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

Closing Conference

REPORT

This report was funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Council of Europe.¹

On 23 June 2023, the Council of Europe organised the closing conference of the multilateral project "[Building Futures, Sharing Good Practices: Migrant Children's Transition to Adulthood – UACFutures](#)" (the Project), funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Council of Europe. The conference was held in presence and online and brought together the Project partners as well as other relevant stakeholders in the field.

Opening remarks

Ms **Leyla Kayacik**, Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on Migration and Refugees, highlighted the challenges faced by migrant and refugee children when they turn 18, and the adverse impact these challenges have on their protection, overall wellbeing, and inclusion. Supporting young refugees and migrants in their transition to adulthood has, therefore, been a priority for the Council of Europe for several years. In this context, Ms Kayacik informed how the work carried out by her office led to the adoption of the [Recommendation \(2019\)4 on Supporting Young Refugees in Transition to Adulthood](#), and the accompanying [practical guide](#), developed in the framework of the current [Council of Europe](#)

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

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[Action Plan on protecting vulnerable people in the context of migration and asylum in Europe \(2021-2025\)](#). Co-operation programmes such as the Building Futures Project align with the Council of Europe priorities and complement the work of the Organisation in the field.



Mr Frédéric Dolt, Head of Implementation of Human Rights, Justice and Legal Co-Operation Standards Department, explained the special nature of the Project, both in terms of substance and dimension, and how it promoted the exchange of good practices and practical solutions in the field. While referring to the achievements of the Project, Mr Dolt underlined:

- (a) its **wide European dimension** through the involvement of representatives of other Council of Europe member states in the Projects' activities.
- (b) the **number of tools developed** to better equip professionals supporting unaccompanied refugee and migrant children in their transition to adulthood.
- (c) the **active involvement of young refugees and migrants** at all levels.
- (d) the strong **horizontal networks** created through the participation of multiple actors from different sectors (governmental and non-governmental).

Finally, Mr Dolt thanked the European Union for supporting this Project through their Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), as well as the Project's partners from Greece, Spain and the Netherlands, for the excellent collaboration in the implementation of this Project.

Ms **Isabela Atanasiu**, Legal Officer, Directorate-General Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) of the European Commission informed about the importance of the topic and how it aligns with the policy priorities of the European Union in the field. In this context, she reiterated the added value of complementarity and synergy with other on-going actions in the field.

Specific reference was made to the work of the European Migration Network (EMN) [Inform](#) on the transition of unaccompanied minors to adulthood in EU Member State and Norway. In light of the refugee situation from Ukraine, Ms **Atanasiu** noted that the evolving needs on the ground underline the importance of the topic and the need to promote practical solutions and exchange good practices.



Following the opening remarks, the participants had the opportunity to watch the video "[I dreamt you yesterday](#)", developed by Fundación Cepaim-Convive (NGO), Spain in the framework of the Project.

Protection: Addressing the specific vulnerabilities of migrant children in transition to adulthood

During the first session, the three speakers, Ms **Cécile Gréboval**, Ms **Evgenia Giakoumopoulou** and Ms **Ourania Botsi** addressed specific vulnerabilities related to gender, sexual orientation, mental health and substance use disorders. As was underlined, girls on the move are generally less visible, and their specific needs should be taken into account. Sexual orientation and gender identity might be a ground for international protection. LGBTI asylum seekers and refugees often face marginalisation, stigmatisation, violence and hate speech. Moreover, lack of support can aggravate pre-existing mental health conditions (distress, anxiety, depression, PTSD, eating disorders etc.), risk of violence and marginalisation. In this context, speakers underlined the importance of early screening and identification, multidisciplinary approach, appropriate reception conditions and support.

Inclusion: supporting access to education and the labour market

During the second session, participants were informed about the importance of access to education and the labour market and how these are fundamental in fostering the inclusion and empowerment of young migrants and refugees. In this context, Ms **Marta Mędlińska** underlined the importance of language proficiency and briefly presented the Council of Europe tools to support [linguistic Integration](#). Moreover, Mr **Samir Hećo** elaborated on the [European Qualification Passport for Refugees](#) (EQPR) as a tool developed to assess refugees' qualifications when there is insufficient or missing documentation. Two young holders of the

EQPR, Ms **Mina Sharifi** and Ms **Anwar Horani** engaged in a dialogue with the speakers and explained how the EQPR helped them pursue university studies and find jobs at their host countries. Finally, Mr **Michalis Karakonstantis**, trainer for migrants and refugees, shared his experience teaching migrant children in Greece, focusing on the challenges faced and suggesting ways to overcome them.



Findings from the field and voices of young migrants and refugees in transition to adulthood

The third session provided an opportunity to learn about the findings of a research on the educational and integration pathways of unaccompanied migrant children in transition to adulthood. The research focusses on Germany and France while the findings were presented by Ms **Catherine Delcroix**, professor at the University of Strasbourg, Ms **Gwendolyn Gillieron**, Master of conferences and Mr **Omorou Baro**, Master student.

Next, Mr **Rui Gomes**, Head of the Division of Education and Training from the Youth Department, Council of Europe, informed about the work of the Youth Department in the field. Mr Gomes presented the [Recommendation \(2019\)4 on Supporting Young Refugees in Transition to Adulthood](#) and the [practical guide](#) which aims to facilitate its implementation. In this context, he also underlined the important role of youth organisations in supporting young refugees in their transition to adulthood.

UACFutures Project: Achievements, lessons learnt and ways forward

During the session on the achievements and lessons learnt, representatives from the Council of Europe and the Project partners in Greece, Spain and the Netherlands presented the Project, its deliverables, results and achievements.

Ms **Theodora Kristofori** provided a general overview of the deliverables of the Project as well as the specific tools developed by the Council of Europe, some of which in cooperation with the Project partners. More specifically, Ms Kristofori presented the:

- (a) **[Compendium of Good Practices](#)** which contains over 35 promising practises from 6 EU member States – Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Spain, and the Netherlands. The compendium also provides information about the specific national contexts, and outlines lessons learnt from the good practices collected.
- (b) **[Toolkit on Transition to Adulthood](#)** which aims to provide professionals working with unaccompanied migrant children with knowledge, concrete tips, tools and ideas to better support them in their transition to adulthood.
- (c) **Free online [HELP](#) (Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals)** module which builds on the findings and tools developed by the Project and aims to present the European and international human rights standards in supporting refugee and migrant children in transition to adulthood.

In order to ensure the wide dissemination and knowledge sharing at the European level, Ms Kristofori informed about the **[Project's website](#)** which, *inter alia*, contains all the Projects' materials as well as the international events which helped to initiate a wide European dialogue and promote the exchange of good practices across borders. Moreover, Ms Kristofori underlined that the Project ensured complementarity and synergies with other ongoing actions in the field, including the work of the EMN, FRA, PICUM, and other stakeholders.

Ms **Gelly Aroni**, from the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum in Greece presented the study visit to Greece, the national training session for professionals in the field and the transnational workshop organised by the Special Secretariat. Specific reference was made to the **[Roadmap to Adulthood](#)** developed by the Special Secretariat. In terms of achievements made, Ms Aroni mentioned the new immigration Code of March 2023 as well as the practice of Teens Network established in Greece based on the Dutch practice of Connected Youngsters and Trusted Juniors following the study visit in the Netherlands.

Mr **Theo Bogeas**, from the Greek NGO SolidarityNow presented the activities and deliverables under their responsibility, in particular, the development of two videos² where former unaccompanied children describe how they experience their transition to adulthood, as well as the organisation of a transnational workshop and a national training session for professionals in the field. Mr Bogeas informed that the video “[I woke up 18](#)” premiered at the 28th Athens International Film Festival and has won 2 awards so far.³

Mr **Adolfo Patón Monge** and Mr **Jesús Fdez. de Sevilla Gómez** from the Spanish NGO Fundación Cepaim-Convive jointly presented the achievements of the Project in their context. Among others, Fundación Cepaim-Convive organised a study visit to Spain, a national training session for professionals in the field, a transnational workshop and developed the video “[I dreamt you yesterday](#)”. Mr Patón Monge and Mr Jesús de Sevilla Gómez outlined some of the achievements of the Project in their respective context such as the: (a) inclusion of social mentoring in their methodological approach



of intervention; (b) increase of their local, regional, national and European network; (c) inclusion of the European standards in aspects related to evaluation, reporting and cooperation; (d) transfer of knowledge to the teams and the youth on the ground.

Finally, Ms **Marjolein Groen** and Ms **Marika Zervos** from the Dutch Guardianship institution, Nidos, informed about the study visit to the Netherlands, and the contribution to the Compendium of good practices. They also provided an overview of the new policy on ensuring reception and guidance for young refugees after they turn 18 in the Netherlands which was approved in 2023.

² “[I woke up 18](#)” and [Bubarak's story in his own words](#), videos developed by SolidarityNow (Greece) in the framework of the Project “*Building Futures, Sharing Good Practices: Migrant Children's Transition to Adulthood – UACFutures*”.

³ MEET Film Festival 2023: Youth & Training Section, Jury Prize (Italy). Positively Different Short Film Festival 2023: Honourable Mention Award (Greece).

Concluding Remarks

Ms **Lilja Gretarsdottir**, Head of Co-operation programmes division, warmly thanked the partners for the excellent collaboration throughout the duration of the project. She further underlined that the good practices identified, and the tools developed under this Project have laid strong foundations to support migrant and refugee children in their transition to adulthood. Finally, Ms Gretarsdottir, expressed her firm belief that the Project will offer an avenue for meaningful progress in the field and that the fruitful collaboration with the partners will continue in the future.

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Annex: Agenda

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Closing Conference

Friday, 23 June 2023

09:30 – 17:00 (CET)

English

Room G01, Agora Building

Allée des Droits de l'Homme, 67000 Strasbourg, France

Zoom link

Meeting ID: 669 8797 1138

Passcode: 598209

AGENDA

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Friday, 23 June 2023

09:00 – 09:30 ARRIVAL AND REGISTRATION OF PARTICIPANTS

09:30 – 10:00 OPENING REMARKS

Moderator: Konul Gasimova, Head of Unit, Co-operation Programmes Division, DGI, Council of Europe

Leyla Kayacik, Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on Migration and Refugees

Frédéric Dolt, Head of Implementation of Human Rights, Justice and Legal Co-Operation Standards Department, DGI, Council of Europe

Isabela Atanasiu, Legal Officer, DG Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME), European Commission – online

10:00 – 10:10 “[I dreamt you yesterday](#)” – video developed by Fundación Cepaim-Convive (NGO), Spain

10:10 – 11:10 PROTECTION: ADDRESSING THE SPECIFIC VULNERABILITIES OF MIGRANT CHILDREN IN TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

Moderator: Konul Gasimova, Head of Unit, Co-operation Programmes Division, DGI, Council of Europe

Evgenia Giakoumopoulou, Head of the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Unit, DGII, Council of Europe

Cécile Gréboval, Programme Manager Gender Mainstreaming - Senior Gender Equality Advisor, DGII, Council of Europe

Ourania Botsi, Senior Project Officer, Pompidou Group, DGI, Council of Europe

Questions and discussion

11:10 – 11:30 COFFEE BREAK

11:30 – 12:30 INCLUSION: SUPPORTING ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND THE LABOUR MARKET

Moderator: Anne Kayser, Adviser, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on Migration and Refugees

Samir Hećo, Project Officer, European Qualification Passport for Refugees (EQPR), Council of Europe

Jointly implemented with:

Mina Sharifi, *Holder of the European Qualification Passport for Refugees*
Anwar Horani, *Holder of the European Qualification Passport for Refugees*
– online

Marta Mędzińska, *Administrator, Language Policy Programme, Education Department, Council of Europe*

Michalis Karakonstantis, *Trainer, Symbiosis-School of Political Studies in Greece*

Questions and discussion

12:30 – 14:30 LUNCH BREAK

14:30 – 14:50 FINDINGS FROM THE FIELD AND VOICES OF YOUNG MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

Moderator: Anne Kayser, *Adviser, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on Migration and Refugees*

Catherine Delcroix, *Professor of sociology, University of Strasbourg and University of Poitiers, Lab Migrinter*

Rui Gomes, *Head of Division of Education and Training, Youth Department, Council of Europe*

Questions and discussion

14:50 –16:50 UACFutures Project: ACHIEVEMENTS, LESSONS LEARNT AND WAYS FORWARD

Moderator: Evita Aravantinou, *Project Manager, Co-operation Programmes Division, DGI, Council of Europe*

Theodora Kristofori, *Project Manager, Co-operation Programmes Division, DGI, Council of Europe*

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 in Greece – online*

Theo Bogeas, *Programme Officer, SolidarityNow (NGO), Greece*

Adolfo Patón Monge, *Head of the European Unit, Fundación Cepaim-Convive (NGO), Spain*

Jesús Fdez. De Sevilla Gómez, *Coordination of Transition to Adult Life Programmes, Fundación Cepaim-Convive (NGO), Spain*

Marjolein Groen, *Project Manager European projects, Stichting Nidos, the Netherlands*

Marika Zervos, *Liaison Officer, Stichting Nidos, the Netherlands*

Questions and discussion

15:30 – 15:50 COFFEE BREAK

16:50 – 17:00 CLOSING REMARKS

Konul Gasimova, *Head of Unit, Co-operation Programmes Division, DGI, Council of Europe*