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Building Futures, Sharing Good Practices: Migrant Children's Transition to Adulthood - UACFutures

REPORT

Launch Event

This report summarises key messages from the launch event of the multilateral project “Building Futures, Sharing Good Practices: Migrant Children’s Transition to Adulthood” (the Project), organised by the Council of Europe on 28 February 2022. The event was held online and brought together the Project partners as well as relevant professionals in the field.

Opening of the event:

The launch event was opened by **Mr Sergey Dikman**, Head of the Innovation and Development Unit, Co-operation Programmes Division of the Council of Europe, who welcomed the speakers and participants.

In her opening remarks, **Ms Leyla Kayacik**, Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees, noted that the Project addresses a topic of priority for the Council of Europe: the protection of unaccompanied migrant and refugee children. She underlined, that unaccompanied children face significant challenges and risks upon turning 18, many of which have been further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Ms Kayacik also recalled the guidance and work carried out by the Council of Europe in this field, notably:

- the previous [Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children \(2017-2019\)](#),
- the [Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec\(2019\)4 Supporting Young Refugees in Transition to Adulthood](#), and the upcoming accompanying Guide prepared by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, and
- the current [Council of Europe Action Plan on protecting vulnerable people in the context of migration and asylum in Europe \(2021-2025\)](#).

¹ The content of this report represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.

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Ms Kayacik highlighted that the Project will contribute to enhancing the protection of unaccompanied children by strengthening the foundations for practical solutions in the field. Finally, Ms Kayacik thanked the European Union for supporting this Project through their Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Project partners for their excellent collaboration. She expressed the hope that the good practices generated under this Project will also support the efforts of other member states in the field.

Ms Isabela Atanasiu, Legal Officer and Focal Point for the Project at the European Commission, informed about the policy priorities of the European Union in the field. She noted that the Project is in line with European Commission (2017) [Communication for protection of children in migration](#), COM(2017)0211 final. The European Communication sets out actions to reinforce the protection of migrant and refugee children at the European Union and national levels. Ms Atanasiu underlined that attention should be also given to, among others, the work of the European Migration Network (EMN). To this end, she mentioned the EMN report on children in migration. The EMN report provides an overview of procedures and measures put in place by member States to ensure the protection of migrant and refugee children in various areas including transition to adulthood. Finally, Ms Atanasiu reiterated the importance of ensuring complementarity and synergies with other on-going actions in the field.

Presentation of the project and realities in the field:

The session was opened by **Mr Dikman**, who presented the Project and the role of the Council of Europe in its implementation. He explained that the Project aims at initiating long-term improvements in the quality of support for unaccompanied migrant children during their transition to adulthood by promoting the exchange of good practices at the European level, with a particular focus on Greece, Spain and the Netherlands. Mr Dikman noted that the Project is coordinated by the Council of Europe and implemented jointly with the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Children of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum of Greece, SolidarityNow – a Greek NGO, Fundación Cepaim – a Spanish NGO, and Stichting Nidos – the Dutch Guardianship institution. The Project will be implemented over an 18-month period from January 2022 until June 2023. He highlighted that a specific thematic emphasis will be placed on four areas in which unaccompanied migrant children are known to require particular support:

- (1) psychological impact and support,
- (2) legal support and access to basic rights,
- (3) access to education and the labour market,
- (4) access to accommodation.

Mr Dikman explained that the Project is divided into three thematic components. The first component focusses on exchange of good practices, the second component focusses on

training development and implementation, and the third component focusses on dissemination and knowledge sharing at the European level.

Dr Gelly Aroni, Head of the Unit for Integration and Support of Unaccompanied Minors, Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, gave a presentation on the role of the Special Secretariat in the Project and the current realities in Greece. She highlighted that the Special Secretariat was established in November 2020 and has the unique mission to develop, implement and supervise the National Strategy for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors in Greece. Dr Aroni noted that according to the Eurostat estimates, Greece was the main receiving country for unaccompanied children in 2019. She further provided an overview of the situation of unaccompanied children in Greece and measures adopted to support this particularly vulnerable group. She noted that Greece has made important efforts to adequately protect and respond to the specific needs of unaccompanied children but the transition to adulthood remains one of the most challenging issues. Dr Aroni concluded her presentation by providing a brief overview of the key activities to be implemented by the Special Secretariat, which include the organisation of a study visit and a national training session in Greece, the development of a Roadmap to adulthood, and contributing to the Compendium of transferable good practices and the training Toolkit on Transition.

Ms Antigone Lyberaki, General Manager of SolidarityNow, outlined the role of SolidarityNow and provided further details on the situation of unaccompanied children in Greece. She explained that SolidarityNow was established in 2013 with the mission to support the most vulnerable members of the community. In that context, children are at the centre of the actions carried out by the NGO, including through the provision of targeted support programmes for unaccompanied children. Ms Lyberaki noted that one of the particular difficulties in the transition to adulthood relates to the lack of a clear pathway for many unaccompanied children which creates uncertainty about their future. Referring to the meaning of adulthood, Ms Lyberaki underlined that “becoming an adult is not a fixed point in time.” She further stressed that unaccompanied children lack the safety net to take a leap into adulthood, highlighting the need to collectively identify ways to bridge the gap and give unaccompanied children the best opportunities to become independent. As to the role of SolidarityNow in the Project, Ms Lyberaki noted that the NGO will be responsible for the organisation of a transnational workshop and a national training session in Greece, the production of a video with young refugees aimed at raising awareness and sharing experiences and solutions, and contributing to the Compendium of transferable good practices and the training Toolkit on Transition.

Mr Jesús Fernandez de Sevilla Gómez, Project and Research Technician, Families and Youth Intervention Unit at Fundación Cepaim, presented the role of Fundación Cepaim in the Project and provided a brief overview of the history and mission of the NGO. He underlined that

Fundación Cepaim has been committed to fostering social cohesion in Spain and aims to facilitate access to human rights for particularly vulnerable individuals. He highlighted that only about 53% of young adults leaving the social protection system after reaching the age of majority receive support in their transition to adulthood. As a result, around 10% of young adults find themselves in situations of homelessness and severe social exclusion. In that context, he stressed the importance of the Project as a means to identifying and promoting solutions and practices to support unaccompanied children in their transition to adulthood. Mr Fernandez de Sevilla Gómez concluded his presentation by noting that Fundación Cepaim will be responsible for the organisation of a study visit to Spain, contributing to the development of the Compendium of transferable good practices and the training Toolkit on Transition, the production of a video with young refugees, and the organisation a transnational workshop and a national training session in Spain.

Ms Liedewij de Ruijter de Wildt, Head of Policy and European Cooperation Department at Nidos, concluded the session by providing an overview of the role of Nidos in the Project as well as the situation of unaccompanied children in the Netherlands. She explained that Nidos is the Dutch guardianship institution for unaccompanied children and as such is responsible for their reception and guardianship in the Netherlands. In that role, Nidos supervises the positive development of children and provides support with integration, return and family reunification. Building on its extensive expertise in the field, including as the founder and coordinating body of the European Guardianship Network, Nidos will organise a study visit to the Netherlands and contribute to the development of the Compendium of transferable good practices with a view to enhancing the exchange of good practices and knowledge-sharing on transition to adulthood at the European level.

Closing remarks:

Mr Dikman concluded the meeting by thanking the European Commission for supporting the Project through their Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. He also thanked the implementing partners for their excellent cooperation and wished them a good continuation in the Project. Mr Dikman recalled the important work of different Council of Europe bodies in the field, including the work of Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees, and thanked Ms Leyla Kayacik for opening the launch event and her support to the Project. Finally, Mr Dikman reiterated that the protection of unaccompanied children is one of the key priorities of the Council of Europe and underlined the commitment to enhance opportunities for the exchange of good practices and practical solutions at the European level throughout the implementation of this Project.

Appendix I: Agenda

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COUNCIL OF EUROPE



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EUROPEAN UNION

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

AGENDA

Multilateral Project

Building Futures, Sharing Good Practices:

Migrant Children's Transition to Adulthood

Online Launch Event

Jointly implemented by the Council of Europe, the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum of Greece, SolidarityNow, Fundación Cepaim, and Stichting Nidos.

This Event is funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Council of Europe.

Online Event (KUDO), 28 February 2022, 09:30 – 11:45 CET

Monday, 28 February 2022	
09:30 – 09:40	Registration of participants
09:40 – 10:00	Opening of the Event Ms Leyla Kayacik , Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees, Council of Europe Ms Isabela Atanasiu , Legal Officer, DG-HOME, European Commission
10:00 – 11:15	Presentation of the project and realities in the field Mr Sergey Dikman , Head of the Innovation and Development Unit, Co-Operation Programmes Division, Council of Europe Dr Gelly Aroni , Head of the Unit for Integration and Support of UAMs, Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum Ms Antigone Lyberaki , General Manager, SolidarityNow

Jointly implemented with:

	<p>Mr Jesús Fdez. de Sevilla Gómez, Project and Research Technician, Fundación Cepaim</p> <p>Ms Liedewij de Ruijter de Wildt, Head of Policy and European Cooperation Department, Stichting Nidos</p>
11:15 – 11:30	Questions and Answers
11:30 – 11:45	<p>Closing remarks</p> <p>Mr Sergey Dikman, Head of the Innovation and Development Unit, Co-Operation Programmes Division, Council of Europe</p>

Languages: The working languages of this event will be English and French. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided. Documents will be made available in English and French.