UAC where they have the right to stay up to the age of 18

increasing the capacity of the alternative care providers (usually in small group homes) to care for the specific needs of these children.

This may be linked to the PROUD Project manual.

- Focus within all three groups on safeguarding and prevention of exploitation and abuse. This is important both for children who stay but also for children who move on quickly from Bulgaria. Can involve rapid safeguarding assessments, links to the SGBV training already provided by Council for Refugee Women.
- The training of trainers approach will develop expertise of those individuals who are going to stay long term in their roles and in the sector, so that they can continue to train staff to counteract a loss of knowledge that comes with high levels of staff turnover.

Catalonia, Spain

- Training on different cultural context and case management with an holistic approach (taking in consideration the psychosocial care or the psychosocial counselling) and with a special focus on the transition to autonomy.
- Training on recruitment of foster care families.
- Training on the legal documentation, the legal process and also about the mechanisms to detect potential asylum seekers among the UAC.
- Training on implementation of a pilot project in a university campus or residence where UAC will live among other students. Likewise, training on the benefits of semi-independent living units in order to promote personal autonomy that will enable UAC to be self- reliant in their personal care when they become 18.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SIPROIMI with its holistic approach and the range of services offered to UAC • the system that is currently implemented has a series of rules that help UAC to grow and become responsible • the presence of voluntary guardians in alternative reception systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor motivation and training of foster families • Lack of accompaniment for foster families • The rules present in alternative reception systems can be misunderstood by UAC also for reasons related to different cultural backgrounds • Lack of a supervisor in the semi-independent living arrangements • It can be hard to find a place that matches all the wishes and requirements of the child and the guardian. This specifically applies when finding a family for children aged 15-18.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus all efforts on facilitating autonomy paths for UAC that make them independent under the guidance of an adult who helps them move around the territorial system • Creation of a support network that exploits the large social capital present in the reception context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of job placement opportunities for UAC in Sicily, and presence of language barriers • Uncertainty in the documentation that causes anxiety • Needs that change in the transition to adulthood • Possible political change at the national level which could negatively influence the measures implemented to date to support UAC

ANNEX 2 SWOT ANALYSIS BULGARIA

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a legislative framework available, stakeholders and authorities are not starting from scratch. • Safe Zones – positive progress recently, compared to previous years • Capacity has been built in mainstream social services where UAC are sometimes placed. There is a foundation to develop this further. • Existence of residential and non-residential services for children in Bulgaria • Many organisations have networks and pools of interpreters and social workers who work in different organisations. • Social workers from countries of origin which helps with the work, including staffing from refugees/migrants. • Coordination and cooperation between institutions has improved a lot over the past few years. • There are many dedicated and talented professionals working in Bulgaria with lots of expertise to share. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current guardianship practice is not working well. It is not professionalised, guardians are appointed by the municipality and have many other functions in addition to guardianship, which means that they do not have enough time to work with each child. • Some gaps in coordination in particular cases and despite improvements, it is not always a smooth process. • Government policy on integration leads to difficulty in working for integration for children that will not get status to remain. • Very difficult to convince children not to move on with traffickers to western Europe, especially when integration in Bulgaria is limited. E.g. staff are making an effort to convince UAC to go to school but the UAC are only interested in their onward journey. • Improvements needed on how to advise children about their rights. • Lack of capacity in social services to work with foreign nationals.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No current crisis and slower arrival rates, which allows opportunities to try different strategies to improve services. • The new Law on Social Services will provide more opportunities to provide improved care for UAC • Availability of resources. New EU funds can be used in meaningful way to improve care for UAC in Bulgaria. An opportunity to lobby and think about how these resources could be focused properly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If another increase in flow of refugees occurs (like in 2015/16), this would prove to be very challenging to manage, and could reverse any progress made in recent years. • Lack of political will to improve care for UAC poses a threat to the implementation of new practices. • Political climate could deteriorate, with a rise in anti-immigrant policies, which would have negative impact on refugees. • The risk of corruption and theft of money from European funds.

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- Promising work with migrant communities in Bulgaria
 - Relocation schemes which include EU support to member states who receive UAC
 - New strategy on migration is an opportunity to plan for care for UAC and identify them as separate target group for more tailored support.
- Negative public attitudes towards refugees and migrants.
 - Lack of opportunities for adapted education and personal development for UAC.
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ANNEX 3 SWOT ANALYSIS CATALONIA, SPAIN

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear identification from the stakeholders of the shortcomings. • The system (DGAIA I ICAA) has a strong capacity of response, articulation and adaptation. • Willingness to reverse the situation (society, NGOs and public administration) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of coordination between all the administrations involved. • Lack of specific formations in some areas such as human trafficking, mental health or the country-origin background. • Lack of resources: housing, structural budget and the ratio of workers- children.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The increase of the number of foster apartments. • Emerging projects for foster families: collaborative families and weekends and holiday families • Mentorship program • Train multicultural educators/coaches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfavourable public opinion regarding UAC. • Lack of will regarding legislative changes • National legislation • Stigmatisation

ANNEX 4 SWOT ANALYSIS THE NETHERLANDS

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot specialised small living units for children from save countries. • Alternative care (small scale reception and family-based care) available for all UAC in need of it. • Guardians and mentors working in reception facilities receive frequent training on working with- and taking care of UAC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A residence permit is required for children aged 15-18 to be placed in family-based care but they don't have one upon arrival and are first placed in initial (POL) accommodation to await the decision on their asylum claim. They experience more freedom in a POL and it can therefore be difficult to motivate them for family-based care once they have obtained their residence permit and family-based care is indicated as the most suitable reception. • It's a challenge to have enough types of families available who are willing to let a child aged 15-18 lead a more independent life. • It's not very attractive to place a 17-year-old in a family because of the challenge ensuring placement in family-based care after majority (see 'Threats'). • Placing children from safe countries, such a Morocco, in families and finding suitable families for them. • It can be hard to find a place that matches all the wishes and requirements of the child and the guardian. This specifically applies when finding a family for children aged 15-18. • The desire for placement in a family from a specific culture or with a certain family composition can sometimes not be fulfilled because this specific family is not available at the time of placement. • Children who have been living in initial reception (POL) who have a desire and/or need for family-based care sometimes refrain from placement in fear of not maintaining their desired (and experienced) financial freedom.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prolongation of foster care for Dutch children till the age of 21, with possibilities in making this available for UAC. • Part time family-based care (weekend- and part time family-based care, use of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities are responsible for family-based care for youngsters aged 18 years and over and some of them are not willing to offer it to UAC. • Finding the right place for children with behavioural or psychological problems. They sometimes need very specific care and a

guest families for UAC living in reception centres or small-scale units).

suitable environment and it may be difficult to find a place that offers it all.
