

CASE STUDY REPORT: MIGRANT CHILDREN IN TRANSITION

Migrant children and communities in a transforming Europe



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The project Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe (MiCREATE) aims to stimulate inclusion of diverse groups of migrant children by adopting child-centred approach to migrant children integration on educational and policy level.

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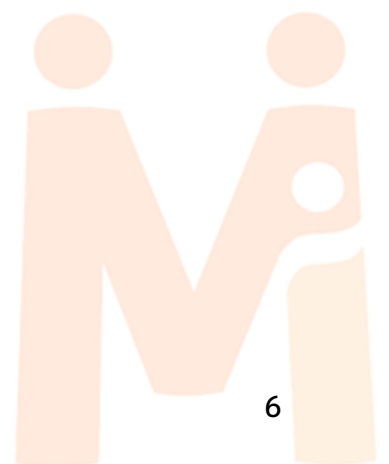
PREFACE

Workpackage 8: Migrant Children in Transition dealt with asylum seekers and irregular migrants living in the 'middle phase' - in a liminal space where they are no longer in their countries of origin and have not yet started living in the host country. The planning of the studies, conducted in (informal) camps and asylum homes in Austria, France, Greece, Italy, Poland, Slovenia and Turkey, has started in 2019; however, due to the Covid-19 outbreak, several adjustments have been made to the original schedule and plans. At the most critical times, at the beginning of the pandemic, when field research was supposed to be in the entry phase, researchers were suddenly unsure if and when they would be able to access research sites. In some cases, mobility between provinces was stopped, making access to host facilities impossible. On the other hand, (informal) camps with dense populations of migrants and typically limited access to health facilities were considered risky, especially at the beginning of the pandemic when medical experts, epidemiologists and the general public were more or less unfamiliar the Covid-19. Against this backdrop, researchers were forced to adjust the original research methodology to a certain extent and adopt maximum flexibility in terms of methods and data collection.

The main aim of Workpackage 8 was to create a space for children to express themselves and their interests. The child-centred approach to exploring and addressing integration challenges is followed in all workpackages in order to bypass common sense in terms of what 'we' - the adults - tend to consider as indicators and stimulators of integration. The objectives were achieved by capturing migrant children's experiences and views of their life in the host society (present), their assessment of the obstacles and difficulties they have faced (past) or continue to face after arriving in the destination country, and their opinions on how these challenges can be overcome (future). The aims of the study were in detail:

- to examine core areas in relation to the experiences of migrant children in places of transit: dynamics of pre-departure, experiences of detention and deportation, access to social support and legal protections, access to education and/or language training, contact with and integration in the local community, experiences of separation and ability to (re)connect with family members at home or in Europe, experiences of (in)security, and experiences of daily life in transit
- to identify the advantages and weaknesses of existing models of migrant children's integration and to assess children's experiences and views regarding the shortcomings of integration support services
- to gather their opinions regarding overcoming the integration challenges in relation to their specific needs; to examine conceptualizations of well-being in relation to their living conditions, socioeconomic status, cultural background, gender, religion and language proficiency
- to examine migrant children's satisfaction with their new life in the host society through their self-perceived possibilities, options and feeling of power to arrange their own life and future, their achievements

- to examine assistance to migrant children, access to child-friendly information, access to rights and relevant procedures, standards and good practices to restore family links and reunify families, standards for the reception and accommodation of refugee and migrant children, and alternatives to detention and similar





AUSTRIA

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1. Introduction

The main aim of this report is to make an overview of the literature, present policy and institutional framework relevant for asylum-seeking children, and present main findings from the fieldwork. Overall, the main aim is to assess a child-centred perspective, focusing on the rights of asylum seekers and their well-being.

2. Secondary analysis

In the following part, the scarcely available literature on the topic of asylum and children in Austria is discussed. Subsequently, statistical data on asylum in Austria will be shown as well as the institutional support for asylum-seeking children will be examined on several levels. First, the legal and political framework of asylum and children's rights in Austria is described. On the one hand, the topic of asylum, in general, is addressed, and on the other hand, the focus is on asylum-seeking children and their families. Next, the main concepts,

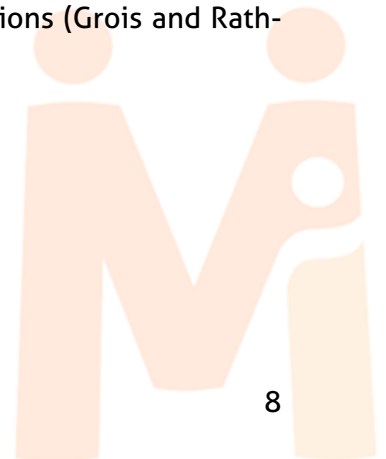
objectives, and instruments of the policy in Austria are highlighted. Afterward, best practices and initiatives to support asylum-seeking children are discussed. It also discusses whether institutional support follows a child-centered approach. Finally, a conclusion and reflection follow.

2.1 Literature review

Regarding the asylum experience in Austria from the perspective of asylum-seeking children, the article by Dursun and Sauer (2015) provides insights into the experiences of unaccompanied minors in Austria. The authors emphasize that the Austrian asylum regime is characterized by a tension between institutional mistrust, restriction, care, and protection concerning unaccompanied minors. It is these tensions between the two regimes, namely asylum, and care, that determine the social position and status as well as access to resources and perspectives of unaccompanied minors. However, the authors also point out that minors are not only subject to asylum and child protection laws but also have the opportunity to help shape and change the framework and circumstances in which they live (Dursun and Sauer 2015: 106).

Additionally, Glawischnig (2018) examines the legal situation of asylum-seeking children in general in Austria. In her opinion, the legal situation of asylum-seeking children depends to a large extent on their past or the past of their parents. Thus, the context of origin and the expected persecution in the country of origin determine the prospects of residence in Austria. Asylum-seeking children thus bring different preconditions with them to Austria due to their past, both in the legal context as well as in the social sphere and in the area of mental and physical health. Therefore, asylum-seeking children have different life realities due to unequal forms of accommodation and different durations of the asylum procedure. What these children have in common, however, is that they often have to wait a very long time for their asylum procedure. Here, according to Glawischnig (2018), both children and parents often lack information about which aspects of their past are particularly relevant for the asylum procedure or the granting of asylum (Glawischnig 2018: 24, 28).

Besides, Grois and Rath-Waczenovsky (2018) investigate the medical care for asylum-seeking children in Austria. They point out that the medical care for asylum seekers in Austria is inadequate. There is a lack of vaccinations, continuity, documentation, sufficient professional competence, translation aids, and therapeutic capacities. They stress that the limitations of the Austrian health care system become evident by the deficiencies in the care of children with refugee and migration backgrounds. A change in the current medical-therapeutic care is also urgently needed for health policy considerations (Grois and Rath-Waczenovsky 2018: 31).



2.2 Statistical data

The main source of publicly available statistics and data is "Statistics Austria" (*Statistik Austria*), which is an independent and non-profit federal agency under public law. In addition, Statistics Austria is responsible for federal statistics. Among many other data, they provide figures on the native- and foreign-born population (*Figure 1*). Out of the total population in Austria in 2020 (N=8.901.064), 7.135.753 people were born in Austria (80.2%) and 1.765.311 people were born abroad (19.8%). Further differentiation of the foreign-born population shows that 826.533 were from EU and EFTA countries and 938.778 were people from 'third countries'.

Figure 1: Number and percentage of native- and foreign-born population in 2020

Place of Birth	Austria	foreign country	
	7.135.753 (80.2%)	total	11.765.311 (19.8%)
		EU und EFTA-States	826.533 (46.8%)
		'Third countries'	938.778 (53.2%)

Source: STATISTIK AUSTRIA 2020 Bevölkerung nach Staatszugehörigkeit und Geburtsland¹

Besides, the "Austrian Integration Fund" (*Österreichischer Integrationsfond, ÖIF*) published statistics regarding the residence permits of third-country nationals. According to figure two, almost half of the third-country nationals have a permanent residence for an unlimited period. However, 22.80% still have only temporary settlements and 27.60% are recognized refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, and/or seasonal workers. Unfortunately, the *ÖIF* does not distinguish between these different statuses here, but this would be important as these statuses differ, for instance, in the duration of stay. In contrast to 2015, when a very large number of asylum-seekers applied and were waiting for a decision, in 2019 only 3.80% of third-country nationals are still in the asylum process.

Figure 2: Residence permits of third-country nationals

Permanent residence for an unlimited period (>5 years)	303.637.62 (42.9%)
Temporary stay	19.817.84 (2.8%)
Temporary settlement	161.373.84 (22.8%)
Asylum-seekers (ongoing procedures)	26.895.64 (3.8%)
Recognized refugees, subsidiary protection, seasonal workers	195.347.28 (27.6%)
Total	707.780.00 (100%)

Source: STATISTIK AUSTRIA, Migration & Integration 2020: 43-44

Concerning children seeking asylum, the eleventh statistic illustrates that in 2016 almost half of the asylum-seekers were minors. The figures show that there are more accompanied minors than unaccompanied ones (in 2017 there were 1.355 applications from unaccompanied and 10.665 from accompanied). Most of the accompanied minors are

¹Online: http://pic.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/menschen_und_gesellschaft/bevoelkerung/bevoelkerungsstruktur/bevoelkerung_nach_staatsangehoerigkeit_geburtsland/index.html (14.08.2021)

younger than 14 years old. However, the number of asylum-seeking minors is also decreasing, as is the total number of asylum-seekers.

Figure 3: Asylum-seeking children from 2014-2018

Jahr	AsylwerberInnen gesamt	Minderjährige gesamt	% Mj.	Unbegleitet Minderjährige	Davon unter 14 Jahre	Begleitet Minderjährige	Davon unter 14 Jahre
2014	28.035	8.480	30,24 %	1.740	120	11.140	6.740
2015	88.160	32.230	36,56 %	8.280	745	23.950	18.823
2016	42.255	17.865	42,28 %	3.900	375	13.965	12.340
2017	24.715	12.020	48,63 %	1.355	145	10.665	9.690
2018	13.400	6.656	49,67 %	488	47	6.168	5.714

Source: Netzwerk Kinderrechte Österreich 2019: 46

2.3 Assessment of institutional support to children in transition

Legal and policy framework

For an understanding of the legal and policy framework of asylum and children in Austria, it is necessary to include several policy levels. Austria is a federal state, which is divided into nine *Länder*. Therefore, laws and policies relate to the national and *Länder* levels. The *Länder* do not issue asylum laws but must implement national laws. Besides, national legislations partly refer to international agreements and European Union directives and regulations. In the following, these framing agreements will be discussed to get a better understanding of the asylum system in Austria.

In the context of asylum and children on the supranational level, two conventions should be mentioned: the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Refugee Convention (1951). The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is regarded as a legally binding document for the rights of children and has been signed by Austria in 1992.² The convention is based on four principles. The first is the right to equal treatment, this means that a child must not be disadvantaged based on his or her origin, citizenship, language, religion, political opinions, or physical limitations. The second principle is that the best interests of the child take precedence. Therefore, the best interests of the child must be taken into careful consideration when making decisions that affect the child. The third principle is the right to life and development and the fourth and last principle is the respect for the child's opinion. This means that children are taken seriously and should be included

² Austria signed the Convention on the first day with reservations about the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the right to information and assembly. These were withdrawn on 7 July 2015. Online: <https://www.wien.gv.at/menschen/30jahrekinderrechte/un-kinderrechtskonvention.html> (22.02.2021 9:03)

in decision-making processes (UNICEF 2020). In 2011, some provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child were included in the Austrian Constitution.³ However, according to the Austrian *Netzwerk Kinderrechte* (children's rights network), an independent network of a total of 44 child rights organizations, there is a lack of implementation of these basic rights, especially for children from families from foreign countries (*Netzwerk Kinderrechte Österreich* 2019: 4). The second framing convention is the Refugee Convention. Austria's signature in 1951, six years after the end of the Second World War, created a legal basis for refugees⁴ in Austria. According to the protocol of 1967, the spatial and temporal restrictions that only European refugees were included were lifted. After the amended Refugee Convention, a refugee is a person who is outside the country of his or her nationality (or outside the country of principal residence) and has a well-founded fear of persecution for religion, nationality, race (ethnicity), membership of a particular social group or political opinion. In these cases, the protection of the persons' own country cannot be claimed, or the person cannot return to the country of origin due to persecution (Art. 1 Refugee Convention 1951). Thus, if a mother flees with her child from a war zone due to a lack of protection, but herself is not politically involved in the war, does not belong to a specific ethnic group, and does not practice the religion that is predominantly lived locally, she and her child are not considered a refugee (Glawischnig 2018:23).⁵ In addition, the convention also includes the principle of family unity. However, there are many obstacles in the implementation of family reunification in Austria, such as a long waiting period before families can see each other (six to 12 months) and additional costs. Some children cannot see their parents for years and for only two percent of all unaccompanied minors, family reunification is feasible. In this regard, the *Netzwerk Kinderrechte Österreich* (2019) emphasizes that family reunification procedures should be "benevolent, humane and expedited" in the sense of Article 10 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (*Netzwerk Kinderrechte Österreich*, 2019:46-47).

As for the European level, when Austria became a member of the European Union in 1995, it had to harmonize national law with EU law in general and work towards the development of common European policies, with asylum being one such policy area since 1999 (European Commission 2014). Thus, at the European level, other important legal agreements shape the asylum system in Austria. These are the European Convention on Human Rights (1950) and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000), which regulate the right to subsidiary protection. Whether the requirements for subsidiary protection status under the EU guidelines are met is to be examined only if asylum-seekers are not granted refugee status according to the Geneva Refugee Convention and thus the status of persons entitled to

³ These include the right to protection and care, the right to personal contact with both parents, the prohibition of child labour, the right to consideration of the child's will, the right to protection from all forms of violence and special protection for children with disabilities.

Online: <https://www.wien.gv.at/menschen/30jahrekinderrechte/un-kinderrechtskonvention.html> (22.02.2021 9:09)

⁴ In order to avoid misunderstandings, the terms refugee and asylum seeker/asylum applicant should be clearly separated. "Refugee" means in the following that a person has already received a legally binding positive decision of asylum. While the term "asylum seeker" or "asylum applicant" should clearly refer to people in the asylum procedure.

⁵ Under the European Convention on Human Rights, however, she can be granted subsidiary protection and thus gets a temporary stay. Accordingly, there are children who have fled, who are recognized refugees and those who need subsidiary protection from a legal perspective (Glawischnig 2018:23)

asylum. Subsidiary protection shall be granted if the protection-seeker is at a real risk of violation of the right to life, prohibition of torture, or prohibition of the death penalty in his/her country of origin, or if his/her life or immunity is seriously threatened as a civilian by indiscriminate violence in the context of an international or internal conflict (European Convention on Human Rights 1950). In addition, Austria also ignores several EU agreements, e.g. the European "Directive laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum-seekers in the Member States" (Reception Directive), which stipulates in Article 15 that 'effective' access of asylum-seekers to the labor market must be provided if the procedure duration of 9 months for asylum applications is exceeded. Austria maintains a complete ban on work - the only exception to this is access for apprentices up to 25 years of age in shortage occupations and seasonal workers in tourism and agriculture. Although the average duration of first instance proceedings in Austria was 16 months in 2017, all access to the labor market remained closed except for the two exceptions mentioned above (European Parliament 2018). Austria also rejected the signing of the UN migration pact, because it is emphasized that Austria wants to decide sovereignly on the admission of migration. In this context, it is stressed that a human right to migration, as highlighted by the Pact, is alien to the Austrian legal system. Thus, the creation of the category of "migrant", which does not exist under international law, is rejected by Austria. Besides, a dilution of the distinction between legal and illegal migration, as made by the Pact, is rejected. Furthermore, Austria rejects the facilitation of family reunification and the improved integration into the labor market (Die Presse 2018). The right-wing conservative government at the time also legitimized the non-signing with the argument that the UN Migration Pact was in "diametrical" contradiction to the government program (Der Standard 2018).

At the national level, the "asylum law" (*Asylgesetz 2005*) was passed in 2005 under a right-wing conservative government (called Schüssel II, the prime minister was Wolfgang Schüssel from the Christian conservative Austrian People's Party ÖVP). The asylum law regulates the conditions for obtaining international protection. The asylum procedure is based on the Refugee Convention (1951, 1967), the European Convention on Human Rights (1958), the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000), the EU procedural guidelines (2013), and the "asylum law" (2005). As Figure 3 illustrates the process begins with the questioning of the person who arrived by an official of the Federal Office of Immigration and Asylum (*Bundesamt für Fremdenwesen und Asyl, BFA*). The official verifies if there are grounds of persecution and if the applicant has the right to asylum in Austria or subsidiary protection. Furthermore, the applicant's escape route and the reasons for escape are checked, fingerprints are taken and compared with the European database (Eurodac-system). The BFA is the only authority responsible for the asylum procedure, as well as for return matters, basic care, and decisions on humanitarian residence, alien police matters, detention pending deportation, and the issuance of travel documents. It was established in 2014 within the Ministry of Interior and replaced the former Federal Asylum Office (*Bundesasylamt*) (European Asylum Support Office 2014: 59). If the BFA decides that Austria is not responsible in the first place, the person receives a green card and is during the admission procedure limited to the district of the *Erstaufnahmestelle, EAST* (care center). In the case that an applicant has already applied for asylum in another Dublin state the Dublin III procedure

comes into force and thus, Austria is not responsible and deportation becomes possible. However, if the applicant is underage or has family members in Austria, Austria is responsible. In case that Austria is in charge of the applicant, the applicant receives a white card (residence permit card) and is admitted to a basic services accommodation. The situation is similar when Austria is responsible in the first place. In the case of Austria's direct responsibility after the applicant's arrival, he/she is admitted to a distribution center. From there, the applicant is taken to a basic services accommodation of the nine federal provinces and also receives a white card until the asylum procedure is completed (Asylkoordination 2019:1-2).⁶

⁶ There are seven locations for distribution centers in Austria: Upper Austria (Bad Kreuzen), Vienna (Nussdorfer Straße, responsible for Vienna and Burgenland), Lower Austria (Traiskirchen), Salzburg (Gaisberg), Tyrol (Innsbruck, responsible for Tyrol and Vorarlberg), Styria (Fehring) and Carinthia (Ossiach). Online: https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20150717_OTS0034/neues-konzept-der-grundversorgung-verteilerquartiere-nehmen-arbeit-auf (22.02.2021 10:57)

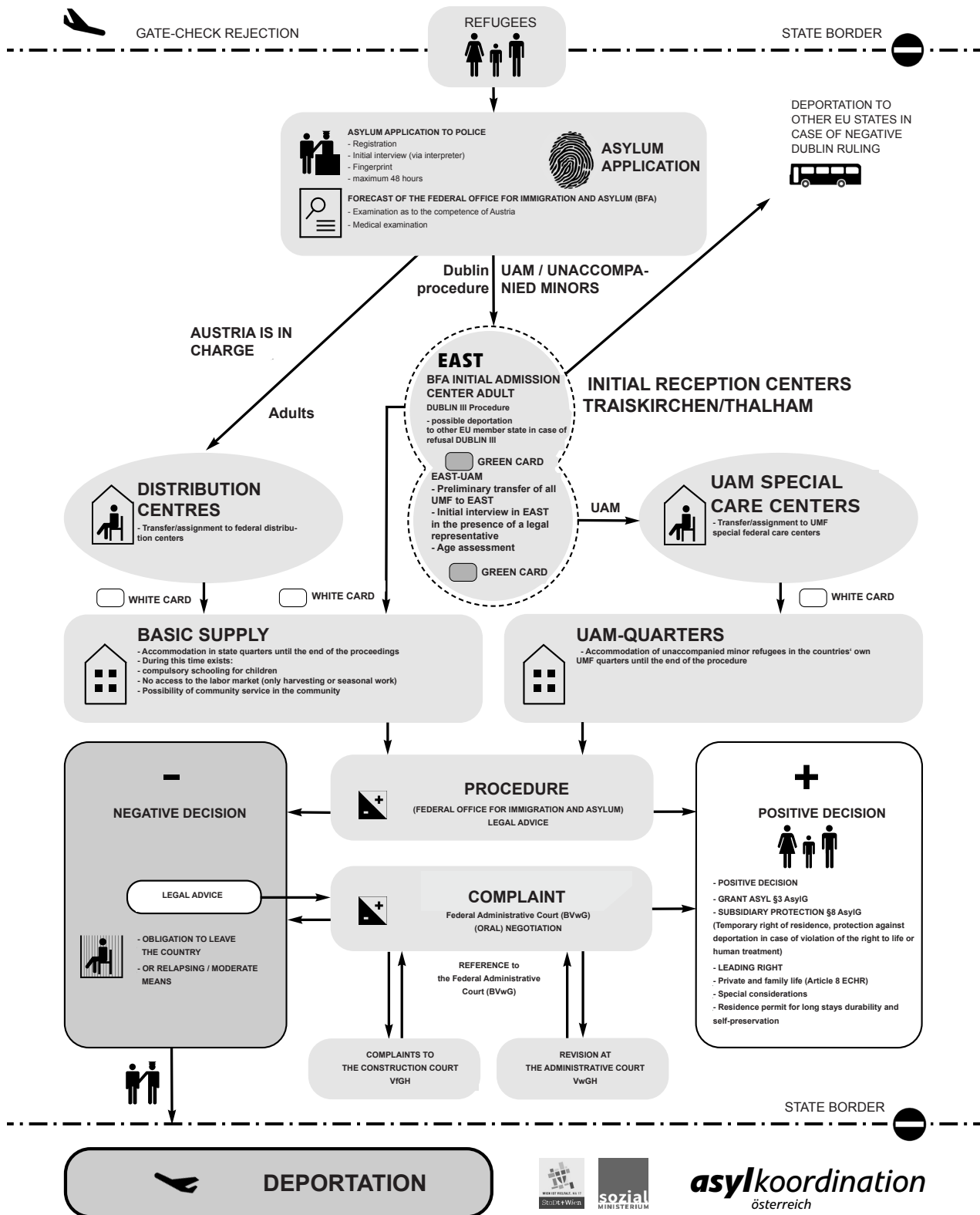


Figure 3: Asylum procedure since 2015; Source: Asylkoordination (Author's translation)

In the basic services accommodation, the asylum procedure continues with an interview with a *BFA* official about the reasons for leaving the country of origin, the *BFA* examines whether the conditions for recognition as a refugee or subsidiary protection are met.

The basic services for asylum seekers are mostly regulated at the *Länder* level. The “basic supply agreement” (*Grundversorgungsvereinbarung Bund-Länder 2004*) regulates the division between the Federal Government and the *Länder*. Each *Land*, in turn, has its own “basic supply law”. The ratio to the resident population of the province is most significant for the distribution rate. While some *Länder* do not meet the quotas, others (such as Vienna, Lower Austria, and Upper Austria) exceed them (Koppenberg 2014:38). The distribution also considers family relationships, vulnerable single mothers and minors, and special ethnic groups (§2 Abs. 2 Grundversorgungsgesetz-Bund). Since the amendment of the asylum law in 2017, people who are in the asylum proceedings cannot change their place of residence to another *Land* (§ 15c AsylG 2005, Wohnsitzbeschränkung). The “Vienna basic supply law” (*Wiener Grundversorgungsgesetz*) was passed in 2004 (last amended in 2010). All persons in basic supply are granted health insurance, are medically examined, and receive nursing care when needed. Counseling is also offered with the inclusion of interpreters for orientation in Austria and voluntary return. In addition, transport costs to authorities are covered. For school-age children and adolescents, travel costs to school are covered and school materials are provided (Grundversorgung in Österreich 2020, Leistungen). The costs for this kind of organized accommodations are paid by the respective *Land*.

There are two different models of accommodation in basic services: individual housing and organized housing. Due to the specific situation, it can be assumed that most asylum applicants first live in organized facilities before switching to individual housing. In principle, the “Vienna Social Fund” (*Fonds Soziales Wien*, FSW) is responsible for administrative processing in Vienna. However, individual housing is handled by catholic-oriented Caritas Vienna. An adult person receives 215 Euros per month for food, minors receive 100 Euro. They also get 150 Euro per individual and 300 Euro per family monthly for renting an apartment (Grundversorgung in Österreich 2018, Wien). Furthermore, they receive clothing and health insurance. The second type, organized housing, includes a place to live, care, meals, pocket money, clothing assistance, and health insurance (Fonds Soziales Wien 2020). The daily rate in organized housing is 21 Euros. 5,50 Euros of this amount will be used as food allowance per day. The residents receive 40 Euros pocket money per month (Grundversorgung in Österreich 2018, Wien). Generally, asylum seekers are beneficiaries of basic supply services until their asylum procedure has been legally concluded. Afterward, they can continue to receive benefits for up to four months (Grundversorgung in Österreich 2020).

However, in general, the duration of the asylum procedure is quite variable. A supplementary report by the *Netzwerk für Kinderrechte* (2019) speaks of a decision period of 15 months for asylum proceedings. The current governing coalition between the Austrian People's Party (*Österreichische Volkspartei*, ÖVP) and the Green Party (*Die Grünen*) wants to reduce the duration of proceedings to six months (government program 2020-2024:141).

According to the Asylum Information Database (AIDA), the general duration of an asylum procedure in Austria is between six and fifteen months. In addition, many asylum seekers had to wait over a year until they were invited to the first personal interview (AIDA 2016:4-6).

During the asylum procedure, several possible residence statuses are available with different outcomes: firstly, the person can be granted asylum according to the Refugee Convention. However, since the amendment of the "asylum act" (2016) in Austria "temporary asylum" (*Asyl auf Zeit*) limits the asylum status to three years. Only if the country of origin is still considered insecure after this period, the temporary status is changed into an unlimited one. This temporary status is linked to unrestricted access to the labor market. Secondly, asylum seekers might be granted "subsidiary protection", which is valid for one year. After this period the status "subsidiary protection" can be extended up to two years through a further application. Again, this is only possible under unchanged circumstances in the country of origin. A person with a subsidiary protection status has access to the labor market, but limited access to social benefits. Thirdly, asylum seekers can get humanitarian residency after an examination of family and private ties according to the European Convention on Human Rights (Art. 8). Therefore, close family relationships with people with residence permits, the degree of integration, the length of stay, language skills, and the possibility of employment are considered. This status can be granted for one year and then a change to the "settlement permit"⁷ is possible (AsylKoordinaten 2019:3). If all these decisions are negative, the person must leave Austria voluntarily within fourteen days or appeal against the decision.⁸ However, it is possible to file an appeal with the Federal Administrative Court (*Bundesverwaltungsgericht*), where the person can be invited to a hearing. Nevertheless, often the appeal cannot be filed in time, due to lack of information (lawyer on vacation, wrong email address, etc.). In any case, legal advice will be provided free of charge or a lawyer can be called in as legal representation (AsylKoordinaten 2019:3). If again the decision for asylum is negative, the asylum seeker may again file a complaint with the Administrative Court (*Verwaltungsgerichtshof*). Persons whose application for international protection has been rejected by a final decision are required to leave for their country of origin. If this obligation to leave voluntarily is not complied with, the person will be forcibly 'removed' (removal is defined here as the enforcement of the obligation to return, i.e. the physical transport from the member state (International Organization for Migration 2017: 13) by the Province Police Directorate (*Landespolizeidirektion*) (Bundesministerium für Inneres).

The number of returnees (including deportations as well as voluntary departures and returnees) in Austria has increased in recent years, even though there are fewer asylum applications (International Organization for Migration 2017: 18). Thus, the number of people placed in immigration detention also more than tripled between 2015 and 2017 (from 1,436 to 4.627) (Bundesministerium für Inneres 2018). According to former Interior Ministry

⁷ The Settlement and Residence Act defines legal residence possibilities in Austria and is to be distinguished from the right of asylum.

⁸ Even if a complaint is made, the person must still go to a return counselling service (AsylKoordinaten 2019:3)

Herbert Kickl, this increase in detention was due to an increased emphasis on return and removal. In the government program 2017-2022 it is emphasized "there is no place for illegal migration, which mostly takes place under abuse of the right of asylum. We will therefore take steps to make the asylum system more efficient and ensure the consistent repatriation of rejected asylum-seekers" (Regierungsprogramm 2017-2022: 28). Nevertheless, in this context, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) urged Austria to use detention as a last resort, for the shortest possible period and only when necessary and proportionate. Non-custodial measures should be given priority and an individualized risk assessment should be carried out when deciding on detention. OHCHR also recommended that the country amend its laws and practices to ensure that children, including accompanied children, are not placed in immigration detention and that authorities instead find alternatives to detention for the entire family (Global Detention Project 2020: 8).

A so-called family procedure covers the asylum applications of families with children. However, each family member gets an individual notification of the decision. If the applicant for asylum has a minor child, the application is automatically valid for both (no matter where the child is located in Austria). If one family member has the requirements for international protection the other family members receive the same status of protection. Family members are legally speaking minors, heterosexual marriage partners, if they were married before the asylum application, and people in a civil partnership. This definition excludes adult siblings, uncles, aunts, and grandparents. Each person of the latter groups receives his or her asylum process. The birth of a child after a couple's application must be reported within two weeks to the BFA. Then the child's application for asylum is valid and the court awards the child the same status as his or her parents (AsylG 2005, BFA-Verfahrensgesetz). Family members outside of Austria can request the right of entry (family unification) if they apply within three months after the reference person in Austria achieved asylum status. Therefore, they must apply for it in an embassy of Austria. As not all countries have an Austrian Embassy, difficulties regarding deadlines and travel costs might occur. Furthermore, according to the above-mentioned definition, siblings who have reached the age of majority are not considered family members and thus must stay in the country of origin. If the request is granted the family members can come to Austria and apply for asylum within the family procedure. These persons can receive the same protection status as their reference person. If they apply to the reference person three months after asylum was granted, they must find their accommodation, health insurance and must prove that they have enough income. Family members of people with subsidiary protection status can apply after three years for the right of entry. Consequently, a person must have received subsidiary protection at the age of fourteen years at the most to remain a minor after the three years so that family members can join him or her. The family members also must find suitable accommodation, must have health insurance, and must prove their income (Familienvorfahren 2020). If no one in the family is granted residence, the entire family will be deported.

Main concepts, goals, and instruments

With the right-wing conservative government between the *Österreichische Volkspartei* (Austrian People's Party, ÖVP), and the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (Freedom Party of Austria, FPÖ), since 2017 changes have been implemented in the asylum system. As a response to the so-called 'refugee crisis' of 2015-2016, the government focussed on increased foreign missions and EU border control. In the context of development work, incentives to leave one's own country of origin should be reduced through 'aid on the spot' (government program 2017-2022). Altogether, the public discourse links asylum and questions of internal security. As Jef Huysmans (2000) states there is an ongoing process of securitization that forces migration into the discursive realm of 'national security'. Migration is still framed as a 'security threat' (Bigo 2002) as well as a threat to 'law and order', to the economy, culture, and social cohesion. Thus, Austria's 'cultural traditions' should be preserved, the right to asylum should be limited in time and the formation of 'parallel societies' should be prevented. Closely related to the process of securitization in Austria is the split between 'irregular' or 'illegal' migration and refugees. A decrease in 'illegal' migration is to be achieved primarily by combating traffickers and smugglers. The term "economic refugee" (*Wirtschaftsflüchtling*) assumes that refugees come to Austria because of the poor economic situation in their country of origin and not due to persecution. Moreover, refugees are seen to endanger the prosperity of the Austrian society and the Austrian social system. Here, on the one hand, the various causes of flight are not taken into consideration, and on the other hand, "economic refugee" is a term with rather negative connotations (Wiessböck 2019:118). This distinction creates fear and xenophobia within the country. In addition, refugees are mostly perceived as Muslims,⁹ which leads to the fear of an alleged cultural infiltration of the majority population (Aschauer, Gann, and Stöllinger 2019:100-101). Furthermore, the program claims that European Union regulations from 'above' should have less influence on national politics and 'illegal' migration should be prevented (government program 2017-2022). This is related to the fear of losing Austrian sovereignty.¹⁰ Chancellor Sebastian Kurz (ÖVP) acknowledged during the right-wing conservative coalition with the FPÖ that Austria is an immigration country and that qualified migrants are a necessity for the country. However, he demands that the government should actively manage migration and decide on who shall be allowed to enter the country and who shall not (Vorarlberg Online 2018).

In the current legislative period (since 2020) the government coalition between the ÖVP and the Greens, kept some measures of the previous government period in place, such as the reduction of refugees, EU external protection, the reduction of 'illegal' migration, and a 'return policy'. Chancellor Kurz (ÖVP) stated that it is possible to protect both "climate and borders" (Presse 2020) – to refer to the contested issue between the two governing parties.

⁹ The term Muslims here refers primarily to the majority population's idea of Muslims. As Filzmaier and Perlot (2017) showed, "the Muslims" do not exist as a uniform group, online: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/databases/anti-muslim-hatred/node/4211> (last accessed on 20.01.2021 at 13:11)

¹⁰ This is one reason why the Austrian Government rejected the UN migration pact 2018, online: <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000090390933/oesterreich-zieht-sich-aus-globalem-uno-migrationspakt-zurueck> (last accessed on 02.12.2020 at 10:36)

However, the process of securitization has not been curtailed under the new government coalition. Migration and asylum continue to be negotiated as security issues. In addition, the acceleration of asylum procedures is not fulfilled yet. As already mentioned, the duration of the asylum procedure varies considerably. While there are reports that the procedures take up to 15 months (Netzwerk Kinderrechte Österreich 2019), in the government program the duration of the procedure was limited to six months (government program 2020-2024:141). Furthermore, statistical data on how long the procedures take are not publicly available. It can be assumed that waiting for a decision and the lack of access to the labor market during this time is associated with unrest and uncertainty and could have serious consequences for the person's health and well-being.¹¹ Furthermore, most likely asylum seekers do not file complaints regarding the duration of the procedure, as this could hurt the outcome. Such a complaint would also transfer the proceedings to a higher instance and deprive the asylum seeker of a chance to further appeal. Besides that, a long waiting time results in the process of settling. For young people, an obligation to leave the country after years in Austria can mean being torn from their social and educational networks.

Recent debates on the right to asylum are triggered by the deportation of five children and their families. Especially the twelve-year-old girl named Tina, who was born and raised in Austria, became visible in the media. Her mother is from Georgia and applied for asylum in Austria several years ago (Falter 2021). Tina's mother's country of origin is considered a 'safe country'. The asylum procedure took several years, during which Tina made friends and went to school. Nevertheless, the family has been deported. When asked whether humanitarian residence rights could have been granted in this case, the Minister of the Interior, Karl Nehammer (ÖVP), replied that it was a decision of the Constitutional Court (ORF 2021). Referring to this, the *Asylkoordination* speaks of the need for a new right to stay and a change in the legal situation for children born in Austria (Asylkoordination 2021). Moreover, the length of the asylum procedure and the timing of the deportation during a global pandemic are criticized. According to the Minister of the Interior Nehammer, the best interests of the child have been examined and he blames primarily the girl's mother for putting Tina in this situation (ORF 2021). The deportation of the five children has led to an internal coalition crisis between the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) and the Greens – with still an open outcome (Salzburger Nachrichten 2021). But other children also experience similar things as Tina. Media reports on the five-year-old child Lea and on Sona and Ashot, who had been living in Austria for seven years (Falter 2021).

¹¹ Asylum seekers are only allowed to work in harvest or seasonal employment, or to perform a non-profit activity with a low wage of 3-5 euros per hour (Asylkoordination Österreich, Arbeitsmarktzugang 2020). Moreover, it is also possible to work as a freelancer. online: <http://www.asyl.at/de/themen/arbeitsmarktzugang/> (last accessed on 22.01.2021 at 12:24)

Good Practices and initiatives (GO and NGO)

In general, participation in the regular school system by asylum-seeking children can be understood as a good practice (§ 1 Schulpflichtgesetz 1985). The children, therefore, attend public schools and receive free school materials. In the school context, initiatives such as "mother tongue instruction" (*muttersprachlicher Unterricht*), which was introduced as early as the 1970s to prepare the children of guest workers for a return to their countries of origin (Hkdc 2011), help asylum-seeking children. "Mother tongue instruction" is part of the regular school system and can be attended voluntarily across all types of schools and classes. All pupils who grow up multilingually can take advantage of this offer (BMBWF 2018).

Another good practice is the association *Kinderfreunde* ('Children's friends'), which offers a wide range of services from infant care to park care and school afternoon care, parents' evenings, and courses. In connection with migration and asylum the projects "friends", "Nightingale" and "Connect" are particularly worth mentioning. "Friends" is an intercultural children, youth, and family center. The focus is on the inclusion of different ethnic groups and the promotion of intercultural dialogue. In addition, children and young people are assisted free of charge with questions about school, careers, or finding work. Besides, there is also a girls' room and a boys' project in which health, sex education, violence, and addiction prevention are addressed.¹² The project "Nightingale" is based on a concept from Malmö, a pupil mentoring concept, and has been implemented since 2010. Students with a migration background are accompanied by university students once a week. The aim is to learn from each other and to promote educational motivation (*Kinderfreunde* 2015). In 2015, the project "Connect" was launched and offers childcare for asylum-seeking children. The supervisors pursue a creative approach, for instance by learning German through play, playing theater together, or doing handicrafts. In addition, the *Kinderfreunde* are also active in basic services accommodations. In cooperation with the basic services accommodations, the *Kinderfreunde* offers learning groups and leisure activities. In some basic services accommodations, the *Kinderfreunde* organizes a "learning week" for asylum-seeking children. The goal is to find fun in learning, exchange ideas, and also have a space to play.

Other good practices are initiated by the association "Vielmehr für Alle" (Rather for all). Part of the association is the PROSA project, which offers basic education and compulsory school-leaving courses for young people with refugee or migration experience. Learning spaces should be a space where the emotional consequences of flight have a place and individual confidants and buddy programs are available (*Vielmehr für Alle* 2021). Another project is the Prosa Cultural Centre, which is an open meeting space where events and celebrations take place. In addition, the association "Vielmehr für Alle" also supports the project "Flüchtlinge Willkommen" (Refugees Welcome), which assists in finding individual housing (*Flüchtlinge Willkommen* 2021). There are also initiatives of the *Diakonie* to help asylum seekers and refugees in their search for housing (*Diakonie* 2021).

¹² The information was provided by *Kinderfreunde* 25.5.2021

Implementation of a child-centred approach

Asylum-seeking children receive housing as part of basic care, money for food and leisure activities, they receive medical care, and they can go to school. Thus, asylum-seeking children are largely secured in purely existential terms. On the other hand, although existential needs are secured in Austria, this does not at the same time mean that children are enabled to lead a self-determined life or to participate fully in social life. The restrictive asylum laws and policies – in short, restrictions that impact access to important socially relevant resources – lead to a lack of self-determination and participation in social life. Following the suggestion of Gornik (2020) it would be necessary to find a balance between the protection and the participation of children in the policy-making process (Gornik 2020: 539).

For instance, asylum-seeking children and their families are not allowed to travel due to their ongoing asylum process; they are not issued "convention passports" or "foreign passports". However, even with a foreign passport, they would not be allowed to travel to their country of origin (Bundesministerium für Inneres/b). Thus, they have limited options to see their relatives, and as long as the asylum process takes – but also until they are no longer considered a refugee once asylum has been granted – they are not able to visit their country of origin. In addition, family reunification, which in itself takes a long time, is made even more difficult by the circumstance of the lack of asylum status. In this context, *Netzwerk Kinderrechte Österreich* (2019) highlights that the family reunification process should be benevolent, humane and expeditious (Netzwerk Kinderrechte Österreich 2019: 46-47) and thus children seeking asylum should at least be given the chance to be reunited with their nuclear family.

Besides, precarity is produced by an educational policy characterized by the introduction of disciplinary measures such as German language support classes. (*Deutschförderklasse*). The segregation of the children from the regular class into the German language support classes denies the asylum-seeking children, the proper learning of the German language, but also the getting to know of 'locals' (MiCREATE 2020: 25).

Also, as mentioned by Koppenberger (2014), neither the federal government nor the *Länder* define a minimum floor space per person in a basic services accommodation in Austria (Koppenberger 2014: 48). Accordingly, children find better or worse living conditions depending on where the family is accommodated and thus each child has different perspectives (Netzwerk Kinderrechte Österreich 2019:50).

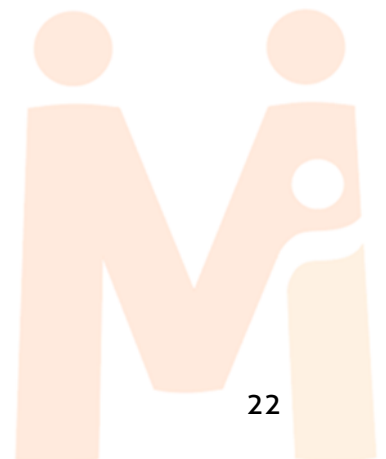
The recent deportation of five children to their countries of origin also does not testify to the protection and participation of children in the political decision-making process regarding the right of deportation. The deportation took place in the middle of the night, with police dogs and several police officers (ORF 2021). Here it remains unclear to what extent the best interests of the child were guaranteed during the deportation process.

Here it can be concluded that existing asylum policies do not take into account the different needs of children and therefore precarity towards asylum-seeking children is produced.

Reflection and conclusion

Looking at the asylum system in Austria, or more precisely on the structural and legal framework in the asylum system, it becomes clear that the asylum system can be classified as restrictive, with the most important task being to prevent 'illegal' migration. Restrictive asylum policies result, among other things, in the absence of integration measures for asylum-seekers. Moreover, the asylum system is based on 'efficiency', which means that anyone who does not meet the requirement for asylum or subsidiary protection should be deported as soon as possible. Thus, the number of detentions and deportations in Austria is increasing even though the number of asylum applications is decreasing.

Concerning asylum-seeking children, the policy analysis shows that some asylum policies, e.g. family reunification, lack a child-centered approach and thus do not sufficiently address the well-being and needs of asylum-seeking children. Here it is important to understand that children's life experiences, as well as desires and hopes, are shaped/influenced by socio-political processes in which they are embedded. Therefore, it is important to ensure the participation of asylum-seeking children in the policy-making process to promote their well-being.



3. Qualitative research

3.1 Methodology design

Research site			
	Type of research site	Location (urban/rural)	The number of total migrants
RS1	Basic care accommodation	Urban	Approximately 50 children and 25 adults
Selection criteria of the site and procedure (gatekeepers)			
RS1	Via the organization <i>Kinderfreunde</i> ¹³ and personal contact to staff		
Description of location(s) and/or institution(s).			
RS1	Two institutions one in the city center one outside of the city		
Period of data collection & number of days at the research site			
RS1	Fieldwork began in March 2020 and continued from July to September 2020 (the many interruptions were due to the Covid 19 pandemic) until July 2021		
Brief description of "entering" the research site			
RS1	Before starting the participant observation, an informal meeting was arranged with the social workers working in the facility to get general information about the accommodation and also to get useful sensitive advice for working with children. We also contacted a child psychologist for help in working with traumatic children.		
Number and roles of researchers participating in the process			
RS1	A total of three researchers, two of whom spent many days with the children in the accommodation and also conducted participant observations, and interviewers.		
How respondents (migrants) were selected			
RS1	At the beginning of our research, we accompanied the <i>Kinderfreunde</i> at different activities, such as playing together on a playground, and so we came into contact with many children and the children had the opportunity to get to know us better. The children we met during the activities were later selected for an interview.		
How the respondents (migrants) were approached			
RS1	In many cases, after spending a lot of time with the children, we asked them if they would be interested in talking to us. But also the staff asked around the accommodation and told us about children who were interested in talking to us. We then visited them personally and asked them if they would like to do an interview with us.		
How the research was facilitated by staff at the research site?			
RS1	The staff helped us to find interview partners by informing the children and families about our research. They also gave us a lot of additional information about the accommodation and the children and families in informal conversations. They also assisted us by organizing rooms for the interviews, giving the consent forms to the families, and helping us translate the consent form and explain the project.		
Difficulties encountered and ways to overcome (like getting access during empirical work, social closure, etc.)			
RS1	Unfortunately, the research was limited due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The fieldwork had to be repeatedly interrupted due to the pandemic. First in March until July and then in October - after that no more fieldwork was done due to the recurring		

¹³ For more information: <https://wien.kinderfreunde.at/Bundeslaender/Wien/Ueber-uns>

	<p>lockdowns. This repeatedly interrupted participant observation and thus getting to know the children, which made it difficult to build a long-term relationship with the children.</p> <p>But, all in all, it was surprisingly rather easy to connect with the children. Despite the many interruptions, they were always open and trusting. Moreover, the assumption that it might be difficult to communicate with them due to the language barrier turned out to be wrong - most of the children speak German well since they have been living/waiting in Austria for so long. Still, some children had difficulties in fully understanding the interview questions, although this does not have to correlate with a lack of language skills. During the interview, it was sometimes also rather difficult to get much content, although among other things an art-based approach, i.e. creative and psychological methods such as drawing family members as animals, was used. Talking to the parents was more difficult due to the language barrier, however, the children always helped as translators. This simplified the subsequent conduct of the interviews. The fact that initiatives like weekly play activities are organized by the <i>Kinderfreunde</i> and their social workers in the accommodation also enabled participant observation as well as the establishment of contact with several children at the same time. Also since many external social workers spend time with the children, they are used to "strangers". Moreover, the employees who are employed in the accommodation were very helpful and supportive, e.g. when it came to getting the consent forms back from the parents after signing them.</p> <p>Nonetheless, since many children are traumatized by the often dangerous and exhausting journey to Austria, many considerations were made in advance that work with traumatized children requires. In this context, a child psychologist was contacted and the questionnaire was gone through. No questions were asked about the journey so that a reinforcement of the traumatization should be prevented. The psychologist's advice was not to ask further questions about the escape until the children began to talk about it of their own accord - this was taken to heart during the interviews.</p>
Additional descriptions and explanations	
RS1	

Short description of the sample

	Nr.	Date & duration (min)	Gender	Age	Country of birth ¹⁴	status
S1	Interview 1	29 min	m	10		Asylum seekers
	Interview 2	23 min	w	10		Asylum seekers
	Interview 3	14 min	m	13		Asylum seekers
	Interview 4	17 min	w	11		Asylum seekers
	Interview 5	17 min	w	13		Asylum seekers
	Interview 6	28 min	m & m	10 & 13		Asylum seekers
	Interview 7	19 min	w	8		Asylum seekers

¹⁴ The accommodation has asked us not to provide the children's country of birth in order to maintain anonymity. Besides, we did not explicitly ask the children about their country of birth

Interview 8	23 min	w	12		Asylum seekers
Interview 9		m	13		Asylum seekers
Interview 10		w	9		Asylum seekers
Interview 11		w	11		Asylum seekers
Interview 12		w	12		Asylum seekers
Interview 13	112 min	w	13		Asylum seekers
Interview 14	112 min	w	17		Asylum seekers
Interview 15		w	16		Asylum seekers
Interview 16		w	15		Asylum seekers
Interview 17		w	13		Asylum seekers
Interview 18		m	10		Asylum seekers
Interview 19		m	7		Asylum seekers
Interview 20		w	12		Asylum seekers
Interview 21		m	17		Asylum seekers
Interview 22		m	12		Asylum seekers
Interview 23		w	17		Asylum seekers
Interview 24		m	14		Asylum seekers
Interview 25		w	9		Asylum seekers
Interview 26		w	10		Asylum seekers

4. Findings from participant observation

During the fieldwork, findings obtained through nonstandard, direct, and open observation, as well as informal conversations with social workers, such as with children and families, were recorded in a field diary. The findings are reported below.

4.1 Social dynamics

Description of physical environment

In the basic services accommodations, there are, on the one hand, apartments that have to be shared by two families. These apartments have two bedrooms, an anteroom, bathroom, and toilet, as well as a kitchen and living area. On the other hand, there are also smaller apartments in which only one family lives, which have one living/bedroom with kitchen, anteroom, bathroom, and WC. Approximately seven to ten people share only 80 square meters. In addition, there is a common living area as well as a garden – which is not available in every basic service accommodation – that offers space for children and adults. Here, the asylum-seeking children can play together and the older ones can participate in projects or courses. In addition, the basic services accommodations also house the office of the social workers. In general, the accommodation seemed bright and clean.

Another observation to be pointed out is that there are many posters in the accommodation that contain information where the asylum-seekers are addressed with the

word "clients". Here it becomes clear that although many of the residents consider their apartment as their home, the apartment does not really belong to them and they are supported but also controlled/observed by the institution, in the form of the social workers who have their office in the house. This is made clear by posters explaining how to behave during the Covid-19 pandemic or posters showing the money payout dates with a certain time and the amount of money the residents receive, e.g. 82,50€ lunch money. The most important poster represents the house rules in the basic services accommodation. Here it is pointed out that the stay in the accommodation is limited and that the residents do not have the right to choose their apartment unit. It is also mentioned that they are not allowed to have a toaster, for instance, and that smoking is also prohibited in the apartments. Furthermore, between 10 pm and 6 am there is night's rest and visitors are only allowed from 8 am to 10 pm. Accordingly, visitors are not allowed to sleep in the accommodation. In addition, if residents are absent from the accommodation for more than three days without excuse, they can be expelled from the accommodation. Consequently, if they want to sleep somewhere else, they must inform the social workers.

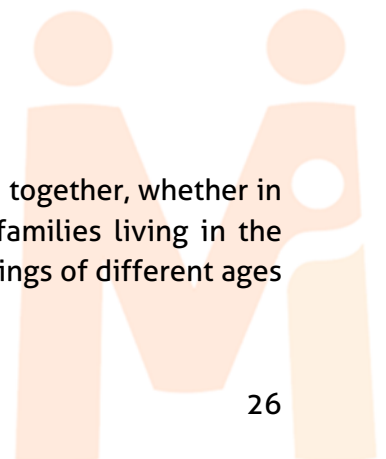
Interactions between migrants and personnel

In general, not much interaction between the social workers and the residents was observed during the study because all residents have their own apartments and do not spend much time in the common living area. However, residents have the opportunity to ask the social workers for help, e.g. for translations (the social workers speak Persian, Kurdish, and Turkish, among other languages). The questions were always answered very kindly and there was a lot of laughter together. In addition, some residents offered food for the social workers, so that overall a cordial atmosphere could be observed between the residents and the social workers.

However, also the regular apartment visits of the social workers could be observed during the study. The social workers have to check once a week whether the apartments of the asylum seekers are "clean" and not "destroyed". The asylum seekers are forced to let the social workers in and, upon request, to better clean and, if necessary, renovate the apartment. Although the residents were not surprised when the social workers entered the apartments, there was a tense atmosphere between the residents and the social workers during the inspection. In this context, the social workers mentioned that the children also witness these visits and are reminded by the visits that life in the home is not "normal."

Interactions between migrants

It could be observed that especially the siblings spent a lot of time together, whether in the apartment or for instance on a playground. Since most of the families living in the accommodation consist of many children, the children have many siblings of different ages



with whom they can play/talk. It was also observed that the older siblings looked after their younger siblings and were very protective towards them. However, there was also a lot of interaction among the families, especially among the children. The intensity of the interaction was often determined by whether the families/children spoke the same mother tongue or could communicate in German.

Especially in the interaction among the adults, it could be observed that the asylum-seeking children often acted as translators for their parents. The fact that the parents often speak less German than their children can be explained, among other things, by the fact that there is hardly any opportunity for them to participate in Austrian society. Here, as mentioned by the social workers, the children have more opportunities to participate in Austrian society and interact with "locals", for instance, through their compulsory school attendance.

Networking and identity categories

Since the children and families in the accommodation come from different parts of the world and therefore speak different languages, e.g. Urdu, Arabic, Russian, and many also do not speak 'proper' German, they lack a common language in which they can all communicate. Thus, in the context of the relationship between the adults in the accommodation, the main issue emphasized by the social workers was the internal conflicts in the accommodation. This is indicated, for instance, by a situation at a joint breakfast, where a woman emphasized that Kurdish names are "strange" to her, while a Kurdish family set next to her. Here it could be observed that more (cultural) differences among the asylum seekers were mentioned in the conversation instead of similarities, e.g. that Kurdish and Arabic food have different names, instead of emphasizing that the food is similar in some respects. The social workers also mentioned that they realized that the asylum seekers do not trust each other and do not inform each other about their asylum procedures. However, since the asylum seekers live so close to each other, they (unintentionally) receive a lot of information from each other.

4.2 Institutional procedures

Access to social support, health and legal protections

The three social workers in the accommodation support the asylum seekers when it comes to health problems and legal procedures. They arrange doctor's appointments and accompany the asylum seekers to visits when necessary. It should be noted, however, that the social workers do not speak all the languages of the residents. For instance, residents who speak Arabic, if they do not speak German, may be more difficult to assist because none of the social workers speak Arabic. Here, other families often help in the accommodation, but when it comes to particularly private matters, they probably do not always want to be shared with others.

Standards for the reception and accommodation of migrant children

As already mentioned, there are different types of apartments in the accommodations. They differ not only in size but also in whether a family has its apartment or has to share it. The larger the family, i.e. with many children, the higher the chance of being accommodated without a second family. However, there was one family with 'only' three children who had their own apartment with a roof terrace, while there were families with the same number of children who had to share the apartment with another family and did not have a roof terrace. So there are no standards for the accommodation of the families and therefore also for the migrant children.

Access to education and/or language training

In Austria, school is compulsory, so asylum-seeking children attend school every day during the week. Furthermore, the city of Vienna offers a summer camp during the vacations, where many of the children can learn German in the accommodation. There is also support from, for instance, the *Kinderfreunde*, who come once a week to do homework with the children. In addition, the social workers support the families and the children, for instance, with the registration in the school, school change, etc.

However, the children live in a kind of biotope of their own in the basic services accommodation, where on the one hand they do not have the opportunity to speak German 'properly' and on the other hand, they also have no place to learn due to the spatial confinement in the accommodation. Concerning educational disadvantages, it also became clear that children are socioeconomically disadvantaged as well. Asylum seekers living in basic services accommodation, receive €40 pocket money and a maximum of €200 per school year for school supplies for school children (Grundversorgungsinfo 2020b). With this small amount, it is difficult to finance tutoring, which is necessary for some children, or class trips and additional learning materials.

Contact with and integration in the local community

Regarding the location of the basic services accommodation, the social workers talked about the marginalization of the asylum-seekers. If one takes a closer look at the surroundings of the accommodation, the marginalization becomes particularly obvious: The basic services accommodation, like other accommodation of this kind, is located on the outskirts of Vienna, surrounded by industry, and consequently not green and family-friendly, with not many opportunities to participate in society, i.e. attending events, bars, restaurants. As a result, the asylum-seekers do not have the opportunity to get in touch with the 'local' community.

Another issue is that, since only asylum seekers live in the accommodation, there is hardly any contact with the Austrian population, which gives the asylum seeker the feeling of being outsiders in the Austrian society or part of a parallel society. Here, the asylum seekers experience segregation in combination with marginalization, since the accommodation is located in an industrial area outside of the city. Although some have lived in Austria for a long time and feel at home here and want to stay, the ongoing processes of segregation and marginalization constantly create the feeling that they do not belong to Austria, which generates precarity vis-à-vis the asylum seekers.

Access to child-friendly information

It could be observed that a lot of information, such as the Covid19 regulation, was translated into different languages and that there were also often pictures to accompany the information, which can contribute to a better understanding.

Access to rights and relevant procedures

No observations on access to rights and relevant procedures could be made.

Standards and good practices to restore family links and reunify families

No observations on family reunifications could be made.

Alternatives to detention

During the research, we found out that there are many efforts to prevent detention. Many volunteers make efforts to provide private housing and write letters of support that prevent detention. Nevertheless, the social workers told us that recently there have been more and more deportations, which take place in the middle of the night, without notice, by a special police unit. Here, social workers reported that families disappeared from one night to the next without being told, as staff, where the family would be sent.

Child-centred approach institutional support & assistance to migrant children

The children are embedded in networks of NGOs/volunteer work in Vienna. One example, as mentioned, are the *Kinderfreunde* that visit the accommodation regularly. Once a week they do homework together with the children and on another day they play together. They also go out with the children to various parks and organize trips. Due to the frequency of the visits of the *Kinderfreunde*, the children know the social workers and already connect with

them and trust them. In addition, they can ask them questions and get help. As could be observed, almost all children have always joined the activities of the *Kinderfreunde*, especially when it came to going to the park together.

In addition to the offers for children, the *Kinderfreunde* also organize a breakfast once a week for families, where women and children can get together and exchange their experiences.

The right to be heard and other participation rights

It was observed that the staff provide essential assistance in implementing the rights of the residents.

4.3 Differences in reception processes

Regarding the reception process of migrants in the accommodation, it could be observed once that an Arabic-speaking family arrived in the accommodation. Here, the social workers were faced with the challenge of communicating with the family, because, as already mentioned, no one speaks Arabic. With the help of another male resident who speaks Arabic, the family was then told that they could live here but would have to share their apartment with another family. However, the family, especially the mother, refused directly and were indignant about these circumstances. Fortunately, we happened to have a very nice Arabic-speaking female translator with us for the translation of the interviews we had planned that day, who then offered her help and explained to the family, with the instructions of the social workers, that this is a temporary solution until they receive an asylum decision. Together we went into the apartment and showed the family the advantages of the apartment. They became more and more satisfied and thanked the translator afterward, stressing that without her they would not have stayed. However, this statement shows that the communication problem leads to many misunderstandings and, above all, hinders the emotional bonding/understanding that is necessary given the fact that the newcomers are presented with a *fait accompli* in terms of sharing the apartment with people they do not know. Therefore, it would be important that social workers can be accompanied in these situations by a professional translator, who has the necessary sensitization on the topic of asylum and the support of families, especially children, in the asylum process in Austria.

In addition, the asylum seekers' country of origin and the Austrian authorities' assessment of what is considered a "safe" or "unsafe" country has an impact on the asylum procedure and thus on the length of stay in the accommodation. Accordingly, some families have already been living in the accommodation for years and are waiting for a decision, while others receive a decision within a very short time and are provided with a private apartment outside the accommodation.

5. Interviews with children in transition

In the following part, the results of the interview with asylum-seeking children are presented.

5.1 Institutional support & assistance

The respondents described the conditions in the accommodation as very positive compared to other previous accommodations - both in Austria and in other countries. One child, for instance, told: "So I had a school when I was in the camp, but it was bad. There you didn't even get money and only bad things. There was a house where there was food." (I1). Another also pointed out that their previous apartments were small and there was due to the small space always fights (I6). One interview explained that also in Bosnia the room they lived in was very small (I5) and another stressed that in another accommodation he and his family had only one room where six to seven people had to live, which was not nice (I8). They also highlighted that they did not like the fact that in previous accommodations their mother could not cook for them and that they did not like the food someone else made (I5).

Thus, they expressed that they like to live in the accommodation, especially in the apartment, which is perceived by the children as nice and big and where they can cook by themselves (I1, I2, I3, I5, I6, I8): "Yes, but I think the apartment is nice because there is space" (I1).

Nevertheless, some of the respondents would like to have more living space: "Much bigger (...) and two rooms (...) maybe. And three rooms maybe" (I6). One child told that since she sleeps in the same room with other siblings, she always wakes up when another sibling wakes up and that she cannot continue sleeping afterward (I2). Another one also mentioned that she and her other three sisters as well as the mother share a sleeping room. Her youngest sister is still a baby and cries a lot during the night, which often causes her to wake up (I9). Here, it can be assumed that the closures during the pandemic, which resulted in children having to spend much more time in the accommodation, only exacerbated the problem of crowding.

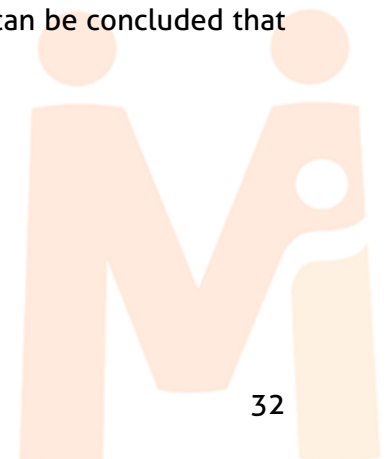
Besides, the children especially emphasized that they do not want to share the apartment with another family: "Because we also wanted when we/ when we take shower then we so nobody can open it and so with other family and want to open it or we didn't want to have any argument (...). And we just wanted to be alone. To study in peace and so" (I6). In this context, because some families had to move over time for various reasons in the accommodation itself, one child said that his mother is afraid to move in with another family, she would rather stay in the apartment where they live alone at the moment: "[M]y mother (...) but she is also afraid because this apartment is much nicer" (I1).

A lot of the children interviewed perceived the care provided by the social workers at the accommodation as positive, as they receive support and advice from them. They also seem to like them on a personal level (I1, I5, I6), which can be indicated, for instance, by the following statements: "They are just nice. They greet us, for example. Yeah, yeah and I think it's cool here because always in every Christmas, every Christmas like this (...) every December they give us something. First of all, they ask us what we want and I think that's great. And then we come up and we all share the gift. I think that's really great" (I6). Also because the social workers speak other languages besides German, some of the children have the opportunity to talk in their mother tongue with them: "Yes, because I, uh, can't speak German. I say, can you tell me exactly in Kurdish? In Kurdish, yes" (I5).

In the interviews also some children spoke of experiences with discrimination and racism in Austria. There seems to be a particular problem with the neighbors of the basic services accommodation. One child told that a neighbor always scolds and calls the police, e.g. because he does not want them to barbecue or because they are too loud. In this context, the child told that they cannot do anything against him because he is Austrian. The same child concluded that the neighbors are against them/criticizes them because they are not from Austria and emphasized that he finds this unfair: "(...) [a]nd when we go into the garden, they say they're going to call the police or something" (I3). Another also claimed that another neighbor or maybe the same one insults his mother because she wears a headscarf. However, he explained that it does not bother her because she is used to it (I10).

In addition to the basic services accommodation, some children also described the health care system in Austria as good in comparison to their country of origin or the country they stayed in during their flight. Two children, for instance, answered the question "What is the best in Austria?" with "The medicine" (I3, I4, I13), and another told that the hospitals in Bosnia were not good (I4). Besides, one child stressed that some of her relatives died in her country of origin because he got 'wrong' blood and died due to it (I5). Many of them noted that they have chronic illnesses in their families or emphasized that they receive regular medical treatment. In this context, they stated that they are "thankful for the good doctors in Austria" (I5).

However, there are also other institutions and organizations in Austria children are embedded, for example, sports clubs. One child explained that he regularly plays sports together with a coach in the stadium (I6). Another also mentioned a coach who helps him to become athletic (I3). The same child also stated that she and her family regularly attend a church where many people from her country of origin also attend. She went on to say that she has made many friends with the help of the church (I3). Thus, it can be concluded that some children are also embedded in the church as an institution.



5.2 Well-being, experiences of migration & life in transit

All the children who were interviewed live together with at least parts of their families in the accommodation. That some of them get along well with their family can be indicated, for instance, when the children told: "I love my mommy and daddy" (I2). Another child emphasized that he is happy when it is Mother's Day and Father's Day because then he can give them presents (I7). Another responded to the question "do you get along well with your family?" with a clear "yes" (I1). Nevertheless, the interviews also revealed that the children recognize their parents' sadness, fear, and despair and then develop likewise negative feelings: "I notice that (clears throat), my mom is a little sick and my dad is a little tired and my brother. And then I feel really bad (...)" (I8).

Besides, most children pointed out that they miss their family members (grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins) who are still traveling or have stayed in their country of origin. Many have not seen their relatives for years of waiting in Austria: "[A]nd because of that I can, I am sometimes sad and cry because they [the brothers] are away from me and miss things, yes then I am sad" (I8). They are missing their country of origin because relatives still live there (I2). One child stated that her father is still in her country of origin and that she misses him very much and therefore wants to go back (I16). Another highlighted: "I miss [them], but I talk to [them] on my cell phone" (I1). This statement shows that technology at least enables both children and their families to stay in touch with their relatives. A connection across national borders is made possible. In this context, nonetheless, the child emphasized that she is fine because her nuclear family (father, mother, and sisters) is with her in Austria (I4).

However, many of them have responsibilities that involve caring for relatives or translating and supporting their parents. One interviewee emphasized that he helps his father with a German course, reads with him, and teaches him German because his German is better than the fathers': "My father has a course and I do with him. So I read with him. (...) And yeah, we also teach our parents German and stuff" (I6).

Regarding the relationship between the asylum-seekers in the accommodation, some children told that they have many friends in the accommodation (I4, I8) and that also their families are friends with other families: "Yeah, I'm almost friends with all of them (...) [a]nd my mom knows (...) the family and we go and come to the house, yes" (I8). However, another child mentioned that he has not many friends in the accommodation because the other children are not in the same age as him (I10) and another child explained that making friends is also problematic because some "also do not understand German so well" (I1).

5.3 Models of migrant children's integration

Regarding the existing integration models in Austria, two girls from Georgia said that they would like to have more space in the apartments of the basic service accommodation. They

would also like more German courses for their parents. Overall, they said that they are satisfied with their lives and like Austria, which is why they would be happy to stay. They reported that they try hard in school. At the same time, they communicated that there is also some pressure to "do well" at school, as performance is seen as an indicator of how well they are integrated. This indicates that the two girls are aligned with the dominant performance-oriented discourse of integration. In the context of the asylum procedure "being integrated" can mean having a better chance of being allowed to stay. Especially if one comes from a "safe" country of origin, this can be important in the asylum process to prove one's integration. The girls shared, for instance, that they present their school reports when they talk to the authorities. Whether this is mandatory or done to prove integration is unclear. At the same time, it also happens that integrated people are deported, leaving uncertainty despite their efforts. The girls mentioned that they repeatedly experience other residents being taken away by the police and deported (I13, I14, I18, I25).

One good practice is having friends and other children or young people in the basic service accommodation. One girl shared that her friends give her great social and psychological support (I13).

5.4 School life

The children described positive experiences in everyday school life, especially in relation to teachers and classmates. Some of the interviewees mentioned, for instance, that they receive a lot of support from teachers and classmates in translating tasks or answering questions and therefore enjoy going to school (I1, I2, I3, I4, I15, I18, I19): "Yes, I have three teachers, they are so nice. And the one teacher explains everything to me because they can't, then other teachers help me. I don't understand, I say I don't understand and they say ok that's how it is" (I4). Here, some children also pointed out that they can communicate with their teacher in a language other than German. For instance in English or BCS¹⁵, since some of the children went to school in Bosnia or Serbia during their flight and thus can speak/understand BCS (I4).

One child, when asked how she feels, responded with "everything is good for me (...) because I go to school" (I4), another emphasizes "[t]he best thing in Vienna is (...) [t]he school" (I6), and one indicates that he was sad because "school was over" (I7). When asked if the children are happy to be in Austria, one child clarifies that "everything is good for me (...) because I go to school" (I4). Here, the important role of the school in these children's lives is emphasized once again. The positive image of school has to do, among other things, with the fact that the interviewees, as already written, have many friends at school: 'I love school (...), I have friends there and my teacher is all so sweet' (I4).

¹⁵ Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian

In particular, concerning the Covid-19 pandemic, children shared in the interviews, but also in informal conversations, that they were very unhappy that the school was closed (I1). One reason for this could be, among others, that the children see their friends at school and could not see them because of the closure. For instance, one child highlighted: 'I love school (...), I have friends there and my teacher is all so sweet' (I4) and another one "I also wanted to play with my friends. Because I had a cell phone, but it broke. (...) and then just the whole cell phone was broken. I couldn't talk on the phone anymore" (I1). The last quote indicates that the child suffered because she could not communicate with any of her friends during the first lockdown in Austria due to the broken cell phone.

On the other hand, the asylum-seeking children also referred to negative experiences, such as fears related to lack of language skills and thus having problems understanding/following lessons: "Yes, is very difficult because of German" (I2). The children also mentioned that it was especially at the beginning of their arrival hard to communicate, due to their lack of language skills and that it was in general hard to learn German: "So I was afraid. Yes, I certainly didn't understand German that well" (I1) (I3, I4, I18). However, many children pointed out that they want to improve their German skills and are thus motivated to learn: "Because of German, I don't know German so well and have bad grades. I need better" (I3) (I7). They also go to German courses "I also go German course this week yes I go. I'm going to learn German, so I like to go to the German course" (I4) as well as to summer schools (K6). Due to German courses and the support of teachers, they seem to be able to improve themselves: "Yes, because I didn't understand anything. They always talked to me and I just said yes and that was really boring for me, then I said why shouldn't I learn German, then I learned it really fast" (I8).

6. Conclusions and discussion

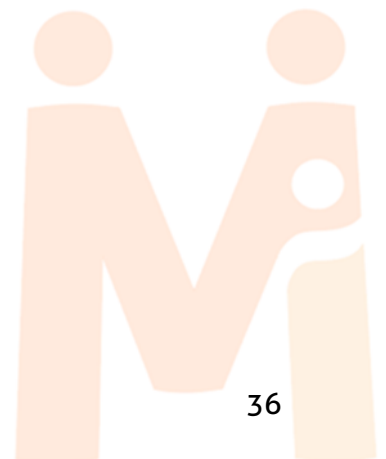
Looking at the asylum system in Austria, or more precisely on the structural and legal framework in the asylum system, it becomes clear that the asylum system can be classified as restrictive, with the most important task being to prevent 'illegal' migration. Restrictive asylum policies result, among other things, in the absence of integration measures for asylum-seekers. Moreover, the asylum system is based on 'efficiency', which means that anyone who does not meet the requirement for asylum or subsidiary protection should be deported as soon as possible. Thus, the number of detentions and deportations in Austria is increasing even though the number of asylum applications is decreasing. Also, sociopolitical processes towards asylum-seekers are exclusive rather than inclusive. The normalization of this restrictive, efficiency-oriented, and exclusive asylum policy is legitimized, among other things, by the construction of migrants as a 'threat' to Austrian society.

However, the policy analysis also shows that on the one hand, asylum-seekers in Austria are covered by basic services and receive accommodation, money for food and leisure activities, receive medical care and asylum-seeking children can attend school. Concerning asylum-seeking children, the interviews also revealed that children are embedded in various

institutions such as family, basic care, and the education system, and thus experience aspects of social security during a time of general uncertainty while they have to wait for their asylum decision. In the interviews, they talked a lot about their school friends, their supportive teachers, their doctors, the church they go to - in short, they talked about social relationships they have while waiting. Therefore, in purely existential terms, asylum-seeking children are largely secure.

On the other hand, existential security in Austria does not at the same time mean that the children are enabled to lead a self-determined life or to participate fully in social life. The restrictive asylum laws and policies, e.g. more difficult family reunification, disciplinary measures in the basic care accommodations or generally the conditions in the accommodations, insufficient financial resources, German language support class, and so on - in short, restrictions that affect the access to important socially relevant resources - lead to a lack of self-determination and participation in social life. Here it is important to understand that children's experiences of waiting, or more generally their life experiences as well as desires and hopes, are shaped/influenced by socio-political processes in which they are embedded. Thus the interviews also indicate that the children do not only wish for a positive asylum decision, they also wish to see relatives who are still in the country of origin and whom they have not seen for a long time, they wish for better German language skills to better keep up in school, they wish for more space in the accommodation or generally for a house of their own for themselves and their family to have more privacy. Besides, they suffer from the fear of not belonging and the fact of being excluded from many rights, they suffer from receiving minimal social benefits, they suffer from psychological stress and their parents feeling useless and unappreciated, and above all, they suffer from the lack of security and stability regarding their future.

It can be concluded that asylum policy does not take into account the different dimensions and thus effects of the long waiting period that asylum-seeking children have to "endure", thus producing precarity towards asylum-seeking children. Thus, asylum policies often lack a child-centered approach that takes into account the overall well-being and needs of asylum-seeking children, especially concerning social and emotional needs.



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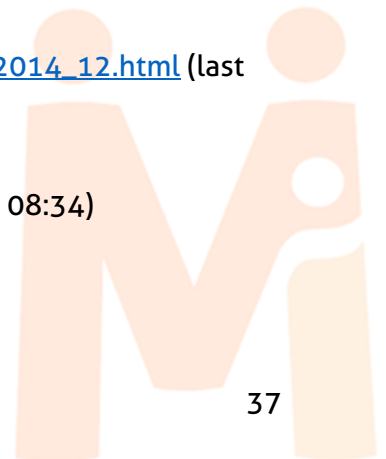
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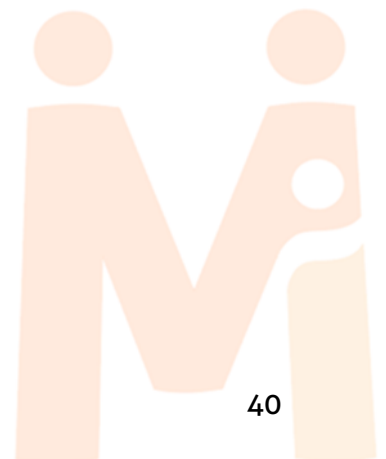
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FRANCE

Bastien Roland

1. Introduction

"So I found other Sudanese people and I told them that I had been here in Calais for three hours. They asked me if I had a place to sleep, I told them no, and they told me to come with them. The next day at about 1pm, an association came and they gave me a tent. Other people gave me a blanket. But it was very cold where we were, so after three days, we decided to go under the bridge. It's less cold and wet. And I started to know the places where we could get into trucks. But the police are everywhere. They arrive with pepper spray cans. Ilyès 14 years old

Wrapped up in his parka and multiple jumpers that he never seems to leave in this month of November, Ilyès, 14, tells me about his living conditions in Calais since his arrival. This is

the second interview we have had in the day centre. I have negotiated a room to be quiet. For more than half an hour, my young interviewee tells me about the journey he has made alone from Sudan and his daily life since his coming to Calais. He is smiling and pleasant. He does not seem to be indignant about the situation he has been living in for several weeks. The police officers he meets when trying to cross the border do not seem to be moved by it either. Despite the cold, his young age, and the French legal framework that requires the protection of minors in danger, Ilyès lives in the street in France, in Calais. He is not the only minor in this situation. Like many other young people, he is trying to go to the UK.

This report aims to understand the experience of these young migrants in transition in Calais. How do they perceive their experience of living in transition on the French-British border? This investigation also aims to examine how the policy and institutional framework integrates a child-centred approach in the case of minors in transition. How the institutions consider the integration of these migrant minors?

Definitions of terms

Minority is defined by age. Being under 18 years old. It is a chronological but also a legal fact (Carayon, Mattiussi, et Vuattoux 2018b; Rennes 2019). In our survey, we use the terms 'minor', 'young person', 'adolescent' or 'unaccompanied minor' or 'UAM' interchangeably when the people interviewed fall into this category¹⁶. The term "migrant" is defined relatively broadly by the United Nations: it refers to any person who lives temporarily or permanently in a country in which he was not born and of which he is not a national. We sometimes substitute the term "exile" or "exiled persons". The term "refugee" when used refers to the legal definition of the word, namely: beneficiary of international protection. We have chosen to give a broad meaning to the definition of "in transition". This term refers to a threefold movement. It is defined as a period of time and a liminal state between two clearly defined stages. It is first of all a geographical transition from one place to another. It also refers to the gradual passage from childhood to adulthood. We also use this expression to refer to the effects of the uncertainty of the administrative situation of many young people. This uncertainty places these young people in a transitional situation: their minority status may be in doubt without them enjoying the benefits of adulthood. They are not irregular, but may become so in adulthood if they are undocumented. These three transitional states can be distinct: A minor may be stabilised in one place and be in administrative transition pending his regularisation. They can also overlap. This is generally the case in Calais when young people have no administrative status and are not seeking to stabilise themselves. Finally, these transitional states can influence each other. The passage to adulthood, or the disappointed expectation of regularisation, can create mobility and transit. This threefold definition seems to be particularly heuristic to us for analysing the situation of young people in Calais.

¹⁶ See below for the definition of UAM.

Our use of the term 'Calais' in this survey is synecdochic. It refers to both the city and its surroundings. It also sometimes refers, in the language of those involved in the migrants' cause or of the migrants themselves, to the situation in which they live or to the migration regime at the border¹⁷.

The term child centred approach that we use in the problematic is a concept that is defined at the legal and political level by an approach that reconciles a minor's need for protection with his participation in the procedures that concern him or her (Micreate 2019)). It therefore always invites to collect and listen to the child's point of view.

Historical elements

Child migration is not a new phenomenon in the history of population movements in Europe. In the eighteenth century movements of single minors existed in Europe (Duvivier 2012). The construction of the phenomenon as a public policy problem is much more recent (Senovilla Hernández 2014). It is based on a UN vision of the child in the wake of the adoption of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (Gilbert 2014). A first resolution concerning the care of unaccompanied minors from third countries was adopted in 1997 by the Council of Europe¹⁸.

The city of Calais is a historical crossing point to the United Kingdom. The construction of the Channel Tunnel accentuated this phenomenon. To preserve their insularity, the British have deterritorialize their border on French soil. This was the first step towards the externalisation of the Franco-British border. In 1986, associations noted the refoulement of migrants from the UK to France (Agier, Bouagga, et Galisson 2019). Their presence aroused the indifference of the authorities. In 1999, the number of people turned back at the border increases. The British government tightens controls and deploys the first border management devices¹⁹. This progressive closure of the border increases the time spent in Calais before a successful crossing (Clochard 2007). The collectives and associations supporting the people who have been turned back negotiate with the authorities to provide accommodation for the exiles. A camp was opened under the aegis of the authorities: the Sangatte Hangar in the suburbs of Calais, managed by the Red Cross. It closed on 31 December 2002 under pressure from the British authorities. They see this camp as a device that creates a "draught". The number of migrants present in Calais is then estimated at 2000 people (Clochard 2007). Among them, many families²⁰.

¹⁷ See below

¹⁸ Council of Europe Resolution of 26 June 1997 on unaccompanied minors who are nationals of third countries (97/C 221/03)

¹⁹ Promulgation of the *Immigration and Asylum Act in 1999, which sanctions transporters in the event of exiled persons being discovered in lorries and transforms them into migration control agents. From 2000 onwards, the port of Calais was fenced off and the first technological means of detection were deployed: radar, CO2 detectors, etc.*

²⁰ Olivier Clochard, in the chapter of his thesis devoted to Calais, mentions the presence of children and families but not of unaccompanied minors. We can assume that their number is relatively small

A policy of harassment follows the closure of the hangar. Several companies of CRS²¹ were mobilised to disperse the exiles. The administrative retention centre in Coquelles opened on 2 January 2003. It aims to lock up and expel people arrested in an irregular situation. In 2021, this policy has not changed²² (Palmas 2021).

However, the creation by the authorities of the largest shantytown in Europe in the spring of 2015: "The Great Jungle" has made the situation of migrants in Calais a paradigm of non-housing policies in Europe. What Michel Agier calls "the Jungle moment" has thus provoked reactions throughout Europe (Agier, Bouagga, et Galisson 2019). This has brought to the Calais area a variety of skills, particularly legal ones, which have made Calais a laboratory of support for exiled people. This is particularly true in the case of UAMs²³. This effervescence is part of the construction of a relationship of strength with the authorities so that they modify their border management policy. The problem of taking care of UAMs or family reunification was thus raised in the Jungles. This forced the institutions to react by offering solutions to the problems raised.

Methodology

Calais is a particularly rich, dense and fascinating field of investigation²⁴. This report is based on 27 interviews with migrant minors, 25 UAMs and 2 accompanied minors. 17 interviews with people who work with this population: associative actors, prosecutors, juvenile court judges, educators, lawyers, etc. complete the panel of respondents. In addition, field observations were carried out in the Calais associative environment between October 2019 and January 2021, by assuming the status of a socio-legal accompanier, particularly with minors. Thus, access to legal files, minutes of meetings, and the accompaniment of young exiles in administrative procedures will enrich the field data.

Plan

The survey described below is based on qualitative interviews with children as the main source of data. Interviews with people working with this children audience, a literature review of migrant minors in transit in France, and of border management in Calais and statistical data complete the data. The survey includes an analysis of the legal and policy framework concerning migrant minors in transition at the border. This analysis starts from the French theoretical and legal framework and then describes the implementation of this framework in the Pas de Calais department²⁵. The third part briefly describes the sample of

²¹ French anti riot police

²² See below

²³ See below

²⁴ See reflective analysis report

²⁵ The department is the relevant political and legal entity for our analysis.

respondents²⁶. The fourth part describes the institutional procedures implemented in Calais for migrant minors. It is based on immersion and participant observation. The last part collects the minors' point of view on their transit situation in Calais and in Europe. It deliberately gives pride of place to interview extracts. The aim is to give them a chance to speak, to convey the situations they experience in their own words. Moreover, their points of view prove to be an extremely rich source of data. These interviews shed light on the vision that these young people have of the institutions they encountered in Europe. They show the failures of these institutions to take care of them in the long term. In addition, they contribute to lifting the veil on the path of these minors outside the institutions. For the majority of the young people interviewed, this pathway constitutes the essential part of their European experience. In addition, these adolescents are an important research subject both in terms of university research and public policies. However, many studies do not succeed in gathering the voice of this public and rely on second-hand sources or intermediaries (such as the educators in contact with these minors). The difficulties of access to these young people, the time needed to create a bond of trust, the language barrier sometimes, the need to explain the scientific process are all factors that tend not to gather their voice directly. However, not to collect this information runs the risk of missing the objective (whether it is the understanding of these young people's lives or the improvement of their care). These UAMs have their own agency. They have goals and dreams that do not necessarily fit in with the institutional care that may be offered to them. In addition, their life experiences, especially in Europe also shape their relationship with institutions. These adolescents, like any other recipients of public policies, have opinions on the issues that concern them. These opinions should be taken into account in order to better understand this public.

Having translated, transcribed, cut up and chosen their verbatims in order to place them in an academic analysis by a white, adult, French, regular researcher already carries with it a risk of violence and betrayal of the message that these young people wanted to convey to me (Schmoll 2020). On this point I hope to have failed as little as possible in my mission.

2. Secondary analysis

2.1 Literature review

There are very few studies on children in transition in France. The study by Corentin Bailleul and Daniel Senovilla-Hernandez on UAMs in 2016 analyses the consideration of the best interests of the child in the context of the care of UAMs by French social services (Senovilla Hernández et Bailleul 2016). This survey relies, like ours, on the collection of the minors' own words as a source of data. The study focuses mainly on Paris, however, part of the study takes as its field of investigation the Saint-Omer hostel which takes charge of migrant minors from Calais. This report highlights the difficulties, mainly for young people living in Paris, to be recognised as minors and to access child protection. A first feedback

²⁶ The sample was anonymised. In addition, any particular element that could identify one of the respondents was omitted, such as the mention of a particular nationality or language spoken in Calais.

from this survey concerned Calais in particular. It described the living conditions at the border for UAMs. The study describes the situation of danger and destitution in which these young people find themselves, facing police violence and dramatic living conditions (Bailleul 2015).

A report commissioned by UNICEF and carried out by the association *Trajectoires* draws attention to the dangers faced by migrant children in the camps of northern France. A methodological description highlights several constraints and limitations of the study due to the context of the camps and the precariousness of the minors (Unicef 2016). The article emphasises the *agency* of the minors in their transit situation. This requires them to take significant risks. It also underlines the point of view of support actors, who perceive minors in transition as having an innate will to move to the UK, which leads to a real difficulty in proposing them a protection project within the framework of child protection. The survey highlights the key role of family reunification procedures in Calais in reaching minors in transition. Again, very few articles have been devoted to examining this procedure. Nevertheless, we can refer to Mathilde Albert's master's thesis on this topic - built on her own field experience in Calais (Albert 2017).

A UNHCR report in December 2018 looked at the living conditions of migrant children in Northern France, Paris and the Italian border. This report gives a voice to children regarding their access to participation, to the definition of their best interests. It provides an overview of the needs and expectations of minors and a list of recommendations. The report emphasises the information needs of children, as well as the need to create a link to establish their trust. In addition, it emphasises the need for refugee children's participation, which includes access to interpreters and a guardian (UNHCR 2018).

Since 2016, the Migrinter laboratory has been publishing a journal on young minors in migration. It is an original publication, a collection of academic articles and young people's words about their experience of transit. Within it, several papers caught our attention. An article by Guillaume Coron on good practice in the care of newly arrived UAMs in reception centres (Coron 2018). His study emphasises the difficulty for young people to obtain clear and complete information about their rights and possibilities. Their arrival in a care facility sometimes comes after a long period of wandering. Their lack of mastery of the French language puts them in a situation of stress and uncertainty. The author therefore advocates the use of tools and drawing plates to facilitate the understanding of these young people. In another field, Ela Meh's article on the care of UAMs at the Serbian border seemed to us to echo the situation of minors in Calais (Meh 2016). It demonstrates the emptiness of the care of UAMs in the face of a violent border closure regime. This situation does not stabilise young people but rather increases their situation of danger, regardless of the care facilities that may be implemented.

Emilie Duvivier's thesis on the experiences of minors in transit in France sheds light on the institutional and non-institutional trajectories of these young people (Duvivier 2012). The author investigates young people placed in a home in the north of France, where she

also works. This positioning allows her to gather the point of view of the young people during interviews that could be described as longitudinal. She shows the processual dimension of these young people's journey from their country of origin to the country of arrival. In addition, it emphasises the autonomy of these young people, their ability to develop tactics, to maintain links with relatives in order to break their isolation, far from the sole figure of the child victim. In a more literary vein, Rozenn Le Berre describes her daily life as an educator in a care home for UAMs in France. Her account also includes the travel story of a young Malian to France and the institutional difficulties he encounters (Le Berre 2017).

Action research by a team from the migrinter laboratory focuses on the administrative and existential waiting period that UAMs undergo in the Vienne department. How do young people live the wait for their placement in the child welfare system, their schooling or their recognition of minority status? (Senovilla-Hernández 2019).

There are many studies on the institutional care of UAMs in France. The pioneering work of Angelina Etiemble helped to document the phenomenon by offering a typology of UAMs, which has since been updated, according to the reasons for leaving the country of origin and the aims of the migration (Etiemble 2004; Etiemble 2013). However, these studies rarely take the minor's word for it as a main source of data. Thomas Vetier explores the care and integration of unaccompanied minors through the voices of the family assistants responsible for housing them (Vetier 2016). Marie Jacob explores the difficulties and abuses of the care system for unaccompanied minors. She shows that the economic argument is used as a pretext to provide care on the cheap, a source of great institutional violence (Jacob 2017). Chloé Marmié studies the practices of the French social services in the care of this group (Marmié 2021).

The political dimension of the provision of care for UAMs has been widely documented (Frigoli et Immelé 2010). These studies emphasise the suspicion of fraud that taints the application of a young person requesting care from child welfare. This suspicion is particularly present when comes the minority assessment interview or the appeal procedure in front of the juvenile judge (Bricaud et Thibaudeau 2017). Numerous studies, based on assessment files : (Paté 2020; Carayon, Mattiussi, et Vuattoux 2018b) or from interviews with those in charge of the procedure, document the phenomenon (Paté 2020; Lendaro 2020). The collection of the minor's point of view regarding his feelings about this procedure is rarer and more difficult to obtain (Paté 2020).

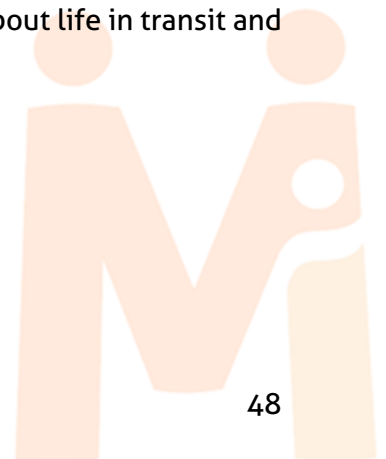
Important works illustrate the legal and institutional obstacle course that UAMs face in France throughout their journey. The legal practices of institutions towards them are dissected (Aït Ahmed, Gallant, et Meur 2019). It demonstrates the legal vacuum into which these young people fall upon their arrival in France and the tinkering of the legislator and institutions to remedy this. This infra-law is characteristic of the law on foreigners (Parrot 2019).

However, these studies do not allow us to understand the trajectories of minors in transition at the border, nor what happens at the border. Understanding the current situation in Calais and the factors that influence it, is crucial to understanding the living conditions of minors in transit. A large body of grey literature, mainly from the defender of the rights (DDD) and the Nationale Consultative Commission for Human Rights(CNCDH), has denounced the living conditions of migrants in Calais. It underlines the inertia of the authorities in the face of their duty to protect children, particularly UAMs:(Défenseur des Droits 2016; Droits et Défenseur des Droits 2018; 2016; CNCDH 2015; 2021) but also accompanied minors(Clegg et Rosen 2018). More specific reports from a wide range of actors: associations, institutions, authorities, on police harassment (Rapport IGA, IGPN, IGGN 2017), eviction from camps (Observatoire des expulsions des lieux de vie informels 2020)show the important dimension of state repression towards migrants in Calais. This repression does not spare minors (Refugee Rights Europe 2019).

This situation invites us to examine the situation of minors in Calais from the perspective of border studies. The aim is to understand how the border shapes the relationship of exiles to the border (Guenebeaud et Lendaro 2020). How it shapes the relationship of exiles with the territory in which they are inserted(Guenebeaud 2015). Life in the camps is another particular point to consider.

Michel Agier's studies on camps help us to think about the function of these places. It is a question of storing and managing a sub-numerary or undesirable population and making it invisible (Agier 2007). However, the camps are no longer thought of as places created by national states on the model of the 1930s. They are more like refuges, created by the migrants themselves in the interstices of the city, or next to the borders, or both in the case of Calais (Agier 2016). According to the author, the camp represents the immobilisation of people on the move. It is for Agier, quoting Hannah Arendt, '*the only country the world had to offer to stateless people*' (Agier 2016).

Sophie Djigo's philosophical and anthropological investigation continues the reflection and defines the Calais 'Jungle' as a place away from the nation-state, within the territory but where the laws of the (French) Republic do not seem to be applied by the authorities themselves. This leads to a great sense of insecurity on the part of refugees (Djigo 2016). Finally, the contribution of his book allows us to think about the way in which exiles organise themselves and perceive their situation. The author shows that the absence of a legal framework does not lead to anarchy but to the establishment of a moral regulation on the part of the migrants themselves which replaces the law and the need for protection. Furthermore, she highlights the inability of the French state to think about life in transit and then to offer protection to people in this situation.



2.2 Statistical data

INSEE (the national institute in charge of statistics and economic studies) estimated the population living in France at 67 million people in a study published on ¹ January 2019. Of these, 6.8 million were immigrants, i.e. 10% of the total population. Of these 2.5 million people, 36% had acquired French nationality (2.5% of the total population)²⁷.

On 31 December 2020, 3,454,816 foreigners had a valid residence permit on French territory²⁸. To this must be added 148 567 people with a long-stay visa in 2020²⁹. 138,420 people also applied for asylum in 2019, including 105,904 adults. This figure falls to 81 669 applications in 2020, of which 62067 were from adults³⁰. 36 275 were granted international protection status in 2019 and only 24118 in 2020, for 95400 applications examined in 2019 and 70 036 in 2020 respectively³¹.

Minors in France do not need residence permits. The data is therefore not available. The only data available concerns foreigners who entered France as minors (defined here as unaccompanied minors) and obtained a residence permit when they become 18: 7859 people in 2019 (Ministère de l'intérieur 2021).

The number of undocumented migrants is difficult to estimate. The most reliable indicator concerns applications for State Medical Aid (AME), which allows all persons to access healthcare. Amongst the beneficiaries, 335,483 foreigners in an irregular situation would be beneficiaries (Ministry of the Interior 2021).

Foreign minors do not need to justify their stay in France. There is therefore little data on the subject. The figures available relate to accompanied minor asylum seekers: 21841 minors accompanied by their parents had filed an asylum application in 2019 (OFPRA 2020). 755 unaccompanied minors applied for asylum in 2019 and 642 young people in 2020. Of these 207 were from Afghanistan, 100 from the Democratic Republic of Congo and 40 from Sudan (OFPRA 2020; 2021).

A second available figure concerns the number of unaccompanied minors in the care of French social institutions³²: (Child welfare or ASE): 16760 in 2019, 17022 in 2018 in France against 14908 in 2017 and 8054 in 2016(DPJJ 2020). To these figures should be added a total of 54,000 minority assessments carried out in 2017(IGA, IGAS, IGJ et ADF 2018). This

²⁷ Source: Insee / Population census 2019 (provisional data excluding Mayotte) in

²⁸ Source Ministry of the Interior - DGEF - DSED / AGDREF

²⁹ The covid effect is being felt as the demand for visas in France between 2019 and 2020 has fallen by 79.7% and the number of long-stay visas granted by 37.5% compared to 2019: Source Ministry of the Interior SDV - DSED

³⁰ Source: Ministry of the Interior, SI-Asile

³¹ Source: OFPRA, CNDA

³² For the proper understanding of the text, it is important to make a distinction now: A minor in **care** is a minor who has been recognised as a minor by the French authorities and placed under the authority of child welfare. A minor **in care is a minor who** is accommodated but who has not yet been recognised as a minor by the French authorities and who is therefore not formally under the authority of child welfare. *See Legal and policy framework*

number includes numerous reassessments³³. The rate of recognition of minors is estimated at between 50 and 60% in France since 2015 with large deviations from the average: Depending on the department, the recognition rate in 2017 varies from 9% to 100%(IGA, IGAS, IGJ et ADF 2018; Doisneau et Godefroy 2017).

In 2018 as in 2019, 95.5% of them are boys. About 40% are under 16 years old. Less than 1% are under 13 years old. The main nationalities represented in 2019 are Guinea (24.67%), Mali (23.60%) and Côte d'Ivoire (16.13%) (DPJJ 2020).

These figures can only give an idea of the scale of the phenomenon, even if they conceal numerous biases. The number of unaccompanied foreign minors (UAMs) on French territory is impossible to assess accurately. Statistical counting of unaccompanied minors in care in France is incomplete, as the Court of Auditors pointed out in a report: "*There is currently no rigorous study that relates the situation of unaccompanied minors to that of immigration and asylum applications*" (Moscovici 2020:5). The number of young people assessed is not known precisely, due in particular to double assessments. The number of young people in care is also imprecise, as the aggregated data do not consider placement decisions by judges. The institution calls for the creation of a statistical tool and studies to better understand this population. Moreover, these data only concern young people who are assessed. Many minors remain outside the structures and are therefore never counted. The public studied here is characterised precisely by its living situation on the street.

In Calais, the statistics have become an issue between associations not mandated by the state and the authorities to demand an adaptation of the arrangements for the care of young people. Indeed, every UAM on French soil has the right to protection. However, it implies to identify the minors.

Situation of migrant minors in the Calais region

1,875 people declaring themselves to be unaccompanied minors were received in emergency accommodation in 2020 in the Pas de Calais department. This figure fluctuates considerably: 2,215 in 2017, 818 in 2018 and 1,254 in 2019 (Département du Pas de Calais 2021). It includes duplications, as a young person may leave and return to the system several times. Since 2007, nearly 20,000 unaccompanied minors have been sheltered. Of the 1,875 young people received in 2020, 95.8% were boys. Of these, 10% were under 15 years old. 23% were 15 years old. 41% were 16 years old and 26% were 17 years old³⁴.

249 agreed to be assessed in order to have their minority recognised in 2020, compared to 395 requests for assessments in 2019 for 1254 minors and 341 requests in 2018 for 818

³³ According to the Court of Auditors, '*Some departments re-evaluate the minority status of 70-90% of young people from other territories*' (Cour des comptes 2020).

³⁴ Data from the management of the Maison du Jeune Réfugié (name of the emergency accommodation facility), transmitted to various organizations during a meeting between NGOs and the Pas-de-Calais department on 23 December 2019.

young people accommodated. In 2020, the nationalities most represented in the temporary emergency reception centre, were Sudanese: 531 young people, i.e. 31% of the total, Afghans: 359 young people, i.e. 19% of the total, and Eritreans: 340 young people, i.e. 18% (Département du Pas de Calais 2021). These figures clearly illustrate the transit situation in which these young adolescents find themselves, as many of them choose not to be assessed. Of the requests for minority assessments, 136 resulted in a interim placement order and 113 resulted in a dismissal, i.e. an acceptance rate of 54%, up from 46% in 2019 (Département du Pas de Calais 2021).

78 minors assessed in another department but transferred to the Pas de Calais via the national distribution key mechanism must be added³⁵. In total, on 31 December 2020, the Pas de Calais department was caring for 492 unaccompanied minors³⁶. Of these, 95% were boys. On average, the young people were 16 years old when they were admitted. Of the five most common nationalities admitted to the ASE: 37% were Afghan (78 young people). 6% were Sudanese (13 young people). 7% were Somali (15 young people), 8% were Guinean (17 young people) and 9% were Pakistani (20 young people).

The number of people exiled on the jungles is extremely fluctuating. From more than 10,000 people in October 2016, it would have dropped to around 1,500 people since the summer of 2017. Associations generally estimate the presence of minors at 15 to 20% of the total population. The Refugee Rights Europe report counted 254 minors in August 2020, the youngest of whom claims to be 13 years old (Refugee Rights Europe 2021). This count does not consider the dimension in terms of flows over a year, which is much more important. The nationalities present in the jungles are mainly from Sudan, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Yemen, Kuwait, Syria and Iran (Unicef 2016; Défenseur des droits 2018). There are few minors from French-speaking Africa in the camps compared to the rest of France. Instead, the jungles host minors from countries that make up the largest groups of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers in the UK (UASC). 2872 UASC applied for asylum in the UK in 2018. Among them, 620 Eritreans, 462 Sudanese, 312 Vietnamese, 251 Iranians, 308 Iraqis, 286 Albanians, 210 Afghans (Refugee council 2019).³⁷

The number of accompanied minors is more difficult to assess as they are not statistically recorded as such. The relevant counting unit according to the authorities or associations is often the family. However, accompanied migrant minors are often younger than UAMs. Moreover, on the Calais Jungles, these families are few in number compared to the situation on other camps in the north of France.

³⁵ Solidarity mechanism between French departments to transfer UAMs in departments that receive a large number of young people, such as the Paris region, to other departments according to a distribution key based on the demographic weight of the department and the number of UAMs taken into care in the department in relation to the total number of UAMs positively assessed in France as a whole: Article R. 221-13 taken for the application of Article L. 221-2-2 of the Social Action and Family Code.

³⁶ In addition, there are 467 young adults still in care under a young adult contract.

³⁷ Iranian and Iraqi Kurds are more present in the Grande Synthe camp, 30 km north of Calais. The Vietnamese used to live in a camp inland at Angres, near Lens. This camp was dismantled in 2017 by the authorities, forcing them to move around Cambrai.

2.3 Assessment of institutional support to children in transition

France has ratified the International Convention on the Rights of the Child of 6 September 1990. However, "*the direct applicability of many of the Convention's stipulations is still pending*" (Defender of Rights 2020:10). The Constitutional Council, in line with the Courts of Cassation, has enshrined the best interests of the child as a constitutional requirement³⁸. France guarantees all the rights provided for in the Convention to any minor present on its territory without discrimination on the basis of origin, nationality or administrative status³⁹. A child should therefore never be considered irregular in France. As such, he theoretically does not need to justify his right to stay and is not covered by the Code on the Entry and Stay of Foreigners and Asylum Seekers (CESEDA) (Slama 2019).

Accompanied minors ⁴⁰

There is a significant difference in French law between accompanied and unaccompanied minors. The legal situation of accompanied minor is inseparable from the situation of their legal representatives (often the parents). These minors therefore come under the CESEDA. They only have a right to residence as long as their parents have a right to residence. Accompanied minors can therefore be deported to their country of origin with their parents, transferred under Dublin agreement or taken in administrative custody. The legal argument used by the authorities is not to separate families in order to respect their fundamental right to privacy and family life in accordance with article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. France has been condemned several times by the European Court of Human Rights for this interpretation of the law. In the *Popov vs France* of 19 January 2012, the court stated that the best interests of the child are not limited to the family unit, but that the detention of children in retention should be reduced to a minimum. On the other hand, it condemns France for the absence of legal recourse for the children themselves. Children are in fact in a legal vacuum to contest their placement in detention pending their expulsion. Indeed, they were only detained in the capacity of "*accompanying persons*" in violation of article 5-4 of the European Convention on Human Rights (Rodier 2012). France was condemned again in five other judgments on the same grounds on 12 July 2016⁴¹. The government does not seem to have taken the measure of these judgments. The detention of children "*accompanying*" their parents has not disappeared, regardless of their age (Comité inter-mouvements auprès des évacués 2020). Thus, the law of 10 September 2018 authorises the detention of "*accompanying*" minors.

³⁸ Decision 2018-768 QPC of 21 March 2019

³⁹ Article 2 of Convention on the Rights of the Child' and Article L112-3" French Social Action and Family Code.

⁴⁰ We will not discuss here the other aspects of foreigners' law (such as residence) that may apply to accompanied minors, as they do not correspond to the situation in Calais, where we note, admittedly arbitrarily, that most of the families present fall under asylum rather than residence.

⁴¹ In the following cases (*A.B. and Others v. France* (no. 11593/12), *R.M. and M.M. v. France* (no. 33201/11), *A.M. and Others v. France* (no. 24587/12), *R.K. v. France* (no. 68264/14) and *R.C. v. France* (no. 76491/14))

A minor can apply for asylum as a minor. However, this application is not easily distinguishable from that of their parents. Since 1 January 2019, a parent's asylum application is extended to their children⁴².

In terms of fundamental rights, French Social Action and Family Code ⁴³ (CASF) and the Conseil d'Etat⁴⁴ guarantee emergency accommodation to vulnerable people without any condition of regularity of residence. However, this obligation has gradually changed from an obligation of result to an obligation of means in case law, limiting the legal scope of this right.

In terms of health care, France guarantees access to health care through State medical Aid (AME) to all persons present on its territory for more than 3 months, without any condition of regularity of residence⁴⁵.

The right to school education is guaranteed to all children in the country. "*Schooling is compulsory for every child from the age of three until the age of sixteen*"⁴⁶. The authorities also have this obligation. The enrolment of children in school is the responsibility of the parents. It has to be done at the town hall for primary schools and with the school principals for secondary schools. Mayors must therefore ensure that all children of school age in their municipality are registered⁴⁷. The temporary nature of the families' accommodation cannot be used as an argument to refuse school enrolment to children present in the commune⁴⁸.

The child centre approach is therefore minimal, with the child acting through his legal representative for asylum but also for access to other rights such as legal action or schooling. The comparison of the situation with unaccompanied minors is heuristic in order to measure the key role of the legal representation of the minor⁴⁹.

Unaccompanied minors

The body responsible for care: the department

"*Unaccompanied minor*" is not a legal term. The only definition contained in the law in France mentions: "*minors temporarily or permanently deprived of the protection of their*

⁴² CESEDA, art. L. 741-1. Note: the article numbers of the CESEDA are presented here in their version prior to 1 May 2021, which saw a recodification of the code supposedly for greater readability..., which had the effect of losing everyone.

⁴³ Any homeless person in a situation of medical, psychological or social distress has access, at any time, to emergency accommodation. (French Social Action and Family Code, article L. 345-2-2)

⁴⁴ Conseil d'Etat, ref. 10 February 2012, Fofana c/Minister of Solidarity and Social Cohesion, no. 356456

⁴⁵ Article L 251-1 of the French Social Action and Family Code

⁴⁶ Article L.131-1 of the Education Code

⁴⁷ Article L.131-6 of the Education Code.

⁴⁸ Circular n°2012-142 of 2 October 2012 (NOR : MEN/E/12/36611/C)

⁴⁹ It should be noted that this situation is not specific to migrant minors but can apply to all French minors. It is particularly salient, however, for foreign minors, as they have more steps to take when they arrive in France to start their new life or assert their rights.

*family*⁵⁰. The absence of a legal representative for a minor carries a presumption of danger which leads to the child being placed under the protection of the authorised social services, i.e. the Aide Sociale à l'Enfance (ASE), which is the responsibility of the department⁵¹.

Reporting a minor in danger

There is a legal framework for reporting a minor in danger to the authorities. This reporting is even a legal obligation for any individual or institution that has knowledge of a child in a situation of danger, regardless of their nationality or legal status⁵². Any minor in danger can be reported to the department's social services (ASE) through the drafting of an information of concern⁵³. The ASE can take an administrative decision to protect the minor. This is a temporary emergency reception for a maximum of 5 days in the absence of the legal representatives' agreement⁵⁴. During these 5 days, the aim is to assess the situation of danger in which the minor finds himself and to remedy it by appropriate means⁵⁵. The public prosecutor may also be informed by means of a report to the public prosecutor. He can then issue a interim placement order (IPO) for a period of 8 days⁵⁶. At the end of this period, he must appeal to the Juvenile Judge who must confirm the IPO. The minor may himself or herself refer the matter to the Juvenile Judge⁵⁷ who will normally hear⁵⁸ the case. The framework described here applies to any minor in danger in France. The assessment of the minor's situation of danger is transformed into an assessment of his minority based on the same article of the CASF, to which is added a ministerial circular that sets the conditions for assessing minority.

Minority assessment

Since 2013, two circulars, three ministerial decrees and one law have returned to the framework for assessing UAMs. The 2013 Taubira circular sets out the assessment of minority through a minority interview.

The minority interview can be carried out by the department's services or by associative structures delegated to provide a public service. It aims to conclude whether an individual is minor or adult based on the collection of a number of indicators. The assessment must be conducted in a language understood by the person concerned, if necessary with the assistance of an interpreter. It must be conducted in a multidisciplinary manner by professionals with specific experience in the fields of childhood, migration and psychology.... They have to justify at least 21 hours of training as an assessor. The interview must be conducted in a neutral and benevolent manner. Its modalities and possible

⁵⁰Article L112-3 of the Social Action and Family Code.

⁵¹Article L221-2 of the French Social Action and Family Code and article 20 of the CRC

⁵²Article L 434 of the Penal Code

⁵³L 226-3 of the Social Action and Family Code.

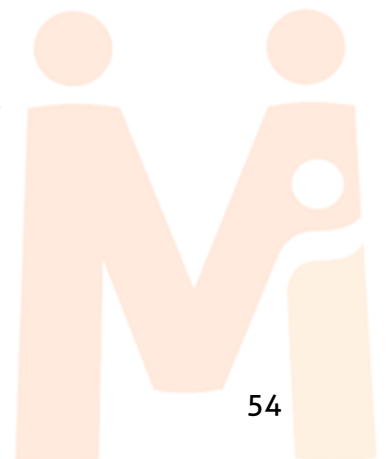
⁵⁴L. 223-2-2 of the French Social Action and Family Code

⁵⁵L 226-1 of the French Social Action and Family Code

⁵⁶Articles 375 and following of the Civil Code

⁵⁷Articles 375 and following of the Civil Code

⁵⁸Article 1182 of the Code of Criminal Procedure



consequences should be explained to the young person beforehand. The assessment covers the following six points: 1) The assessor must collect all identity documents and review the conditions for obtaining them in accordance with Article 47 of the Civil Code⁵⁹. In order to be considered, the document must be linked without doubt to the person presenting it⁶⁰. If there is any doubt as to the authenticity of the documents, the assessor may seek the advice of the State services, in particular the document fraud service⁶¹. Any use of a false document may result in criminal prosecution by the public prosecutor's office⁶². 2) The composition of the young person's family and in particular their place in the siblings, as well as the possible presence of family members in Europe. 3) The living conditions in the country of origin, with particular emphasis on schooling. 4) The reasons for leaving the country of origin. 5) The conditions of the journey and arrival in France 6) The person's life project. *"At each stage of the social assessment, the assessor ensures that the physical appearance of the person being assessed, their behaviour, their ability to be independent and autonomous, their ability to reason and to understand the questions asked, are compared with the age they claim to be"*⁶³. The assessment is then forwarded to the President of the Departmental Council or the Prosecutor who makes the decision. The decision is then notified to the person concerned. In case of refusal, it must clearly state the reasons for the decision and mention the remedies and periods allowed for appeals⁶⁴. The provisional emergency shelter ends and the young person must leave the accommodation.

The person can then appeal the decision to the Juvenile Judge⁶⁵. This is an exception to the legal incapacity of the minor (Aït Ahmed, Gallant, et Meur 2019). The judge can be seized by simple letter, written in the first person and signed by the young person. The minor has the right to request a lawyer and to use an interpreter. The judge is obliged to hear the young person⁶⁶. If there is any doubt about the minority, the juvenile judge may order a bone test with the young person's consent⁶⁷. In the case of a refusal of minority, the young person may appeal the decision to the Court of Appeal. If the young person is recognised as a minor, he is placed in a care centre. He/she may be referred to another department for care according to a national distribution key⁶⁸.

⁵⁹ "Any civil status record of French nationals and foreigners made in a foreign country and drawn up in the forms customary in that country is authentic, unless other records or documents held, external data or elements drawn from the record itself establish, if necessary after all useful checks, that this record is irregular, falsified or that the facts declared therein do not correspond to reality. Article 47 of the Civil Code

⁶⁰ Interministerial circular of 25 January 2016 on the mobilisation of State services to the departmental councils concerning minors temporarily or permanently deprived of the protection of their families and persons presenting themselves as such NOR: JUS/F/16/02101/C.

⁶¹ *Ibid*

⁶² The circular of 25 January 2016 encourages reporting to the Public Prosecutor so that he can investigate the case and initiate criminal proceedings.

⁶³ Article 7 of the Order of 20 November 2019

⁶⁴ Order of 20 November 2019 and article R 221-11 of the French Social Action and Family Code

⁶⁵ Although the decision was administrative, the Conseil d'Etat ruled to designate the Juge des Enfants as the competent judge on this dispute. Council of State, 1 July 2015, N°386769.

⁶⁶ Article 1189 of the procedure civil code (Code de Procédure Civile)

⁶⁷ Article 388 of the Civil Code

⁶⁸ Article L221-2-2 of the French Social Action and Family Code

Accommodation

The ASE has an obligation to provide shelter for UAMs. In case of failure to comply, the minor can assert his right in court even in the absence of a legal representative⁶⁹. He can refer the matter to the administrative court in summary proceedings to have his case examined as a matter of urgency.

Legal representation of unaccompanied minors

All these rights would not be effective without access to justice. A minor is considered legally incapable⁷⁰. This measure is seen as a protection rather than a limitation, so that no one abuses the young person's credibility (Aït Ahmed, Gallant, et Meur 2019). He can only go to court through his legal representative. Depending on his degree of maturity, he can be heard by a court if it is in his best interest. A judge is obliged to hear a minor if he requests it and is concerned by the proceedings. This hearing does not make the minor a party to the hearing⁷¹. Regarding UAMs, the minor is entrusted to the ASE through an interim placement order. In order to provide the minor with legal representation, the Juvenile Judge can take educational assistance measures. These measures function as a partial delegation of parental authority concerning the usual acts of life⁷². Non-usual acts must be the subject of a guardianship measure⁷³. Procedures such as applying for asylum, a residence permit, choosing a school orientation or important medical acts are concerned. For a guardianship measure to be effective, the children's judge must therefore relinquish the case. The ASE, which is legally responsible, must refer the matter to the guardianship judge⁷⁴. The minor cannot refer the matter to this court. Without the goodwill of the ASE, the young person is blocked until he reaches majority⁷⁵. An alternative exists, particularly in the case of an asylum application. This involves the appointment of an ad hoc administrator (AAH) by the public prosecutor to represent the young person in his asylum application (or family reunification in the case of a Dublin transfer)⁷⁶.

⁶⁹ Conseil d'Etat decision of 12 March 2014 No. 375956

⁷⁰ Apart from the two exceptions mentioned above, namely referral to the children's judge and referral to the administrative judge in summary proceedings. In the second case, the idea is that the summary procedure aims to protect a fundamental freedom, and therefore cannot lead to deleterious effects for the young person making the referral (Aït Ahmed, Gallant, et Meur 2019)

⁷¹ Article 388-1 of the Civil Code

⁷² Article 373-4 f of the civil code (Civil Code) defines customary acts as daily acts, non-serious acts that do not involve the child's future or apparent risks.

⁷³ Article 411 of the Civil Code

⁷⁴ In the case of minors, the family court acts as a guardianship judge. Article 213-3-1 of the Code of Judicial Organisation.

⁷⁵ We will not go into the technicalities of this problem, which does not arise very often in the Pas de Calais department. Just for fun: in the event of a conflict with the ASE, the young person can request the appointment of an ad hoc administrator from the Public Prosecutor to represent him or her in court in a dispute with the ASE (article 388-3 of the civil code). Alternatively, the young person can write to the guardianship judge to ask him or her to take charge of the situation. The judge has the power of self-referral. Article 391 of the Civil Code. This possibility is not self-evident, and has been (re)discovered recently by lawyers in Toulouse. They obtained favorable decisions that allowed them to remedy the deadlock in which many UAMs in the care of the department found themselves.

⁷⁶ Article L 741-3 of the Code on the Entry and Stay of Foreigners and Asylum Seekers.

Asylum application and family reunification under Dublin transfer ⁷⁷

An UAM can apply for asylum regardless of his/her age. As for adults, the asylum application is declarative. It is not subject to any prior recognition of minority. However, in order to register their asylum application, they must be accompanied by an ad hoc administrator. This person is responsible for the minor's asylum application until the end of the procedures. Therefore, when a minor applies for asylum, the prefecture does not register the application immediately⁷⁸. It first refers the matter to the public prosecutor's office in the minor's place of residence to request the appointment of an ad hoc administrator. This AAH must be appointed **without delay** from a list of authorised persons or associations⁷⁹. It is only after this appointment that the minor can register his asylum application. The minor is subject to fingerprinting for the Eurodac and Visabio files if he is 14 years old or older⁸⁰. However, the country responsible for the minor's asylum application is the country in which a family member or close relative is present⁸¹. Failing that, it is the country in which the minor applies⁸². Unlike an adult, a minor cannot be subject to a Dublin transfer except to join a family member provided that both parties have expressed their wish in writing.

After giving his/her fingerprints, the young person receives an asylum application receipt and an asylum application file. Unlike adults, a minor does not receive material reception conditions (CMA⁸³). If the young person wishes to apply for asylum in France, the file must be completed and returned to the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA⁸⁴) within 21 days. OFPRA then convenes the young person and their ad hoc⁸⁵ at a later date to hear them on the grounds for the asylum application. The interview takes place with a protection officer authorised to interview minors (as well as with an interpreter who is physically present). Following the interview, the young person may be granted international protection. If this is refused, as with adults, the young person has one month to appeal the decision to the National Asylum Court (CNDA).⁸⁶ The young person may be accompanied by a lawyer at the hearing. Legal aid is provided as of right.

⁷⁷ Procedure valid until 31 December 2020. It is included here because this procedure has had an impact on our field. It seems heuristic to us to measure its effects on the transit experience of minors in Calais.

⁷⁸ The application is nevertheless deemed to be considered when the minor declares his asylum application. The application continues to be registered for a minor even if the young person becomes an adult before a decision has been made. CJEU 12 April 2018, A and S, case C-550/16

⁷⁹ Article L 741-3 of the Code on the Entry and Stay of Foreigners and Asylum Seekers.

⁸⁰ Inter-ministerial Circular of 25 January 2016 on the Mobilisation of State Services to the Departmental Councils Concerning Minors Temporarily or Permanently Deprived of Family Protection and Persons Presenting Themselves as Such. NOR : JUSF1602101C

⁸¹ Article 8-1 and 8-2 of Regulation 604/2013 of 26 June 2013, the so-called "Dublin III Regulation

⁸² Article 8-4 of Regulation 604/2013 of 26 June 2013, the so-called "Dublin III Regulation

⁸³ This benefit paid by the French Office for Immigration and Integration consists of the offer of accommodation and the payment of a sum of money between 6.80 and 11.50 euros per day. *Article. L 744-9 and D 744-18 of Code on the Entry and Stay of Foreigners and Asylum Seekers.*

⁸⁴ Ofpra is the independent administrative authority in charge of examining and granting applications for international protection in France. Their office are in the Paris suburbs cf: Article L721-2 of the Code on the Entry and Stay of Foreigners and Asylum Seekers.

⁸⁵ Or his tutor

⁸⁶ Article R733-7 of the Code on the Entry and Stay of Foreigners and Asylum Seekers.

If the young person wishes to be reunited with one of his family members (in the United Kingdom)⁸⁷, he must submit his family reunification file to the Prefecture. This includes the agreement of the parties, proof of identity and family ties. France then submits a request to the United Kingdom to take charge within two months. The UK has two months to respond. Silence after this period is considered as implicit acceptance. France then has six months to transfer the minor⁸⁸.

Schooling

As for accompanied minors, schooling is compulsory for UAMs up to the age of 16. Beyond the age of 16, the national education system sometimes requires a minority provision or an Interim Placement Order⁸⁹. The authorities remain subject to compulsory schooling until the age of 18 if the young person so requests (GISTI 2019).

Right of residence and young adult contract ⁹⁰

Prior to 2003, each UAM in the care of the ASE had the right to apply for French nationality as an adult. Since then, new regulations have been introduced. Access to nationality is only possible for minors who can prove that they have been in care for three years before their 18th birthday⁹¹. They must then apply in writing to the court and provide proof of identity. Between the ages of 15 and 16, a young person will be entitled to a residence permit as of right when they reach the age of majority, subject to the completion of a school education and depending on the intensity of the links with family members who have remained in the country⁹². After the age of 16, the residence permit granted at the age of majority is a salaried residence permit granted on a discretionary basis. To be eligible, the young person must justify 6 months of professional training⁹³.

When a young person is in the care of the ASE. They can benefit from temporary assistance for young adults (APJM) when they reach the age of majority and up to the age of 21⁹⁴. This aid must be applied for in writing to the department. It takes the form of a contract between the young person and the ASE. It can include economic, educational and legal support. However, this scheme is discretionary. Not benefiting from it can lead these young adults into great insecurity (Baronnet et Best 2018).

⁸⁷ This procedure is only of interest because the border is closed and difficult to cross, if the young person has family in Belgium for example, getting there by his own means is obviously much quicker and easier. This illustrates that this positive legal provision only serves to compensate for a restrictive European policy on access to asylum and access to territories.

⁸⁸ These time limits are those provided for in the Dublin III Regulation.

⁸⁹ Circular from the CASNAV of the Lille academy dated 7 February 2019

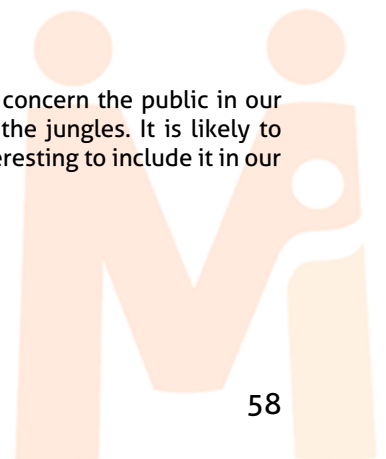
⁹⁰ These two points only concern UAMs in the care of the ASE. They do not directly concern the public in our survey. However, this information plays a crucial role in exchanges with minors in the jungles. It is likely to influence the migratory path of young people in transit, so we thought it would be interesting to include it in our research.

⁹¹ Article 21-12 Article 375-5 of the civil code (Code civil)

⁹² L 311-11-bis of Code on the Entry and Stay of Foreigners and Asylum Seekers.

⁹³ L 313-15 *Ibid*

⁹⁴ Article L 222-5 of the French Social Action and Family Code



Main concepts, goals and instruments

The migration regime at the border

Since the destruction of the Jungle shantytown in October 2016, the migrant population in Calais is concentrated in various informal settlements on the outskirts of the city. People live in tents distributed by associations that also provide clothes, blankets, food, wood, hygiene products. They face very harsh living conditions due to the precariousness of the homeless life, the weather, the lack of hygiene.... However, there is nothing inevitable about this situation (Palmas 2021). It is above all due to the action of the authorities who prevent the erection of any shelters and who, since spring 2018, have been evicting each camp every 48 hours (Observatoire des expulsions des lieux de vie informels 2019; 2020). Thus, tents and personal belongings are often seized by the police and accompanying maintenance workers before being dumped. Local residents may also be arrested, administratively detained or placed in a retention centre. In 2019, 2038 people were imprisoned in the administrative detention centre (CRA) in Coquelles, with a capacity of 88 places⁹⁵. (more than the reception centre for minors in Saint Omer)⁹⁶. Of these, 67 were minors (Comité inter-mouvements auprès des évacués (France) 2020)⁹⁷.

The French state has thus implemented a policy of systematic harassment which aims, in the official language of the authorities, to avoid the creation of "*fixation points*". This policy is not new (Calais, *face à la frontière*. 2017; Refugee Rights Europe 2018 Agier et al 2018). It aims to disperse would-be crossers by exhausting bodies (Guenebeaud et Lendaro 2020). The aim is to lead people who cannot be expelled and whom we do not want to let through, to self eviction (É. Fassin et al. 2014). Since October 2016, and the destruction of the Calais Jungle, this policy has taken on a new dimension. It is carried out through an impressive array of fences, cameras and all kinds of detection equipment. It is also based on an important police deployment. In 2019, nearly 1,500 police and gendarmes were permanently deployed in Calais to harass, repress and "*secure the border*". Thus, children as well as adults can be subject to police violence, arrests and detention at any time: when they wake up, when they walk in the street, or when they try to cross the border (IGA, IGAS, IGJ et ADF 2018). Migrant minors are just as much victims as adults. In 2017, a report by Refugee Rights Europe reported that 89.2% of minors interviewed reported having been victims of police violence (Refugee Rights Europe 2017). This policy at the border is also strongly supported by the judicial authorities to give it the delicate veneer of legality⁹⁸.

⁹⁵ Although legally different, administrative detention is a prison experience that justifies the use of the term 'imprisoned'.

⁹⁶ This makes it the most requested ARC in terms of the number of placements in France (excluding overseas departments)

⁹⁷ Not recognised as such by the administration

⁹⁸ Only 27% of people held in detention are released by the three jurisdictions they encounter (Judge of freedom or detention, Administrative Judge, Cour d'Appel). Several expulsions were carried out by order of the President of the Boulogne sur Mer Court. This non-adversarial procedure does not allow the inhabitants of the land to defend themselves. In general, all deployment and activity of law enforcement agencies is carried out under the control of the Public Prosecutor.

All of the administrations linked to asylum have been closed since October 2016 in Calais. The destruction of the shanty town should automatically lead to the disappearance of the people living there (É. Fassin et al. 2014). This closure is part of the policy of dispersing exiles at the border. It complicates all administrative procedures. These must now be done in Lille⁹⁹.

The situation in Calais and the media coverage of the Jungle of 2015-2016 attracted many volunteers, activists and associations to help the exiles (Pette 2016). Although the shantytown was destroyed, this presence did not disappear. The Jungle moment was a ratchet effect (Agier, Bouagga, et Galisson 2019). Associative support is thus far from what existed before 2015. This presence has made it possible to increase the number of support actions for exiles. The different harassment and other inhuman policies implemented by the authorities have been the subject of numerous legal proceedings brought by exiles and associations. These have led to the condemnation of the State for inhuman and degrading treatment¹⁰⁰. They have also made it possible to reduce harassment against the work of associations¹⁰¹. For the moment, they have not put an end to the evictions or to police violence¹⁰².

Faced with the various condemnations, the authorities have implemented “a humanitarian base”. The authorities mandate an association to provide access to water, showers and meal distributions since March 2018. In addition, exiles can go to reception and situation assessment centres (CAES). In practice, these are accommodation proposals for adults and families in centres managed by the Prefecture (i.e. the Ministry of the Interior) and far from the coast. Entry is on a voluntary basis. However, very quickly, staying in the centres is conditional on an asylum application.

Accompanied minors

CAES do not seem to be suitable for many families who are afraid of being dubbed and sent back to another country, or who know that they are not eligible for asylum, or who still want to go to the UK despite legal and other obstacles (Droits et Défenseur des Droits 2018). In these family centres, children do not attend school because the centre is supposed to be a transit centre where families are not supposed to stay for more than a month.

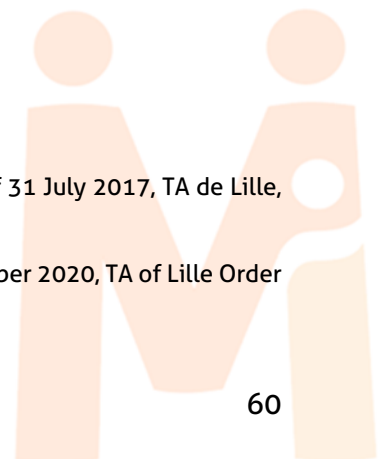
“You understand, it would be worse for a child to go to school for a month and then be forced to leave again... and the Prefecture asks us not to enrol the children in school” **CAES social worker, Field Diary, 14 November 2019**

⁹⁹ That is, more than 100km away.

¹⁰⁰ TA de Lille, order of 26 June 2017, Conseil d'Etat, Decisions N°412125, 412171 of 31 July 2017, TA de Lille, order 31 July 2018

¹⁰¹ TA de Lille, order of 13 February 2017, TA de Lille, order of 22 March 2017

¹⁰² TJ of Boulogne sur Mer Order of 18 December 2019, TA of Lille Order of 18 November 2020, TA of Lille Order of 24 December 2020



Legally, these practices are illegal and go against the law and the various circulars relating to the schooling of minors in transit or living in informal settlements¹⁰³. However, families are reluctant to assert their rights (when they are aware of them) for fear of retaliatory measures. The prefecture, for its part, uses the concept of the best interests of the child to facilitate the implementation of an exclusionary immigration policy under the aegis of the Ministry of the Interior.

Families who had a family member in the UK could claim a right to family reunification under Dublin transfer until 30 December 2020¹⁰⁴. However, the definition of "family member" for adults is restrictive as it only includes the spouse and children of the couple. The procedure involves filing an asylum application with the prefecture, highlighting the family link and the desire to be reunited.

Good Practices and initiatives (GO and NGO)

Accommodation for UAM's in Pas de Calais

In September 2012, the Pas de Calais department opened the centre for unaccompanied minors in the city of Saint Omer. 45km far from Calais. The place is called "La Maison du Jeune Réfugié." The stated aim is to achieve effective stabilisation of the unaccompanied minors placed. Until now, 99% of unaccompanied minors ran away within a few days of being placed. The association FTDA specialised at that time on social work with refugees and asylum seekers is chosen to managed this emergency temporary accomodation. This centre has a capacity of 80 places for minors aged 10 to 17. Its function is to receive only foreign minors. Depending on the needs and situations, other associations may be asked to participate in the temporary emergency reception. Host families can also receive UAMs awaiting assessment who are in particular situations. Thanks to this accommodation scheme, combined with a daily marauding service that goes to the Jungles to meet minors, more young people are sheltered.

The Maison du Jeune Réfugié is also responsible for carrying out minority assessments. However, these assessments are carried out without using the AEM file. The department, which is the commissioning authority, refuses to use this file. As a reminder, on average, 50 to 60% of young people receive a positive assessment and have their minority recognised.

In 2020, The Pas de Calais département has an administrative unit dedicated to coordinate the reception, and the stabilisation (after that the minor has been recognised as minor) of the UAM's and young adults. Daily care is provided by 5 associations under a public

¹⁰³ According to the preamble of the French constitution of 1958, the Education Code, the interministerial circular NOR INTK1233053C of 26 August 2012, the circular n°2014-088 of 9 July 2014, the circular n°2012-142

¹⁰⁴ Article 9 and 10 of Regulation 604/2013 of the so-called "Dublin III" Regulation of 26 June 2013, which is no longer in force in the UK after Brexit. Other UK family reunification procedures still in force very often require a passport, a visa, and money. If the public encountered on the Jungles met these requirements...then there would probably be no Jungles.

service delegation in 13 accommodation centres spread throughout the department... except for the Calais area (Département du Pas de Calais 2021). An annual budget of 7 million euros is dedicated to the care of UAMs (Aït Ahmed, Gallant, and Meur 2019). It covers in particular stabilised young people, i.e. more than 1,000 people per year. The French State pays for the care during the sheltering phase.

Statistical data tells us that the stabilisation rate was 38% in 2018 and 13% in 2020 (Département du Pas de Calais 2021). Once a young person is recognised as a minor, he or she appears to benefit from adequate social and legal follow-up. In 2020, 95% of UAMs or young adults in care had received training or a diploma. 90% had obtained a residence permit and were provided with accommodation (Département du Pas de Calais 2021). The young adult contract (APJM) is widespread, with over 497 young adults in care in 2020. These data highlight the importance of recognising minority status in the sense that it ensures that young people in Pas de Calais are not only provided with accommodation but also have easier access to a diploma and regularisation. There is therefore a real desire on the part of the department to take good care of this group.

NGO good practices

Since 2015 and the big Jungle, an association is particularly involved in meeting, identifying and orienting minors in the Jungles. It helps to facilitate the work of marauding for shelter. Many UAMs are therefore identified and referred by voluntary associations. Without this non institutional help, access to fundamental rights for minors would simply be a mirage if we only consider the weakness of the system (two people in a vehicle to cover several camps in an afternoon) which does not allow for an effective liaison with UAM's.

The Jungle has helped to draw in legal resources as well. These people have helped to make lasting progress in the cause of UAMs based on innovative litigation and unused rights (Watt 2016). This is the case for family reunification procedures in Dublin transfers, particularly in the Pas de Calais. Thus, due to the presence of the "Great Jungle", institutions and NGOs have built up a certain expertise on the subject¹⁰⁵. Above all, this dispute and its repercussions put the separation of minors with their families on the other side of the Channel on the political agenda from March 2016 (Guérin 2018). The French and British authorities had to address the issue. On the British side, an amendment, the Dubs amendment, was even able to see the light of day in 2016. In particular, it involves the relocation of a quota of UAMs living in the Jungles who have no relatives on the other side of the Channel to foster families in the UK. The quota was reached in December 2018. Nearly 340 young people who passed through the Jungles were able to benefit from this amendment and legally move to the UK. Similarly for Dublin, this legal opportunity ended with the implementation of Brexit. However, it has had a significant impact on the care of

¹⁰⁵ They then shared this expertise with other departments in France, or for the benefit of eligible young people. For example, the Pas-de-Calais département and the national distribution unit have agreed on several occasions to take in a minor from another département who did not have sufficient knowledge of the procedure, so that he could be tried for family reunification Source: meeting on 23 December 2019 between associations and the Pas-de-Calais département.

many UAMs. It is estimated that around a thousand young people benefited from this procedure.

The associations have also used the law to sanction the authorities' policy of inaction regarding the care of UAMs. Several court decisions have sanctioned this policy of the authorities: The Administrative Court of Lille forced the authorities to take a census of the minors present in the jungles and to set up an information marauding system for them¹⁰⁶. In addition, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in the Khan v. France judgment heavily condemned France for having failed to shelter a 12-year-old unaccompanied Afghan minor who was living in the Great Jungle of Calais¹⁰⁷.

Alternatives to detention

In theory, an UAM should never be detained. Nevertheless, minors do end up in detention centres. The police and then the judge rarely recognise the minor's minority. Moreover, it is up to the minor to provide proof of his minority. When he does, the Prefecture (which is responsible for the detention order) revokes its order. The case is therefore rarely brought before the courts to be sanctioned. When the young person is released on the grounds of minority, FTDA is called to collect him. However, the young person is simply sheltered. He is not officially recognised as minor by the ASE and taken into care. Moreover, the minor often wishes to distance himself from any form of institution. In fact, they often return to the camps

Child-centred approach institutional support & assistance to migrant children

The institutional approach to UAMs is regularly question their minority. This makes it possible to deny them the rights guaranteed to minors or to suspend these rights pending recognition of their minority (IPO). At the same time, the same young people who declare themselves to be minors are also denied the rights of adults because of their minority and their lack of legal representation.

The Human Rights Defender

The Defender of Rights is an independent administrative authority. One of its missions is particularly concerned with the respect of children's rights, through a children's rights defender. This is the French institution in charge of ensuring that the CRC is respected by the French authorities. As such, it submits a periodic report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. It can easily be seized, including by a child, to establish an infringement of rights or freedoms. The institution then has the power to investigate with the authorities in order to issue opinions and recommendations. It can also make observations in court. On average, 3,000 cases involving children are referred to it each year

¹⁰⁶TA de Lille, 2 November 2015, Association MEDECINS DU MONDE et al, No. 1508747.

¹⁰⁷European Court of Human Rights - Khan v. France (no. 12267/16), 28 February 2019

(Défenseur des Droits 2020). In 2018, 450 referrals concerned unaccompanied minors, which is enormous when compared to the proportion of this group in relation to the total number of children present in France (Aït Ahmed, Gallant, et Meur 2019).

The right to be heard and other participation rights

During the hearing with the Juvenile Judge, the magistrate hears the minor first. In family reunification procedures in Dublin transfers, the minor must give his written consent to the procedure. In the case of an asylum application, as with adults, the young person's word is given priority. It is the main source of evidence on which the decision is based. On the other hand, in the face of the police, this word is likely to be arbitrarily called into question.

2.4 Reflection and conclusion

France has a complete set of rules to take care of UAM's. Based on CIDE and translated in the French law, these rules are supposed to give a frame to protect, to shelter, to school, to give a legal representative, and to assure regularization when the minor becomes adult. Moreover, authorities have the duty to look for any family member of the minor in European Union and then to implement a procedure to reunify the child and his relative. At any stage of the procedure, best interest of the child must be a prior concern. The child has to be associated to every decision regarding his case and according to his degree of maturity.

The examination of grey literature on the subject depicts a less shining situation. In lot of departments, authorities see UAM's as a burden (IGA, IGAS, IGJ et ADF 2018). The uncertain status of these minors seems to justify a low standard of care by the authorities. In a context of struggle against illegal immigration (and restriction of access to legal immigration), the UAM's figure shift progressively from the victim to protect to the scammer to be exposed. Minority appears more as a status to be acquired through the provisional placement order (Paté 2018); than as biological or chronological data (number of years lived since birth) (Rennes 2019). Child protection therefore seems to be the entry point for benefiting from the full range of rights associated with minority. Through the social assessment system, the recognition of minority functions here as a conditional access system to these rights. It aims to distinguish between those who have rights and those who are left out of the procedure, insiders and outsiders. This illustrates the suspicion of fraud that each person claiming UAM status must face. The recognition of minority status then clears this suspicion¹⁰⁸. However, it also creates a major obstacle to the integration of UAMs. Obtaining this recognition sometimes takes several weeks or even months. This uncertain wait causes great uncertainty for the young people concerned. It is also likely to hinder access to schooling or the application for asylum or family reunification under Dublin application.

¹⁰⁸ At least in part, in some departments (for the moment not in Pas de Calais), the prefectures question the validity of the civil status documents of minors in the care of the ASE. The consequences can be dramatic for the young person, with a refusal of a residence permit and criminal and civil proceedings for fraud. This can result in prison sentences and deportation measures. (Défenseur des Droits 2017)

It is interesting to notice that authorities forgot this procedure. They have only used a restrictive part of this application. The disastrous situation of the shanty town of Calais in 2016 led some benevolent solicitors to rediscover this forgotten procedure.

The policy framework in Calais concerning migrant minors in transit is based on a contradiction. On the one hand, France has a legal obligation to take care of minors present on its territory. On the other hand, its border policy aims to repress attempts to cross to the UK (including minors). This policy of "*securing the border*" relies on techniques of blocking and dispersal, harassment and violence. Authorities use a humanitarian rhetoric to justify an action of policing, exclusion and punishment, a combination of what Didier Fassin calls "Compassion and repression" (D. Fassin 2005).

The resolution of the contradiction involves the evaluation of minority (or even its negation). Thus, in order to be recognised as a minor, a young person must leave the Jungle, go to a shelter and undergo an assessment of minority. As long as the minor is not registered in an institution, as long as he does not have a "*paper existence*" (Chamayou 2015), he remains at the mercy of an arbitrary police and judicial system that has made the repression of people in transit at the border its primary objective.

3. Qualitative research

3.1 Methodology design

Research site			
	Type of research site	Location (urban/rural)	The number of total migrants
RS1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Informal camps,• Day care for exiles• Administrations and institutions• Overnight stay	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• City of Calais and its suburbs• Except for the administrations which could be located in Lille or Boulogne sur Mer.• Institutional shelters are scattered throughout the department but the main shelter is in Saint-Omer	Between 500 and 1500. More in terms of flows.
Selection criteria of the site and procedure (gatekeepers)			
RS1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Places where exiles live, especially among Arabic-speaking communities.• Day care because it is a place of exchange that is conducive and appropriate• The administrations were observed accompanying UAMs in their legal and administrative procedures.		
Description of location(s) and/or institution(s).			
RS1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Informal settlements are located on the outskirts of the city. They are characterised by a lack of shelter, comfort and privacy.• The day centre is a private association (not mandated by the state) which offers activities and services to exiled persons.• About the institutions:		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The retention center (CRA) is located in the suburbs of Calais. The courtroom of the court that judges the detainees is attached to it • The competent prefecture for asylum applications is in Lille • The place of shelter and social assessment is a hostel in Saint Omer • The Children's Court for Calais is located in Boulogne sur mer
Period of data collection & number of days at the research site	
RS1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 2019 to December 2019. • January to February 2020. May to September 2020. • November 2020 to January 2021. <p>In addition, this research is based on a volunteer presence on the ground in Calais since December 2015</p>
Brief description of "entering" the research site	
RS1	In fact, I was already present in the field as an association volunteer, socio-legal worker and Arabic-speaking interpreter. These aspects allowed me to legitimise my presence in the field with associative actors and exiles (<i>see Reflexive Methodology Report</i>)
Number and roles of researchers participating in the process	
RS1	1
How respondents (migrants) were selected	
RS1	By opportunity: (<i>see Reflexive Methodology Report</i>)
How the respondents (migrants) were approached	
RS1	The approach of a volunteer who specialises in legal procedures, particularly concerning minors, was a valuable tool for contacting migrant minors. It helped to establish a relationship of exchange and trust (<i>see Reflexive Methodology Report</i>)
How the research was facilitated by staff at the research site?	
RS1	Immersion in the Calais community facilitated my access to the field, including with certain institutional actors. (<i>see Reflexive Methodology Report</i>)
Difficulties encountered and ways to overcome (like getting access during empirical work, social closure etc.)	
RS1	<p>The covid pandemic led to the closure of day-care facilities for several months. These provide a comfortable and intimate setting for building trust with young people and conducting interviews.</p> <p>Vulnerability, precarious living conditions, the constant vigilance and mistrust induced by conduct, the feeling of insecurity and illegalisation, and the language factor were all elements that had to be considered in order to conduct the survey. (<i>see Reflexive Methodology Report</i>)</p>
Additional descriptions and explanations	
RS1	

Short description of the sample

Below is a brief description of the sample of respondents. The status and sometimes the country are only alluded to so that the young people cannot be recognised. All the interviews except those with the four Afghan minors were conducted without the use of an interpreter. For the latter, the duration of the interview included the time taken to translate from Pashto

into English. 4 interviews were conducted in French. 1 interview was conducted in English and Arabic. 18 interviews were conducted entirely in Arabic.

Nr	Date	duration (min)	Gender	Age	Country of birth	status when interview was conducted
S1	25 January 2021	91	Male	16	Sudan	Asylum seeker
S2	23 June 2020 25 June 2020	190	Male	17	Sudan	Not in the care of child protection
S3	06 November 2020	63	Male	16	Chad	Not in the care of child protection
S4	26 January 2021	67	Male	16	Afghanistan	Asylum seeker
S5	07 January 2021	97	Male	16	Afghanistan	Not in the care of child protection
S6	18 August 2020	35	Female	11	Sudan	accompanied minor
S7	18 August 2021	141	Female	just 18	Sudan	accompanied minor
S8	04 January 2021	80	Male	16	Sudan	Not in the care of child protection
S9	24 November 2020	39	Male	17	Syria	Not in the care of child protection
S10	30 November 2020	36	Male	17	Yemen	Not in the care of child protection
S11	15 December 2020	85	Male	17	Sudan	Not in the care of child protection
S12	06 January 2021	71	Male	17	Sudan	Not in the care of child protection
S13	09 January 2021	73	Male	17	Sudan	Not in the care of child protection
S14	10 March 2020 04 June 2020 05 June 2020	230	Male	17	Yemen	Not in the care of child protection
S15	23 November 2020	45	Male	16	Sudan	Not in the care of child protection
S16	04 January 2021	90	Male	17	Sudan	Not in the care of child protection
S17	06 November 2021	90	Male	16	Sudan	Not in the care of child protection
S18	26 January 2021	80	Male	16	Afghanistan	Asylum seeker
S19	20 December 2020	85	Male	17	Libya	Not in the care of child protection
S20	22 January 2021	195	Male	19	Erytrea	In the care of child welfare

S21	20 January 2021	92	Male	17	french speaking african country	Not in the care of child protection
S22	26 January 2021	80	Male	16	Afghanistan	Asylum seeker
S23	05 November 2020 10 November 2020	165	Male	16	Sudan	Not in the care of child protection
S24	27 January 2020	45	Male	14	Sudan	Awaiting age assessment
S25	27 November 2020 30 November 2020	80	Male	14	Sudan	Not in the care of child protection
S26	20 May 2020	120	Male	18	french speaking african country	Asylum seeker
S27	06 January 2021	70	Male	16	Sudan	Not in the care of child protection

4. Findings from participant observation

4.1 Social dynamics

Description of physical environment

Our observations focused on one camp in particular. This was the largest camp at the time of the survey. Calais, before 10 July 2020, had four other camps. However, the observations made in terms of living conditions are valid for all these settlements.

The Big Jungle camp

This informal camp is located in a wood, and on a car park. It is located 3 or 4 kilometres from the centre of Calais, so it is on the edge of the city¹⁰⁹.

The camp extends over a hundred metres. Around 500 people lived in the camp, the number being extremely fluctuating. The exiles have settled in the vicinity to benefit from the "facilities" implemented by the authorities¹¹⁰:

The whole area is made up of tents. The authorities prevent the creation of a permanent settlement. They carry out eviction operations every 48 hours, forcing the exiles to move their belongings to avoid destruction.

¹⁰⁹ The first bus stop is one kilometre away.

¹¹⁰ Taps, toilets, food distribution point, shuttles to showers.

The police presence is permanent and visible. Two CRS trucks¹¹¹ are permanently parked near the camp.

The precariousness of the living conditions is obvious: no place to shelter from the rain, no furniture, no utensils for cooking. There is a lot of rubbish on the ground, including a lot of clothes that have been distributed but which have become waterlogged and it has been impossible to dry them. This situation is not inevitable. Associations and exiles have important capacities to improve their living conditions (Guenebeaud 2017; Agier, Bouagga, et Galisson 2019; *Calais, face à la frontière: textes & entretiens*. 2017). They are prevented from doing so by the police and judicial apparatus that keeps people in the camps and prevents any form of organisation on the principle of '*doing nothing and letting nothing happen*' (É. Fassin et al. 2014).

*Interactions between migrants*¹¹²

Living on the Jungle

The vast majority of people in the jungles are single men, rarely over 30 years of age¹¹³. The age differences are not necessarily striking. As such, they rarely constitute a separation.

Jungles are places of sociability. This sociability appears to be a condition for survival in the jungles and for crossing the border. Belonging to a group is a guarantee of security in the face of the uncertainty of life in transit. The risk of disappearance, death, arrest and imprisonment is high.

The fear of theft, by the police or others, is important, especially as it is impossible to store belongings in a safe, closed place. They have to keep them with you, or get others to look after them. Exchanges of services, and in particular the monitoring of belongings (telephones in charge) are therefore omnipresent. The lending of goods between friends is frequent. Younger people seem to benefit from this more frequently.

There are no formal conflict regulation bodies, no leaders, no rules. This situation leads to a general feeling of insecurity which can lead to abuses. The living conditions and oppression in which people are kept are also another factor in exacerbating tensions between exiles (Fanon 1968).

¹¹¹ French riot police

¹¹² For the development of our argument, we thought it would be useful to switch this section with the "*Interactions between migrants and personnel*", as jungles are informal organisational spaces not governed by an institution.

¹¹³ Women and families are rarer and immediately attract the attention of those present, exiles or associations to be offered shelter or civic accommodation as long as they are few in number.

Networking and identity categories

Arrival in Calais

Most of the time, it is these exiles, who have been in Calais for a longer period of time, who guide the newcomers. Learning about life in transit in Calais is done first of all among peers (Djigo 2016)¹¹⁴. These older people also inform associations of the presence of newcomers, particularly if they are vulnerable.

Most of the minors in Calais made the journey without relatives to look after them. They did not make the journey alone but connected with collectives and then with others along the way (Robin 2017).

Migrants are often part of a network of friends and family that extends beyond Calais and constitutes a resource for knowing how to migrate. They enable migration strategies to be built. They produce a circulatory territory of the Franco-British border¹¹⁵(Tarrius 2015).

Interactions between migrants and personnel

Distributions and marauding

In the jungles, the association mandated by the state for distributions has mediators who speak some of the languages spoken in the camp. They do not notice the presence of minors or go to them, for example.

The FTDA marauding team is present every afternoon in the jungles. However, the time spent on the ground does not allow it to cover all the camps properly. Most of the minors are referred to it by another association, not mandated by the state, which seeks to identify and guide the young people, particularly through psycho-social activities in the field.

Other associations are involved in the camp. This is the case of the associations that distribute. The distribution of goods considered rare in the Jungles: shoes, sleeping bags and tents, etc. can be a source of tension between exiles or between exiles and volunteers. The associations have to manage the shortage.

For the minors identified, the association specialising in this group centralises requests from other associations. In general, young people considered to be more vulnerable have slightly easier access to these goods.

¹¹⁴ With the exception of certain camps occupied by Afghans, this information is mostly free. The same applies to access to the services (community distributions, etc.) that result from it. Our observations and the exchanges we had with people, particularly in the Arabic-speaking groups (Sudanese, Yemenis, Chadians, etc.) do not reveal any transactions to gain access to them. It is more a question of demonstrations of solidarity between peers (Djigo 2016). The fact that the information is not free does not prevent us from making this argument. It emphasises that the primary source of information and 'support' for exiles is the exiles themselves.

¹¹⁵ This stretches from Wallonia to Brittany via Paris, with Calais as the epicentre.

The day centre in the centre of Calais is also a key location. It offers conditions of intimacy and security that enable discussions with UAMs or the implementation of legal follow-up. Generally speaking, institutions tend to deny the presence of UAMs in the field. The associations present try to deal with emergencies by providing basic needs. The Calais area is marked by a high turnover of both exiles and associations, which makes it difficult to establish links between people. Communication is often in English, which is the language of communication. Interpreters are a rare resource. Exchanges are therefore often limited to meeting basic needs.

4.2 Institutional procedures

Access to social support, health and legal protections

Social support

Theoretically, the social support available to a minor on arrival in Calais is mainly based at institutional level on their orientation in a shelter. In practice, peers and associations not mandated by the state play a key role in orienting new arrivals and offering them support. This is because nothing is done by the authorities to facilitate access to basic rights.

Minors in transit in the camps

France has made international commitments to protect minors at risk. However, their respect seems to be less of a priority for the French government than the objective of controlling migration flows by reducing the presence of exiles in Calais:

["However, in view of the arrivals of unaccompanied minors in Calais since the signing of the treaty, Gérard COLLOMB¹¹⁶ reminds us that only minors who arrived in France before 18 January are likely to be taken in charge in the context of these transfers. Furthermore, the identification of the minors concerned with a view to their transfer will not be carried out in Calais, which is not intended to be an entry point for this scheme.

[...] Thus, Gérard COLLOMB asked the Prefect to remind people that the regroupings in Calais with a view to being taken in charge in this way would not be followed up.

*The Government reaffirms its firm determination to avoid any reconstitution of camps in Calais and to maintain the highest possible level of border security." **Press release from the Ministry of the Interior on 20 January 2018***

This press release from the Ministry of the Interior seems to us to sum up French policy at the border with regard to unaccompanied minors. The government's legal commitments

¹¹⁶ Minister of the Interior at the time

seem to be suspended when it comes to Calais or at least subordinated to the imperative of "securing the border". Thus, curiously, the Minister mentions a differentiated right according to the length of time in Calais for unaccompanied minors. In general, Calais should not be a place of care.

Legal protection

Normally, a minor does not have to prove the legality of his stay on French territory. However, this presupposes that they can prove their minority. This protection appears rather random in the context of the policy of repression of exiles at the border. Minority regularly, does not protect, as long as the individuals do not manage to claim it.

Several court decisions have sanctioned this policy of the authorities: The Administrative Court of Lille forced the authorities to take a census of the minors present in the jungles and to set up an information marauding system for them¹¹⁷. In addition, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in the Khan v. France judgment heavily condemned France for having failed to shelter a 12-year-old unaccompanied Afghan minor who was living in the Great Jungle of Calais¹¹⁸.

Since the decision of the Administrative Court, the department has set up social outreach activities for UAMs in the jungles in order to offer them shelter in a hostel. This shelter is located 45 km from Calais¹¹⁹. As for the Khan ruling, it is still struggling to be followed up. Moreover, the courts does not have the same degree of emergency regarding an UAM in danger. Justice is often too slow to protect minors in transit. They also express institutions difficulties in sheltering this public even when they are aware of the situation:

"These are reports, it's extremely complicated to deal with, because they are reports, we have almost no information on the young person, so in fact, we can't do anything for him, I'm willing to take an OPP, but the young person, if we don't know where he is, we can't go and get him back, and the times when we try, and the times when I've taken one, it's never worked [...]it's happened, it's once where we managed to pick up a small kid, but like 12 or 13. He went back to FTDA [the official association in charge of care and sheltering UAMs], an hour later he was gone [...], but we are very powerless in relation to that, [...]our means of action to get them back is through the police, and that's probably not the right way to go." **Deputy Prosecutor**

Here, the combination of the lack of social anchorage of these young people and their constant nomadism prevents the institutions from having a grip on these minors. Prosecutor express also her dismay about her means of action, namely mandating the police. Indeed, taking a young person to safety via the police runs the risk of this action being perceived as a coercive measure by the young person.

¹¹⁷TA de Lille, 2 November 2015, Association MEDECINS DU MONDE et al, No. 1508747.

¹¹⁸European Court of Human Rights - Khan v. France (no. 12267/16), 28 February 2019

¹¹⁹ The location of the home is a question of opportunity. The municipality of Saint-Omer, which hosts it, is the only municipality in the department to have accepted such a facility on its territory when it was created in 2012.

This failure is reinforced by the policies of harassment at the border conducted by the same police. Repression puts minors in transit at risk when it comes to them. It also has the effect of pushing them to renounce to be protected while they can avoid it. The authorities must therefore choose between compassion and repression. To avoid to choose, the justice system tends to adopt a wait-and-see attitude in order to shelter minors in transit.

Minority assessment

If a minor wants to be sheltered more than 5 days by the accommodation center, he must have his minority recognised. In Pas de Calais department, decisions on whether or not to recognise minority are taken by the Public Prosecutor and not by the President of the Conseil départemental. Minority assessment is the tool used to take the decision. When a minor wishes to be assessed, he is assessed by one of the two members of the assessment team¹²⁰. The assessment is therefore not multidisciplinary as recommended by the article R 221-11 of the Social Action and Family Code. The small number of assessors often increases the waiting time beyond the five days of provisional reception. Young people remain in the facility until they are notified of their assessment decision. In practice, the assessment takes place as follows. The young person is given an appointment. He meets the assessor in his office. The assessor explains the nature of the assessment. The assessor then asks the young person to go to the Saint Omer police station to submit the minor's fingerprints to the visabio database¹²¹. Several associations are calling for an end to this practice, which is often seen as useless and which can, on the contrary, frighten the minor into giving up the procedure and therefore protection. The department's services claim that this request comes from the public prosecutor's office, but have promised to consider putting an end to this practice¹²². The minority interview takes place with the help of an interpreter when necessary (often by telephone). If the assessment is positive, the young person receives an IPO. He is then transferred a few days later to one of the stabilisation homes to begin his new life. If the answer is negative, the young person receives a refusal decision. This usually looks like a poorly printed piece of paper with a typical statement: "*Posture incompatible with alleged minority*". He also receives a sheet in French explaining his appeal options, as well as various addresses and emergency numbers. These documents are translated for him and he is handed over to the street. His assessment is not given to him. He has to ask for it, not from the association that assessed him but from the Department. This gap is likely to slow down his hearing before the Juvenile Judge. In 2019, the Saint Omer public prosecutor's office refused to recognise 226 people as minors. To our knowledge, only a dozen appeals have

¹²⁰ The information gathered on this point comes partly from informal discussions with staff at the Saint Omer centre, but also from a large number of accounts given by MIEs in the context of legal support for appealing against the decision not to provide educational assistance, which had been given to them at the end of their minority assessment, and this from September 2017 to July 2019 during my work as a lawyer in an association providing access to the law.

¹²¹ This file registers people who have applied for a visa to the European Union. Because many minors are unaccompanied, they may use false papers with an adult date of birth in order to cross borders more easily. Aware of this, the circular of 25 January 2016 and the constant jurisprudence of the Douai Appeal court state that this criterion alone is not sufficient to establish majority.

¹²² Source: meeting of 23 December 2019 between associations and the Pas-de-Calais department.

been lodged with the local courts. Those who do appeal are those who have kept in touch with the Calais associations they had previously met and with whom they had created a link. These NGO's provide support, explaining the procedure, helping to draft the appeal, translate documents, choose and meet a lawyer¹²³. The sheltering of these young people who are not recognised as minors is a real problem¹²⁴. This leads some of them to continue their wandering. Also, this situation shows how little access children have to their rights. In order to have one's rights recognised and to have concrete access to the associated services, one still needs to know about them and to ask for them. Finally, this implies having legal support to be able to claim them if they are denied.

Hearings for young people who have returned to Calais take place at the Juvenile court in Boulogne sur mer (30 km from Calais) several weeks or even a few months after the appeal is lodged. The minor is first received alone by the Juvenile Judge, who then hears the lawyer and any other party he considers interesting (social workers, volunteers, etc.). The practice of judges has changed with a complete renewal of the juvenile judges in the jurisdiction. Before September 2020, the Boulogne sur Mer judges considered the identity documents of young people. They also often chose to place minors for a limited period of time while the UAM provided an original identity document¹²⁵. The minor was left to bear the burden of proof, which in our view contravened the CRC¹²⁶. They no longer had recourse to bone tests, which were considered too costly and whose results were systematically overturned by the Douai Appeal Court. To our knowledge, the majority of decisions are in favour of the young people, who are then often placed in the wake of the decision via an interim placement order (IPO)¹²⁷. The renewal of the jurisdiction has led to the use of bone testing by the new judges.

Access to health

Access to health care for exiles is mainly through the healthcare permanent support (PASS) of the Calais hospital. An association not mandated by the state takes care of referring and bringing exiles to the hospital. The satisfactory operation of this service has led associations providing access to care, such as the Red Cross and doctor of the world, to reduce their services in the Jungles (fewer mobile clinics) so as not to duplicate the institutional services. On average, more than 600 monthly consultations were carried out with exiles in 2019¹²⁸.

¹²³ Around Calais, few lawyers are dedicated to this litigation. It was sometimes difficult to find a lawyer who would take the case. In addition, on several occasions, although a lawyer was requested in the application, the legal aid office did not appoint one for certain minors who were heard.

¹²⁴ If young people declare their date of birth as a minor, institutional accommodation for adults refuses to take them in. If they declare themselves to be of age, they run the risk of breaking the presumption of minority. Thus, many young people are housed in civic accommodation while waiting for the hearing. For others, a place is negotiated with the institutional accommodations for adults.

¹²⁵ Tribunal pour Enfants de Boulogne sur Mer, decision of 20 May 2019, not published.

¹²⁶ Article 18-2 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child

¹²⁷ The arrival of the first confinement and the COVID led the judge in charge of this case to "settle" his cases and render his decisions without having heard the young people, on the basis of the appeals that had been sent to them. In the absence of identity documents, several young people were declared of age.

¹²⁸ Source: internal document of the authorities....

In a 2015 report, doctor of the world noted that 80% of the pathologies encountered were related to living conditions¹²⁹. 10% concerned injuries related to attempted passage and police violence. (Burns linked to gassing, flesh torn off by barbed wire, etc.) Only 10% of people were already suffering from a problem before arriving in Calais. These observations are still relevant in 2020. The permanent policy of evictions which leads to the forced wandering of people is a factor in the breakdown of care and support (collectif d'associations opérant de le Calais 2020). In addition, this permanent tension leads to psychological exhaustion which puts people in "*survival mode*"¹³⁰. This situation does not spare minors

Standards for the reception and accommodation of migrant children

The aim is not to be overwhelmed and to be able to respond to all requests for care. The capacity to accommodate minors is seldom exceeded. The department has therefore paid attention to adapting the supply of emergency accommodation to the demand. However, there are other mechanisms for adapting supply to demand in the field. It has often happened that the FTDA marauding service does not go out into the field when it does not have a place to offer. The associations have sometimes faced refusals to take charge (Trépanier 2017). Another method has sometimes consisted of assessing young people as adults on the basis of their appearances in order to be able to refuse them shelter and adapt the number of places offered to the number of places available (Carayon, Mattiussi, and Vuattoux 2018). In a context of resource scarcity and scarcity management, the arbitrary assessment of minority allows for the allocation of rights according to available resources while giving the illusion of respecting the right.

The accommodation is in a hostel which is divided into two parts. The first accommodation is a house with several collective dormitories for a capacity of 40 beds. The second part, with 40 beds also, is a shed located away from the city, with no toilets or showers. On average, 4 educators are available during the day to manage the two places: to welcome the newcomers, to manage the care, the meals... The activities are reduced to a minimum and boredom dominates among the young people.

Stabilisation, which mean long term accommodation after that the UAM's has been granted as a minor takes place in children care facilities or in shared accommodation (flats). They are dedicated solely to UAMs. This movement is part of a general trend in France towards separating traditional ASE from "UFM" ASE (Marmié 2021). The UAM ASE is often marked by a lower daily rate than the classic ASE (Denieul, Leconte, et Schechter 2020). This is the case in Pas de Calais, with a daily price of between 80 and 100 euros for UAMs,

¹²⁹ Including normally extinct diseases such as tuberculosis and *trenchfoot*

¹³⁰ The "*survival mode*" is characterised by a feeling of insecurity and a state of chronic stress increased by sleep disorders linked to the living conditions and a loss of self-esteem that can go as far as a feeling of dehumanisation.

compared to 200 to 250 euros for young French people. However, the difference lies more in the need for supervision of the two groups:

" I don't hide the fact that my management invites me to be closer to 80 than to 100, [...]for UAMs we need less supervision than in classic MECSs, it's the..... linked to the fact that the kids are semi-autonomous, so there is no educational care 7 days a week. Head of the UAMs' service department

In contrast to young people placed with the ASE, who need a high level of supervision due to their young age or particular problems, young UAMs have an older and more autonomous profile with a lighter supervision requirement. On the other hand, the needs are different. Due to their administrative status, which could be described as foreign adults in the making, UAMs need legal support that young French people in care do not need. The need for psychological support linked to the potential traumas of exile should also be considered. It is this observation of particular needs linked to life paths on the one hand and to the future administrative distinction between French and foreigners on the day they turn 18 on the other that justifies differentiated care in the Pas de Calais.

The aim is therefore to meet the needs of young UAMs by providing monitoring and staff trained in the particular problems of this group. This observation has led to an overhaul of the organisation of the monitoring of UAMs and their care. This is carried out in dedicated hostels and the monitoring of cases has been taken away from local social workers to be managed by the UAM unit at departmental level. Few runaways are recorded. By the time they leave the ASE in 2020, 90% of young people had obtained their residence permit and had accommodation that was not emergency accommodation ¹³¹(Département du Pas de Calais 2021).

Access to education and/or language training

Nothing is done by the authorities in Calais for UAMs. There is no reception structure that takes charge of transit. Some courses are provided, sometimes by volunteers. Language courses are provided for young people who are in shelter. The ones who follow them most assiduously are the minors who aim to stabilise in France, which represents a tiny minority of the children in Calais, most of whom aim to reach England.

In Calais, since the dismantling of the Great Jungle in 2016¹³², the only courses available for migrant minors (or adults) are French or English language courses run by volunteers,

¹³¹ The remaining 10% had received a first refusal, but their procedure was still ongoing. This can further increase the acceptance rate. Furthermore, there is a strong correlation between regularisation and access to permanent housing.

¹³² In the "Great Jungle" of 2015-2016, which we can consider a shanty town, several schools were set up by volunteers with the aim of teaching languages to those who wished to attend. The large number of children and the political and media attention also led the government to send three teachers to the children in the women and children's centre from May to October 2016.

often on an irregular basis, in one of the day centres or on the premises of the Red Cross. Nothing is done by the authorities in Calais for UAMs in transit.

In the emergency accommodation, some language courses are provided for young people who are in shelter. The ones who follow them most assiduously are the minors who aim to stabilise in France, which represents a tiny minority of the children in Calais, most of whom aim to reach England.

If some minors wish to go to school without going through the ASE filter, they must go to the information and orientation centre (CIO) to take tests. However, the academic center for schooling to new arrival people, (CASNAV) in Lille refuses to enrol children without legal representation or identity papers¹³³. The young person is then faced with a blocking situation. Once again, there is a gap between the main principles, in this case the unconditional right to schooling, and its implementation, particularly for minors in transit.

According to the department, young people under IPO can expect to enter school within two months of being recognised as a minority¹³⁴. Before that, a minor in shelter can benefit from French or English classes as soon as he arrives at the temporary emergency shelter. However, no schooling is provided without an IPO¹³⁵.

Contact with and integration in the local community

Among the inhabitants of the city, some local residents are hostile to the exiles (Guenebeaud 2015). However, there are many helpers. Before 2015, voluntary support for migrants relied mainly on local resources (Pette 2016). The Calais town hall (right-wing), unchanged for several mandates, constructs, feeds and mediates the figure of the "*local resident invaded at home by the foreigner*" (É. Fassin et al. 2014). Also, the geography of the city accentuates the separation between the city inhabited by French residents, and the spaces/neighbourhoods where exiles live and where associative volunteers and employees responsible for a mission related to their presence intervene. In this sense, a worker from the association that deals with minors noted with regret that her work was limited to spaces dedicated solely to exiles: camps, day care.

Access to child-friendly information

Access to information is a key issue for minors faced with procedures that appear to be difficult to understand (UNHCR 2018). Exchanges in the minor's language play a key role in this respect. However, this presupposes the availability of mediator-interpreters capable of

¹³³ Field notes on 3 December 2019 and a trip to the CASNAV in Lille

¹³⁴ Source: meeting of 23 December 2019 between associations and the Pas-de-Calais department.

¹³⁵ The legal argument is that the department has not yet been entrusted with the young person, so he is not a legal representative and therefore cannot take any steps towards schooling with him.

simply delivering complex information to all the young people met or taken into care in the temporary emergency reception centre (Coron 2018). Faced with the difficulty of such an undertaking, the shelter has developed, together with researchers and UAMs in care, an information leaflet with drawings on the rights of UAMs which is presented to each young person arriving at the shelter. In the jungles, the association that looks after the minors tries to provide them with appropriate information thanks to mediators and interpreters and leaflets.

Access to rights and relevant procedures

For minors, access to the law starts with the sheltering process. It is only once the IPO has been obtained that the asylum, residence or family reunification procedures are launched by the ASE.

If the minor so wishes, he can nevertheless start the asylum and family reunification procedures from Calais with an association providing access to the law.

Legal representation of the minor

Until now, minors in care were subject to educational assistance measures until they came of age¹³⁶. If they were simply under IPO, then the child welfare services (ASE) negotiated with the Juvenile Judge (Children's Judge) to obtain a delegation of parental authority, which the latter granted, with a more or less broad scope depending on the judge or the needs. Most of the time, this was done without a hearing for the minor due to a lack of time and resources, which is, according to the admission of ASE officials, illegal¹³⁷. If the UAMs were placed following an appeal to the Boulogne Juvenile Judge, he implemented educational assistance measures until the young person reached the age of majority, including a broad delegation for both usual and non-usual acts, including schooling and administrative procedures up to and including family reunification under Dublin III¹³⁸.

Asylum application and family reunification

The Jungle has helped to draw in legal resources as well. These people have helped to make lasting progress in the cause of UAMs based on innovative litigation and unused rights (Watt 2016). This is the case for family reunification procedures in Dublin transfers, particularly in the Pas de Calais. Thus, due to the presence of the "Great Jungle", institutions and NGOs have built up a certain expertise on the subject¹³⁹. Above all, this dispute and its

¹³⁶ Hearing of 6 December 2019, Tribunal pour Enfants de Boulogne sur Mer, decision not published.

¹³⁷ Meeting on 23 December 2019 between associations and the Pas-de-Calais department.

¹³⁸ Hearing of 6 December 2019, Tribunal pour Enfants de Boulogne sur Mer, decision not published.

¹³⁹ They then shared this expertise with other departments in France, or for the benefit of eligible young people. For example, the Pas-de-Calais département and the national distribution unit have agreed on several occasions to take in a minor from another département who did not have sufficient knowledge of the procedure, so that he could be tried for family reunification Source: meeting on 23 December 2019 between associations and the Pas-de-Calais département.

repercussions put the separation of minors with their families on the other side of the Channel on the political agenda from March 2016 (Guérin 2018). The French and British authorities had to address the issue. On the British side, an amendment, the Dubs amendment, was even able to see the light of day in 2016. In particular, it involves the relocation of a quota of UAMs living in the Jungles who have no relatives on the other side of the Channel to foster families in the UK. The quota was reached in December 2018. Nearly 340 young people who passed through the Jungles were able to benefit from this amendment and legally move to the UK. Similarly for Dublin, this legal opportunity ended with the implementation of Brexit. However, it has had a significant impact on the care of many UAMs. It is estimated that around a thousand young people benefited from this procedure.

In Calais, the competent prefecture to apply is Lille. However, the young person's application will not be registered if he is not accompanied by an ad hoc administrator (his legal representative). When the minor is granted as a minor with an IPO, the ASE becomes his legal representative:

"The procedure we have in Saint-Omer, I ask for an ad'hoc, in the second I have it. It's really.... [...] She does the OPP and she does the ad'hocs. And you know that even now the educational assistance rulings are adapted to reunifications [...] on the JAE (educational assistance rulings) of the kids, there is now the thing: "to ensure his protection until he comes of age or until he leaves for England within the framework of... and the custodial service and so even when I'm having trouble getting ad hoc administrators, the JAE is actually acting as a custodial service, it's marked that we are the custodial service and we are responsible for applying for asylum within the framework of the young person's family reunification. "educator in an UAM home

Here, the request comes from an institution (the ASE or its delegates) for a young person who has been officially recognised as a minor. It appears legitimate. It is not tainted by a logic of suspicion. Geographical proximity, knowledge of each other and the habit of working together accelerate the procedure. However, waiting and the length of procedures are crucial elements in the stabilisation of a young person.

However, If the minor so wishes, he can legally start to claim for asylum or for family reunification. It is independent of any consideration of the recognition of minority or placement in the ASE. But it doesn't go without difficulties: The minor must wait for his ad hoc administrator to be appointed and to contact him or her. No documents are given to the young person in the meantime. The time taken to appoint an ad hoc administrator varies greatly in practice, from less than a day (rarely) to several months depending on the public prosecutor's office. However, the law is very clear on this point and states that the appointment of an ad'hoc must be made without delay¹⁴⁰. If the young person does not manage to obtain an appointment quickly, he seizes the Administrative Court in summary proceedings to have an ad hoc appointed. Regularly, when this procedure has been

¹⁴⁰ Article L 741-3 of the CESEDA

attempted, the ad hoc administrator has often been appointed between the referral and the hearing, resulting in the case being dismissed. This illustrates the administrative blockage or at least the inertia of this procedure, which comes partly from the public prosecutor's office and the public prosecutors¹⁴¹.

In the Pas-de-Calais, three associations can currently be asked to be ad hoc¹⁴². Sometimes the prosecutor does not inform the minor or the prefecture and the AAH waits for the minor to contact him or her or is unable to contact the young person for whom he has been appointed.... There have been cases of AAHs refusing their appointment due to lack of time or resources. Due to the lack of AAHs, the public prosecutor's office often does not appoint a physical person but an association. It is then necessary to find the natural person who has been appointed within the association and to obtain his acceptance so that he can take on a new case for which he was not previously responsible and which is often not housed in his structure or under his responsibility. This can sometimes take a long time.

In addition to these timing issues, the authorities sometimes find it difficult to recognise that asylum, schooling and shelter are independent rights. For example, the request to designate an ad hoc application is often met with an email from the Prefecture asking whether the young person has an IPO. Prior recognition of minority is never a condition for registering an asylum application.

Furthermore, the absence of the appointment of an ad hoc administrator should not be an obstacle to the registration of an UFM's asylum application¹⁴³. The appointment of a legal representative must constitute a guarantee for the minors concerned and not represent an obstacle to accessing their rights. The ministry of interior and the prefecture of Lille do not seem to share this view and interpret article L 741-3 on the registration of asylum applications in a restrictive sense. On December 2020, they refuse to register the claims of several UAM, who wants to benefit from the procedure of family reunification under Dublin III before the Brexit agreements enter into effects, because these minors didn't have a legal representative. As with the assessment of minority, suspicion prevails towards minors who wish to assert their rights. This example shows that the best interests of the child are not a priority consideration for the authorities. Instead, they rely on restrictive interpretations of the law to deny minors their right to travel legally to the UK. This interpretation is not based on an ethos of defending the French social system, which aims to define the entitled and the fraudulent: if these minors do not go to the UK, they will remain in the care of the French ASE. The prefecture places the right to mobility of certain populations above the interests of the child.

¹⁴¹ The legal support association has experienced this type of situation on several occasions when monitoring cases of minors seeking asylum or family reunification under Dublin III.

¹⁴² One of the associations is not officially authorised, despite a request that has been pending for several months. However, it carries out its mandate with the agreement of the authorities.

¹⁴³ (TA Montreuil, 23 October 2019, n°1911554; TA Lyon, 19 April 2018, n°1802611; TA Paris, order of 19 October 2018, n°1818231/9; TA Lille, order of 9 September 2016, n°1606635; TA Toulouse, order of 15 September 2017, n°1704240, TA Lille, order of 18 December 2020, n°200957)

4.3 Differences in reception processes

Observed differences according to legal status

- A minor will be cared for differently depending on whether he is an UAM or accompanied.
- An UAM will be cared for differently depending on whether he has a interim placement order or not.
- Without an interim placement order, they usually stay in a shelter, in a certain promiscuity and boredom while waiting for their PPO (always with the risk of being rejected)
- With interim placement order, the young person goes in a stabilisation home. He attends school. Procedures are initiated for his regularisation.

Observed differences according to age

- Depending on age and maturity, young people will be placed in different accommodation. Younger children are more likely to be placed in foster care, for example. The more mature ones will have more access to open accommodation.
- Surprisingly, all minors, regardless of age, must undergo a minority assessment¹⁴⁴.

Observed differences according to ethnic groups

- Minority assessment is considered easier with Albanians as they have a passport.

Observed differences according to religion

- In general, the facilities respect the religious beliefs of each individual. They may adapt their care to the diet or the occurrence of religious events: Ramadan, Christmas....

Observed differences according to gender

- Hostels are usually mixed. However, within the latter, the rooms are obviously not mixed. Depending on the situation, girls (mainly because there are fewer of them) are more likely to be placed in foster care.

¹⁴⁴ Following my observations in the field and some interviews, I expressed my surprise at this point to the head of the UAM department. The procedure seems unnecessary for the youngest children and lengthens the waiting time for assessment in a system that sometimes seems overwhelmed. This point was taken into consideration. *"I have no problem taking an OPP without an assessment for younger people"* **Field Diary 12 January 2021**. This is a good example here of dissemination of the findings of the survey (Dunezat 2011).

5. Interviews with children in transit

5.1 Institutional support & assistance

Access to social support, health and legal protections,

For many minors arriving in Calais, access to institutional support is lacking, even in cases where a young person meets the authorities:

"Where did they stop you? In Calais or on the train?"

"On the train to Calais. They ask you for your papers, if you don't have any, they can make you get off on the way, or else put you in prison. So they searched me, I had nothing, so they told me 'ok tonight you'll sleep at the police station, and tomorrow you'll leave.' They took me there. [...] And then, in the morning, I could leave. Over there, it's all dirty. The bed, the blanket, everything is dirty. And they laugh when they see that you came by train and that you have no money, no ticket, nothing, they laugh at you. They say things I don't understand, and then they take all your stuff, take it away, and tell you to go and sleep inside, and there nothing is right. They don't bring you food, drink, nothing. And then in the morning they tell you to leave." Ibrahim, 16 years old

In Calais, the police have the duty to protect children at risk. This contradicts their more explicit duty to repress immigration at the border (Guenebeaud 2017). Charged with embodying both the social and the repressive state, police officers tend to opt for the second option (D. Fassin et al. 2013). To resolve the contradictions inherent to their roles, the police tend to deny any interaction that might lead to the claim of a right to protection. This is often facilitated by the language barrier which hinders clear communication during these interactions, as well as by UAMs' ignorance of their rights or inability to them. In addition, these young people often lack administrative documents to support their claim. This important asymmetry can lead to various abuses:

"I had lost my phone at the English customs. You know, I don't want to get into trouble with the police, so if they do something, I don't rebel, I don't want to die. So I didn't ask for anything, they took my phone and that's how it is. If you do something, it's your soul that you risk losing, not your phone!" Farès, 16 years old

This citation emphasises the extent to which young people have internalised that the police are not there to protect them. This relationship to law enforcement greatly undermines the trust that young people may have in their ability to receive and support from the authorities. These experiences of '*suppression of their agency*' defined as '*an act of power by the state or other authority without any deference or against the child's will*' is likely to increase risk-taking behaviour by these minors during their transit (Thompson et al. 2019:10). These young people are led to construct their journey by avoiding or defying institutions, and in doing so further exacerbate their vulnerability. In Calais, the police are

almost the only institution they are likely to encounter¹⁴⁵. UAMs in transit are a group that needs to be approached by institutional actors (Trajectoires 2018), but institutional support is lacking when minors arrive in Calais. As a result, support is primarily provided by peers:

"So it was raining when we arrived in Calais. We were looking for the Jungle. We didn't know it was called the Jungle actually. We met someone who told us we had to go to the Jungle. He said that was where people who wanted to go to Britain lived. [...] we arrived, we found a group of Sudanese people, they told us to sit down. We were hungry, tired, it was raining. The Sudanese saw that we were young, and they came to us to help us. They offered us to come and sleep with them in their tent. It was very small. [...] Yes. As soon as we arrived, the Sudanese started to explain the associations etc. to us. I didn't take it all in the first day, because I was exhausted and didn't want to talk or listen to anything. But I asked on the second day, then on the third day and the boys informed me. And every day, when I went to get food, I learned." **Mehdi, 16 years old**

Support is primarily peer to peer. This is primarily due to the language factor: young people first turn to others who speak their language and who seem to share their condition, so they can be understood and receive useful guidance. Approaching members of an association or institution implies being able to identify them, their role and capacities. However, the only identifiable representatives of institutions are the police. Thus, in order to be successful in reaching out to young people, support institutions need to reach out to them in key places. They must also have the linguistic ability to communicate with these young people in their own language, or their work is destined to fail (Unicef 2016). Access to institutional support, however, remains functional through non-state-mandated associations. These organisations sometimes rely on migrants themselves; it is often they who constitute the main face of the organisation. These individuals inform newcomers about the existence and nature of the associative support available. In doing so, they validate its use by young people. In addition, they refer the most vulnerable newcomers to the associations. The associations then refer the young person to shelter.

"He told me, if you go on, you can find the jungle, and then I went down following his indications, and I saw other Afghans, and when I saw them, I asked them for help, and these Afghans, they had Pauline's number and Pauline came, took me, to the police and from there to Saint Omer"¹⁴⁶ **Anas 16 years old**

Access to child-friendly information

Unlike Anas, most young people do not seek institutional help or take up the offer of it. This is the case even after several days or weeks in the Jungle. A state-run marauding service

¹⁴⁵ I modestly leave aside the officials of the French Office of Immigration and Integration (OFII) who sometimes maraud in the jungles to offer people voluntary return to their country.

¹⁴⁶ Shelter for UAMs

operates in the Jungles, but not all UAMs manage to identify it. Its role is also sometimes unclear to some young people.

"And during these three weeks, did you see the people from St Omer? Because they come to Calais every day.

Yes, they come, but I didn't know who they were. I saw that they came and took people but I didn't know why.

Didn't you talk to them? [...] Didn't you ask them why they were coming?

No. I asked a friend who told me that they take people to settle in France. And that you can't go out afterwards. If you go with them, they won't let you go. So I didn't want to go and see them" Mohammed, 16

Here care and containment are seen as two sides of the same coin. Care is understood as likely to undermine the young person's migratory goals. The minor relies on misinformation given by peers, often adults, who have not experienced the system. In this respect, the difference in state-provided services for minors and adults does not always make sense. This difficulty, which has already been highlighted in previous studies, emphasises the need for objective, clear and continuous access to information (UNHCR 2018). However, this recommendation does not consider the fact that many young people do not face a lack of information but rather have to process a diversity of information, which is sometimes contradictory or even false. This leads us to consider how young people select information. The first element is its accessibility, for which language plays a crucial role. The second element is the degree of credibility attributed to the informant. On this point, an adult peer of the same nationality, who shares the same living conditions and the same migratory experience, is often considered more credible than a foreigner belonging to an organisation, whom it is difficult to identify as either a member of the authorities or of an independent body.

"There are some that help you, but there are some... you don't know if they are really trying to help you. It's like they take advantage of us from behind" Ayman 16 years old

Many young people are therefore wary of the institutional support offered to them. The establishment of a relationship of trust is therefore essential to ensure that the young person adheres to the service.

"And how do you know if people are telling the truth?

Well... I spoke with Eva, she reassured me. And Eva, I believe her, because she was with us on the boat. She saved us. She found us in the sea. Mohammed 16 years old

In this case, Mohamed was referred to France Terre d'Asile by a volunteer in Calais, whom he had met earlier on a rescue boat in the Mediterranean and from whom he had already received help. Eva also speaks Sudanese Arabic. These two factors contribute to the credibility of her word and to that of those to whom she refers the young person.

However, accessing care only works if it helps to achieve the young person's migration goals. Mohammed and Anas for example only agreed to connect with the organisation because they had a family member in the UK. Connecting with the organisation and staying at their shelter enabled them to access the family reunification procedure. Care and migration objectives were thus combined.

However, this is not always the case for young people:

"They sent me to St Omer. It was the first time I went there. I stayed for 2-3 days. And they told me that if I wanted to go to England, it was possible if I had family there. In family reunification procedure. But I told them that I didn't have anybody there. But I still wanted to go. So I thought it wasn't worth it, I stayed for two or three days and then I left. Ayman 16 years old

Because it is not a means to the ends of crossing the border, some young people simply use the shelter as a default resting place. Legal frameworks (which limit legal pathways to the UK to family reunification) limit the prospects that may be offered to UAMs. (Vacchiano 2014).

Standards for the reception and accommodation of migrant children

Living conditions in Calais

Living conditions in Calais play a paradoxical role in stabilising young people. They are both repulsive and, more rarely, stabilising. Their harshness has the effect of blocking young people in the immediate. All focus is concentrated on satisfying basic needs such as eating, drinking, sleeping, keeping warm and recharging their phones.

"Today, in Calais, I wake up, and I have to hurry to go and shower, eat... I have tons of things to do before I can move: put my tent away, prepare my things so that they don't get stolen etc. I have to walk for miles. I have to walk for miles. And every day it starts all over again. Farès 16 years old

As a result, some find themselves stuck in a limbo that does not allow them to reflect on a future, on their prospects which are always uncertain. This permanent stress, which is the result of the aforementioned eviction operations, contributes to keeping minors on the street (Bruneteaux and Lanzarini 1998):

"Every morning the police come. I mean every other day the police come, they take you out of the field, they take your tent. They enter the forest. So in fact, you learn that when the police arrive, you have to take your tent, get it out of the forest, and when they're gone, you put it back. [...] Frankly, until today, I don't understand. You have people sleeping in the forest already, and you arrive to take everything from them, to destroy

them. What are you looking for? It's to keep the police busy, it seems. Ayman 16 years old

As well as these regular eviction operations, large-scale operations are occasionally rolled out in order to destroy entire camps. People (including minors) are forced to board buses to unknown destinations. This type of operation was first rolled out in 2016, during the destruction of the Calais Jungle, and has been repeated on numerous occasions since (Aït Ahmed, Gallant, and Meur 2019). Minors therefore end up in centres, sometimes alongside adults. Some stay there for some time. This policy is nevertheless counterproductive. It has the effect of saturating care arrangements at the Aide Sociale à l'Enfance, including through the sheltering of adults, due to the deterioration of living conditions.

The massive eviction operations in July 2020, coupled with the disappearance of health services, made life in the Calais jungles even harder and more precarious than they already were. Adults and minors alike had lost their tents, their shelters, their blankets. They then turn to the only solutions still available: the UAM shelter system¹⁴⁷. For those who have been forced to seek shelter, many of them quickly run away and return to the Jungles (Martini 2018). Many find themselves cut off from the associative support they relied on to survive. In a submission to the Défenseurs des Droits following the expulsion operations of 10 and 30 July 2020, the Calais associations reported that they had lost contact with many of the minors they had been monitoring. This was due to the difficulty of recharging their phones and the loss of young people's trust in the associations' support services.

"Sometimes the police know where you are, so you have to move. As soon as the police know where you are, you have to move. In fact, you don't have to be many people, four or five people is all. You can stay two, three months like that.

"And what do you do with the distributions, the food?"

You go there and stand in line. They don't know where you sleep. You take your food and go." Ayman 16 years old

Once again, the experience of having their agency suppressed by law enforcement render minors even more precarious by pushing them to evade the authorities (Thompson et al. 2019). They undermine the work patiently carried out by associational actors to build trust with minors in transit in order to get them out of the challenging situation in which they find themselves.

The use of violence, often outside of any legal framework, is also a technique used by law enforcement officers in the exercise of their duties to harass exiled persons (IGA, IGPN, IGGN Report 2017). It acts as a deterrent to attempted passage, aiming to physically and psychologically mark the exiled persons who are subjected to it, in order to make them give

¹⁴⁷ There is a shelter for adults in CAES, but after 10 July, this facility, managed by an association mandated by the state, no longer exists. The meeting point previously located near the destroyed camp no longer exists. Adults no longer know how to apply for this service

up on transit and self-expulse. This violence emerges in the absence of interaction, the absence of exchanges and formal procedures, as illustrated by what happened to a young Sudanese man we met in Calais:

"In fact, the worst thing that happened to me in France, and which made me not seek asylum here, was one day, in a dougar¹⁴⁸, we got into a truck, the police arrived, [...] they started gassing us inside [...] We couldn't breathe, but we resisted and didn't get out. We arrived at the French border post and they took us out. They put us in a room, [...] And so I didn't want to go in, but the police hit me and locked me in the room with my fists tied. Then I asked them to open the door because of the smoke, I told them I couldn't take it anymore. And for a minute they sprayed me with their gas and hit me. That was the scene that really made me hate France. I think he sprayed me for more than 15 seconds with his gas, that's super long. And then he closed the door. And in the room, there were 14 of us! In a room full of pepper spray. There, really, I said to myself that they didn't consider us as human beings ! [...] Anyway, since then, I decided not to stay in France. And I said to him, "Even if they give me a 10-year residence permit, I'm not staying in France. Nassim 16 years old

This absence of exchange allows for violence and justifies attacks on the body, which Didier Fassin and Patrice Bourdelais emphasise constitutes the frontier of the intolerable in contemporary societies (D. Fassin and Bourdelais 2005: 10). An intolerance to intolerability that is nevertheless differentiated because they show that it is the result of a moral indignation that is based on an unequal treatment of lives (*ibid.*).

"In France, I don't think torture is still allowed, but you know, for migrants, it's different. They hit us a lot. It's normal for them." Farès 16 years old

This unequal treatment of lives is reflected in the police control and harassment of migrants in transit at the border, whose minority often does not protect them until they can prove it. The difficulty in proving one's age, however, carries little weight in relation to the feeling of illegitimacy that their condition as a migrant in transit and living on the streets entails. This perception of a lack of rights is a source of great insecurity, particularly with regard to the police. These young people are well aware that they are at the mercy of arbitrary police action.

"We complained about what happened at Auchan with the police last time, but if they came and beat us all up at night, broke our legs and everything, what do you think would happen? [...] You're a migrant, you have nothing. Even in my country I had a lot of worries, but I've never experienced anything like that." Farès 16 years old

¹⁴⁸ The word "Dougar" is a Sudanese word that refers to the traffic jams of trucks on the ring road leading to the Eurotunnel, which offer an opportunity to get into trucks to try to cross the border without having to resort to the use of smugglers. This is extremely dangerous because it takes place on the motorway, and several Dougars have resulted in the serious injury or death. In addition, these attempted crossings often lead to a brutal police response in the form of manhunts on the highway and the use of massive violence, gas and flashbulbs to deter would-be crossers.

These traumatic experiences, which Farès rightly likens to torture, have the effect of undermining any protection of the minor in France. In contrast to their goal of discouraging illegal immigration to the United Kingdom, the policies of systematic harassment of exiles produce mobility. Paradoxically, they have the effect of reinforcing the attractiveness of England vis-à-vis France.

Thus, access to social support, legal protection, or simple self-preservation on the part of state institutions, exists for minors only on the condition that they leave Calais to go to a home ... in France or the UK. Remaining in the camps puts UAMs at risk, of being treated not as adults in an irregular situation, but as animals:

"Of course, in Calais, life ... I wouldn't say it's miserable but ... I don't like to say things like that but that's the reality: it's a forest for men, not a forest for animals but a forest for men." **Mehdi 16 years old**

Sheltering conditions

When minors agree to be sheltered, they are placed in a home at the Maison du Jeune Réfugié in Saint-Omer, managed by the FTDA association. Generally speaking, the young people we met in the Jungles knew about the scheme. Many had benefited from it. However, when we suggested that they return to the centre, many said no. *"St Omer no good"*.

The reluctance of many UAMs to go to the hostel is partly due to the reception conditions.

"I mean at the beginning I was in the place without showers, and after three days they told me to go to the other place.... Yes, much better. There is a screen, you could watch movies, play Playstation. It was better." **Mohammed 16 years old**

These young people live with other UAMs in a collective living space with only four educators. For example, one of the two places has no sanitary facilities. The conditions thus appear to be unfit for some minors.

"La Maison (the hostel in Saint Omer) is crazy, I was about to lose my mind there, everyone is there typing, typing on their phones, it's like the Jungle, it's dirty, it's dirty everywhere, inside it's dirty, no one cleans up, they're like children. In the bathroom they leave the toothbrushes, the brushes and Toilet paper on the floor pfff." **Ibrahim 16 years old**

This is sometimes the first structure in which these UAMs are sheltered since their arrival in France. In the eyes of some young people, it constitutes a paradigm for possible care within child protection. Thus, these living conditions can have a repulsive effect on young people who seek care in Calais.

However, the quality of the accommodation is not the only issue. The care is not very enveloping and the minors are left to their own devices. Boredom prevails.

"But I asked the young people who lived there. I said to them 'if I want to ask to be recognised as a minor, how does it work?' They told me 'you come, you stay one, two, three months, you ask, you do an interview, and then they find you an accommodation, and when you are 18, they send you for another interview.' But I didn't want to. In St Omer, they don't even send you to school. People stay there and get bored." **Djibril 17 years old**

This stalemate in waiting is characteristic of many migratory routes (Eule 2019). However, here the wait is not only administrative, it is existential. This forced immobility is imposed as a test of endurance for young people to assert their rights (Hage 2009). It can take several weeks for them to be assessed and to obtain the result of their minority assessment. The move to a hostel can be seen as a choice of pragmatic dependency, defined as a '*Child's active choice to allow another's power over them to meet a goal or objective*' (Thompson et al. 2019: 6). Others manage to stave off boredom by making friends locally. For those for whom choosing to stabilise in France is an uncertain option, returning to the Jungle is a way of countering this boredom. The hope of passage, which can occur at any time, intervenes as a salutary alternative to this imposed ordeal of waiting.

In addition, the framework of life in a hostel may appear rigid to some young people who are used to organising their lives with a certain degree of freedom despite the precariousness of their lives.

"There was a girl who yelled at me because I didn't speak French. She came to tell us that we were dirty, because it was a mess. But I told her that I didn't understand her. [...] Then there was another guy [...]. He told me I shouldn't smoke because I was underage. I told him to mind his own business. He spoke to the headmistress and told her that I had spoken to him wrong." **Karim 17 years old.**

By agreeing to be housed, young people have to suspend their autonomy for the benefit of the institution that takes care of them (Kobelinsky 2012). They experience a certain infantilisation. They are made to submit to rules. In cases of non-compliance, they are reminded of their precarious status, which is always in uncertain: they are still not recognised as minors. The prospect of 'deminorisation' tends to be used as a tool for disciplining the young people who are housed. They have to act in the image that the social workers have of children (Carayon, Mattiussi, and Vuattoux 2018b). Thus, hostels become "*both structures of assistance and spaces of control*" (Kobelinsky 2012: 160). Any evidence of independence or rebellion comes with the risk of punishment. For example, a minor whom I had referred to the shelter decided to leave it even though his assessment interview had not yet been completed. Shortly afterwards, I received the following email from an educator with whom I had established a relationship:

"Malik [...] left our scheme yesterday. Also, his assessment goes against a minority." Mail received from a social worker, field diary, November 2020.

For some of the young people we met in Calais, the reception conditions, the disciplining, the waiting and the boredom experienced in the department's shelters led them to choose to live in the Jungle rather than in a shelter:

"If you have to choose between the Jungle and Saint Omer, but you have already chosen..."

- THE JUNGLE! Let me show you what we did yesterday in the jungle

(He shows me a video on his phone, where Sudanese people are around the fire and delicious looking food is heating up in a big pan, people are laughing and having animated conversations, Ibrahim films the fire). Ibrahim 16 years old

Far from idealising his life in the camps (for example, his fingers were so cold at the beginning of our interview that he could not use his phone), this young person prefers the Jungle to the departmental hostel, as the camp offers him community sociability and freedom that the hostel lacks. On the contrary, these institutions tend to cut young people off from the social relationships built up during their journey without providing any new ones (Italiano 2007). The isolation felt then becomes unbearable. It leads to a return to the transit situation. The warmth and the bed do not compensate for the boredom, the unchosen promiscuity with strangers, the instructions to be respected and the feeling of a lack of freedom compared to that offered by life in the jungles. These factors tend to give meaning to the expression *"Saint Omer, no good"*.

Access to rights and relevant procedures

Minority assessment

There is another obstacle for young people seeking to benefit from institutional care: the assessment of their minority status. The young person is required to tell his story. His story is subject to a narrative credibility assessment, which should determine whether or not he is a minor (D. Fassin et al. 2013). However, what is at stake is not so much minority as access to child protection and regularisation (Carayon, Mattiussi, and Vuattoux 2018b). In Saint-Omer, the young person can immediately perceive that the procedure brings him back to his foreignness. Even before the interview, he must go to the police station to have his fingerprints taken for the visabio file.

"I went there, I asked why we had to go there...the translator, he told me 'don't worry, they will take your fingerprints and then you can have a passport.' I wanted to make sure it wasn't for another reason, he said no. But I didn't have much confidence in him. I didn't have much confidence. I said I was a bit scared. He asked me why, I told him that

*the police are not very nice people. Anyway, I gave them my fingerprints. The policewoman asked me if I had a passport, I said no! If I had a passport I wouldn't be here."***Youssef, 16**

The suspicious nature of the procedure is palpable. Each party suspects the other of lying. The interview afterwards is often a test for the young person. It causes anxiety.

*"I was worried. I didn't handle it very well, and when they asked me questions, I answered, with descriptions and movements."***Youssef 16**

Some perceived it as an interrogation. This minor replayed the scene of his assessment in front of me:

"The evaluator - How did you get to Saint Omer?

- Oh my god but why are you asking me the question... Ok I will answer the question no problem... [...]

The evaluator - what do you want to do in the UK?

*- Oh my god... it's none of your business what I want to do in the UK... Ok I'll answer...I'll answer"***Ibrahim 16 years old**

For others, this injunction to tell their story awakens traumas and painful episodes in their history.

*"I've had so many people ask me questions, being asked questions sometimes is a real pain... and then you're always asked questions, questions, questions, so your life, it happens, it's like dictations, you're there answering, answering, answering. It's the same questions [...] you have to change, because I've stopped, I've moved on, it reminds you of stages that are so difficult to explain, so you're there, explaining, explaining..."***John 18 years old**

The young people are aware of the stakes of the interview. What is at stake is their right to stay in France, their access to regularisation and to school. The interview procedures, however, arouse more incomprehension and perplexity. The discretionary nature of the test is often highlighted. The subjectivity of the assessor is sometimes questioned by the young people themselves.

"When did you do the interview in St Omer?

I did it because that was it, I had decided to stay in France. [...] They ask you if you went to school, and for how long. What do your mother, your father do, how many brothers and sisters do you have, what do you like to do in life. And I'm told that it was this interview that allowed them to assess my age, but really, I don't understand how an interview like that can show them how old I am. [...] I was really surprised. They have a magic power or something. It's impossible to define someone's age after an interview like that [...] It's weird isn't it? But actually I think it's a way to break us. It's a way to break our hopes, so we don't

stay. When I got the rejection, I said to myself 'I'm leaving this country and I'm not coming back.' I think it's crazy that it works like that. **Mehdi 16 years old**

This young person's opinion is also based on a very objective view of the arbitrary nature of the procedure.

"She didn't even look at the papers I had brought. She told me to bring my birth certificate, my passport, things like that, but she didn't take them. I asked my father for my papers for the interview. They told me that the interview was in a week's time, then they arrived and told me 'in the end, it's tomorrow.' So I didn't have the papers, my father hadn't had time to send them to me. So during the interview I told him I didn't know when they would arrive, but maybe in 5 days. I received them two days later, but when I wanted to give them to her, she didn't take them. And so she refused my minority but she hadn't seen the papers!" **Mehdi 16 years old**

Arriving a few days after the assessment, these identity papers were not considered by the assessor. She did not want to question her work or consider the best interests of the child. In this sense, the minority assessment is more like a counter-policy that aims to determine the rights of the child.

Legal support and legal insight

Beyond mere minority assessment, the trajectories of UAMs are extremely constrained by legal parameters. When they find themselves outside of institutions, they must be able to use their minority to be protected, or even to facilitate their transit. If they are not recognised as minors, they must be able to contest the decision. Moreover, French law considers them adults in the making. The issue of regularisation once they reach adulthood is therefore also a major concern. However, UAMs have a limited capacity to take legal action, firstly because they have no legal representative. In addition, they rarely have the skills to deal with a legal system that is not very clear. Many young people do not know that a different legal system applies to minors than to adults.

"You know there are different rules or not?"

No. The law for minors or adults, for me it's the same thing. **Zakaria 17 years old**

For this reason, minors over the age of 14 and adults are equally obliged to give their fingerprints when applying for asylum or crossing a border illegally. Many young people conclude that being subjected to this similar procedure has the same consequences as for their adult peers. This is considered all the more true as the latter are the first source of information available to these young people.

"I'm afraid that if they take my fingerprints, they'll see that I've been to Italy and they'll send me back. [...] You see people who say to you 'they already sent me back to Italy' and so on. And so you ask how this is possible, and they tell you 'the fingerprints.' So from then on you understand that you shouldn't give them." **Ayman 16 years old**

Both minors and adults live in fear of giving their fingerprints. This fear is not unfounded as there is no guarantee that their minority will be recognised. Few young people have identity papers, and these are not always considered. Thus, the law, designed to put an end to arbitrariness, is not a source of social regulation here.

In the criminal domain, the legal field is rarely an arena for settling conflicts between two individuals. In the case of exiled persons, victims of police violence, it is more often perceived as an additional tool of domination by the state to assert its policy of repression at the border. The action of the police is always presented as a legitimate use of violence (Codaccioni 2019).

"If you arrive and say 'the police did this', what weight do you have as a migrant, frankly? [...] There is no security. You are not safe as long as you are on the street. The only way for me to be safe is to have my house, my key, to have a telephone, the number of the police, and to know the laws of the country. That's security. That's when the police will protect me. But if you are in the street, the citizens complain about you, and the police come and bother you." Farès 16 years old.

The law is thus perceived as primarily repressive when one occupies the position of a migrant minor in transit in society. Since one cannot use it to protect oneself from arbitrary violence, the solution is to disappear as much as possible from public space, which is where these interactions are most likely to occur. Thus, far from regulating the arbitrary, the law participates in the production of an '*othering*' of migrants in public space. This phenomenon is internalised by the migrant minors in Calais who feel permanently insecure.

Standards and good practices to restore family links and reunify families, which implies child-centred approach institutional support & assistance to migrant children and the right to be heard and other participation rights

The law can be protective, as is the case with family reunification procedures. But the procedures are slow and uncertain, which is likely to make many young people give up on them:

"if there's an easier way to go to the UK, and not even put people with trucks and all that with problems, I would do it, but what I'm wondering, but I don't have enough evidence to prove that I have an uncle, because I left all my papers, I left all my stuff, if it's really easier, I would do it, I would sleep, I would put my head on a pillow, I would sleep if it's easier to go, but you know it's complicated, it takes time." Ibrahim 16 years

The law does not inspire confidence. Engaging in procedures means giving up transit and going into a child protection home. Young people then submit their fate to a bureaucratic machine, the ins and outs of which they understand little and which places them in a position of waiting (Eule 2019). This position of waiting is nevertheless acceptable as long as it is

perceived as enabling the migration objective to be achieved. Faced with a closed border that is very difficult to cross, UAMs have to take major risks to cross, such as getting into lorries to the UK with the risk of being hit on the motorway, beaten up by a guard, a smuggler or a police officer. Alternatively, they may choose to place themselves in 'pragmatic dependency' by seeking out adults who can get them across (Thompson et al. 2019). These may be smugglers or lawyers in the case of family reunification or the Dubs Amendment. The young person's adherence to the procedure thus depends on their belief in the chances of success.

"There is a cousin of mine who did family reunification to go to the UK. He told me to go there to do reunification to go to the UK. And he gave me a name: Benoit. And my cousin...He left Afghanistan long before me, he was in Calais, he tried by trucks. He couldn't pay the guarantee for the passage, and he was a minor, and then someone introduced him to the organisation." **Bilal 16 years old**

Evidence by example, then, is a powerful tool. Knowing other young people who have benefited from a procedure and who are now in the UK makes it easier to use the law. The previous extract mentions a cousin. However, the link does not need to be as strong. As mentioned earlier, information flows in the Jungles. Those who pass inform their peers in the camps of their success and how they achieved their goal. The increase in requests for stabilisation and assessment at the St. Omer shelter in 2018 and 2019 can be read in this light. The opportunities offered to cross the border through family reunification procedures, or the Dubs amendment, have pushed young people to stabilise. The success of the first crossings contributed to increasing the number of voluntary candidates. The use of the law by minors in the case of family reunification is based less on a detailed understanding of the procedure than on trust in resource persons.¹⁴⁹

"And do you know what they do with your fingerprints, with your papers? He told me... What was it? He brought back an interpreter, who told me that I had to wait, and that they would make a file and send it to England. Then they will give me news. It didn't last long. We just talked a bit." **Mohammed 16 years old**

The end of the Dubs procedure and uncertainties linked to the Brexit have reduced the number of applicants for family reunification¹⁵⁰. The second key element in the success of this procedure is again time management. One has to manage the wait induced by the slow bureaucratic procedures (Eule 2019). Two techniques are used: fill in the gaps as much as possible¹⁵¹; give the young person the feeling that the procedure is moving forward. This

¹⁴⁹ Successfully completing a family reunification procedure when you are a legal intervener entails the risk of seeing the number of requests increase, with calls from strangers who may come from France or the United Kingdom to request a family reunification procedure for a minor.

¹⁵⁰ Throughout 2020, there were rumours that the procedure would soon come to an end, including within the structures for access to rights. The lawyers are then more evasive about the chances of success, thus reducing the attractiveness of the procedure.

¹⁵¹ The placement of young people in a particular structure by the Pas de Calais ASE with many activities met this need

involves including them, completing documents and forms with them, calling them frequently (or answering their calls) to keep them informed of the progress of their case. As with stabilisation in child protection, family reunification is a test of endurance and patience (Hage 2009). The differences in the speed with which cases are processed between the summer of 2016 (extremely fast, in just a few weeks) and the spring of 2020 (slow, in several months on average) show that this wait is the result of a political will constructed as an act of domination that aims to reduce the attractiveness of the procedure.

5.2 Well-being, experiences of migration & life in transit

The UAMs who arrive in Calais are not passive victims waiting to be taken care of. On the contrary, they are active actors in their migration trajectory. A review of their background and past experiences allows us to obtain some insight into their presence in Calais and their relationship with institutions. Indeed, Calais is not the point of arrival in Europe of all these young people. Some arrived on European soil a few weeks ago, others have been there for several months or even years. The point of view we are defending here is that the relationship of young people to the institutions in Calais is not only the result of a lack of access to the institutions.

Calais is not the point of arrival of all these young people in Europe. Many arrived via the Mediterranean Sea or Eastern Europe. A few lucky ones by plane. All of them therefore had to make a journey to Calais. However, on their arrival in Europe or during their journey, these young people met with various institutions: police, social workers, judges, etc. which should have taken charge of them. The aim here is to understand why these institutions failed in their mission of protection on the one hand. On the other hand, it is important to understand how these experiences are likely to influence the young people in their relationship with the institutions encountered in Calais.

Family and relatives

UAMs are legally defined as isolated on French territory. However, the relationship with the family remains a structuring factor in migration. Thus, many young people come to Calais because they want to go to the United Kingdom where a member of their family is. Angelina Etiemble refers to these as '*joining minors*' (Etiemble 2013).

"My brother suggested I join him in the UK" **Anas 16**

The presence of this family member constitutes both a compass during the journey in transit. It forms the objective of the journey. Once arrived, the young person knows that he can count on material, emotional and family support to start his new life in the country. This relative also provides support during the journey, to send money, pay a smuggler or to guide the young person. This relative is potentially a key player in getting the young person to sign up for a family reunification procedure. Convincing the family member living in the UK of

the merits of a family reunification procedure, given the danger and cost of passage, helps to convince the young person. The procedure is then constructed with three people, the family member, the minor and the legal worker. This makes it possible to stabilise the young person and get them out of a dangerous situation. For other young people, the presence of this member is more diaphanous, and contact has often been lost or is tenuous. The fact remains that joining this relative remains an objective that gives meaning to the migration project.

"But it's been a long time since I've seen him in person, since he left. What I'd like is for us to be together, to see each other because we're brothers. And that we could also maybe bring our parents to England. Because back home, we are not safe." **Ilyes 14 years old**

Helping family back home is also an important longer-term goal. Studying, working, sending money, or even bringing relatives over is one of the purposes of migration. Sometimes this is an explicit family mandate. Failure to reach the UK is tantamount to failing that mandate. So, although some young people realise that it is dangerous to go to England and want to settle in France, they feel obliged to obtain their family's agreement to end their transit experience. Without this agreement, many young people continue to attempt the crossing.

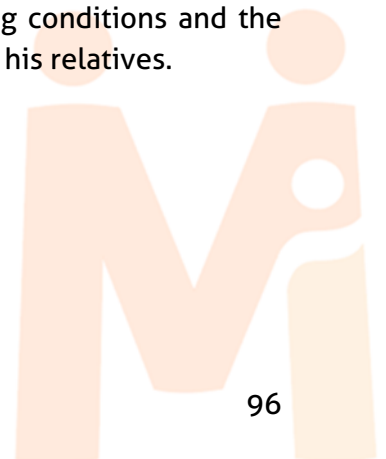
A surprising finding of our survey, however, is the tenuous relationship that many young people have with their families during their transit experience.

"I prefer to finish all my steps here first and then I will look for family news. They know my current situation because I contacted them to say that I am going to France, the last time I was in Italy." **Ayoub 17 years old**

The situation experienced is indeed unspeakable or shameful for many minors. They do not wish to explain the conditions in which their journey is taking place. Silence, omission or lies sometimes seem preferable so as not to worry their relatives.

"I tell them that my situation is very good here, that I will arrive soon and that they can join me. But I don't tell them what is happening to me or where I am exactly in France. I don't want to add too many details [...] I don't want to tell them that we are living like homeless people. I'm afraid it will hurt their feelings." **Mehdi 16 years old**

In addition to the geographical distance, the difficulty of the living conditions and the transit experience adds an emotional distance between the minor and his relatives.



Early days, months in a new country

Arrival in Europe is often a source of difficulties and disillusionment for minors. Both factors are then likely to produce mobility. In addition, young people continue to experience their minority as a factor that makes them more vulnerable than protected.

*"And then when the night came, they sent us back to Turkey.[...] the Greek police [...] the only thing they did was find a room, put us in it, and they gave us food and when the night came, they sent us back to Turkey [...] it was like a kind of police station and when they arrested us, they kept us for two hours, and after that they transferred us back, they didn't ask us if we were under 18 years old or over 18 years old." **Abderazak, 16***

Coming in a new country

Thus, many minors experience refoulement, sometimes accompanied by police violence, when they arrive in Eastern Europe by land. When they arrive from Turkey to the Greek islands, the experience is more akin to being stuck in a hotspot for a very long time. For migrants arriving in Malta, including minors, the experience turns into arbitrary confinement without time limits, lawyers or trial.

"You have entered the EU". And then they told us that they were going to take us to a hotel, but in fact this hotel is a detention, in fact it's an official prison. I don't even know if European citizens go to prisons like this. [...] Because it was a two-metre prison. I mean, the room I was in was two metres, that's all. And I stayed there for two months. [...] No, it was an official, normal prison. A prison. Since I arrived in Europe, honestly, I had a lot of dark thoughts. I didn't understand why I deserved this. [...] So I was in there for two months. We had food and drink and a place to sleep, that's all. [...] If I'd been in a prison for a conviction, and they'd said "you've got a six-month sentence", that's fine. Because I knew that after six months I would be out. But now they don't give you any information. The Maltese government doesn't come and explain to you and say for example "you crossed the Mediterranean and you arrived in Malta illegally, so the Maltese government has to lock you up for five months, and then you get out". If it had been like that, okay. But what I found horrible was that I arrived from the sea, I was not told anything, the Maltese treated us badly, and I ended up in prison [...] It destroys you. You tell yourself that you are not a human being for them. You don't understand. Really, at one point I thought it wasn't the government that locked me up but a bunch of mafia people or something. It destroyed me. [...] And I was beaten by the police."
Farès 16 years old

Minors who arrive in Italy or Spain also report experiences that lie on a continuum between care, encampment and confinement. The quarantine caused by the health crisis further accentuates the impression of confinement.

"[...] and on Saturday morning they came for us and took everyone to the police station where we freshened up [...] Not quite a police station but it was controlled by the police, it's a centre, a very big place, when they rescue migrants it's the place where they put them, to wash them, to give them clothes, to feed them." **Amir 17 years**

Arrival is thus managed by the police. More than a humanitarian approach, it is a question of managing undesirables (Agier 2008). This process is reflected in the fingerprinting procedure to which migrants are subjected shortly after their arrival. Many migrants are not informed of the consequences of the procedure.

"Yes, everyone gave their fingerprints, everyone put their hand in ink and they put it on paper like this...(mime the gesture)

And did they explain to you why they were doing this?

No I didn't know anything and as I said, because of our inexperience, we couldn't challenge them. Whatever they said, OK we did it." **Amir 17 years old**

This fingerprinting is done under the aegis of deception to obtain consent without resistance. However, this duplicity as a first interaction with institutions in Europe is likely to undermine in the long term the trust that a minor may place in the authorities to protect them. This experience of suppression may lead many young people to use future strategies of avoidance or concealment from the authorities. They then place themselves off the radar of social services, at the possible mercy of forms of exploitation and trafficking.

"They told us 'these are just prints for the police files'. There was someone who came to translate into Arabic, and he told us that it would be no problem if we went to another country. And after we gave our fingerprints, they told us that they were the fingerprints that said we were registered as asylum seekers in Italy. But we didn't apply for asylum!" **Nassim 16 years old**

Fingerprinting can also be carried out by force. Here the weapon of hunger is used. The deliberate deprivation of food, an abject procedure, reveals the differentiated treatment of lives between newly arrived irregular migrants and citizens with rights. The sanction here has no criminal character. It is an arbitrary punishment that reminds people of their dominated status.

"When I arrived in Italy, in Milan, [...] they made us do fingerprints, [...], they made us do fingerprints to eat. They told us if we didn't do the fingerprints, they wouldn't give us food. We were too hungry, we had no choice." **Moustafa 19 years old**

When picked up by the authorities following arrival by boat, people are required to register and give their fingerprints. Being underage is not necessarily considered a status that requires protection. On the contrary, it is seen as a factor of vulnerability. Furthermore, often unaware of the procedures they are involved in, and plunged into great uncertainty,

exiles, including minors, rely on rumours to inform themselves and make their choices. This is the case of Ilyès, who was 13 when he arrived in Italy.

"When I was in Lampedusa, I didn't feel safe. Lampedusa is in the middle of the sea [...] And there was a translator who said that the children were being sent back to Sudan [...] There was one who told me: 'you are small, they are going to send you back to Sudan.' So I was afraid. There were people who told me to register as a minor, but I was afraid, so I told them I was 20. But I don't know if they registered me." Ilyès 14 years old

Other young people choose not to declare themselves as minors in order to avoid being placed in care. This care is often seen as a procedure that does not meet their expectations and places them in the position of a child, considered as a passive victim to be taken care of and controlled.

"I was told to say I was older so they wouldn't send me to a camp for minors. Because there are a lot of people in these centres. Haroun 17 years old

For other young people, it is simply a question of not being separated from relatives who are of age, so as not to find themselves alone. More than minority, the presence of close relatives, even those met during the journey, is seen as reassuring.

"They put a bracelet on my wrist like all minors. When they docked, they separated the adults from the minors. I wanted to stay with my friend, so I said I was 20 years old. The Spanish didn't believe me. They sent me to a doctor, who examined my teeth and genitals in Alicante, and declared me a minor." Youssef 17 years old

Taking minority status into account in the absence of identity papers is therefore a matter of calculating the advantages that this may confer on the young person according to the information he has obtained. It also comes into play through interaction with the official in charge of registering the young person on disembarkation. The latter has a great deal of latitude to define the age of the person during a short interaction which is based in particular on the young person's physical appearance. The minor must fit the official's image of a minor. If, as in the case of Youssef, this results in the young person being declared a minor, in other cases it can lead to the person declaring himself or herself an adult in order to satisfy the facial evaluation.

"Someone asked me how old I was, I said I was born in 2004. And he said 'no, no, you're not 16,' I said 'what do you mean I'm not 16? The age is not written on my head.' [...] But he scared me, he told me that if someone checked the computer and saw that I had said I was 16 and it wasn't true, they would put me in prison. So I got scared and I said I was 21 [...] He told me that people who lie about their age, they put them in jail. So I said I was 21. Nassim 16 years old

This calculation regarding the declaration of minority can be found throughout the wandering process. Minority is a fluid identity that allows for shifts between majority and minority. Declaring oneself a minor or an adult depends on the entities with which the young person interacts and on the perception of the advantages or disadvantages that minority can bring (Kaukko and Wernesjö 2017). Declaring oneself a minor can thus be seen as suppressive in one's relationship to institutions (Thompson et al. 2019).

"Yes, I have seen some associations! [...] I didn't tell them how old I was. When people see me, they think I'm taller, so I don't contradict them. [...] It's a mess if people know you're small! They tell you: 'come on, we'll put you in an association.' If you have a goal, they say, 'your goal, you'll do it later'. [...] The procedures take too long afterwards.'" Achraf 17 years old

It may also be a question of not appearing vulnerable, so as not to be a possible target in transit life. Minority then appears as a stigma that must be removed or concealed (Goffman 1963).

"Of course, I have faced problems because of my age. And most people, I don't tell them my real age. And luckily I have a pretty big body type and I can easily look older. And it's helped me to meet people, and I've met a lot of people who I haven't told my real age to so they don't try to manipulate me or do other things that I can't talk about now. [...] When you are small, there are people who see you as an opportunity for them. To steal from you, or ... or many other things they could do to you. I say I'm 19, for example. When I was 14-15, I said I was 18 for example." Mehdi 16 years old

As discussed earlier, declaring oneself a minor can sometimes be an advantage allowing one to benefit from services not granted to adults, such as accommodation, or to benefit from the prospect of regularisation. However, many UAMs are not aware of these legal aspects. They do not always seek care. Furthermore, the tension surrounding the status of UAMs is part of the history of a closure of the European asylum system (after a closure of the access to residence system) (Akoka and Spire 2013). Declaring oneself a minor then becomes one of the only possibilities for obtaining papers in Europe, a necessary condition for benefiting from a set of rights and a feeling of security vis-à-vis the authorities.

Early days, months in a new country

After their arrival to Europe, some minors experience care in child protection systems in Italy or Spain. However, the minors we met in Calais did not remain in these structures, and very quickly resumed their journey. The reasons given remain the same as the criticisms given for the care provided in Saint-Omer. Firstly, their aspirations were not considered. The extract below shows how these young people are considered passive objects of care, with no regard for their goals. Care is often even portrayed as *opposed* to the achievement of the migration goal:

"There I asked someone. He told me, 'you're going to spend one or two years here, we're going to teach you, you're going to learn, you're going to go to school, we're going to find you a job...' It was crazy, I saw that I was going to stay the rest of my life here and I don't know anyone and it's really weird to stay in such a place, inhospitable, with people I don't know, I don't know anyone, I don't know anything, Italian is a language I don't know anything, and I have family in the UK, that's why I felt apprehensive, [...] so in the night I left." **Ibrahim 16 years old**

Other young people have a vaguer migratory objective. However, boredom, empty time, geographical and linguistic isolation pushes these minors to take to the road again in search of somewhere else that might meet their aspirations. The lack of social anchorage facilitates their mobility. They have no ties, no relatives in their immediate environment:

"They sent me to the end of Sicily, to a place called Naro. An empty place, where there's nothing, not many people, it's the countryside. And I tried to talk to them, but we couldn't understand each other, I didn't like the place. So I wanted to leave. I saw that there were buses leaving for a town called Agrigento. I went there, I found a train." **Ilyes 14 years old.**

The fact that they are cared for in a structure dedicated to exiles and the absence of a school does not facilitate links with the host society. The young people then have the impression of wasting their time, of being stuck in this "existential immobility" mentioned above (Hage 2009). Fleeing in order to wander freely appears to be an easy solution to a problem over which they have no control.

"But my friend, after three months, he still couldn't read well, he still hadn't got protection, he didn't have a phone, he didn't have money. So I say to myself that France is not for me."

Some minors associate the quality of care they experience in a given structure or place with the reception prospects offered by the country itself. This factor then pushes these young people to change countries.

Identity, belonging, role of ethnic group, religion community

The migratory trajectories of the UAMs encountered in Calais rely heavily on what I would call an archipelago of peers (Robin 2017). Care confines the minors to a state of existential immobility. Isolation in the structure in which they find themselves does not mean they are altogether isolated in Europe: many minors develop peer relationships during the journey which constitute social capital that can be mobilised in order to continue the journey. These may be friends with whom these minors communicate on social networks.

"One of us had a friend who he talked to on the phone and who told him what we needed to do to move forward." **Mohammed 16 years old**

They may be young people they meet on the street who share the same condition and language.

"Yes, the Somalis. They speak a bit of Arabic. One of them told me... I told him 'I want to go to England.' He told me 'if you want to go to England, you have to go slowly, until you get to France and then in France you go to England.' He told me to take a train at nine o'clock, because there are no police." **Ibrahim 16 years old**

Some young people rely on community solidarity.

"We found some Sudanese who wanted to move on too. They told us 'it's an island here, it's difficult to leave unless you have money.' We said we had nothing, and we found a Sudanese man who had been there longer, we told him our story, he gave us food and 70 euros. So that we could try to move on." **Nassim 16 years old**

Other young people enter into a monetary relationship and rely on smugglers, often of their own nationality or at least with whom they share the same language.

"When we crossed from Macedonia to Serbia, the smugglers sent a car, which brought us to Belgrade." **Anas 16 years old**

This archipelago of peers can help define the purpose of the trip and the country of destination, especially when the minor is young and his views are not considered even by his peers. Also, by doing so, the minor places himself in a strategic dependency on the smugglers with the counterpart of progressing in his journey (Thompson et al. 2019).

This social dimension is an important factor of mobility that contributes to offering prospects to UAMs outside of a system of care that infantilises them. Contrary to the image of a prepared minor, many minors do not always have a precise project. Their choice is thus based on other criteria such as the avoidance of loneliness. The peer group provides security. It also allows the young person to have the feeling of delegating his or her choice. By doing so, the minor doesn't have to carry a heavy decision that engages his future. This decision relies on the group or of the person who has a precise migratory project such as joining a relative.

"I thought that going to England was the only way to go because the guys we were with, they only thought of that - the project was to go to England." **Moustafa 19 years old**¹⁵²

¹⁵² Moustafa was 13 years old when he arrived in Calais in 2015. The interest of his migratory journey and his legal situation justified his inclusion in our survey.

Experiences related to migration (ex.travel, life on the move)

By leaving care, minors place themselves outside of state institutions. However, they are still minors in need of protection. However, the authorities have difficulty fulfilling their protection mission because they are unable to grasp this mobile population. These young people are nevertheless visible in public space. They have relatively numerous interactions with state authorities, notably police officers and train controllers. However, the *ethos* of these professions is more concerned with the repression of behaviour deemed deviant than with the protection of vulnerable populations. In the case of UAMs in transit, their vulnerability due to a lack of resources, particularly monetary resources, places them in situations of deviance: fraud in transport or even sleeping rough.

"What do you want from the police? They just say "go".

And nobody asked you how old you were?

- No, they did not. Never [...] only once they talked with me. They told me, 'you can't sleep here, yalla.'" **Achraf 17 years old**

Exchanges are built on an absence of interaction. The minority of the young person is rarely noted. Train controllers and police officers are content to hinder a journey that continues anyway, but with greater difficulty.

"I wanted to go to France but I didn't know the way [...] when I got on the train. In fact I had no money, no money, no ticket, no documents, nothing uh ... The police told me to get off because I had no documents, nothing. I said to the police 'please let me go,' 'I don't have anything.' They told me to go down, I went down and I went to Bari, I didn't know anybody. I slept in the street the first day. Without food, without water, [...] I got on trains, only to get off a little further on several occasions. [...] So that's what I did, and the police would get me off the train every time." **Ibrahim 16 years old**

Border crossings are special moments in the transit experience. Some borders, such as the French-Italian border or the Serbian-Hungarian border, are particularly guarded. They constitute a police territory (Bachelierie 2020). In these areas, as in Calais, the repression of immigration takes precedence over the protection of minors. The UAMs who cross the border all too often experience violence from the police.

"The first time the police took our phone [...]: the Greek police just kicked me 2 or 3 times, the Serbian police caught me and beat me up, they beat me up and used pepper spray, like spray, when they used it, my whole face was burning." **Abderazak 17 years**

Other young people experience detention and refoulement by the police:

"It's not easy to go to France! Sometimes you arrive at the French border, and the police pick you up and take you back to the other side. Even if you say you are a minor, they can do that to you. [...] they say, 'you go back.' Even once, in Ventimiglia, the Red Cross

had given us a card with our name, a photo and the date of birth. And sometimes the police tell you, 'no, no, you are not a minor, you are lying.'" Ayman 16 years old

These practices are opposed by associations present at the border, who try to document the refoulements and to assert the minority status of the young people. This monitoring is sometimes successful. Sometimes the police recognise the young person's minority and refer him or her to a child protection centre.

This policy is not without its effects on minors in migration. These multiple 'suppressive' interactions with the police entrench the idea that the presence of young people in public space is illegitimate (Thompson et al. 2019; Chamayou 2015).

"Yes! I was afraid. Anyway, all my life I would be afraid of the police, of governments. Even in my country it was like that. They will always hurt you. So yes, I was afraid." Farès 16 years old

Police control at the border acts as a device for producing social norms (Bachelierie 2020). It is also a very real trauma of migration experienced by young people. Refoulement at the border pushes some young people to take more risks in order to cross, for example by going through the mountains at the risk of their lives. Others use 'passing' techniques to avoid looking like refugees (Guenebeaud 2017).

"No one told me, but everyone knows that when you cross a border, you have to wear clean clothes so that the police don't think you're a refugee or something and they let you through." Bilal 16 years old

Reason for migration

For some young people, the migration project is poorly defined in geographical terms. It is based more on the hope of immediate security and future prospects. To put it simply, these young people are not looking for a particular country. They simply want to be able to go to school, to have papers, to have a prospect of work. However, their access to information to choose where to settle is limited. It is partly based on sensitive experience: How are they welcomed in this new country by the local population or institutions? What difficulties do they encounter?

The second source of information, which is concomitant, is the experience of peers present in that country on the one hand and the information they transmit on the other. As we have seen, these peers are credible informants for these young people because of the language they speak and because their situation and experiences are similar to those of these minors.

"But then I went to La Chapelle, I asked some Sudanese how things were going here and I saw that they had been in France for a while and had nothing. That they were sleeping in the street and that they had applied for asylum in 2017 and so on. So I

didn't like that. I've slept too much on the street, I didn't want to go through that again."
Farès 16 years old

Although it is a fundamental difference, the minor/major distinction is not taken into account in differentiating the situations of these adults from that of this young person. Although the law is supposed to be more protective of minors, this young person's experience places more of a boundary between French and foreign. It is experienced as "having nothing" and "sleeping rough" with no prospect of this changing. Thus, the difficulties experienced or observed among peers by a newcomer contribute to forging his or her opinion of the country in which he or she finds himself or herself. The difficulties experienced in transit life in France, the lack of prospects, including among peers, are powerful mobility factors that lead many young people to transit to Calais.

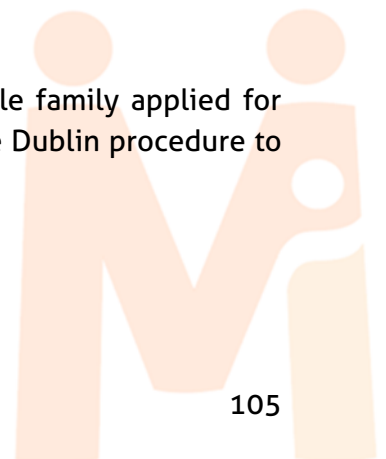
Indeed, beyond community, linguistic, historical or economic factors often put forward by exiles in Calais to go to the United Kingdom, exiles justified their presence and their desire to go to England by saying: *"France does not give papers!"*

Some of the young people we met in Calais explained that the United Kingdom was not their first choice. However, negative experiences of care had led them to pursue their migratory journey further. In this respect, the Franco-British border is particularly illustrative of the difficulties of dealing with migrant populations in France and Europe. It is not uncommon to come across young people in the Jungles who speak German, Italian or Swedish, who have sometimes benefited from several years of care and education in these countries, but have been denied the right to stay when they come of age. Faced with the risk of deportation, they then take to the streets to try to cross to the UK.

"She gave me, this paper saying I was under dismissal. At that moment, I said to myself that I had to find a way out, there were people before me, 5 years, 6 years, 8 years, nothing, they just sleep, they get up, [...] there are two guys from Niger, they are completely crazy, because they don't give you the chance to do anything, to work, [...] You get frustrated, so they drink, they smoke, they are two guys, [...] both of them are crazy and I said to myself if I stay here, it's not possible, I'll end up like them. You understand? And that's why I came to Calais" Amir, 17.

Amir was not recognised as a minor in the country he was in before arriving in France. He nevertheless filed an asylum application and waited patiently for the result. Eventually, the answer came. His application was rejected. The prospect of being sent back pushed him to take the road of exile to come to Calais.

As for Mona, she finds herself with her family in Calais. The whole family applied for asylum in Paris several weeks ago. They have been placed under the Dublin procedure to Malta.



Despite the harsh accommodation conditions, alternating between dingy hotels and the streets, they wait patiently for the answer from the Parisian pavements.

"Because we received the transfer order, we went to see the people from CAFDA, they told us 'they are going to transfer you, they are going to transfer you,' so we came to Calais with the aim of leaving for the UK. Because here the situation was very hard."

Mona 18 years old¹⁵³

The legal challenge is illusory. Caught in an administrative impasse, the family decides to attempt to cross to the United Kingdom in the face of the risk of deportation. Leaving for Calais also appears to be a solution when access to rights, although theoretically existing, is inoperative. Younès wanted to stay in France. He was assessed as an adult in Paris. He is informed of his possibilities to appeal:

"They said it's fine, we haven't accepted, you have to go to the courts, and there I'll sleep where I don't know, and again the problem of sleeping is not serious, but the problem of eating, where are you going to eat? And again, it's cold, that's how I decided to come to Calais to join my friends to go to England if it goes through." **Younès 16 years old**

Putting the young person back on the street immediately, without a place to sleep or even food, is a source of great insecurity for the young person. Appealing the decision and waiting for the result is a luxury that the young person cannot afford in the face of the urgency of survival. Younès therefore turned to the UK as a solution.

Leisure time, activities

The school for UAMs has a triple function. It fills the empty time of home life. It is a powerful integrating institution in a host society. It tends to provide the young person with prospects for the future, thus partially fulfilling their aspirations. Its absence is therefore another factor of mobility in the face of the dissatisfaction generated by the situation.

"In the place, there was nothing to study. You had to take a bus. [...] No, but I asked them where it was possible for me to study, and they told me that there was a place that gave courses to young people, but it was an hour away by bus. There was no school in the area. [...] And when I got out of there, I took a train back to Ventimiglia."

Ilyès 14 years old

Xenophobia, interethnic conflict racism, nationalism

Another factor in the mobility of some of the minors we met in Calais was the racism to which young people can be subjected. Three young people explained to me that they had fled their care home in East Germany for fear of the racist attacks that were taking place

¹⁵³ since the day before the interview

there. All spoke good German. Some had been in the country for several years. Other young people, like Amir, did not go so far as to mention physical attacks. However, they emphasised the constant reminders of the order they are subject to when they are present in the public space. Their presence is only tolerated in a delimited and invisibilised space.

"For example, even if you want to go out to...like just see the town, you can't. I remember, we went to passo [walk around] with one of the staff and we were doing a tour in the city or somewhere and one of the civil guards saw us and, he said something like 'go back to the camp' And I felt like I'm not a human being, we're not allowed to do a tour? I tried to tell him [...] like I'm not alone, yeah because normally you don't go alone, you go with a staff. I remember one of the staff, J. a big guy, I forgot... but a funny guy, that day we were with him and the civil guard was shouting that we should go back to the camp, and I thought is it because we are black? Or we are not allowed to go for a ride, even in H. [in Germany] There was this point, [...] and even if you are not sick, you have to stay in the camp for 18 good months." Amir 17 years old

These shortcomings in integration and in the social anchoring of migrant minors in Europe are all factors that produce a 'draught,' to use the term used by the authorities in Calais, which pushes young people to the camps on the coast of northern France.

5.3 Models of migrant children's integration

The choice to migrate can be read as dissatisfaction with the situation in which one finds oneself and against which one cannot immediately fight. "Exit is here the corollary of "voices". It is a protest political choice that is similar to voting with one's feet (Düvell, Rodier, et Vallois 2005). Beyond the flight from danger, migration is above all based on the quest for a better future. This future is based on access to what Vacchiano calls citizenship (Vacchiano 2014).

A vision of Europe

Upon arrival in Europe, migrant minors experience disillusionment. As they reach for their dream of a better future, they discover that far from being welcomed, they are considered undesirable (Agier 2011).

"In fact, the only thing you're guilty of is that you've just arrived and know nothing! That's why. And that you have no money. If you had money, or if everything was fine, you would have stayed in your country. I didn't come here on holiday. I came here to look for a better life. You have the right to do that! It's a very frustrating situation. [...] Otherwise, you don't risk your life in the sea, putting yourself in danger like that [...] I didn't imagine it was like that. The way we are treated and everything... [...] I imagined that life was good. That people took care of each other, of the children. That no one would make fun of you, because of your clothes, your dirtiness [...] I saw them making fun of me when I had just come out of the sea. The person who is in this situation has

nothing. If she could, of course she would wear nice, clean clothes and take a shower. But she has nothing. You feel ashamed in this situation. You don't know anyone, no one talks to you." **Karim 17 years old**

Their suffering is not recognised. On the contrary, misery carries stigma. It is accentuated by feelings of loneliness and a lack of solidarity. Frustration is all the greater when people are prevented from building their lives because of their lack of papers. Documents are therefore the new weapon of mass discrimination (Chamayou 2015).

"Frankly, I had no idea that Europe was in this situation. I came to Europe thinking that when I arrived, they would give you a house, I wasn't thinking at all about papers. I thought I would find protection, that was the most important thing. I imagined that we would be able to live in peace, in good health, that we would be able to communicate easily with our family, that we would have a job. I wasn't thinking about papers. But when you arrive in Europe, that's all they talk about: "you need such and such a document". Europe is all about papers. I imagined buying a new car, getting married, calling my family, things like that." **Youssef 17 years old**

Weakness of integration

Integration in Europe is therefore a multifaceted challenge. First of all, it involves the injunction to tell one's story. The credibility of the discourse and the alleged sufferings eventually opens the right to papers and support from the host society. The minority assessment in this respect is very similar to an asylum interview (Carayon, Mattiussi, et Vuattoux 2018b; Paté 2020). However, telling the story of these sufferings that happened 'there' in order to be able to obtain papers 'here' is not always obvious:

"She didn't explain everything to me in terms of how I have to, in my head, I have to prove that I'm well integrated in France, that I speak the language well etc... so when I went to the interview, I wanted to do what: 'Monsieur, I grew up in France, and I speak French well'. The only thing I had in my head was that I had to prove that I spoke French." **Moustafa 19 years old**

His asylum application was rejected. He then discovered that in order to be regularised in France, he did not have to prove his integration, but that he had to talk about the misfortunes he had experienced several years earlier in his country.

"I never went to school, it's here that I learnt, after I was refused, I became interested in my country, in the history of my family, my grandparents, my uncles, who are in prison until today. In fact, it's thanks to OFPRA that I learned that my country is really in trouble, because I really started looking." **Moustafa 19 years old**

He does not fail to note, however, the particular nature of the asylum interview he experienced. To support his point, he adapted the questions he was asked to some of his classmates who had grown up in France.

"When I came back, I asked my friends the same questions they asked me, why Marianne, and the cockerel? they didn't answer me, why the French flag? what does it mean, the blue, the red and the other colour too? They didn't answer me, and you, you ask me these questions to me who never went to school. I know more about the history of my country, in France, because that's where I did my history, I did everything." **Moustafa 19 years old**

Having papers

Obtaining the right to live in France on a regular basis is therefore not a right for UAMs. On the contrary, it is a privilege distributed to the most deserving¹⁵⁴.

On the contrary, the UAMs stress that regularisation should not be a favour that recognises their merit. It must be a basic condition for their integration. They have understood that their future depends on their ability to obtain papers. Even though they are theoretically never illegal on French territory, in practice the undocumented person is always subject to the arbitrariness of the authority they face. Moreover, minority is only transitory. Also, many UAMs are well aware that, although legally they are minors, they are above all adults in the making, adults in a potential future irregular situation.

"Actually... I'd like to have a job. You know what I mean. A future without a job, it doesn't work. That's why I'd like to... Well, it's not just about England. Maybe I can never go there. Maybe I'll stay in France, or anywhere in the European Union. Any country that gives me papers actually. And then I'll see what job I can learn and I'll start working" **Ayman 16 years old**

Amir has a similar opinion. He is aware of the efforts that integration requires, in terms of learning the language for example. He perfectly sums up what having papers means in terms of safety, freedom of movement, including in public space. Papers are a protection against the arbitrariness of the authorities, against the risk of deportation. They put an end to the existential insecurity felt by those who lack them. They allow the person to regain control over their life, by studying or working. The person is no longer stuck in their 'undesirable' status, which is characterised by systematic obstruction by the authorities of the slightest step they wish to take: working, studying, renting accommodation (É. Fassin et al. 2014).

¹⁵⁴ Merit in the case of asylum is based on the political reasons for the suffering endured in the country of origin. In the case of access to residency, merit is measured by the quality of the birth certificate provided, attendance at school and the ability to put the lawyer in charge of the legal case into motion.

"Okay, but what if France gives you papers?"

I would stay! Because I'm tired of running around, for example, now I don't know how my future will be, I'm not sure of anything, because I have nowhere to stay in Europe. So I don't know I'm just going to see what happens... if they declare me a minor, I'm staying! Yeah, because I find French is not hard to learn, you understand, so I can stay, and all Europe is the same, if you don't have documents, the situation is the same. [...] I think it's good, for someone, even if you don't want to go back home, if you are African and you miss Africa you can go back and Africa is big, you can go to other countries, even without going back home, if you have papers, you are now safe, you are safe, you won't be deported again. When you work, you work legally (straight) you understand, you don't look to the left, you don't look to the right, and when you sleep, you sleep well, nobody is going to come and knock on your door or somebody is going to open and go into your house without your knowledge, so, I think that having papers, it's good, it's important, but to have papers without having a job, it's not good because most of the people who come from Spain or Italy, they have them, but they don't have a job, so they come to Germany and they have to apply for asylum again, you know." **Amir 17 years old**

Security and stability appear to be necessary prerequisites to project oneself into the future. The difficulties of exile have diminished the ability to dream. Learning the language or going back to school are seen as secondary and more distant perspectives.

"Frankly, I don't have too many. To get protection, to be in a safe place, without anyone to oppress me. I've been through a lot of abuse in my life. I would just like to live like anyone else. For example, walking down the street in France without anyone asking me anything. That's all. [...] If I could settle in a place far from all the problems ... That's already my dream. Then ... School and everything, I don't know anything about it. I could tell you I want to be a doctor, or an engineer, but I don't know anything about that. I don't really know what it is." **Farès 17 years old**

When reading these interview extracts, it is striking to note how the administrative dimension of their situation is integrated into the discourse of many UAMs in transit (Senovilla-Hernández 2019). The latter are well aware that their condition of exclusion or at least of non-integration is legal before it is social or economic.

Advantages of integration

The second aspect of their integration is the feeling of social anchorage in the host society (Grzymala-Kazłowska 2016). This feeling is decisive for ending their wandering. Moustafa's experience is revelatory on this point. In 2015, at the age of 13, Moustafa fell ill in the Great Jungle slum. He was taken in by child protection services and sent to an ASE home where there were other young French people. He was treated, then returned to the Jungle. He then gave up life in transit to ask to be taken in charge.

"Well, the one in France, there were a lot less people, there were no people, I don't know, it was not the same way they looked after us there, it was just between us. When I arrived at the hostel, for example [...] there were 2, 3 of us with Sudanese, 1 with Afghan, it was like that. [...] And the rest were French, and I stayed because I knew that I could integrate more quickly."

The contact with French youngsters of his age plays a decisive role in his choice. Moustafa feels that he is no longer treated as a foreigner but as a child. He finally has access to European society. He does not just rub shoulders with it at the margins or through his relations with institutions alone. This point is essential. It illustrates the need for UAMs to belong to the society in which they find themselves. Shelter homes rarely fulfil this function. Schools, sports clubs or cultural activities can fulfil this need to belong and stabilise the young people they take in. These institutions also have the advantage of meeting young people's aspirations. However, access to them is too often conditioned by the slowness of legal and bureaucratic procedures. Several months of uncertain waiting (if the young person is not recognised as a minor in the meantime) before being able to access schooling is too distant a prospect for adolescents who do not want to lose any more time to start their lives again. The uncertain wait in which they are kept is too often, in their eyes, a disguised refusal to integrate them. It keeps them in a position of "uselessness in the world" which they wish to get rid of (Castel 1995). Yet these young people aspire to be normal adolescents, in their own words:

"I just wish we could finally settle down, go to school, like all normal people. People who live a normal life, in their house. Without problems, they can sleep." **Mona, 18 years old**

This normality is reflected in the recognition of a right to exist in society. This is the condition for a feeling of security. It translates into the right to "settle down", to have a home, an address, a return to the sedentary condition that is the norm in our society. It is also embodied in the recognition of a social position. In this case, that of a student.

Social anchoring can also be achieved through family or peers. The community or family dimensions offer emotional and economic security. They represent important social capital that can be mobilised in the event of difficulties.

"I could, but I would be all alone, there would be no one to help me. If I go to England, after my studies my salary will be better and then during my studies I could count on the Yemeni Jahilya¹⁵⁵ whereas here there are no Yemenis. And then you have to look at the imagination that England has for us. They colonised part of the country, Aden, for 130 years, and left buildings and churches. When I arrived in France, I was afraid, I didn't know anything about the country, I didn't know anything about this country, whereas I know about England." **Mehdi 16, Field diary 16 July 2020**

¹⁵⁵ Yemeni Diaspora

Social anchoring can also take place not in *spite* of institutions, but alongside them. The example of Youssef is very telling here: he is housed with a Calais family who met him alone in the street one winter evening. The accommodation is unconditional. Youssef often returns to sleep there and, little by little, no longer attempts to cross the border. He began to occupy a central place in the family, acting as a big brother to the younger children of the family that took him in. His social circle evolves: from the youngsters of the jungles, he starts to associate with the youngsters of the neighbourhood where he is staying. He eventually decides to stay in France but refuses to be taken into care by the Child Welfare Office. This would mean having to leave his family to be housed in a home in another town. While his school and administrative care is an obstacle course lasting more than a year, Youssef does not give up.

"Before, I didn't really have hope because I was talking to the guys, Sudanese, and they were saying 'you know, France doesn't give papers' [...]. But little by little, I saw that there were people who were succeeding. I told myself that they were talking nonsense. And so I decided to stay in France. I found a great family, and that was that." **Youssef**
17 years old

Children ideas for integration

When asked what they would like to change to improve the situation of UAMs in France. Some minors have some very concrete ideas. Many replied that they need support, that they need to be monitored. Some also asked for the right to make mistakes, especially in administrative procedures.

"There should be one person, older, who knows France well, to take charge of each child. So that it becomes a bit like a parent for the minor. Because otherwise it's difficult, people don't have time to listen to us. [...] It's not necessary for someone to have full responsibility for you, but they should give each child a reference person to whom he can talk, with whom he can learn the language and integrate more easily into society [...] Because we need only one person we can count on to talk to. So at the hostel, we speak five words with them and they leave because they are busy. They don't have the time or the inclination. You ask a question, they never really answer you, because there are too many people asking questions. But if you are responsible for one person, you meet regularly, and you discuss problems, you solve them... There are a lot of volunteers! When I grow up, I'd like to do that too. There are so many families in France, I'm sure it could work."

Among the minors we met, many UAMs aspire to play a role in the society that will receive them. Many want to go back to school, to have a job. Some want to make their mark in history or science. Others want to become involved in associations in the future to help people in need.

6. Conclusions and discussion

The minors in Calais want to go to the United Kingdom. Most of them come from countries in crisis and are looking for security and a future that they can no longer find at home. To justify their choice of Great Britain, they often invoke family, community, linguistic, historical and even economic reasons.

For some, the choice of destination is the result of a reflection that sometimes began even before leaving the country of origin. For others, it is the result of a less assertive choice that was made along the way according to opportunities and obstacles. The arrival in Calais is also the result of dissatisfaction with the prospects offered since arrival in Europe. These young people refuse the encampment, the relegation to the margins (geographical and social) and the waiting that is offered to them on their arrival in Europe. They respond with their feet by setting out again in search of a new society that would welcome them.

Another contingent of applicants for the UK is made up of aspiring outcasts. These young people have often been in care and education in European countries. They spent several years there, in Scandinavia, Germany and France. However, they have taken the road to exile because of the lack of prospects for regularisation as adults and the risk of being sent back to their country of origin. They then run away to try their luck in the UK. Fear of social isolation or experiences of racism may also be at the origin of this secondary migration.

Thus, Calais is not only the gateway to the UK. It is a way out of the difficulties and disillusionment encountered on the European continent. The migratory presence in Calais must be seen as a sounding board for all the dysfunctions in the reception of exiled people in Europe.

However, this mobility is hampered by the closure of the border by the Franco-British authorities for those who do not meet the conditions for entry to the UK. Those whose lack of papers or visas have constructed them as undesirables must be blocked and discouraged. These are people whom the authorities do not want to let through, but cannot deport. To resolve this paradox, the choice has been made to lead them to self-expulsion by making life in transit impossible through practices of harassment, expulsions, theft, police violence and confinement (É. Fassin et al. 2014; Guenebeaud 2017). Migration is perceived as a threat to public order. The authorities fear a 'draught', a wave that would flood across the border to the UK. These irrational fears justify the use of a violent policy of exclusion towards people in transit at the border (Düvell, Rodier, and Vallois 2005).

These policies affect both adults and minors in Calais. However, all have the right not to be subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment. Unaccompanied minors also have a right to protection by the French authorities. The ASE implements this policy of protection for UAMs. A shelter is dedicated to them 45 km from Calais. A marauding team goes to the Jungles every day to meet them and offer them shelter. This system makes it possible to reconcile France's international commitments to minors with the policy of repressing

immigration at the border. The repressive state does not take over from the social state (D.Fassin et al. 2013). It is the social state that softens the effects of the repressive state. This makes it possible to minimise the legal sanctions regarding the treatment of UAMs at the border. However, this mechanism does not exist because of the presence of UAMs at the border, but because of the exclusion regime implemented at the border and its consequences. The police presence is not a response of the authorities to the existence of Jungles. It is the police presence (which ensures the closure of the border) that creates Jungles, situations of transit, danger and exclusion, including for UAMs. The social and human costs of such a policy are so great that no social mechanism can compensate for the effects (Meh 2016). The policy of self-expulsion leaves its mark on bodies and minds. It creates or reawakens important traumas. It increases the dangers faced by UAMs. The immediate and long-term consequences it entails invite us to re-examine it. To say it more simply, migrant minors in transit in Calais only exist because the border is closed. It is possible to discuss at length how to adjust the offer of protection to their needs on the ground, to improve the existing arrangements, to improve care. However, the only solution to solve the problem in the long term is to open the border.

Meeting France's commitments to child protection on the UK/French border is a legal obligation. However, it is an illusion to create only a relatively benevolent system of care for minors without providing an equivalent system for adults. Doing so only creates age exclusions. It forces a sorting out of individuals. These threshold effects lead to a lack of access to rights (Spire 2015; Warin 2017). The minority/majority distinction is not always a clear concept for exiled people. Above all, in the absence of identity documents, it relies on the subjectivity and arbitrariness of the official facing the minor. The experiences of discrimination or suppression that young people or their peers, whether adults or minors, may undergo clearly impact on their relationship with institutions, authorities and legal procedures. On arrival in Europe, UAMs generally have no idea of their rights. They learn and discover it in the course of their journey. Their own experiences and exchanges with others who share their migrant status are often their first sources of information. They help to form their judgement about their prospects in the country they are in. It is essential to provide objective, comprehensive and appropriate information to UAMs in their mother tongue about their possibilities. This prerequisite can facilitate their care. However, it is not enough. It is important that the young person gives credibility to the information given to him or her. The quality of care and the establishment of a long-term relationship of trust are all avenues to explore. Going towards minors in transit to offer them care is thus similar to the job of a street educator in specialised prevention (Goaziou 2015). On the other hand, the experiences of suppression of agency that they may undergo: forcible fingerprinting, police violence, confinement, all contribute to keeping minors away from care, even in the future.

However, the care of UAMs is far from being the end of the matter. It does not always meet the migratory objectives of the young people. Indeed, far from being passive and vulnerable, the minors present in Calais pursue their own objectives. Not considering the desires of these young people carries the risk of rapidly derailing care. On the contrary, adopting a child-centred approach that reconciles the child's need for protection, includes his

participation and considers his aspirations often allows the young person to be stabilised and protected. In this respect, the successful experiences of family reunification under Dublin transfers and transfers of minors from France to the United Kingdom call for the opening of legal and safe passage routes to facilitate the transit of UAMs¹⁵⁶. The absence of legal possibilities does not generally lead the young person to give up the passage. It simply invites them to try to achieve this by other, often more dangerous, means.

Administratively, the unaccompanied minor remains in a situation of administrative transit, until his final regularisation, which can sometimes take place after his majority. The recognition of minority is a first step. It is a prerequisite for benefiting from the services of the ASE. However, it too often functions as a necessary condition for access to schooling or asylum application. Yet these three rights are legally distinct. The moment of assessment is a moment of suspicion for both parties. It is an intrusive and often painful moment when the young person is invited to bare his soul in front of a stranger in order to obtain recognition of their minority. The evaluators preferred the narrative as a means of providing evidence to the consideration of identity documents. Many minors point out the discretionary nature of the procedure they had to undergo. The refusal that may result from this is another factor in mobility and wandering. The reason for this is that the minor has to leave the accommodation quickly. The urgency of survival that they are then faced with often makes it impossible to use their right to appeal. Passage to the UK then becomes a credible alternative.

Furthermore, the entry into care is the beginning of an endurance test for the minor. The first stages of life in a home are characterised by waiting. Waiting for the minority assessment, waiting to enrol in school or activities, waiting for regularisation. The minor is therefore in a liminal situation, on the margins of the society in which he aspires to obtain a place. Their situation remains suspended on a future administrative decision (recognition of minority status, family reunification, etc.). Waiting is therefore a central experience for minors sheltered by the ASE. It is a powerful factor in the mobility of these young people, as it is often experienced as an absence of future prospects or a refusal of reception. On the contrary, rapid schooling can help to anchor a minor in a lasting way and put an end to his wandering. Now, in the Pas de Calais, it takes several weeks to get to school.

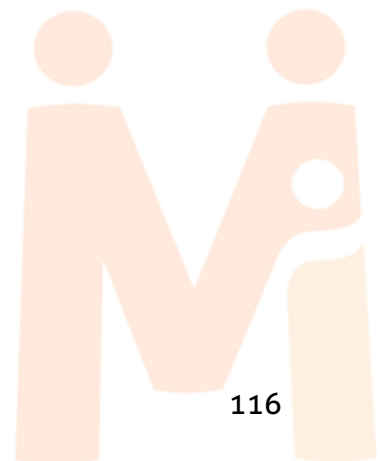
This social anchoring is also based on the young person's need to be monitored, to be supported, to be able to rely on a contact person in the event of difficulties, whether administrative or emotional. The path that UAMs have to follow, from arrival in Europe to regularisation, is full of pitfalls. Yet these young people do not exist for the authorities until they have been formally taken into care. The system of the interim placement order is a good example of this phenomenon. Previously, minority was an arbitrary fact that could always be called into question. All the more so as time is against minors. There is no right to make mistakes from the very first steps on European soil. Yet many young people are registered via their fingerprints as soon as they arrive in Europe. The authorities are therefore aware of

¹⁵⁶ It can also be hypothesised that these legal experiences of transit to the UK also facilitate the stabilisation and integration of minors once they have arrived. However, further work is needed to verify this assertion.

their presence. One way to succeed in protecting minors in transit would be to create an UAM status at European level, as soon as they are detected by the authorities. This status could protect minors during their wandering in Europe. It would give them access to rights, particularly that of movement. It could continue to apply retroactively even if the young person has not been or is no longer in the care of the authorities. This failure of protection would be the responsibility of the institutions. It would not handicap the young person in the stabilisation process, which sometimes takes place several months or years after arrival. It would be a powerful tool to guarantee the integration of the minor by limiting the administrative obstacles that multiply as soon as they reach the age of majority. The modalities of such a status should be open to political debate. To those who would argue against the financial cost of such a measure. The answer is that exclusion generates extremely high social and economic costs. Similarly, the costs of the policy of repression of illegal immigration are never quantified. The financial aspect is a matter of political choice. Integration or exclusion?

However, there is a way to reduce the cost of caring for UAMs. Putting an end to their isolation quickly by allowing them to be joined by members of their family when this is possible and in the young person's interest.

UAMs in transit in Calais are therefore the dominated ones in the European migration management system. Their trajectories are a response to the exclusion regime they face. A regime of exclusion that should be ended for the best interests of these young people.



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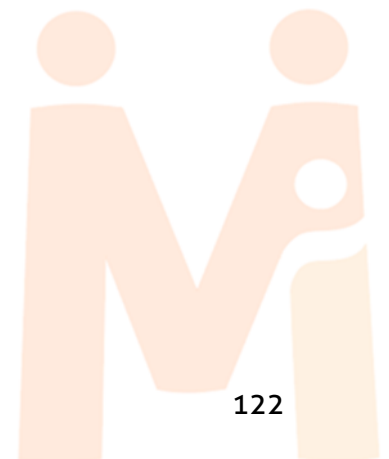
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**ITALY**

Erica Caredda

1. Introduction

The following report summarises the findings of the research carried out in Italy for the purpose of better understanding the legal and social framework of the established reception system in Italy to support migrant children in transition. More specifically, the research explored whether the existing laws and current practices are compliant with the child-centered approach, and whether child agency is indeed taken into account in the reception and integration system at the national, regional and local level.

The research is built on a desk analysis that was carried out between October 2019 and January 2020, where literature review, a statical overview and an assessment of the Italian legal framework are presented.

Upon conclusion of this first analytical phase, field research had been conducted in four different research sites in Sicily, with the aim to establish contacts with the personnel who

manages the reception centres and coordinates the activities and services offered to hosted migrant children, and to conduct interviews with migrant children in transition.

The field research was originally planned for the first half of 2020, yet the global pandemic has severely affected the research strategy, which led to a substantial revision of the research methodology and of the research tools deployed. Therefore, the research activities were conducted between September 2020 and June 2021.

Sicily hosts, on average, nearly 30% of all the Unaccompanied Foreign Minors (UAM) in Italy¹⁵⁷. Given the high prevalence of UAM against other migrant children, and the fact that most of the UAM arrive to Sicily only to proceed their journey towards different destinations, CESIE decided to focus the research on UAM as the most representative category of Migrant Children in transition in Sicily.

2. Secondary analysis

To stimulate the inclusion of diverse groups of migrant children on educational and policy levels it is crucial to understand the integration challenges and needs of children in transition. The present report was created to present the current situation in Sicily, Italy and reply to the three research questions: (1) How a child-centred approach manifests at the level of policy and law in case of children in transition; (2) How integration issues manifest at the level of policy and law in case of children in transition and (3) How children in transition perceive/experience their life, processes and places of transit.

This phenomenon of children in transition creates new situations of vulnerability and certain invisibility for the representatives of this group, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapters.

2.1 Literature review

How children in transition perceive/experience their life, processes and places of transit?

Hundreds of unaccompanied children who enter Europe in the South spend months in inadequate facilities and lack proper protection. The standards of the reception and hosting facilities are often poor and many UAM prefer to escape or to continue their journey to Northern Europe. In these cases, they become 'invisible' and exposed to a variety of risks. The research, conducted by Catarci and Rocchi in 2017, provides a following testimony by one of the Egyptian UAM who described his experience in the reception centre in Sicily, from which he escaped earlier:

¹⁵⁷ Data retrieved from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies. The General Directorate of Immigration and Integration Policy, monitoring report on UAMs in Italy, June 2019

'... then I go in another centre close to Syracuse. I stayed there for one year. First the fingerprints. In Sicily. Nothing. No Speaking. Not doing anything. Only eating and sleeping. There is nothing, no school. One year. Sleeping, eating, playing. One year like that. After I took all my clothes and run away with my friends. Social workers not all good. 10% good. Small. Sicily no good. Important to speak Italian and no school to attend. Food is not good. [...] No clothes. Ugly room, not cleaning'.¹⁵⁸

Furthermore, a number of UAMs also need to urgently find some kind of employment in order to send money home or pay off the debt for their journey to Europe. Therefore, they tend to accept illegal, dangerous and underpaid jobs, and often become victims of sexual exploitation, forced labour, prostitution, and forced to perform illegal jobs¹⁵⁹.

Unaccompanied minors are more likely to be classified with internalizing and externalizing problems than native Italian adolescents. The results of the 2013 study found significant differences in internalizing and externalizing problems between unaccompanied refugee and native Italian minors - unaccompanied refugees were found to have significantly more problems than the Italian group¹⁶⁰.

A significant number of UAM suffer from acculturative stress that originates from attempts to integrate the differences between culture of origin and the dominant culture and is often accompanied by a number of stressful psychosocial experiences.

Research on UAM and acculturation stress (2014) provides a number of statements by UAM of different origins who describe their feelings during and after migration:

- 'Being alone without knowing anyone'. (N., Senegalese, 18 years old)
- 'Just get used to being alone'. (X., Albanian, 20 years old)
- 'This was the first time that I remained without the family'. (E., Egyptian, 20 years old)
- 'No, I do not think that here is like Albania, because there are so many things. I miss family'. (M., Albanian, 19 years old)¹⁶¹

One of the notable challenges are linked to the learning the host country language and to the inability to find a job because they are minors.

Many of children in transition describe their overall experience of reception as 'eating and sleeping' – many of them are hosted in the centres, located in remote areas, where they cannot undergo any educational or employment programme, including Italian courses.

Catarci and Rocchi's research showed that there is a noticeable difference between young migrant who have turned 18 years old and those who are still under 18 years old. The minors

¹⁵⁸ Catarci and Rocchi, 2017

¹⁵⁹ Ferrara et al., 2016

¹⁶⁰ Thommessen et al., 2013

¹⁶¹ Rania et al., 2014

under 18 years old seemed more enthusiastic and didn't think much about what is waiting for them outside of the protection system. Those who already turned 18 years old were worried about their future and the uncertain conditions, without any help or protection¹⁶².

However, it is evident that experiences of UAM in Italy depend on the type and location of reception centres. Research on health challenges in reception centres (2016) showed that most of the interviewed UAM had lived in multiple types of accommodation facilities in remote villages and towns and hence had very little possibility to access any activities that would improve their integration. However, those who live in 'multiple occupancy rooms' in big cities like Catania described them as 'good enough' and stated that there they had opportunities to attend language lessons and different trainings¹⁶³.

Other research shows that UAM in different reception centres voiced complaints about inadequate, minimal and sometimes rotten food, inadequate hygiene supplies, poor health care access, minimal clothing and mistreatment by the workers¹⁶⁴.

2.2 Statistical data

The General Directorate of Immigration and Integration Policy collects data on unaccompanied foreign minors in a database instituted by Decree n.535/1999¹⁶⁵. It guarantees the confidentiality of information regarding minors and treats personal data with respect of the Code on the protection of personal data. Statistical Reports are published on a monthly basis and publicly accessible on the website of Ministry of Labour and Social Policies.

Monitoring Reports on UAMs present on national territory are released in accordance with Article 33 of the Immigration Act and with Article 2(2) of Decree n. 535/1999. The reports analyse the main characteristics of unaccompanied foreign minors present in the Italian territory, with a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the trends, through the confrontation among various analytical indicators with historical data. Since 2018, monitoring reports have been published every six months.

As part of its competence, the General Directorate has developed the Information System on Minors (SIM)¹⁶⁶. It monitors the presence of unaccompanied foreign minors, tracking movements within the national territory and managing data on their registration, status and settlement.

¹⁶² Catarci and Rocchi 2017

¹⁶³ Blits et al., 2017

¹⁶⁴ Manzano et al., 2018

¹⁶⁵ Ministry of Labour and Social Policies. The General Directorate of Immigration and Integration Policy, monitoring reports on UAMs in Italy. Available at: <http://lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/immigrazione/focus-on/minori-stranieri/Pagine/Dati-minori-stranieri-non-accompagnati.aspx>

¹⁶⁶ Information System on Minors. Available at: www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/immigrazione/focus-on/minori-stranieri/Pagine/SIM-Sistema-Informativo-Minori.aspx

Data on unaccompanied foreign minors is available also in reports of International Organizations, namely those published by UNICEF, IOM, UNHCR¹⁶⁷ and Save The Children.¹⁶⁸

As of 30 November 2019, the unaccompanied foreign minors present within the Italian territory were 6,369¹⁶⁹. In June 2019 a 44.7 per cent decrease in the number compared with the same period of 2018 was registered, when the minors present were 13,151. Compared to 2017, when the presence was of 17,864 minors, the decrease is 59.3 per cent.

Gender: 94.1 per cent of unaccompanied foreign minors are males (5,996), while 5.9 per cent are females (373).

Age: 63.6 per cent of UAMs are 17 years old, 22.7 per cent are aged 16 years old, 7.1 per cent are 15 years old and 6.6 per cent are under 15. Compared with the same period of 2017, the number of those aged seventeen is increasing, while there is a decrease of minors aged between 7 and 16 years old.

Table 1. UAMs Age Distribution (2019)

Age range	Recorded number	%
17 years old	3.723	61,5
16 years old	1.579	26,1
15 years old	438	7,2
7-14 years old	270	4,5
0-6 years old	44	0,7
Total	6.054	100

Source: Monthly Report on Unaccompanied Minors, Ministry of Labour and Social Politics, December 2019, p. 1

¹⁶⁷ Latest statistics and graphics on refugee and migrant children, UNICEF, 2019. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/eca/emergencies/latest-statistics-and-graphics-refugee-and-migrant-children>

¹⁶⁸ Save the Children website. Available at: <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net>

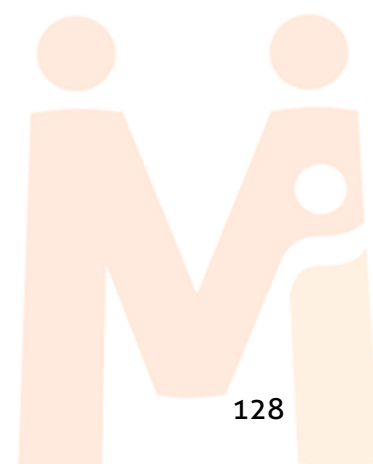
¹⁶⁹ Ministry of Labour and Social Policies. The General Directorate of Immigration and Integration Policy, monitoring reports on UAMs in Italy. Available at: <http://lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/immigrazione/focus-on/minori-stranieri/Pagine/Dati-minori-stranieri-non-accompagnati.aspx>

Citizenship distribution: As of June 2019, the main country of origin of unaccompanied minors was Albania (1.662 minors), followed by Egypt (632), Pakistan (523), Ivory Coast (485) and Gambia (476). These citizenships accounted half of unaccompanied minors present in Italy. Other citizenships were Guinea (377), Kosovo (359), Nigeria (354), Senegal (322), Eritrea (285) and Mali (270).

Table 2. UAMs Citizenship Distribution (2017-2019)

		30 June 2017	30 June 2018	30 June 2019
Albania	N	1.639	1.517	1.662
	%	9,2	11,5	22,9
Egypt	N	2.093	1.225	632
	%	11,7	9,3	8,7
Pakistan	N	342	368	523
	%	1,9	2,8	7,2
Ivory coast	N	1.284	1.081	485
	%	7,2	8,2	6,7
The gambia	N	2.474	1.353	476
	%	13,8	10,3	6,5
Guinea	N	1.654	1.153	377
	%	9,3	8,8	5,2
Kosovo	N	277	277	359
	%	1,6	2,1	4,9
Nigeria	N	1.429	879	354
	%	8,0	6,7	4,9
Senegal	N	949	624	322
	%	5,3	4,7	4,4
Eritrea	N	1.106	953	285
	%	6,2	7,2	3,9
Mali	N	928	748	270
	%	5,2	5,7	3,7
Other	N	3689	2973	1527
	%	20,7	22,6	21
Total	N	17.864	13.151	7.272
	%	100	100	100

Source: Monitoring Report of Unaccompanied Minors, Ministry of Labour and Social Politics, June 2019, p. 5



Hosting Regions: Until November 2019 Sicily was the Region hosting the majority of UAMs (1,433, 22.5 per cent of the total), while the Monitoring Report on UAMs on June 2019 registered 2,066 minors hosted in Sicily (the 28.4 per cent of the total).

Table 3. UAMs hosting Regions (2019)

Region	Registered presence	%
Sicily	1.433	22,5
Lombardy	792	12,4
Friuli Venezia Giulia	671	10,5
Emilia Romagna	586	9,2
Tuscany	454	7,1
Lazio	407	6,4
Veneto	307	4,8
Piedmont	276	4,3
Apulia	263	4,1
Liguria	195	3,1
Campania	182	2,9
Calabria	176	2,8
Marche	136	2,1
Abruzzo	119	1,9
Basilicata	80	1,3
Molise	78	1,2
Aut. Province of Bolzano	74	1,2
Sardinia	51	0,8
Umbria	47	0,7
Aut. Province of Trento	25	0,4
Aosta valley	17	0,3
Total	6.369	100

Source: Monthly Report on Unaccompanied Minors, Ministry of Labour and Social Politics, December 2019, p. 3

The number of missing unaccompanied minors (i.e., minors who leave, either voluntarily or not, the reception system after their presence has been registered) is 4,736 (data updated on 30 June 2019). The main countries of origin of missing unaccompanied minors are Tunisia (13.8 per cent), Eritrea (11.9 per cent), Afghanistan (11.9 per cent), Somalia (8.1 per cent).

According to the analysis done by Ismu Foundation¹⁷⁰, commissioned by UNICEF, UNHCR and IOM, on Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) arrived in Italy by the central Mediterranean route, there is a lack of data on:

- Work permits for UAMs issued by the police stations and data on the conversion of these permits when they turn 18 years old;

¹⁷⁰ ISMU Foundation – Initiatives and studies on multiethnicity, 2019, At a crossroads. Unaccompanied and separated children in their transition to adulthood in Italy

- Other types of residence permits issued to UAMs (e.g. for special cases or for medical treatment);
- Number of UAMs enrolled in the Adult Learning Centres (tr. Centri Provinciali per l'Istruzione degli Adulti - CPIAs)
- Volunteer Guardians;
- UAMs under foster care;
- Number of UAMs in reception facilities;

This is mostly due to the fact that there is no comprehensive administrative body responsible for the collection of data on former UAMs (as regards the reception system, their socio-economic inclusion, the continuity of their education pathways when they turn 18 years old and those who are granted continued protection by social services until age 21 pursuant to Article 13 of Law n. 47/2017¹⁷¹).

The analysis also highlights the difficulties in comparing available data from different authorities due to, inter alia, different definitions applied, levels of disaggregation, and frequency in collection and dissemination.

2.3 Assessment of institutional support to children in transition

How child-centred approach manifests at the level of policy and law in case of children in transition

The best interest of the child principle that lies in the core of the child-centred approach is a fundamental element of the international legal framework regarding the protection of children and their rights. It is crucial for the protection of smuggled and trafficked unaccompanied minors (UAM)¹⁷².

The principle takes its name from Article 3(1) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which is the main human rights document defining the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children. The rights, outlined by the UNCRC, refer to all children regardless of their immigration or citizenship status. Italy ratified the UNCRC on 5 September 1991 and it came into force on 5 October of the same year.

Article 3(1) states that 'In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration'¹⁷³. Hence, the States are required to consider the best interests of all children, including unaccompanied minors, in any decision concerning them, including immigration procedures, accommodation, the availability of family reunification mechanisms, and decisions regarding removal whether

¹⁷¹ Zampa Law 2017: article 13

¹⁷² Lelliot 2017

¹⁷³ UNCRC 1989: article 3, para 1

undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies¹⁷⁴. It also implies, that all children, including separated children, should have access to rights to protection, education, health care and welfare, freedom of expression, participation, social inclusion and cultural life and access to information concerning them.¹⁷⁵

The Italian legislation does not specifically mention the principal, but a number of laws address the rights of the unaccompanied minors, from the so-called 1990 Martelli Law¹⁷⁶ that first introduced the term "unaccompanied minor" to the 2002 Bossi-Fini Law¹⁷⁷ that systematically reviewed the Italian legislation on foreigners and introduced new rules on the conversion of the resident permit for minors who reach legal age.¹⁷⁸

In 2013 the Constitutional court of Italy with its verdict 7/2013¹⁷⁹ stated that the principle of "best interest of the child" is considered implicit in the provisions of the Italian Constitution regarding human rights and child protection.

In March 2017, Italy became the first European country to legislate a comprehensive framework protecting UAM - the 'Provisions on protective measures for unaccompanied foreign minors', often referred to as the Zampa Law¹⁸⁰.

The Zampa Law adopts the multi-disciplinary approach and modalities for carrying out a socio-health assessment of the age of young migrants in case of doubt, by trained professionals of the National Health System, with the support of cultural mediators, under the full information and understanding of the child and of the legal guardian about the procedure. It also foresees the direct action of local institutions and authorities to facilitate the access to education to Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) in reception, including designing ad hoc insertion programmes and cultural mediation services to allow for the completion of mandatory schooling.

¹⁷⁴ Furia 2012, Lelliot 2017

¹⁷⁵ Furia, 2012

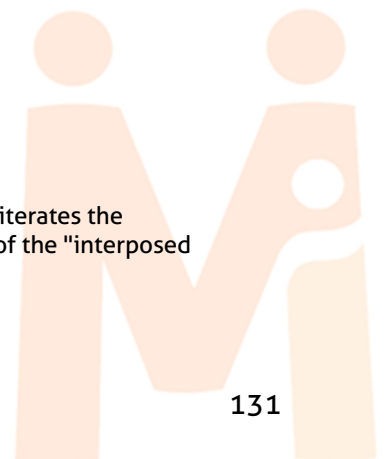
¹⁷⁶ Martelli Law n. 39/1990

¹⁷⁷ Bossi-Fini Law n. 189/2002

¹⁷⁸ Duca, 2012

¹⁷⁹ Constitutional Court of Italy, Verdict no.7/2013. The Constitutional Court of Italy reiterates the unreasonableness of art. 569 of the Italian Criminal Code and updates the "doctrine" of the "interposed parameter" (art. 117, first paragraph, of the Italian Constitution).

¹⁸⁰ Zampa Law n. 47/2017



How issue of integration manifest at the level of policy and law in case of children in transition

The Italian legislative and policy framework regarding separated children are regulated by primary legislation, secondary legislation and European Union Regulations and Directives, as well as international conventions.¹⁸¹

Since 2014 the Italian government, regions and municipalities started the implementation of the National Plan in order to adapt the reception system to the increasing flows of non-EU citizens. At the same time, the new approach regarding the reception of unaccompanied minors was accepted, which made the Ministry of the Interior the sole responsible for the organisation of their reception. This action provided a significant change in the system, as previously the Ministry of the Interior was responsible only for unaccompanied minors seeking asylum, and the reception of non-asylum seekers was in the competence of local authorities.¹⁸²

The National Plan divided the reception of UAM in two phases:

- 1) During the first one a number of highly specialized governmental structures conduct activities aimed at identification, age assessment and status definition while UAMs are provided with places in short-term reception centres. These procedures are conducted in order to foster potential family reunification with relatives in EU countries and to confirm the age of children, as those who declare being a minor according to Italian law have the right to receive full protection of the state. Although in Italy age verification has become more important in recent years, there are no uniform, standard procedures to carry it out that ensure the respect of minors before, during and after the verification¹⁸³. Furia (2011) states that only after they will 'pass' all this system, UAMs 'can undertake a path of [...] protection and integration that should allow them to obtain a residence permit, access to the public education and job training system, the protection of health and psycho-physical well-being, [...] the effective implementation of which is often hindered'.¹⁸⁴
- 2) In the second phase all unaccompanied foreign minors, who don't have relatives in Italy or other EU countries, enter the System of Protection for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR), financed by the government. The SPRAR carries out integrated hosting projects that, apart from providing food and accommodation, also allow access to information, assistance and guidance activities in order to facilitate UAM's socio-economic integration with the focus on training and employment.¹⁸⁵

During the first phase the data on children in transition, provided by the majority of stakeholders, has significant limitations in terms of gender. Statistical data, including the

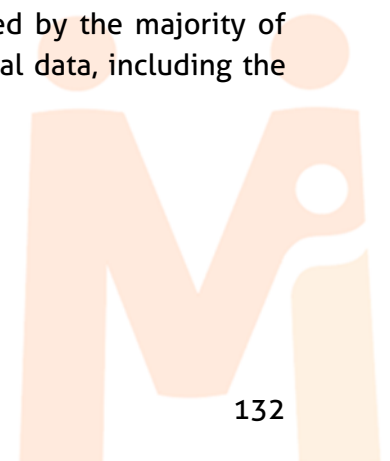
¹⁸¹ Furia, 2012

¹⁸² Giovannetti, 2017

¹⁸³ Bianchi, 2017

¹⁸⁴ Furia, 2011

¹⁸⁵ Accorinti 2013, Giovannetti 2017



UNHCR reports, on the arrivals usually provide the numbers on male, female and minor migrants, keeping the last category gender neutral. This makes female UAM significantly more vulnerable, as they remain invisible for the system.¹⁸⁶

Within the process of integration, UAMs are registered in the national healthcare system and in educational institutions where they receive a personalized educational plan, that includes language courses. It is crucial, as a sufficient level of Italian is necessary in order to renew their permits of stay, take up an employment and feel like a part of the host society. However, scholars note that, despite the increase of interest regarding educational programmes for foreigners, far too little attention is paid to educational programs specifically addressed to unaccompanied minors in school setting.¹⁸⁷

Unfortunately, there are several protection gaps in Italy which encourage, among other trends, secondary migration - the Italian guardianship model is reliant on volunteers and suffers significant bureaucratic delays; accommodation for unaccompanied children is poorly managed through private contracting arrangements, that show evidence of corruption; children after being wrongly assessed to be over 18 years old, often become homeless etc.

Young people often transit through Italy to the UK and France due to the lack of support and long bureaucratic procedures, language factors and desire to be reunited with family members. Jennifer Allsopp (2017) states that Dublin III procedures are not working effectively and children who should be able to access legal transfers from Italy to the UK or France, often do not have this opportunity and turn to smugglers instead. According to her 2017 research brief, at the time of the research 'as few as 20 reunions of unaccompanied children from Italy with their family members elsewhere in Europe have been completed [...], despite it being likely that several thousand children are eligible'.¹⁸⁸

The norms on support to children in transition are placed at the intersect of a three levels system of rules: the international one, the European one and the domestic one.¹⁸⁹

International Framework

From the international perspective, Italy ratified the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC) of 1989¹⁹⁰ with the Law n. 176/1991¹⁹¹. This is the most ratified of the international human rights treaties in the world; it promotes and encourages the development of the rights of the child¹⁹². The Art. 22 of UNCRC is of fundamental importance, since it sets forth the rights of children in transition, whether accompanied or

¹⁸⁶ Blitz et al., 2017; Kofman, 2018

¹⁸⁷ Augelli, Lombi and Triani, 2018

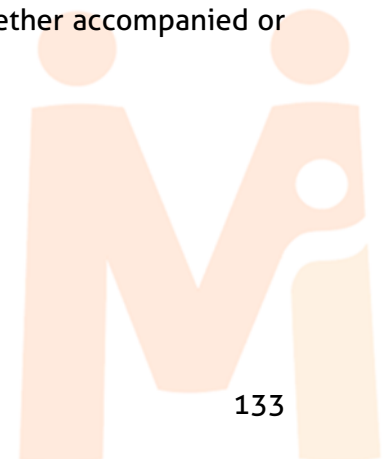
¹⁸⁸ Allsopp, 2017

¹⁸⁹ Smyth, 2014

¹⁹⁰ UNCRC, 1989

¹⁹¹ Law of ratification of the UNCRC Convention, n. 176/1991

¹⁹² Parkes, 2013



not, to receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance. Other important articles concern the rights to health (art. 24), to development and education (art. 27-28), to religion (art. 30) and protection from exploitation and abuses. Within the legal framework on migration, the main point of reference is the Geneva Convention the Status of Refugee of 1954, which contains the definition of refugee (Art. 1) and the principle of non-refoulement (Art. 33)¹⁹³.

European Framework

In the European context, minors are entitled to the rights set forth in the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950¹⁹⁴ and in the European Convention on the exercise of children's rights of 1996¹⁹⁵. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union enshrines the fundamental principle of the best interest of the child and explicitly calls for the right to protection, care and opinion.¹⁹⁶ Within the European Union context there are various norms concerning the peculiar condition of children in transition, forced migration and the fundamental principle of the best interest, which establish the Common European Asylum System. Among these: the Qualification Directive¹⁹⁷ (for the establishment of common bases of recognition of international protection for those fleeing persecution or serious harm); the Procedure Directive¹⁹⁸ (which establishes the minimum common standards of the asylum procedure and contains specific references to the application submitted by minors); the Dublin Regulation¹⁹⁹ (for the identification of the State responsible for assessing the application for international protection); the Directive against trafficking in human beings²⁰⁰ and the Communication on the Protection of children in migration²⁰¹, which establish specific guarantees for children involved in criminal proceedings and requires Member States to take the necessary measures to ensure lasting solutions to unaccompanied minors throughout the whole migration route within and beyond the EU borders.

Italian National Legislation

The Italian National Legislation mainly derives from the transposition of the International and European standards while taking into account national rules on the protection of minors.

¹⁹³ UN General Assembly, 1951.Treaty Series: vol.189

¹⁹⁴ Council of Europe, 1950

¹⁹⁵ Council of Europe, 1996. European Treaty Series: n.160

¹⁹⁶ European Union, 2000: 2000/C 364/01

¹⁹⁷ Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection.

¹⁹⁸ Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of the European Union of 26 June 2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection.

¹⁹⁹ Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection.

²⁰⁰ Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA.

²⁰¹ Communication (211/2017) from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the protection of children in migration

This results in some important internal rules, including those on the prohibition of expulsion of unaccompanied minors²⁰², on their protection and legal representation in the asylum procedure²⁰³, on their reception²⁰⁴.

The current Law in force is the Law n. 47/2017 (the Zampa Law)²⁰⁵: it establishes a protection system and safeguard of unaccompanied foreign minors (UAMs) in an articulation of competences between central and peripheral administration, seeking to ensure greater uniformity in the application of the provisions throughout the territory of Italy.

The Italian legislation defines an unaccompanied foreign minor as a 'minor not accompanied present in the territory of the State means the minors who do not have Italian citizenship or European Union citizenship is for any reason in the territory of the State or that it is otherwise subjected to Italian jurisdiction, without any assistance and representation by parents or others adults legally responsible for him according to the laws in force in the Italian legal system.'²⁰⁶ From a legal perspective, foreign minors hold the same rights and are entitled to receive the same treatment of national Italian minors. Indeed, they are protected primary as minors without any form of legal guardianship, and only later, if they have applied for protection, as beneficiaries of international protection.

Strengthening the provisions established by Legislative Decree n. 286/1998 (Immigration Act), the Law n.47/2017 recognises the minors as vulnerable subjects with rights²⁰⁷. They can directly apply for a residence permit at their local police station, even without the appointment of a legal guardian. The 'right to be listened' is also established for unaccompanied foreign minors in the administrative and judicial proceedings concerning them, while the right to legal assistance is guaranteed and at the expenses of the State. The Law consolidates the principle according to which the setting up of reception services includes services specifically targeted to the requirements of minors: specialised centres for rescue and protection, with trained personnel and in respect of the standards established by Decree of the Minister of the Interior.²⁰⁸

The new text also reshapes the identification procedure for minors in a harmonised manner throughout the territory of Italy: this is the fundamental step for the assessment of the age, on which in turn the possibility of applying the protection measures for minors depends. This procedure includes:

- an interview of the minor conducted by qualified personnel, under the direction of the local authorities;

²⁰² Legislative Decree n. 286/1998 (Immigration Act)

²⁰³ Legislative Decree n. 25/2008. Implementation of the Directive 2005/85/CE, establishing minimum standards for the recognition or revocation of the status of refugee.

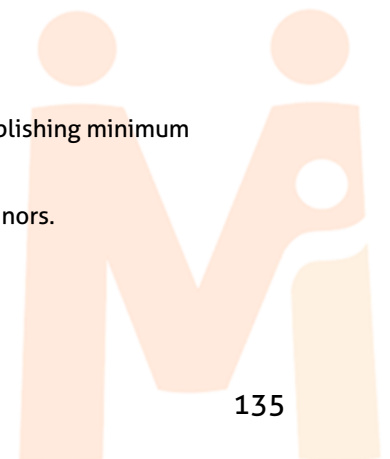
²⁰⁴ Legislative Decree n. 142/2015 (Reception Act)

²⁰⁵ Zampa Law n. 47/2017. Provisions on the protection of unaccompanied foreign minors.

²⁰⁶ Zampa Law 2017: article 2

²⁰⁷ EMN Focussed Study 2017:10

²⁰⁸ Ministry of Interior 2015:41, Study Group on the reception system



- the request for a personal data document in case of doubt about the age and, possibly, of socio-health assessments, with the minor's consent and in the least invasive way possible;
- the presumption of minority cases where there are doubts about age even after the assessment.²⁰⁹

Unaccompanied foreign minors cannot be rejected at border (principle of non-refoulement) and the limit for the detention in preliminary reception facilities is of 30 days, while the maximum time foreseen for identification operations is 10 days. The Law n. 47/2017 also established the National Information System of Unaccompanied foreign minors (tr. 'Sistema Informativo nazionale dei Minori Stranieri Non Accompagnati' or SIM) at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.²¹⁰ The system logs the entry into Italy of the minor and monitors the following integration process.

Local authorities have the task of raising awareness and training the carers who are able to accommodate these minors. In fact, the law favours the placement of the minor within households (including the active search of family members of the minor within the Italian territory) rather than placing them in host community²¹¹. Each Juvenile Court has a list of voluntary guardians available to assist one or more unaccompanied foreign minors. With regard to long-term assistance measures, the rule reiterates the possibility of requesting the minor to be assigned to social services up to the age of 21 years old for those minors who have embarked on a path of integration, but who require prolonged assistance and support when they reach the majority age.

Types of permits and rights

First of all, UAMs may benefit from the protection status provided by International and European Law. In any case if they do not require this protection or in any case do not obtain the status – they obtain a residence permit for minor age, humanitarian protection or, in case they can be hosted by family members already residing in Italy, a permit for family reasons²¹². At the age of majority, the individual can obtain a residence permit for reasons of study or work or job seeking, or possibly for health-related reasons of (e.g., need for medical treatment - Article 32 of Immigration Act). Pending the outcome of the identification procedures, it is always guaranteed that the child will be welcomed by the appropriate reception facilities for minors, provided by law.

The child's identity is ascertained by the public security authorities, assisted by cultural mediators, in the presence of the legal guardian or temporary guardian if already appointed, only after the basic needs been guaranteed to the minor. The social and health assessment of age must be carried out with some guarantees, i.e., a suitable environment and

²⁰⁹ Zampa Law 2017: article 4

²¹⁰ SIM website. Available at: <https://sim.lavoro.gov.it/Pagine/index.aspx>

²¹¹ Zampa Law 2017: article 6

²¹² Zampa Law 2017: article 10

professionals, at the presence of a cultural mediator and respecting the right of the minor of being informed.

Law Decree n.113/2018, converted into Law n.132/2018²¹³, introduced an important change with the repeal of the residence permit for humanitarian reasons as this measure was widely used by the Territorial Commissions to protect Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) or former Unaccompanied Separated Children (UA SC) who did not meet the conditions for the awarding of international protection in the form of asylum or subsidiary protection. With the same law, the Territorial Commission now has the possibility of granting a new residence permit for a special protection of one year, for the cases in which the foreigner cannot be rejected, expelled or extradited, as for instance specific and severe health conditions, documented natural disasters in the country of origin, etc. In case of continued eligibility, the permit can be renewed for another year. Thereafter it cannot be converted into another form of residence permit, the applicant should then apply for other type of permits (if meanwhile has become eligible) or otherwise leave the country.

All unaccompanied minors have the right to access preventive treatments (e.g., vaccinations) and are enrolled in the National Health Service. Once a guardian (a person whose duty is the support of the minor throughout the inclusion path in the host community, including bureaucratic proceedings) is identified, the State guarantees the right to education. The host community or the foster family will be involved in finding a school and proceed with the enrolment process.

In principle, the Italian school system is inclusive. According to the Italian Constitution (Article 34), 'schooling is open to all and there are no separate programmes or educational institutions for children with special needs.' Furthermore, Italy acknowledges the access to the national welfare system and its services to the UAMs as much as what is foreseen for all the Italian citizens. Migrant adults who have no proof of having completed compulsory education can enrol in the programmes for adult education, which offer the possibility to complete all the cycles of compulsory education to everyone who has not done it yet but wishes to do it.

Other than this, specific measures related to the transition to the age of majority are expected. For instance, provided that the child had forwarded the request, the support provided by the Social Services to whom they have been entrusted can be extended for a period up to 36 months after the eighteenth birthday of the child.

The Reception System

The 2015 Reception Act²¹⁴ for the first time established specific norms on the reception of UAMs and, together the aforementioned Zampa Law, represent the legislative framework of reference. Children are protected as vulnerable subjects regardless recognition of

²¹³ Decree n.113/2018 (Security Decree)

²¹⁴ Legislative Decree n. 142/2015 (Reception Act)

international protection. The commissioner issues the residence permit for minority age and minors cannot be expelled or refused entry at the border. Unaccompanied foreign minors who have been granted some forms of international protection are still subject to the same Law and to the same rules as those applied to unaccompanied foreign minors who have not applied for protection (or whose application has been rejected).

The National Coordination Committee, established by Legislative Decree n.142/2015 at the Ministry of the Interior, is responsible for planning the activities of the reception system. Municipalities granting reception activities will access the contributions provided by the Ministry of Interior in the National UAMs Fund, established by the 2017 Stability Act²¹⁵: municipalities are paid by Prefectures, depending on the number of reception days provided during the year²¹⁶.

The National Plan for the reception of unaccompanied minors is provided by the combined provisions of the aforementioned Law n.47/2017, of the Legislative Decree n.142/2015 and of the Immigration Act n.286/1998. It is articulated in two levels²¹⁷:

- First Level reception: specialised governmental structures aimed at identification, assessment of age and status, in order to pursue their potential reunification with relatives, even if located in other EU countries, as identified and authorised by the Regions in coordination with the Ministry of Interior; the maximum legal period of stay in these facilities is 30 days, after that period minors are transferred to the:
- Second Level of reception within the Protection System for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (tr. Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati - SPRAR), named by the Law Decree n. 113/2018 Protection System for Holders of International Protection and Unaccompanied Minors (tr. Sistema di Protezione per titolari di protezione internazionale e Minori Stranieri non Accompagnati - SIPROIMI).

These facilities are financed by the national Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund²¹⁸. If SIPROIMI structures are not available, the reception of minors should be temporary assured by the Municipality where the minor is, according to the directives established by the Table of National Coordination. The Municipality who receives the minor has access to the National Fund for Unaccompanied Minors. Prefectures can activate temporary reception facilities (when the first reception facilities are overcrowded) exclusively for unaccompanied minors, aged under 14 years old, for the period strictly necessary to the transfer to second reception structures²¹⁹.

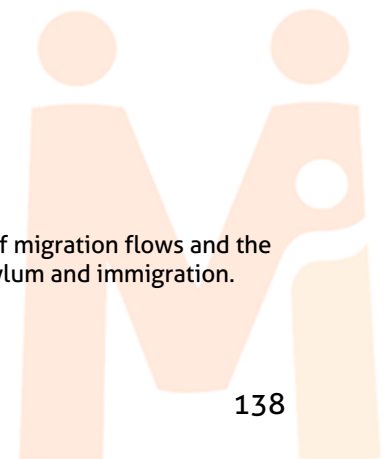
²¹⁵ Stability Act n. 190/2014: Art. 1, par. 181-182

²¹⁶ Law n. 135/2012

²¹⁷ Giovannetti, 2017

²¹⁸ The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund promotes the efficient management of migration flows and the implementation, strengthening and development of a common Union approach to asylum and immigration.

²¹⁹ Reception Act 2015: article 19, par. 3-bis. Introduced by Law Decree n. 113/2016



The Interior Ministry Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration has governance functions. The Ministry of the Interior (and Prefectures) ensure the availability of the adequate reception facilities. The Ministry of Justice oversees the functioning of the competent jurisdictional bodies in matters of protection. The Ministry of Health is competent in the field of health protection. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policies monitors minors with the SIM IT system. ANCI (the union of Italian municipalities) represents and protects the interests of the Municipalities in relation to other state bodies and manages the central SPRAR service.

Government authorities hold a relevant commitment in hosting and placing UAMs in safe places. This integration model involves both larger and smaller municipalities and consistent financial resources. Taking custody of UAMs is defined by heterogeneous models of intervention. These use, as main sources of protection and assistance, immediate shelter and request for appointment of a guardian, followed by notification to the pertinent authority, the request for a residence permit, an age assessment and the activation of a contact with the original family.

Financial Resources

The reception structures of first and second level are financed by the national Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. This fund is set up for the promotion of the efficient management of migration flows and the implementation, strengthening and development of a common Union approach to asylum and immigration. This fund contributes to the achievement of asylum, legal migration and integration, voluntary return and solidarity schemes with the migrant's country of origin for the further support to the migrants upon their return to the country of origin.

The 2015 Stability Act²²⁰ transferred from the Ministry of Labour to the Ministry of Interior the management of the Reception of Unaccompanied Minors Fund²²¹. This fund covers the costs incurred by local authorities for the reception of unaccompanied minors. The amount of the fund has been incremented in order to face the growing needs of reception of minors and the incremented number of arrivals. The 2019 budget has allocated for the Fund of reception of minors 150 million of Euros for 2019 and 170 million for 2020/2021. At the same time, the possibility to have access to reception services financed by the National Fund for Asylum policies and services has been extended to all unaccompanied minors, regardless their application for international protection²²². The Fund promotes the efficient management of migration flows and the implementation, strengthening and development of a common Union approach to asylum and immigration.

²²⁰ Stability Act n. 190/2014: Art. 1, par. 181-182

²²¹ Reception of UAMs Fund. Available at: <http://www.libertacivilimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/fondo-nazionale-laccoglienza-dei-msna>

²²² More info at: <https://www.camera.it/temiapi/documentazione/temi/pdf/1104665.pdf>

Another source for financing interventions to support unaccompanied minors is the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

Good practices

In Italy, the practices in favour of the reception and integration of unaccompanied foreign minors are numerous. They reveal the presence of positive experiences that were in place even before the introduction of specific legislation. These experiences can be considered 'good practices', since they fostered processes of integration of unaccompanied minors, the social cohesion, the protection of their rights, the path towards independence. Some of them are presented below.

Before Law n.41/2017, in Italy, family fostering UAMs has already been activated, both with Italian families and with families of the same nationality of UAMs (homocultural foster care). The goal was not the reintegration of the minor into the family of origin, but the support to a future personal project towards autonomy, with the purpose to be extended beyond the eighteenth year of age.²²³

The Ciclofficina project²²⁴, promoted at the SPRAR for UAMs in Udine by the Municipality of Udine and the Association 'Nuovi Cittadini Onlus', started in 2015. The 'Ciclofficina' (which literally means bike workshop) is a space equipped for the ordinary maintenance of bicycles, with services open to all citizens in the community. It has allowed UAMs to acquire basic skills in bicycle mechanics and also skills related to broader topics, such as sustainability and road safety. The project thus can be considered a good practice in the process of encouraging social cohesion since, through the activities proposed, it allowed the establishment of a positive contact between guests from the SPRAR and the local community.

Notably, the Memorandum of Understanding signed by ANCI and the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI) with a time frame of three years for 'The dissemination, practice and implementation of sporting activities for foreign minors hosted in the national reception system'²²⁵: it is aimed at promoting the social inclusion of UAMs through sport. Its purpose is the local dissemination of sports activities by asking municipal government and sports clubs to involve UAMs.²²⁶

In the field of education, on 11 December 2017 the Minister of Education, University and Research and the Supervisor for children and adolescents have signed the guidelines for the right to education of the students who live out of their family of origin, in order to guarantee

²²³ Pavesi N. and Valtolina G.G., 2018: 82-83

²²⁴ More info at:

https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/rapporto_annuale_buone_pratiche_di_accoglienza_2017_eng_w eb_rev1.pdf

²²⁵ EMN Focussed Study 2017: 19

²²⁶ Accorinti 2014: 128

'equal education opportunities for minors'²²⁷. The guidelines include concrete indications and suggestions, at all levels, from the governance among different institutions to the classrooms. Both parties commit to the promotion of initiatives aimed at the protection of minors and, above all, at the guarantee of the right to education and wellbeing of unaccompanied minors, minors outside families and minors belonging to ethnic minorities (Rom, Sinti and Caminanti). The agreement promotes the training of actors involved in children's education and the dissemination at school of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In Sicily, there are also many extremely positive reception experiences, where children are well followed from an educational point of view and included in educational, vocational and training paths. They are also supported during the transition to the age of majority, thanks to the constant commitment of social workers and managers of reception centres, social services, legal guardians and other stakeholders.²²⁸

A good practice is the Protocol of Palermo²²⁹. It is an agreement between the Municipality of Palermo and Palermo Civil Court, Juvenile Court, Prosecutor's Office at the Juvenile Court, Police Headquarters, University of Palermo, Provincial Health Department, Sicilian Regional School Office, Supervisor for children and adolescents. The Protocol is aimed at protecting vulnerable categories, in particular unaccompanied foreign minors through: the establishment of individualised projects of guidance, the institution of a system of volunteer guardians, the institution of a technical table in order to individuate and to solve issues linked to the identification of the minor and the ascertainment of the minor age. It has been signed also in other municipalities, such as Naples, Bari and Cagliari.²³⁰

Particularly important is the role of the voluntary guardians, introduced by Law n.47/2017. They are private citizens, appointed by the Juvenile Court, who not only have the legal representation of the minor in all the procedures that concern them, but also are adult figures of reference, attentive to the relationship with the child, who must promote their best interests. A Protocol Agreement has been signed between the Family Court of Catania and the Supervisor for children and adolescents of the Region of Sicily, for the establishment of the voluntary guardian list, the selection, the training and updating of such guardian, the establishment of a reference space for the voluntary guardians and to support the coordination and territorial synergies. In Palermo, in support to the volunteer guardians in their new role, a monitoring and support system has been established. This system provides guidance and advice to the volunteers on how to protect and support children as they move towards social inclusion and make the transition to adulthood.²³¹

²²⁷ More info at:

https://www.garanteinfanzia.org/sites/default/files/Protocollo%20Intesa%20Garante%20infanzia_Miur.pdf

²²⁸ INTERSOS: 2019: 32

²²⁹ More info at: https://www.comune.palermo.it/js/server/uploads/_30012017104927.pdf

²³⁰ EMN Focussed Study. 2017: 25

²³¹ EMN Focussed Study. 2017: 25

Among NGOs best practices, worthy of mention is the project 'Ragazzi Harraga' – Social Inclusion Processes for unaccompanied minors in the City of Palermo.²³² The project was coordinated by CIAI (tr. Centro Italiano Aiuti all'Infanzia Onlus), in partnership with the Municipality of Palermo and other local association and NGOs. Its objectives were to improve the reception system of unaccompanied minors by promoting models ensuring the protection of children's rights in Italy.

It promoted models supporting social inclusion which took into account the potential, the interests and the expectations of unaccompanied minors, in order to facilitate an autonomous and responsible passage to adulthood by involving the Region of Sicily. The project proposed a social inclusion model, which took into account interests and perspectives of minors who are alone in Sicily. The intervention was based on three dimensions: 1) social one, through the creation of a platform with social folders for each minor featuring all the information concerning their identities, the reception procedures, the inclusion strategies and the hard, soft and transversal skills they have developed; 2) professional one, through the development of an active policy for labour market integration; 3) housing one, by setting up temporary and affordable housing solutions featuring a low-cost accommodation for unaccompanied minors and tourist hostel²³³. As matter of fact, the project has facilitated the job placement of many of the minors involved, through the activation of 30 curricular internships of three months, with a grant of 300 Euros and 50 curricular internships of one month.

Child centred approach

The best interest of the Child is established by Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989²³⁴, ratified in Italy by Law n.176/1991. The Italian Constitution does not directly mention the best interest of the child, but Article 2 of the Constitution guarantees the inviolable rights of the person as individual. Italian Jurisprudence recognises the Constitutional significance of the principle of the 'best interest of the child': it is considered a general clause that constitutes a parameter in the constitutional legitimacy judgements.²³⁵

The principle is commonly interpreted as a fundamental criterion of the social policies for childhood protection and support to guarantee the access to the best opportunities for children's development. With respect to non-national children and immigration, the best interest of the child is explicitly mentioned in the Legislative Decree n. 286/1998 and also in the Legislative Decree n. 142/2015.²³⁶ The legislation establishes that the best interest of the child represents an element of primary consideration in all decision making,

²³² CESIE NGO. Ragazzi Harraga project. More info at: <https://cesie.org/project/harraga/>

²³³ CIAI Foundation, 'Ragazzi Harraga' project. More info at: <http://www.non6solo.it/harraga-il-progetto/>

²³⁴ UNCRC 1989 : Article 3

²³⁵ Constitutional Court of Italy. Verdicts n. 308/2008, n. 61/2006, n. 425/2005, n. 341/1990

²³⁶ Arcuri: 2017:7-8

administrative and jurisdictional processes concerning the child, and the principle is indeed taken into account by the courts when deciding about complex cases.

However, there are cases where the best interest of the child must be balanced with State interests, as in the rare case of expulsions on the ground of public order and national security. Nevertheless, the methods of implementing the deportation order must be determined in compliance with the minor's best interests.

Integration into the target society is considered in the minor's best interests, as well as the inclusion in Italian public schools, registration in the National Health Service, sports, cultural and work projects developed and managed by voluntary associations, cooperatives and the Third sector in general.

The best interest of the child is also a priority for their housing situation: if the outcomes of family investigations and evaluations are successful and if this solution is considered in their best interests, the Italian authorities can arrange for assisted voluntary repatriation, aimed at protecting the right to respect for family life. A further solution is if a minor is assigned to a foster family which entails even greater possibilities for integration in addition to a better psycho-physical well-being for the child²³⁷.

There is no standard procedure or protocol to assess the best interest of the child, since it is an element that must be balanced with other types of interests and with specific concrete elements.

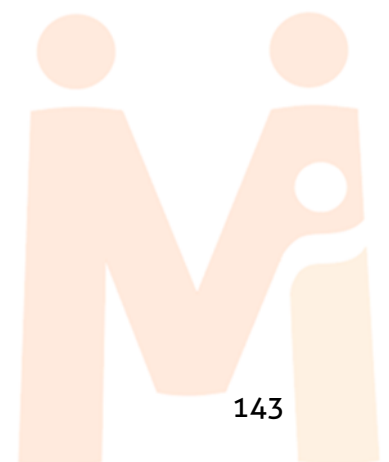
Conclusion

UAMs are defined as rights holders, similarly to underage nationals or citizens of the European Union, but in a condition of greater vulnerability. The complexity of the condition of unaccompanied minors results from the fact that they belong to several juridical categories: they are minors, foreign children, asylum-seekers who can also be victims of trafficking. Hence, the main problem is the promotion of an integrated and coherent approach, along with the possibility of gaining the systematic collaboration of all relevant juridical, social and administrative stakeholders²³⁸. On the other hand, the legal framework is complicated and ambiguous, composed by overlapping measures, with consequent difficulties for the clear establishment of shared and common social and juridical practices and procedures²³⁹.

²³⁷ EMN Focussed Study 2017: 25.

²³⁸ Giovannetti, 2017: 7

²³⁹ Giovannetti, 2017: 6



3. Qualitative research

3.1 Methodology design

The field research started in September 2020. In its first phase the research team mainly focused on contacting agencies and institutions who should respond to UAMs' needs. The main goal was to start a dialogue with second level reception centres that were willing to participate in the research and share the working plan with UAMs. After having selected 4 reception centres, the research team organised an introductory meeting aimed at presenting the research to social workers and UAMs (October 2020). In October and November 2020, the research team visited the reception centres, but was forced to suspend the activities so as to comply with COVID-19 containment measures applied at local and national level which strongly restricted mobility making travelling from one destination to another practically impossible. Access to reception facilities was forbidden so as to prevent contamination, therefore the research team resumed activities in January and in February 2021 with online meetings through relevant online platforms. In December 2020 contacts were maintained with people working in and managing the reception centres. They acted as mediators and helped us ask UAMs if they were ready to switch to online meetings. Once their availability was secured, the research team organised three meetings aimed at learning more about certain topics before testing the willingness to participate in the research, by taking part in the interviews. In March and in April 2021 the interviews were conducted with social workers working in the reception centres (12 online interviews) and migrant children (33 interviews).

Research site			
	Type of research site	Location (urban/rural)	The number of total migrants
RS1	Second-level reception facility for UAMs. The site is located on the outskirts of Naro.	Naro is a Sicilian village, located 30 km far from Agrigento. Agriculture plays a fundamental role in the local economy and the village is not well connected to the rest of the province, since it is quite isolated. Naro does not offer any service or activity aimed at children (as a matter of fact, there is only one primary school).	20 (all boys aged between 14 and 19, mainly of Tunisian origin).
Selection criteria of the site and procedure (gatekeepers)			

RS1	We decided to carry out this research so as to identify a list of potential actors to involve, by contacting partner organisations, mainly managers of UAMs reception centres. Such initiative was necessary as apparently a regional list of reception centres and facilities has not been provided yet. We also tried to contact those municipalities, in which UAMs reception centres are traditionally located, such as Naro, Marsala and Mazzarino. Firstly, we sent the project's fact sheet and requested to schedule an introductory meeting so as to go through the aims of the research. We decided to organise preliminary meetings with those reception centres who gave us positive feedback. As for the second-level reception centre, RS1, we met with the manager and the president of the cooperative running the aforementioned centre. She was informed about the research and agreed to participate in it, therefore we planned some sessions so as to discuss our project with social workers and UAMs.
Description of location(s) and/or institution(s).	
RS1	Naro is a village in the province of Agrigento with a population of 7 thousand people. Agriculture plays a fundamental role in the local economy. Several cooperatives have worked here throughout the years so as to manage reception centres for both adults and UAMs. The cooperative has been running the so-called RS1 (opened in 2017) and RS2 (opened in 2016) for 4 years. These facilities are part of the second-level reception system and host UAMs who have arrived in Italy. The cooperative manages COVID centres for children and in the past, it used to run the so-called CAS (Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria – Emergency Reception Centre) for adults. RS1 staff is composed of 8 professionals having the following roles: a psychologist/manager, a social worker, two educators, two cultural mediators and two assistants.
Period of data collection & number of days at the research site	
RS1	We first contacted the centre in September 2020 as the researcher had already met the manager for a previous study. Then, in October 2020, we decided to send an abstract of the project and as soon as we had the opportunity to meet the manager, we discussed the topic further and checked the viability of the research. The research process was slowed down by the critical situation connected to the pandemic, its restrictions and prevention measures (especially during strict lockdowns) and the impossibility of meeting participants. In October and November 2020, we visited the centre several times and got to know the practitioners working with UAMs. We had to suspend our activities from December on so as to comply with COVID-19 containment measures, applied at a local and national level, which strongly restricted individual mobility making travelling from one destination to another practically impossible. Moreover, it was forbidden to access reception facilities in order to prevent contamination. We resumed our activities in January and in February 2021 by setting up online meetings. At that time, we contacted the manager and the practitioners once again. They acted as mediators so as to ask UAMs if they were willing to switch to online meetings. Once we secured their availability, we organised three meetings aimed at giving them further information about certain topics before checking their willingness to participate in the research and take part in the

	interviews. 11 out of 20 children said they were ready to do so, therefore we decided to carry out the interviews.
Brief description of “entering” the research site	
RS1	<p>In Sicily, due to its special status, it is the regional government that is in charge of opening reception centres for children, while the local authority (the municipality of Naro in this case) monitors and supervises the interventions. As for the RS1 centre, we did not experience any difficulty in entering the centre, since the Municipality allowed the manager to authorise the study.</p> <p>During our visit, we noticed that the centre is located on the outskirts of Naro. The school is the only institutional hub in the area. Migrant children can spend their free time solely in the centre: a three-floor building with two levels devoted to hosting UAMs. There are quadruple bedrooms on these two floors, a dining room and a kitchen. The dining room is the only common area. Due to an increase in migration flows, the Prefecture allowed 5 more people to be hosted in the centre (15 children used to live in the centre before), therefore UAMs had to deal with less space at their disposal.</p>
Number and roles of researchers participating in the process	
RS1	<p>The research team was composed of two people, i.e., a researcher and a cultural mediator, supported and assisted by the project coordinator. Researcher has previous experience concerning UAMs reception and the monitoring of these facilities, therefore the researcher was able to facilitate the interactions between the research team and the community. The mediator is equipped with linguistic and cultural mediation skills (being an English speaker and fluent in various African languages such as Wolof, Bambara, Fulani) and with the experience in working with UAMs, therefore making it easier to communicate with UAMs.</p> <p>The main task was that of investigating the condition of migrant children, who still do not have a clear legal status and whose migration path has not come to an end. The main focus of our study was to understand better UAMs’ idea of well-being (the things they now consider important), their perceptions, values, attitudes and opinions concerning different aspects of their lives on the move, by visiting the centre (first phase) and setting up online meetings (second phase, due to COVID-19 restriction), trying to create an empathic relationship with them and sharing their path with UAMs along with the support of mediators.</p>

How respondents (migrants) were selected	
RS1	<p>The participation of UAMs living in the RS1 centre in the research was influenced by the difficulties connected to the pandemic. Firstly (in September and in October 2020) we met all the 15 migrant children living in the facilities and only after that we learned about an increase in the number of migrants housed in the reception centre (upon a formal request of the Prefecture aimed at overcoming an emergency due to an increase in the arrival of UAMs in Sicily, starting from November 2020). Moreover, 4 out of the 15 migrant children we met decided to leave the centre and are still missing. With the contribution of cultural mediators and social workers, we managed to organise the preliminary sessions aimed at raising awareness of the research. After those meetings, we were able to understand the number of interviews that we should have been carried out, excluding those children who could not take part in them due to communication issues. Both the cultural mediator of the project and those working in the structure could not speak some of the languages spoken by the boys hosted in the centre. In the end, 11 UAMs decided to take part in the study.</p>
How the respondents (migrants) were approached	
RS1	<p>We decided to carry out the research using active and participative observations, unfortunately, we were not able to implement this methodology due to pandemic restrictions. Lockdowns and restrictions to access reception facilities in Sicily have influenced and forced us to modify our strategy. Our first meetings with migrant children took place in September and October 2020 in the common area (a small dining room) or the children's rooms. At first, we got to know each other so as to gain trust. We had to work on reconstructing our relationship with them again in an online environment, which is certainly not ideal for a study based on observations. However, due to the circumstances, it was the only viable solution. The common areas offered by the RS1 facility were limited, moreover, migrant children had only one computer at their disposal as there was no Wi-Fi network they could use so as to connect with their own devices. Online plenary meetings (February 2021) were attended by a good number of people however, they could easily withdraw. After two sessions, we asked to carry out an educational and recreative activity focused on their dreams during which we asked migrant children to create a suitcase to be filled with all the things they need so as to make their dreams come true. Most of them built a cardboard box and shared their dreams. This course of action allowed us to listen to and create a relationship with them. The following step was quite natural and the selection of respondents was facilitated by mediators. The individual interviews (April 2021) were postponed since some COVID-19 cases were detected in the centre. Moreover, the manager was forced to step down from her position due to personal issues.</p>

How the research was facilitated by staff at the research site?

RS1	<p>Face-to-face meetings were not exhaustive; however, they gave us a clear idea of the centre whose manager was the only person responsible for sharing important information with migrant children. The other social workers and mediators were a useful, but passive presence. Social workers were concerned with centre dynamics connected to household chores and food, while mediators are present and live in the community, mediating potential conflicts among migrant children. Anyway, all of them put themselves at the researcher's disposal, both during face-to-face and online activities. One of the social workers was in charge of managing the online research procedure and shared her own tools (computer and smartphone), so as to support this activity. Social workers and mediators actively participated in the research, even though they had different workloads and attention levels, in particular mediators were "invited" by the manager to be more engaged. The sudden replacement of the manager pushed the professional educator to take care of all the aspects connected to the management of the centre, including the collection of authorisation letters. As for the interviews we used ZOOM platform since UAMs were already familiar with it as they used it to participate in online lessons. We interviewed 11 migrant children (average length of the interviews: 15 minutes).</p>
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Difficulties encountered and ways to overcome (like getting access during empirical work, social closure etc.)

RS1	<p>When carrying out the research with UAMs in RS1 centre, we noticed two main difficulties: first of all, the face-to-face meetings were not facilitated by the structure in itself, since UAMs were forced to stay in a room which was too small to host them all, and secondly there was no Internet connection. We could not resort to outdoor spaces due to specific COVID-19 restrictions in Naro, therefore we adapted to the structure. Some migrant children, who were shy or had some linguistic difficulties, turned away from the activity. These challenges increased when we switched to online mode since we experienced some technical issues: there was no Internet connection and all migrant children could only use one device. Another challenge we noticed, both during face-to-face and online meetings, was connected to communication since some children could not speak English, therefore were not able to participate as the facilities does not have a suitable mediator, and we had to depend on roommates. This is an excluding factor not only from research activities but from social life as well. In some interviews, we resorted to a group of cultural mediators who not always were up to the mark and sometimes by their mates who could speak Italian. (Our cultural mediator cannot speak Arabic and most of the people hosted in the centre were Arabic-speakers). We partly managed to overcome these challenges by working and communicating constantly with migrant children so as to explain to them the purpose of our research.</p>
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Additional descriptions and explanations

RS1	It is important to underline that all the activities carried out in Naro, including lessons at schools, were suspended due to the pandemic from November 2020, therefore we had to tackle the feelings of mistrust and apathy experienced both by UAMs and social workers. We needed to deal not only with a global pandemic that was game-changing, but also with an inadequate way of managing the reception centre, which was inapt to overcome “new” difficulties connected to COVID-19, also due to the logistics and the characteristics of the structure. Migrant children were forced to spend the whole day in their rooms; therefore, they developed a sense of apathy and passivity. The Municipality of Naro does not pay any specific attention to UAMs needs and the school, the only institution of the village, could only offer online lessons. The fact that children have experienced several difficulties in accessing online lessons has created a sort of hopelessness about the future, which emerged also during interviews.
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Research site

	Type of research site	Location (urban/rural)	The number of total migrants
RS2	Second-level reception facility for UAMs. The site is located on the outskirts of Naro.	Naro is a Sicilian village, located 30 km far from Agrigento. Agriculture plays a fundamental role in the local economy and the village is not well connected to the rest of the province, since it is quite isolated. Naro does not offer any service or activity aimed at children (as a matter of fact, there is only one primary school).	23 (all boys aged between 16 and 20, mainly of Bangladeshi origin).

Selection criteria of the site and procedure (gatekeepers)

RS2	We decided to carry out this research so as to identify a list of potential actors to involve, by contacting partner organisations, mainly managers of UAMs reception centres. Such initiative was necessary as apparently a regional list of reception centres and facilities has not been provided yet. We also tried to contact those municipalities, in which UAMs reception centres are traditionally located, such as Naro, Marsala and Mazzarino. Firstly, we sent the project's fact sheet and requested to schedule an introductory meeting so as to go through the aims of the research. We decided to organise preliminary meetings with those reception centres who gave us positive feedback. As for the second-level reception centre, RS2, we met with the manager and the president of the cooperative running the aforementioned centre (same manager and president as for RS1). She was informed about the research and
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	agreed to participate in it, therefore we planned some sessions so as to discuss our project with social workers and UAMs.
Description of location(s) and/or institution(s).	
RS2	Naro is a village in the province of Agrigento with a population of 7 thousand people. Agriculture plays a fundamental role in the local economy. Several cooperatives have worked here throughout the years so as to manage reception centres for both adults and UAMs. The cooperative has been running the so-called RS1 (opened in 2017) and RS2 (opened in 2016) for 4 years. These facilities are part of the second-level reception system and host UAMs who have arrived in Italy. RS1 and RS2 are within the same facility, but are different structures hosting different minors. During the pandemic, the cooperative has managed COVID centres for children and in the past, it used to run the so-called CAS (Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria – Emergency Reception Centre) for adults. RS2 staff is composed of 8 professionals having the following roles: a psychologist/manager, a social worker, two educators, two cultural mediators and two assistants.
Period of data collection & number of days at the research site	
RS2	We first contacted the centre in September as the researcher had already met the manager for a previous study. Then, in October, we decided to send an abstract of the project and as soon as we had the opportunity to meet the manager, we discussed the topic further and checked the viability of the research. The research process was slowed down by the critical situation connected to the pandemic, its restrictions and prevention measures (especially during strict lockdowns) and the impossibility of meeting participants. In October and November 2020, we visited the centre several times and got to know the practitioners working with UAMs. We had to suspend our activities from December on so as to comply with COVID-19 containment measures, applied at a local and national level, which strongly restricted individual mobility making travelling from one destination to another practically impossible. Moreover, it was forbidden to access reception facilities in order to prevent contamination. We resumed our activities in January and in February 2021 by setting up online meetings. At that time, we contacted the manager and the practitioners once again. They acted as mediators so as to ask UAMs if they were willing to switch to online meetings. Once we secured their availability, we organised three meetings aimed at giving them further information about certain topics before checking their willingness to participate in the research and take part in the interviews. Only 5 out of 23 children agreed to do so. Respondents have just arrived in Italy (end of 2020) and cannot speak Italian or other vehicular languages. The mediator was not able to support us; therefore, we were not able to speak with those children.
Brief description of “entering” the research site	
RS2	Same as RS1
Number and roles of researchers participating in the process	
RS2	Same as RS1

How respondents (migrants) were selected	
RS2	<p>The participation of UAMs living in the RS2 centre in the research was influenced by the difficulties connected to the pandemic. Firstly (in September and in October 2020) we met all the 23 migrant children living in the facilities and only after that we learned about an increase in the number of migrants housed in the reception centre (upon a formal request of the Prefecture aimed at overcoming an emergency due to an increase in the arrival of UAMs in Sicily, starting from November 2020). Some of the migrant children we met decided not to take part in the meetings because of the linguistic issues they had experienced. With the contribution of cultural mediators and social workers, we managed to organise the preliminary sessions aimed at raising awareness of the research. After those meetings, we were able to understand how many interviews we could have carried out, excluding those children who could not take part in them due to communication issues. In the end, 5 UAMs decided to take part in the study.</p>
How the respondents (migrants) were approached	
RS2	<p>We had decided to carry out the research using active and participative observations, unfortunately, we were not able to implement this methodology due to pandemic restrictions. Lockdowns and restrictions to access reception facilities in Sicily have influenced and forced us to modify our strategy. Our first meetings with migrant children took place in September and October 2020 in the common area (a small dining room) or the children's rooms. At first, we got to know each other so as to gain trust. We had to work on reconstructing our relationship with them again in an online environment, which is certainly not ideal for a study based on observations. However, due to the circumstances, it was the only viable solution. RS2 structure (providing its guests only with a small common area) did not facilitate interactions, moreover, migrant children had only one computer at their disposal as there was no Wi-Fi network they could use so as to connect with their own devices. Online plenary meetings (February 2021) were attended by a good number of people, more than half the number of total guests. However, most of them looked uninterested as they could not understand what was going on. After two sessions, we asked to carry out an educational and recreational activity focused on their dreams during which we asked migrant children to create a suitcase to be filled with all the things they need so as to make their dreams come true. Most of them built a cardboard box and shared their dreams. This course of action allowed us to listen to and create a relationship with them. The following step was quite natural and the selection of respondents was facilitated by mediators. The individual interviews (April 2021) were postponed since some COVID-cases were detected in the centre. Moreover, the manager (the same person as in RS1) was forced to step down from her position due to personal issues.</p>

How the research was facilitated by staff at the research site?

RS2 Face-to-face meetings were not exhaustive. However, they gave us a clear idea of the centre whose manager was the only person responsible for sharing important information with migrant children. The other social workers and mediators were a useful, but passive presence (the same ones as in RS1). Social workers were concerned with centre dynamics connected to household chores and food, while mediators are present and live in the community. This might lead to potential conflicts with migrant children as one can see toxic modes of relating. Anyway, all of them put themselves at the researcher's disposal, both during face-to-face and online activities. One of the social workers was in charge of managing the online research procedure and shared her own tools (computer and smartphone), so as to support this activity. Social workers and mediators actively participated in the research, even though they had different workloads and attention levels, in particular mediators were "invited" by the manager to be more engaged. The sudden replacement of the manager pushed the professional educator to take care of all the aspects connected to the management of the centre, including the collection of authorisation letters. As for the interviews we used ZOOM platform since UAMs were already familiar with it as they used it to participate in online lessons. We interviewed 5 migrant children (average length of the interviews: 15 minutes).

Difficulties encountered and ways to overcome (like getting access during empirical work, social closure etc.)

RS2 When carrying out the research with UAMs in the RS2 centre, we noticed two main challenges: first of all, the face-to-face meetings were not facilitated by the structure in itself, since UAMs were forced to stay in a room which was too small to host them all, and secondly there was no Internet connection. We could not resort to outdoor spaces due to specific COVID-19 restrictions in Naro, therefore we adapted to the structure. Some migrant children, who were shy or had some linguistic difficulties, turned away from the activity. These challenges increased when we switched to online mode since we experienced some technical issues: there was no Internet connection and all migrant children could only use one device. Another challenge we noticed, both during face-to-face and online meetings, was connected to communication since some children could not speak any other language but Bangladeshi, and the cultural mediator could not offer his support. In some interview, we decided to dismiss the cultural mediator whose competences were not sufficient to support the process. We partly managed to overcome these challenges by working and communicating constantly with migrant children so as to explain to them the purpose of our research.

Additional descriptions and explanations

RS2	It is important to underline that all the activities carried out in Naro, including lessons at schools, were suspended due to the pandemic from November 2020, therefore we had to tackle the feelings of mistrust and lack of stimulus experienced both by UAMs and social workers. We needed to deal not only with a global pandemic that was game-changing but also with an inadequate way of managing the reception centre, which was inapt to overcome “new” difficulties connected to COVID-19, also due to the logistics and the characteristics of the structure. Migrant children were forced to spend the whole day in their rooms; therefore, they developed a sense of apathy and passivity. The Municipality of Naro does not pay any specific attention to UAMs needs and the school, the only institution of the village, could only offer online lessons. The fact that children have experienced several difficulties in accessing online lessons has created a sort of hopelessness about the future, which emerged also during interviews.
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Research site

	Type of research site	Location (urban/rural)	The number of total migrants
RS3	SAI (Servizio Accoglienza e Integrazione – Reception and Integration System) for UAMS. The institution is located in Marsala countryside.	Marsala is a small city in the province of Trapani. Agriculture plays a fundamental role in the local economy, even though tourism has become increasingly important. Marsala is well-connected to the other cities; however, its territory is quite vast and characterised by several counties, which are not perfectly connected. Marsala is the city with the highest population in the province of Trapani. Marsala offers several essential and recreative services for families and children.	15 (all boys aged between 16 and 19, mainly of Tunisian origin)

Selection criteria of the site and procedure (gatekeepers)	
RS3	We decided to carry out this research to identify a list of potential actors to involve, by contacting partner organisations, mainly managers of UAMs reception centres. Such initiative was necessary as apparently a regional list of reception centres and facilities has not been provided yet. We also tried to contact those municipalities, in which UAMs reception centres are traditionally located, such as Naro, Marsala and Mazzarino. Firstly, we sent the project's fact sheet and requested to schedule an introductory meeting so as to go through the aims of the research. As for RS3, we met the manager in the second phase of our research, during the lockdown, since throughout the first phase (September – October 2020) we could not access the facility, as children were already following a learning path within SAI (Servizio Accoglienza e Integrazione – Reception and Integration System). When admission conditions changed (since the centre was ready to host a group of UAMs who had just arrived in Italy) due to an emergency, we prepared ourselves to move forward with our activities. We informed the manager concerning the content of our research and she agreed to take part in it. In the end, we scheduled a couple of meetings so as to discuss the research with professionals and UAMs.
Description of location(s) and/or institution(s).	
RS3	Marsala is a town with more than 80 thousand inhabitants. It is the biggest town in the province of Trapani and its territory is quite vast and characterised by several rural counties. Agriculture and tourism play a fundamental role in the local economy. The Municipality of Marsala has always been engaged in reception procedures and can count on several cooperatives, which have been hosting a high number of UAMs for many years. Today, in Marsala a bunch of cooperatives still survives, as most of the reception centres have been dismantled. RS3 has been a first reception centre for UAMs for several years and it has been recently transformed in SAI (<i>Servizio Accoglienza e Integrazione</i> – Reception and Integration System). The cooperative manages other SAI centres in the province of Trapani, as well as other reception facilities for both minors and adults.
Period of data collection & number of days at the research site	
RS3	We first contacted the centre in September as the researcher had already met the manager for a previous study. Then, in October, we decided to send an abstract of the project and as soon as we had the opportunity to meet the manager, we discussed the topic further and checked the viability of the research. The research process was slowed down by the critical situation connected to the pandemic, its restrictions and prevention measures (especially during strict lockdowns) and the impossibility of meeting participants. Starting November 2020, we were forced to suspend our activities so as to comply with regional and national restrictions. Access to reception centres was forbidden so as to prevent contamination, and we resumed our activities in January and February 2021 with online meetings which took place on a virtual platform. The research was entirely carried out online. We contacted the manager and the professionals once again so that they acted as mediators to ask UAMs if they were willing to switch to online

	meetings. Once we secured their availability, we organised three meetings aimed at giving them further information about certain topics before checking their willingness to participate in the research and take part in the interviews. 9 out of 15 children living in the reception centre agreed to take part in the research and participate in the interviews.
Brief description of “entering” the research site	
RS3	SAI are national institutions managed by the Italian government; however, the municipalities are responsible for entrusting each project to a cooperative, monitoring and supervising interventions. Since our research was carried out online, we did not need to forward any formal request to the Central National Service, as we were authorised by the cooperative manager. The Municipality of Marsala is quite vast and its services are mainly concentrated in its urban area, while the reception centres are located in the rural counties, which are not always connected to the city centre by public transport. UAMs generally use bikes so as to move around. Marsala offers a series of services that, unfortunately, are not always adequate to answer UAMs needs. RS3 is quite big with ample outdoor spaces and a good Wi-Fi connection, which facilitated the participation of people living in the facilities. There are several common areas, a TV room and a space to do outdoor activities and play sports. Migrant children are provided with single, double or triple rooms.
Number and roles of researchers participating in the process	
RS3	The same as for RS1 and RS2.
How respondents (migrants) were selected	
RS3	The participation of UAMs living in the RS3 centre was affected by the challenges and the restrictions due to the pandemic, as the research team could not access the structure. In the first phase (February – March 2021) we met almost all of the youngster hosted in the reception centre, but afterwards, due to problems connected to the management of the site (migrant children did not receive their pocket money due to financial issues) some of them decided not to participate in the study anymore. Moreover, we deemed two interviews meaningless since the respondents did not want to give their contribution, but participated passively. We set up two preliminary meetings with our mediator and two professionals (April 2021) so as to raise awareness of the research and then we established how many interviews should have been carried out; 9 out of 15 youngsters agreed to take part in the research, but only 7 of them met the minimum criteria (in terms of length and quality of data collected) to be included in the analysis.

How the respondents (migrants) were approached	
RS3	<p>We decided to carry out the research using active and participative observations, unfortunately, we were not able to implement this methodology due to pandemic restrictions. Lockdowns and restrictions to access reception facilities in Sicily have influenced and forced us to modify our strategy. We carried out our first meetings online, and each of the migrant children used their smartphones or computers to connect from their room or the outdoor spaces of the reception site. At first, we got to know each other so as to gain their trust. The online group meetings were attended by a satisfactory number of people. After two sessions, we asked to carry out an educational and recreative activity focused on their dreams during which we asked migrant children to create a suitcase to be filled with all the things they need so as to make their dreams come true. Some children decided not to take part in the activity as they were busy with school or other recreational activities. This course of action allowed us to listen to and create a relationship with them. The following step was quite natural and the selection of respondents was facilitated by professionals. The individual interviews were postponed as the reception centre needed to deal with financial problems, therefore the cooperative could not distribute the pocket money to the children, and as a result of that they asked to reschedule the interviews.</p>
How the research was facilitated by staff at the research site?	
RS3	<p>We did not schedule any face-to-face meetings; however, the research team was already familiar with the management strategy of the centre whose manager is the only person responsible for sharing important information with migrant children. The manager is supported by two professionals who often step in since she also manages other structures and cannot be constantly present. There are not any mediators working permanently in the centre, they are invited when needed. Moreover, also professionals asked us to have more time and reschedule some events because they had not been receiving their salary from the cooperative (they did not receive any pay checks for one year); in any case, they were at disposal of the research team. Two professionals managed the online research procedures and supported the migrant children who agreed to take part in the study. As for the interviews we used ZOOM platform because UAMs were already familiar with it since they used it to participate in online lessons. We interviewed 9 migrant children (average length of the interviews: 15 minutes).</p>
Difficulties encountered and ways to overcome (like getting access during empirical work, social closure etc.)	
RS3	<p>We experienced some challenges when we implemented the research with UAMs living in the RS3 centre, as it was not possible to meet them face to face and gain their trust. Such circumstances had an impact on individual interviews. Moreover, the difficulties connected to cooperative management had an impact on youngsters and professionals' availability which clashed with the manifest shortcomings of an extremely hard time. We partly managed to overcome these challenges by working and communicating constantly with migrant children to explain them the purpose of our research.</p>

Additional descriptions and explanations

RS3	It is important to underline that all the activities carried out by the Municipality of Marsala had to be suspended (due to the pandemic which hardly hit Sicily starting from November 2020), therefore we had to tackle the feelings of mistrust and apathy experienced both by UAMs and social workers. We needed to deal not only with a global pandemic that was game-changing but also with an inadequate way of managing the reception centre, which was inapt to overcome “new” difficulties connected to COVID-19, also due to the logistics and the characteristics of the structure. Migrant children were forced to spend the whole day in their facility developing a sense of apathy and passivity. Moreover, the services offered to UAMs were immediately suspended and such lack of interest nurtured a sense of frustration and indifference. Moreover, failing to pay the pocket money should be regarded as a very unfortunate circumstance since many migrant children wait for it so as to transfer this sum to their families.
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Research site

	Type of research site	Location (urban/rural)	The number of total migrants
RS4	SAI (Servizio Accoglienza e Integrazione – Reception and Integration System) for UAMS. The centre is located in Mazzarino, a village in the province of Caltanissetta.	Mazzarino is a rural village located 45 km far from Caltanissetta (Sicily). Agriculture plays a fundamental role in the local economy and it is not well connected with the rest of the area, being an isolated village. Mazzarino does not offer services or activities targeted at children (one can only count on the primary school).	15 (all boys aged between 17-21 and mainly of Tunisian and Bangladeshi origin)

Selection criteria of the site and procedure (gatekeepers)

RS4	We decided to carry out this research so as to identify a list of potential actors to involve, by contacting partner organisations, mainly managers of UAMs reception centres. Such initiative was necessary as apparently a regional list of reception centres and facilities has not been provided yet. We also tried to contact those municipalities, in which UAMs reception centres are traditionally located, such as Naro, Marsala and Mazzarino. Firstly, we sent the project’s fact sheet and requested to schedule an introductory meeting so as to go through the aims of the research. We decided to organise preliminary meetings with those reception centres who gave us positive feedback, hence we met with the manager and the president of the cooperative running the
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	<p>aforementioned centre. She was informed about the research and agreed to participate in it, therefore we planned some sessions so as to discuss our project with social workers and UAMs.</p>
Description of location(s) and/or institution(s).	
RS4	<p>Mazzarino is a village located in the province of Caltanissetta. About 10 thousand people live there and agriculture plays a fundamental role in the local economy. For some time, Mazzarino has been open to receiving migrants thanks to the work done by the cooperative managing the reception facility. In fact, more than 500 UAMs were hosted on the site throughout the years. The local government has always been trying to support the cooperative so as to bridge the service gaps by promoting several projects. However, from 2019 on, the cooperative could not count on such institutional support anymore due to an institutional change in the local government which disregarded previous guidelines concerning the reception of migrants. The cooperative manages other SAI sites in different Sicilian provinces. (SAI are national institutions managed by the Italian government; however, the municipalities are responsible for entrusting each project to a cooperative, monitoring and supervising interventions). 11 people work at RS4 centre having the following roles: a manager, a social worker, a psychologist, two educators, three mediators, two assistants and a cook.</p>
RS4	<p>We first contacted the centre in September 2020 as the researcher had already met the manager for a previous study. Then, we decided to send an abstract of the project and as soon as we had the opportunity to meet the manager, we discussed the topic further and checked the viability of the research. The research process was slowed down by the critical situation connected to the pandemic, its restrictions and prevention measures (especially during strict lockdowns) and the impossibility of meeting participants. In September and in October 2020 we visited the site several times so as to meet professionals working in the centre, as well as UAMs. Starting November 2020, we were forced to suspend our activities so as to comply with regional and national restrictions. Access to reception centres was forbidden so as to prevent contamination, and we resumed our activities in January and February 2021 with online meetings which took place on a virtual platform. We contacted the manager and the professionals once again so that they acted as mediators to ask UAMs if they were willing to switch to online meetings. Once we secured their availability, we organised three meetings aimed at giving them further information about certain topics before checking their willingness to participate in the research and take part in the interviews. 8 out of 15 youngsters agreed to participate in the study and we decided to interview them. We deemed not relevant two out of the 8 interviews, as they were carried out with two Bangladeshi children who did not speak Italian, nor any other vehicular language. Moreover, we could not ask for the mediator's help, as he was not available at that time.</p>

Brief description of “entering” the research site	
RS4	SAI are national institutions managed by the Italian government; however, the municipalities are responsible of entrusting each project to a cooperative, monitoring and supervising interventions. Since the Municipality does not take any responsibility in the reception management, it was the president of the cooperative who gave his consent to our research activity. The structure is quite big with wide rooms so as to carry out literacy activities. In the centre, there are also a meeting room, a living and a dining room, a big kitchen where migrant children can prepare their meals along with a cook. The school is the only institutional hub in Mazzarino, since all the other services have been suspended by the new local government. The growing intolerance against migrants and the pandemic situations have worsened such distress generating racist incidents against UAMs and people working at the reception centre.
Number and roles of researchers participating in the process	
RS4	The same as in RS1, RS2 and RS3.
How respondents (migrants) were selected	
RS4	The participation of UAMs living in the RS4 centre was affected by the challenges and the restrictions due to the pandemic, as the research team could not access the structure. At the beginning (September – October 2020) we have met all the youngsters living in the community and only afterwards (February 2020) we were informed that some of the youngsters did not want to participate in the research as they lost their motivation due to continuous bureaucratic delays (connected to document processing). Moreover, we deemed two interviews not sufficiently informative since the respondents did not want to give their contribution, but participated passively. We set up two preliminary meetings with our mediator and two professionals (April 2021) so as to raise awareness of the research and then we established how many interviews should have been carried out; 8 migrant children agreed to take part in the research, but only 6 interviews were implemented and were considered as suitable.

How the respondents (migrants) were approached	
RS4	<p>We had decided to carry out the research using active and participative observations, unfortunately, we were not able to implement this methodology due to pandemic restrictions. Lockdowns and restrictions to access reception facilities in Sicily have influenced and forced us to modify our strategy. Our first meetings took place in the RS4 centre which proved to be an ideal location for this kind of activity, having big spaces, many common areas and a comfortable and quite big outdoor space. At first, we got to know each other so as to gain their trust. We had to work on reconstructing our relationship with them again in an online environment, which is certainly not ideal for a study based on observations. RS4 put at our disposal two computer rooms for online meeting with a computer per workstation. Migrant children had the opportunity to connect with their smartphones as well. The online plenary meetings were attended by a good number of active participants. After two sessions, we asked to carry out an educational and recreative activity focused on their dreams during which we asked migrant children to create a suitcase to be filled with all the things they need so as to make their dreams come true. Most of them built a cardboard box and shared their dreams. This course of action allowed us to listen to and create a relationship with them. The following step was quite natural and the selection of respondents was facilitated by professionals.</p>
How the research was facilitated by staff at the research site?	
RS4	<p>Face-to-face meetings were not exhaustive but gave us a clear idea of how the reception centre is managed, the roles are clearly defined and the missions of all the professionals are acknowledged and recognised by migrant children. The manager has a primary role thanks to her professionalism and the passion she puts into her work. All the professionals were at the researcher's disposal, especially during face-to-face meetings. It was the manager who supervised the online research phase, as a matter of fact, all the professionals and mediators were not actively involved. As for the interviews we used ZOOM platform since UAMs were already familiar with it as they used it to participate in online lessons. We interviewed 6 migrant children (average length of the interviews: 15 minutes).</p>
Difficulties encountered and ways to overcome (like getting access during empirical work, social closure etc.)	
RS4	<p>Our main challenge was due to the fact that it was not possible to keep doing face-to-face meetings, as during those first sessions we managed to create a trustful relationship with the group of migrant children which might have led to positive results. In a sense, children show a certain resistance to be involved in online activity and they could not express their potential. As a matter of fact, many of them felt they needed to take part in those meetings out of their respect toward the research team, and not because they were aware of the importance of their contribution. The increasingly racist atmosphere in Mazzarino has certainly had an impact on the group of migrant children. We partly managed to overcome the challenges determined by the COVID-19 pandemic by working and communicating constantly with migrant children so as to explain to them the purpose of our research.</p>

Additional descriptions and explanations

RS4	It is important to underline that all the activities carried out in Mazzarino, including lessons at schools, were suspended due to the pandemic from November 2020, therefore we had to tackle the feelings of mistrust and apathy experienced both by UAMs and social workers. We needed to deal not only with a global pandemic that was game-changing, but also with an inadequate way of managing the reception centre, which was inapt to overcome "new" difficulties connected to COVID-19, also due to the logistics and the characteristics of the structure. The Municipality of Mazzarino does not pay any specific attention to UAMs needs and the school, the only institution of the village, could only offer online lessons.
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Short description of the sample

	Number	Date & duration (min)	Gender	Age	Country of birth	Status
RS1	Interview 1	26/03/21 14 min.	M	17	Tunisia	Waiting to start the procedure
	Interview 2	26/03/21 22 min.	M	17	Sierra Leone	Asylum seeker
	Interview 3	26/03/21 11 min.	M	17	Ghana	Asylum seeker
	Interview 4	26/03/2021 12,5 min.	M	18	Tunisia	Special provisions for minors
	Interview 5	26/03/2021 25 min.	M	17	Guinea	Asylum seeker
	Interview 6	26/03/2021 15,5 min.	M	14	Tunisia	Special provisions for minors
	Interview 7	26/03/2021 11,5 min.	M	17	Tunisia	Special provisions for minors
	Interview 8	26/03/2021 14 min.	M	16	Tunisia	Special provisions for minors
	Interview 9	26/03/2021 10 min.	M	18	Tunisia	Special provisions for minors
	Interview 10	26/03/2021 17 min.	M	18	Gambia	Asylum seeker

	Interview 11	26/03/2021 11,5 min.	M	17	Tunisia	Special provisions for minors
RS2	Interview 12	25/03/2021 16 min.	M	17	Bangladesh	Special provisions for minors
	Interview 13	25/03/2021 11 min.	M	17	Bangladesh	Special provisions for minors
	Interview 14	25/03/2021 10,5 min.	M	17	Bangladesh	Special provisions for minors
	Interview 15	25/03/2021 7 min.	M	17	Bangladesh	Special provisions for minors
	Interview 16	25/03/2021 7 min.	M	17	Bangladesh	Special provisions for minors
	Interview 17	06/04/2021 12 min.	M	18	Bangladesh	Ongoing asylum procedure
RS3	Interview 18	06/04/2021 13 min.	M	17	Bangladesh	Waiting to start the procedure
	Interview 19	06/04/2021 10 min.	M	17	Tunisia	Special provisions for minors
	Interview 20	06/04/2021 13 min.	M	19	Mali	Ongoing asylum procedure
	Interview 21	06/04/2021 13 min.	M	18	Tunisia	Ongoing asylum procedure
	Interview 22	06/04/2021 18 min.	M	19	Egypt	Ongoing asylum procedure
	Interview 23	06/04/2021 15 min.	M	16	Ivory Coast	Special provisions for minors
	Interview 24	17/04/2021 14 min.	M	18	Tunisia	Ongoing asylum procedure
RS4						

	Interview 25	17/04/2021 7 min.	M	18	Bangladesh	Ongoing asylum procedure
	Interview 26	17/04/2021 9 min.	M	17	Somalia	International protection
	Interview 27	17/04/2021 13,5 min.	M	18	Tunisia	Extension of residence permit
	Interview 28	17/04/2021 16 min.	M	18	Tunisia	Extension of residence permit
	Interview 29	17/04/2021 12,5 min.	M	18	Gambia	Extension of residence permit

4. Findings from participant observation

Description of findings from participant observation phase concerning based on fieldnotes

4.1 Social dynamics

Description of physical environment

The institutions analysed in the research are managed by cooperatives with significant experience in the field of reception of both children and adult migrants in first-level and second-level reception systems. The centres we studied are located in rural areas, in small villages with few services, not well connected to the local transport infrastructure. The infrastructures of two out of four reception centres are inadequate and the spaces made available for UAMs seem to be insufficient. The staff share some common characteristics: these professionals, regardless of their tasks, work in several centres managed by the same cooperatives in different villages, therefore their involvement in the institutions participating in the research was not constant, as they need to answer the cooperative's needs. Cultural mediators are not continuously employed within the centres, therefore UAMs cannot count on their constant and daily support. In some cases, mediators were former guests of the centres that decided to stay there once they turned 18 to keep having a place where to stay and a job. These youngsters did not always dream of becoming mediators, however, they decided to do so for practical reasons. The professional profiles

within the centres are those required by legislative provisions; therefore, the sites can count on an adequate number of professional educators, mediators, assistants and professionals offering legal and psychological support, (even though we never had the opportunity to meet those professionals during our research activities). Among the services offered, apart from those aimed at answering material needs (accommodation and food), we can mention psychological support, cultural mediation, literacy courses, career guidance and job placement (by offering training and internship opportunities).

Interactions between migrants and personnel

The presence of UAMs in the centre varies, but those examined might be distinguished into two categories. The first is connected to the country of origin since there are two strong groups, Bangladeshi and Tunisian people, the other is connected to the time spent within the centre. As a matter of fact, some migrant children have just arrived in Italy while others have been living in the centre for a long time and their legal status has not been well-determined yet. Their relationship with professionals working in the centres depends on many factors and time and language are quite important. In the centres, we have noticed a peaceful atmosphere with professionals focused on satisfying basic needs (food, water, clothes, pocket money), even though many migrant children lack linguistic support and personnel often relies on “elder” guests who become the reference for the younger ones. The educational support answers also the material needs of migrant children who refer to managers for important issues, even though they are not always present in the centre. The common system we observed is a ready-made path imposed upon the UAMs by the team. The subject is unaware of the process they will face, as they are not provided with information concerning steps and deadlines. Professionals act like “friends” or “parents” of these migrant children, spend time with them and try to answer their basic needs, they help UAMs in their literacy development, but they do not take care of their learning path nor their life project.

Interactions between migrants

In the centre different national groups coexist, therefore the same-nationality criteria are also followed for room assignment. Even menus are informed by national differences and in one of the four centres we have visited (RS4) migrant children take turns in the kitchen to support the cook and create the menus. In the other centres, children have shifts in the kitchen in order to allow all the ethnic groups to cook. In two circumstances these national differences have no place, i.e., during literacy lessons and football matches. In general, the atmosphere is very quiet, even though of course there are conflicts and tensions, as in every family. The conflicts and misunderstandings are often solved not by professionals, but by mediators whose authority is acknowledged by UAMs; complex cases see the intervention of the manager. COVID-19 and forced cohabitation in the centre have exacerbated those

tensions, and cooperatives managing the facilities do not seem to have offered adequate support.

4.2 Institutional procedures

Access to social support, health and legal protections

All the people hosted in the centre are registered to National Health Service, but contact their general practitioners (doctors) only when strictly necessary; practitioners often use over-the-counter medications. Antipyretics and antacid tablets are always at disposal of the personnel so as to answer UAMs needs. In case of emergency, professionals take UAMs to hospitals, and for all of them, except RS3, this requires a significant financial effort since there aren't any hospitals in the villages where the sites are located (which means appointing a practitioner and a mediator who will take the UAMs in need in another province or city covering up to 500 km in a day). Legal support is the most lacking service. The centres are supposed to have legal professionals in their staff however, UAMs do not receive all the information they need concerning their rights, their duties and the procedures they should follow. The manager only provides them with basic information and such procedure determines certain distress that is rarely addressed. UAMs do not know the role of legal professionals as they are not present in the centre. At the same time, they do not know anything about guardians since this role is often taken by the manager, appointed by the Municipality, leading to a conflict of interests, arising from the fact that the same person covers two roles and that one should be supervising the other.

Standards for the reception and accommodation of migrant children

The centres participating in the project are of two different kinds: second-level reception centres (RS1 - RS2) and the so-called SAI (reception and integration system RS3 - RS4), which have different management criteria, as noted during the research, especially concerning the structures and spaces at UAMs disposal. The first two centres are really small, with narrow rooms and connected beds, also due to an increase in the arrival from November 2020 on, which forced the Prefecture to increase the number of people hosted in the centre. Such decision led to a decrease in the spaces available, the use of bunk beds and no wardrobe in the room. The centres of the second kind have big rooms with adequate and comfortable spaces moreover, they provide migrant children with outdoor and common areas having an impact on the path and the relationship established within the centres. RS1 and RS2 do not even have an adequate dining room for the number of people hosted in the structure, which leads UAMs to isolate themselves in their rooms and eat sitting on their beds. Common and outdoor areas eased the life of UAMs during the lockdown. All the centres facilitate contact with families (by phone) and pay special attention to the food allowing UAMs to write their shopping lists, so as to prevent rebellions. The centres pay also attention to traditional festivals and religious celebrations attempting to do their best to support UAMs.

Access to education and/or language training

Language is the most important means of communication for young people coming from foreign countries, therefore school is of utmost importance. Three Municipalities out of four (except Marsala) cannot count on schools capable of supporting UAMs' learning path. Literacy courses are therefore offered by the centres trying to help migrant children. However, they often lack professional support and such tasks are appointed to one of the professionals. The school which has accepted youngsters (not all of them had the opportunity to attend school since they arrived once the academic year had already begun) do not provide any specific support programme, therefore things get more complicated: during the interviews, we noticed that respondents had some problems understanding basic Italian language. Moreover, during lockdown schools were forced to switch to online lessons and suspend face-to-face activities, increasing understanding and attention difficulties, since migrant children cannot always count on technological support to attend the lessons. For those who managed to finish primary school, there aren't any vocational courses which might meet the needs and the dreams of young people, who end up following courses only instrumentally, since they need it so as to renew their permit of residence, even though such courses are not in line with their ambitions. Education and training do not answer UAMs needs.

Contact with and integration in the local community

Naro and Mazzarino do not provide UAMs inclusion services. In these villages, except for Marsala, there aren't any recreation centres or cinemas, but only football fields and gyms. This situation does not facilitate the integration process that is entrusted only to schools, as we mentioned, unable to support UAMs. Centres should support the inclusion process however; the pandemic stopped any interaction dynamics. Moreover, territories are increasingly influenced by racist policies supported by mass media and some politicians. Few respondents said they have friends outside the centre and this is suggestive considering the experience of the cooperatives in the field of reception policies.

Access to child-friendly information

This kind of activity is not offered in the institutions. It is hard to listen to migrant children's needs due to linguistic barriers and some procedures are activated automatically without informing UAMs, who just know there is someone who is taking care of their documents, even though they ignore everything about it. Professionals often adopt a maternal attitude towards UAMs, which does not facilitate the integration process, as they only answer basic needs regardless of the specific demands of each of them. Migrant children receive only scattered information mainly referred to their conduct. The psychological burden connected to their journey and migratory trajectories is not lifted and many issues are taken for granted, therefore UAMs do not disclose their stories.

Access to rights and relevant procedures

Only a few UAMs know about the role of guardians and lawyers or the permit of residence. Such a situation happens because reception centres do not pay attention to legal issues. Professionals do not create a life path along with UAMs, lawyers are rarely invited to those facilities, and it is up to managers, practitioners and mediators to share basic information. We cannot underestimate the fact that the managers are the guardians of 85% of the UAMs living there. This produces a conflict of interests which is not beneficial to UAMs life path. Bureaucracy takes time and documents processing times are quite long. This situation was worsened by the pandemic. In this phase, we are observing a suspension of UAMs rights and only a few of them are aware of the period they are living in.

Standards and good practices to restore family links and reunify families

Since legal support is quite lacking, the issues concerning family reunification are rarely confronted. As UAMs are not aware of those norms, they do not talk about siblings, parents or other relatives living in Italy or abroad, and do not share information about the journey their relatives had made before they arrived. Only time, empathy and trust can lead them to talk about their fathers or elder brothers with professionals and social workers. Therefore, talking about family reunification is not part of an automatic procedure, it all happens by chance.

Alternatives to detention

Along with family reunification, alternatives to detention are not taken into consideration and migrant children do not receive this kind of information, even though the structures we have analysed offer this treatment. The topic is not addressed.

Child-centred approach institutional support & assistance to migrant children

The absence of institutional support is striking. The centres are managed by the cooperatives only. Municipalities are supposed to supervise and monitor the sites, they should require reports to verify UAMs paths. In the end, they need to appoint social workers who would listen to UAMs requests and try to solve issues along with professionals and guardians. In fact, UAMs have never met any social workers. Social services deal with several issues connected to poverty, housing, drug abuse, the elderly... and leave the responsibility of taking care of UAMS to centres, therefore they are slowed down in building their life paths that become incredibly twisted. They receive no support.

The right to be heard and other participation rights

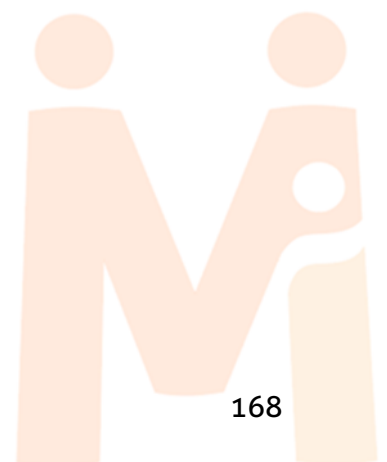
This aspect is not taken into consideration since most of the centres pay attention to basic needs only, as we have already pointed out. Listening to UAMs and creating an individual learning path for each of them are not part of the procedure, therefore these migrant children are mainly ignored and pushed to adhere to a “one size fits all” integration and inclusion programme which has been imposed upon them. Such a course of action facilitates the management procedures since the personnel working in the centres are already aware of the bureaucratic and institutional obstacles and issues that might emerge if all the subjects involved in the reception procedure participate in the decision-making process, therefore they preferred a standardised and simpler alternative.

4.3 Differences in reception processes

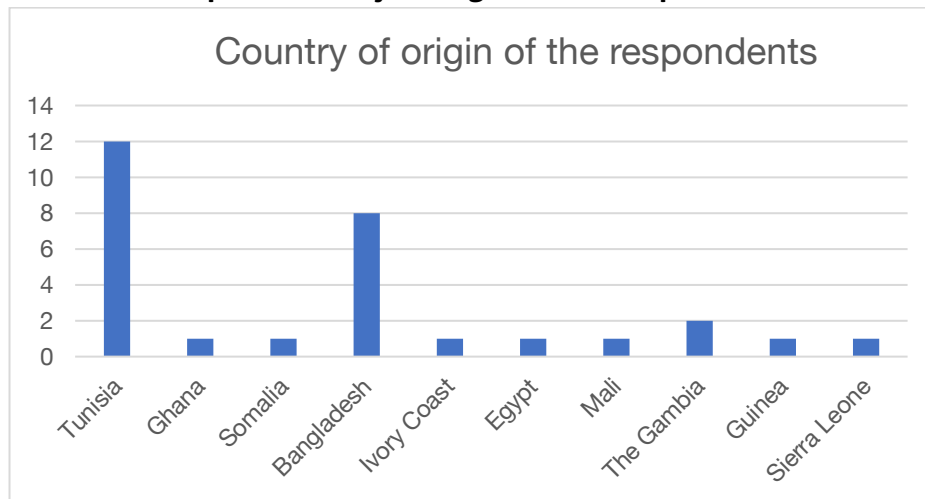
The research allowed us to observe two homogeneous groups in terms of sex and religion. They were aged between 14 and 18 (or up to 21 years old in case migrant children have managed to obtain an extension of their special residence permits), who have faced a long bureaucratic and reception path. However, despite the differences, the management procedure applied in the centre appears to be the same.

5. Interviews with children in transition

The following two tables summarise the population met by the research team, disaggregating the data according to the nationality and age range. As described in the previous section, the number of children met by the research team was much higher, yet due to the difficulties previously described (i.e. impossibility to enter the research sites due to the Covid-19 related restrictions, the lack of adequate IT infrastructures and the often inadequate support received by the cultural mediators and interpreters) the research team could conclude a relative smaller number of interviews, whose results are summarised in the next sessions of this report.

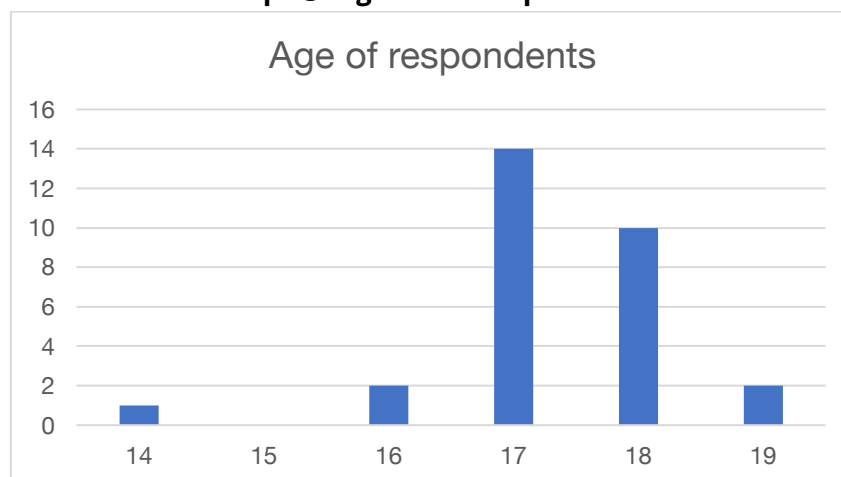


Graph 2. Country of origins of the respondents



Source: own data elaboration

Graph 3. Age of the respondents



Source: own data elaboration

Throughout the research period, we met more than 50 UAMs, aged between 14 and 21 years old, most of them arrived in the second half of 2020. Children mainly come from Bangladesh and Tunisia. We learned that they had a clear idea in mind: gaining an income to support their families. Such project is often shared by their families of origin, to whom they are deeply connected since they feel responsible towards them. These children have often lived terrible experiences and now, despite all the hardships they have been through, are happy to be alive even though they are worried about their future. They were shocked at first by the way the reception system works in Italy since they were not aware of that. However, they were relieved as they would not face again the sufferings they have experienced in Libya, nor the hunger and lack of freedom of their country of origin. Their traumatic experiences are not taken into due consideration, since we learnt from interviews that they are not offered any psychological support.

5.1 Institutional support & assistance

Respondents (29) do not have any idea of what lawyers do, only 6 of them said they had talked to a lawyer who explained and informed them about the procedure they should follow and provided them with basic information. Only 4 out of 29 children can count on a “real” guardian, who is not the mayor or the centre manager, as they had spent more time in the reception system and are aware of the role of guardians. Obviously, this is an existing gap for the centres since they do not comply with Law 47/2017, regulating UAMs reception in Italy. In spite of that, as resulted from interviews children are waiting for their permit of residence, a means that allows them to pursue their dreams and they put their trust in the professionals without knowing anything about procedures and norms. 80% of respondents are not aware of the differences between asylum requests and residence permits for minors and do not know the institutions in charge of implementing these procedures.

Some UAMs pointed at the lack of communication and trust due to linguistic issues. At least 4 respondents have relatives living in Italy and never shared this information with the centre managers. During our interviews they said they were not informed of the importance of having a relative residing in Europe, therefore they did not deem this information essential. In general, if UAMs arrived in a new social, cultural and legal context do not receive relevant information concerning all the important aspects, they keep waiting for a twist of faith (their documents).

5.2 Well-being, experiences of migration & life in transit

All the respondents have a positive opinion of their experience in the centres. They said they are happy about the place they live in. However, if we closely analyse their answers, we will notice their satisfaction is connected to their past since even though their rooms are small and they have no wardrobe, their living conditions cannot be compared to Libyan detention camps or their poor family houses. This sense of well-being shall be compared to their previous circumstances.

Another clear aspect resulting from interviews is the lack of integration with the local community, as well as of integration support services; as one UAMs pointed out *“I am not happy because I don’t do anything, I don’t work out, I don’t play football. I have always been playing football since I lived in Guinea, I do nothing here”*.

School is the only place where they can share their experiences. Municipalities offer a few services for both locals and migrants (except RS3) and they lack social policies aimed at including UAMs. COVID-19 pandemic has worsened a situation that was already critical, and probably the linguistic difficulties we have observed might be explained by the fact that UAMs do not speak Italian with their peers and they do not get to know them. We may simplify our analysis by stating that the centres are a sort of island.

It seems clear that children share similar dreams regardless of their origins: having a legal status to find a job and support their family. *"I cannot stay in Mazzarino, it's a small village, there is nothing here"*. Many of them think they will not have these opportunities in the place they actually live, because the villages do not have much to offer and there are not many professional opportunities available. They will be willing to stay there if they had a job. Apart from their projects, they are not aware of what to do, and the trust they put in the centre depends more on a leap of faith than on conscious self-awareness.

5.3 Models of migrant children's integration

Interviews show that the majority of UAMs is not aware of the institution which should work so as to guarantee their well-being, besides the centres some of them have visited some GPs, but have never met a social worker or other institutional professionals. The centres are left alone managing UAMs path. Respondents said they were often surprised and they wonder about bureaucratic processes. *"I don't know for how long I am supposed to stay here. I want to study and have my documents so that I can work to help my family. I don't know what to do, because I don't have any information about the procedure. They keep telling me that I need to wait...what am I waiting for? The lawyer keeps telling me 'wait and see...wait and see'..."*

UAMs live their lives inside the centre, their relationships are those among their travel mates and their roommates. They create an atypical relationship with professionals; on one hand, it is similar to a parent-child relationship, especially with female social workers (who are often called mothers). On the other, it is characterised by several expectations towards the community manager, the only person who is in charge of all the things concerning UAMs (providing information about legal issues, pocket money, education and training, moral support) and has a pivotal role. This kind of relationship, even though it is strong from a human point of view, it is dysfunctional and inefficient regarding any legal aspects. UAMs are not aware of the procedures they need to deal with, as the manager does it all. This situation emerged from the interviews we carried out, since only 3 youngsters out of 29 have a clear idea and are familiar with the obstacles they had to face since they have been living in the centres for quite some time.

5.4 School life (if they attend school)

All the children decided to continue their studies even though they did not make any distinction between school education (most of them go to school) and literacy courses carried out by professionals. Those who arrived recently have never met a teacher and participate in the lessons offered in the centre, as the academic year had already started before their arrival. Most of them think that online lessons are confusing and complicated, both due to their linguistic and technical issues, therefore some of them decided not to attend them. At least 30% of respondents said they are willing to try to finish middle school.

The situation appears critical when thinking about their future learning path since the municipalities where the centres are located do not have any vocational centre migrant children would like to attend, therefore they are forced to register to courses they are not interested in and which make the time they spend in the centre even more complicated and frustrating. For instance, we have met two children who decided to leave the course for hairdressers however, professionals working in the centre told them they need to attend such training so as not to lose their legal status while waiting for the course they were interested in to start.

6. Conclusions and discussion

The Italian legislative and policy framework regarding separated children are regulated by primary legislation, secondary legislation and European Union Regulations and Directives, as well as international conventions.

The Italian legislation, overall, doesn't specifically mention the principal, but a number of laws address the rights of the unaccompanied minors, from so called 1990 Martelli Law to the 2002 Bossi - Fini Law. Italy is also one of the countries that ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - it came into force on 5 October 1991.

In 2014 the Italian government, regions and municipalities started the implementation of the National Plan in order to adapt the reception system to the increasing flows of non-EU citizens. At the same time, the new approach regarding the reception of unaccompanied minors was accepted, which made the Ministry of the Interior the sole responsible for the organisation of their reception. The National Plan divided the reception of UAM in two phases. The first one consists of activities aimed at identification, age assessment and status definition of UAM, while the second one foresees the entrance of all unaccompanied foreign minors, who don't have relatives in Italy or other EU countries, into the SPRAR system, financed by the government.

In March 2017, Italy became the first European country to legislate a comprehensive framework protecting UAM - the 'Provisions on protective measures for unaccompanied foreign minors', often referred to as the Zampa Law.

Unfortunately, there are several protection gaps in Italy which encourage, among other trends, secondary migration - the Italian guardianship model is reliant on volunteers and suffers significant bureaucratic delays; accommodation for unaccompanied children is poorly managed through private contracting arrangements, that show evidence of corruption; children after being wrongly assessed to be over 18 years old, often become homeless etc.

Hundreds of unaccompanied children who enter Europe in the South spend months in inadequate facilities and lacking a proper protection. The standards of the reception and

hosting facilities are often poor and many UAM prefer to escape or to continue their journey to Northern Europe. Furthermore, a number of this UAM also need to urgently find any kind of employment in order to send money home or pay off the debt for their journey to Europe. Therefore, they tend to accept illegal, dangerous and underpaid jobs, and often become victims of sexual exploitation, forced labour, prostitution, and forced to perform illegal jobs.

Some of the notable challenges, mentioned by many minors, are: loneliness, difficulties with learning the language, inability to find a job due to being minors, the inability to undergo any educational or employment programme due to the fact that many centres are located in remote rural areas; inadequate, minimal and sometimes rotten food; inadequate hygiene supplies, poor health care access, minimal clothing and mistreatment by the workers.

The major problem is that economic resources to be invested in the provision of reception and assistance to foreign minors cannot be easily planned due to unpredictable migration flows and this is especially evident in Sicily, which represent the first places where minors seek assistance after their arrival to Italy. Italian municipalities, which have so far been the only authorities responsible for the reception and assistance to unaccompanied minors, highlighted the main problems related to the actions implemented in favour of minors. In particular, local authorities underlined the lack of standardised national procedures and of adequate institutional support: therefore, every local authority has had to develop its own procedures, with an inevitable impact in terms of efficiency and the lack of an integrated participation by all the actors involved in the reception and assistance of unaccompanied minors (Committee for Foreign Minors, Police Headquarters, Juvenile Court, Judiciary).

In Sicily, as for 30 November 2018, 4,758 unaccompanied minors were hosted, which accounts to 42 per cent of the total UA SC in Italy. The system established by law should, in theory, allow the distribution at the national level of unaccompanied minors who arrive in Sicily, through placement in reception centres located in other regions, but in facts, this does not happen, except to a very limited extent. Hence, until the first half of 2017, the Municipalities and Prefectures with the highest number of arrivals had to manage the reception of a very high number of unaccompanied minors. Later on, since 2018, with the drastic reduction of arrivals, the number of accepted minors has diminished, but the problem of non-distribution at the national level remains serious, above all concerning the children who just turned 18 years old.

In theory, minors should remain in the first reception centres for a very short time, e.g., maximum 30 days, to be then transferred to the SPRAR or in municipal secondary reception centres. The reality, however, is quite different. The majority of the minors stay many months or even years in the first reception centres, as there are no places available in the SPRAR nor in the municipal secondary reception facilities.

The prolonged stay in first reception centres has extremely negative consequences on minors, mainly because services aimed at social inclusion and at the autonomy of minors,

such as training and work placement paths and legal support activities, are not provided. Moreover, these centres have large dimensions, which do not allow the operators to follow the children in an individualised way or to create that family environment to which all the children, according to the Italian law, are entitled. Furthermore, the situation of minors hosted in structures of first and second reception centres is problematic, since they are located far from urban centres, isolated and with little accesses to services. The number of operators employed in the centres is often lower than the minimum standards. In many cases they have neither the qualification required by the current legislation, nor sufficient skills and experience. Many structures lack cultural mediators, with the consequences that the operators are not able to communicate adequately with the children. Another problem is the Municipalities' delay in payments, whereby the reception centres often receive the funds with delays of more than a year, therefore they face serious difficulties for the coverage of the costs related to the functioning of the centre. Partly due to delays in payment and to the decrease in arrivals in 2018, many reception centres have been forced to close: some minors have been transferred over and over again from one centre to another, increasingly raising their level of stress. As it has been stressed, in many cases the failure to comply with the standards set by the law is hardly verified and sanctioned by the competent institutions. In fact, both Municipalities and Prefectures often do not ensure appropriate monitoring of the centres.

A series of obstacles that prevent children from obtaining a residence permit have been highlighted. According to the current legislation there are two possible ways: either by applying for international protection or not. If the minor submits an application for international protection, he/she obtains a permit for asylum application, valid until the end of the procedure. Nonetheless, in some police stations, filing-in the asylum application takes a lot of time. As a result, children often remain for months without any residence permit, which makes it very difficult for them to enrol in the National Health Service and to begin any social inclusion programme such as attending vocational training courses or internships. It is also very stressful for children from a psychological point of view.

If, instead, the minor does fill in an application for international protection, the Police headquarters must issue a residence permit for minor age, even if the minor does not hold a passport. Some Police Headquarters, however, such as the Palermo Police Headquarters, do not issue permits for minor age when the minor has no passport, and this is the case for the majority of UAMs arrived in Italy.

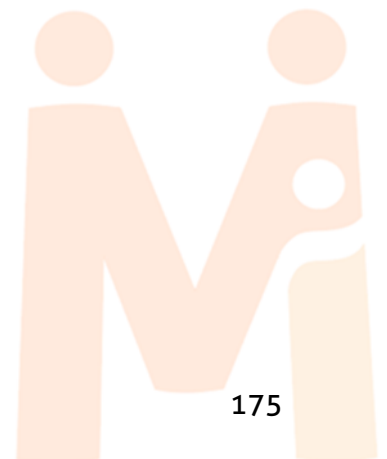
In the most isolated centres, the right to education is not granted and, without a middle school certificate, minors cannot attend a training course nor a traineeship. Furthermore, in Sicily, training and internship opportunities are completely inadequate and often there is a lack of communication between the agencies dealing with these activities. The most serious problem however is represented by the lack of regular job opportunities in the Sicilian context: many unaccompanied minors or people who just turned 18 years old, end up working illegally in agriculture, paid a few euros a day and suffering from severe exploitation.

Additionally, when children hosted in the Italian reception facilities come to age of majority, every support measure ceases. At that age, children rarely have a contract of employment and generally they still have to complete their school and training path, therefore they cannot be independent. The abrupt interruption of any reception and support intervention generally interrupts the evidences of the inclusion path undertaken. Many of these young adults end up living on the street. The problem, already present, has been worsened by the introduction of the so-called 'Security Decree', which deleted humanitarian protection. Minors turning 18 years old, without humanitarian protection will be condemned to social exclusion.

Hence, it is necessary to establish and implement policies in consideration of the best interests of the child, the first guiding principle of the protection system for minors.

The field research conducted within the scope of the MiCreate project has extensively confirmed the fallacies analysed and documented during the preliminary research phase, and this confirms the need to continue researching on the gaps in the application of the child centred approach in the reception system currently in place to support migrant children in transition.

We experienced two different feelings during the field research in Sicily which allowed us to meet many migrant children. Those who are just arrived are happy to be alive but are aware of the fact that time goes by very quickly and they think they will not be able to have the documents they need in order to keep working on their path. The first feeling is that of gratitude toward people who welcomed them. At the same time, they are concerned and doing nothing generates a sense of apathy which becomes a burden for UAMs who are not provided with the tools they need to analyse and understand reality. The second feeling is the awareness that this system does not help them create their future, there are no opportunities in villages "in a rural area where only old people live, and you can't find any job", as the village looks like a dead land and there aren't any job opportunities, but for sure migrant children are not provided with the tools they need to build their future. They cannot make their dreams and aspirations come true.



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANCI: Associazione Italiana Comuni Italiani (National Association of Italian Municipalities)

CONI: Comitato Olimpico Nazionale Italiano (Italian Olympic Committee)

IOM: International Organization for Migration

MSNA: Minori stranieri non accompagnati (unaccompanied foreign minors)

SIM: Sistema informativo Minori (Information system on minors)

SIPROIMI: Sistema di Protezione per titolari di protezione internazionale e Minori Stranieri non Accompagnati (Protection System for Holders of International Protection and Unaccompanied Minors)

SPRAR: Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati (Protection System for Refugees and Asylum Seekers)

UAMs: Unaccompanied Foreign Minors

UASC: Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

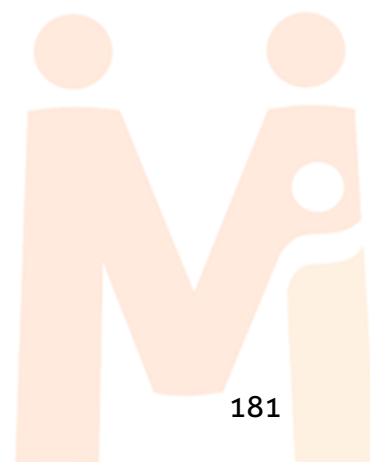
UA SC: Unaccompanied and Separated Children

UN: United Nations

UNCRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees





GREECE

Nektaria Palaiologou
Victoria Prekate
Eirini Kyriazi

1. Introduction

The first section of this report provides a concise overview of the refugee situation in Greece, a literature review of chosen papers that refer to migrant children and presents statistical data on migrant children in Greece compared with other countries. Migration and integration policies are discussed and policy frameworks are analysed, according to Greece's degree of harmonization with the International and European legislation. The second section proceeds with a description of the qualitative research and the findings from participant observation and interviews with refugee children.

2. Secondary analysis

2.1 Literature review

Several papers have been published regarding the situation of refugee/migrant children in Greece, especially since the start of the so-called 'European refugee crisis', with a number of references to Skaramagas Refugee Hospitality Centre (RHC), where the study of this report was conducted. Skaramagas was, for the 5 years of its operation, the largest refugee hospitality center in mainland Greece, hosting at any time on average 2500-3500 people. The RHC was closed down in August 2021, as the land was in process of selling for ship-building purposes.

The British Council was particularly active at Skaramagas RHC and one of the main informal education projects providers at the camp. They published an extensive report on the conclusion of their activities, which highlights the plight of refugees at the camp, but also in Greece in general. The project catered for students from 12-17 years of age and offered a structured curriculum of English Language classes and Life Skills classes in English. Marie Delaney's (2017) evaluation report found that all the children made considerable progress in their English language skills, as well as their communication, presentation and leadership skills. On average, the children had missed 2.5 years of schooling, while some had never attended school at all. Re-entering the familiar environment of a classroom was therapeutic for all students involved and special emphasis was given to human rights, cultural diversity and non-discrimination.

Another study at Skaramagas RHC was conducted by Fasarakis (2020) concluding that school participation was positive for refugee children, as they were able to come out of the confined structure they lived in. She concluded that continued stay at RHC had a negative impact on their mental health and normal development. Despite the difficulties and problems that hampered the educational process, significant learning outcomes were achieved and core skills of these children were strengthened through participation in formal and informal education classes. The research also found that, although school participation is positive, integration into the mainstream education was not achieved, as it was necessary to create new educational materials suitable for teaching Greek as a foreign language and train teachers in intercultural education.

A third study at Skaramagas RHC (Nomikou, 2017) indicated that the Strategy Development in the context of Quality Frameworks for Education in Emergencies can be a great tool for education providers for supporting refugee children's integration to formal education. The main findings were that non-formal education is an important tool for school readiness for refugee students. Greece was not ready to utilize fully non-formal education from the start, due to lack of relevant experience and poor coordination among stakeholders.

A more recent study at Skaramagas RHC by Palaiologou, Kameas, Prekate & Lontou (2021), concluded to a set of good practices and not-so-good practices regarding refugee

children's education at refugee camps. The study's most recommended practices were the provision of hired transportation to and from schools of formal education; the establishment of camp-based Refugee Education Coordinators (RECs); the bridging of the gap between the refugee community and the local education community; supportive non-formal afternoon education activities at camp for homework assistance. Bureaucratic issues that hindered access to formal education, as well as delayed staffing of schools were among the obstacles to integrative education.

The quality of life of Arabic-speaking refugees was investigated at Skaramagas camp, at another research by Koutsoni (2018) with data are collected via WHO's Quality of Life (WHOQOL-Bref) questionnaire and compared to existing reports of WHOQOL-Bref scores of other refugee populations. The average score on the WHOQOL four domains, physical, psychological, social, environment was found to be among the lowest in the world. Refugees from Skaramagas scored lower on all domains than the general population norms from 23 countries. Compared with refugees from West Africa, they score higher on physical and social domains but lower on the psychological domain. No statistical differences were found on the environmental domain.

Many refugees were in Greece as a transition country to relocation to another European country. Relocation often was connected to family re-unification and in Kapitzi's research (2021, p.63) the importance of the family reunification process, is discussed. Under the Dublin III Regulation, opportunities are provided for asylum seekers who are nationals of third countries or stateless. In practice, the implementation of the regulation proved very difficult, complex and slow. The research suggested that a new, improved and more efficient Dublin Regulation is required, the Dublin IV Regulation, in order to address the refugee crisis, with fair distribution based on the principle of solidarity and responsibility in all EU countries (Ministry of Education Research and Religious Affairs, 2016, p.7).

Finally, the research of the Scientific Committee for the support of refugee children was established by order of the Minister of Education (GG1/47070 of 18/03/2016), at the start of the refugee crisis. The findings (Kapitzi, 2021, p.63) suggested the necessity of continuous surveillance and continuous assessment due to the changing circumstances of the refugee situation, the necessity for synergy of various departments of the Ministry of Education, other ministries, international organizations and NGOs in a coordinated manner and an administrative structure that can make quick decisions and direct recommendations (Ministry of Education Research and Religious Affairs, 2016, p.34).

2.2 Statistical data

During the so-called European Refugee crisis, which started in 2014 and continues to this day, 1.1 million refugees have entered Greece (UNCHCR Operational Portal, 2020a). Most of them went through Greece as a transit country, but tens of thousands have been trapped in Greece long term, even though Greece was not their first choice of destination country. This

is important to remember, as long-term stagnation at a country they did not choose, builds resentment, especially among young refugees.

A statistical overview of the situation for refugee children is as follows: By June 2019, there was a total of 38,000 children (45,000 in June 2020), out of which approximately 4,500 were unaccompanied minors, of which an estimated 1,000 are either homeless or living in unknown circumstances (Bourdaras 2020; Zafeiropoulos 2020). As of October 2019, approximately 9,000 children have been living at 28 refugee camps (RHCs) in mainland Greece. Approximately 13,000 children live in Refugee Identification Centres (the so-called 'hotspots', on a much stricter set of living regulations compared to RHCs) on the Aegean islands of Lesbos, Kos, Samos, Chios and Leros (Migrants in Greece, 2019). Urban accommodation schemes include the HESTIA Accommodation Scheme managed by UNHCR (2019), which includes residence in hired hotels. In addition, there is rented housing by the Ministry of Migration Policy and the IOM, hosting about 16,000 children in total (Reliefweb, 2020). As for schooling, 26,000 refugee children are of school age. During the school year (2018–2019), 12,500 children were registered at Greek state schools, which was about half the school-age refugee population. However, this number fell during subsequent years and, even more dramatically, during the pandemic. School enrollment rate at the urban settings can reach 70 per cent (although real attendance is much lower), whereas attendance at island RICs is low and in some cases, such as Moria RIC, almost non-existent (UNHCR Operational Portal 2020a, 2020b).

The influx of refugee children can be appreciated when the numbers of asylum applications lodged are compared to other European countries (UNICEF, 2020). The graphs below (UNICEF, 2020) cover the period January 2020–June 2020, which was a period of greatly reduced influxes due to the onset of the pandemic. Greece has a volume of applications comparable to much bigger countries, such as Spain, and France, and despite the fact that public services were half-functioning due to the pandemic restriction measures.

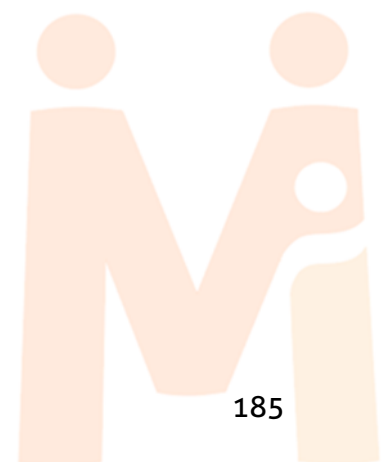
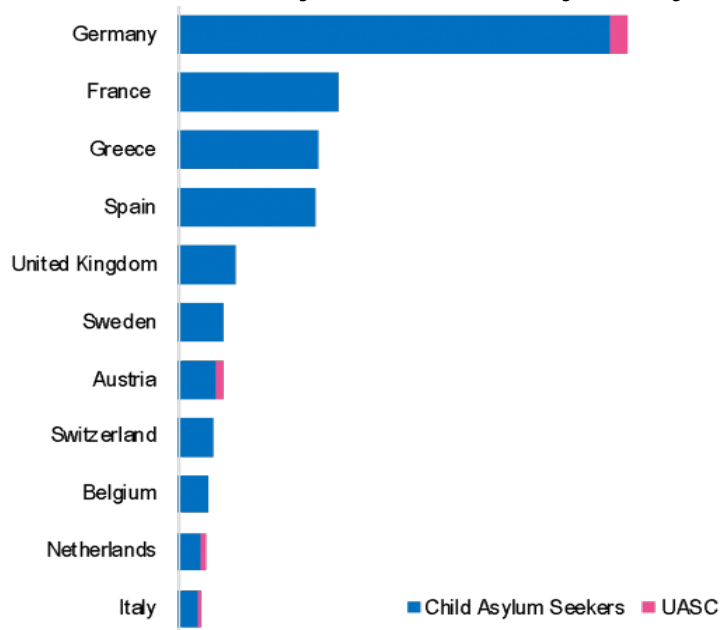


Figure 1. Asylum applications lodged by children, including unaccompanied and separated children, between January and June 2020 – by country of asylum



Regarding the country of origin for asylum seekers, during the first half of 2020, the Syrian Arab Republic continued to be the most common country of origin among child asylum seekers (22%), followed by Afghanistan (13%), Iraq (6%) and other countries. 45% of all child asylum seekers were female. Regarding the country of desired destination, Germany remained the top destination goal for refugee and migrant children in Greece, which means that most children and young people see Greece as a country of temporary transition. As we will see later, this can be a contributing factor to low school enrolment rates.

The gender breakdown of accompanied and unaccompanied and separated children by country of arrival, shows that Greece, like other European countries, the vast majority are boys. The age breakdown however, shows a much bigger proportion of very young children, compared to other countries and this is due to the fact that Greece is a preferred destination for families and the geographical route of travel is safer than to other countries. Unaccompanied children account for roughly 15% of the total number of child arrivals and greater care should be directed to their protection (UNICEF, 2017b).

Figure 2. Gender and age breakdown of accompanied and unaccompanied and separated children by country of arrival in Greece as compared to other countries

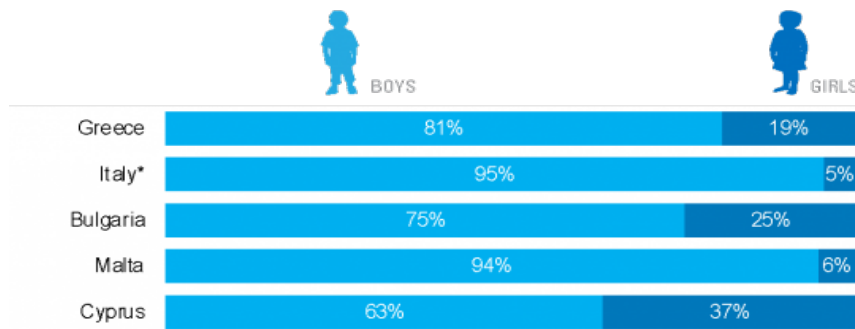
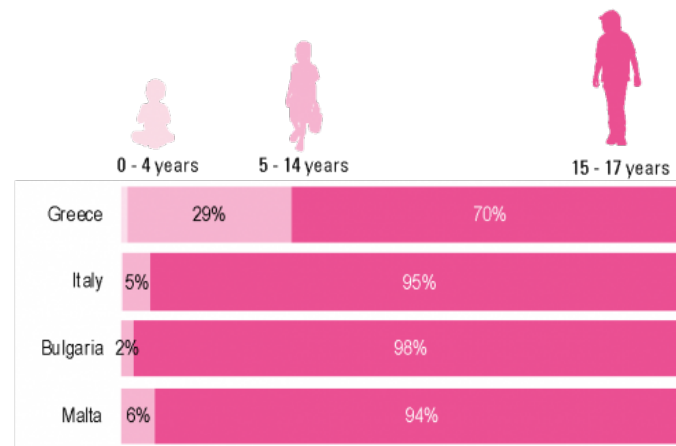


Figure 3. Age composition for refugee children 0-17 years



Sources: Hellenic Police, EKKKA, Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies on UASC in reception, Spanish Ministry of Interior and Social Policy, Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees, Maltese Ministry for Home Affairs, National Security and Law Enforcement (MILSE).

In 2018, 36 000 new migrants obtained a residence permit longer than 12 months in Greece (excluding EU citizens), 19% more than in 2017. This figure comprises 8% labor migrants, 48% family members (including accompanying family), 2% who came for education reasons and 42% other migrants. In 2019, the number of first asylum applicants increased by 15%, to reach around 75 000. Most applicants came from Afghanistan (24 000), Syria (11 000) and Pakistan (6 400). The largest increase compared to 2018 concerned nationals of Afghanistan (+12 000) and the largest decrease nationals of Iraq (-4 100). Of the 33 000 decisions taken in 2019, 53% were positive (UNICEF, 2020)

According to the AIDA country report for Greece (2021), arrivals in the first two months of 2021 decreased by 90% compared to the same period last year, with 691 refugees and migrants arriving in Greece through sea and over land borders, as the pandemic affected international movement at all levels. The majority (403) arrived on the island of Lesbos. In January and February, 1,586 people were transferred from Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) on the Greek islands to second line reception facilities on the mainland. By

the end of March, 11,265 refugees and migrants remained in the five RICs on the islands of Lesbos, Kos Chios, Leros and Samos. The Samos continues to be severely overcrowded – with 3,141 people residing in accommodations designed for 648.

2.3 Assessment of institutional support to children in transition

Legal and policy framework

The asylum applicants' rights and international protection standards are clearly depicted in the EU law and the national legislation of the EU member states (Banti & Sounoglou, 2021).

The Asylum Procedure in Greece

The Asylum Service registers the applications of persons seeking international protection. Twelve Asylum Offices and twelve Asylum Units were operational at the end of 2020. The Asylum Service applies the Dublin procedure, with most requests and transfers concerning family reunification in other Member States. The Asylum Service may be assisted by European Asylum Support Office (EASO) staff in registration and interviews. Access to the asylum procedure remains an issue of concern. A fast-track border procedure is applied to applicants subject to the EU-Turkey statement, i.e., applicants arriving on the islands of Eastern Aegean islands after 20 March 2016 and takes place in the Reception and Identification Centres (RIC) in the Aegean islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros, Kos and Rhodes. Under the fast-track border procedure, interviews may also be conducted by EASO staff and, in urgent cases, the Police and Armed Forces. Short deadlines are provided to applicants for most steps of the procedure. The concept of "safe third country" is applied within the framework of this procedure for Syrian applicants.

First instance decisions of the Asylum Service are appealed before the Independent Appeals Committees under the Appeals Authority. An appeal must be lodged within 30 days in the regular procedure, 20 days in the accelerated procedure, in case of an inadmissibility decision or where the applicant is detained, 15 days in the Dublin procedure, 10 days in the border procedure and in the fast-track border procedure and 5 days in the case of a subsequent application. The procedure before the Appeals Committees remains as a rule written. Significant gaps in the provision of free legal aid at second instance hinder the effective access to an appeal (AIDA, 2021).

Limited access to the asylum procedure in the mainland is another problem of the asylum system, due to difficulties in accessing the Skype-based appointment system in place for registration of asylum applications. Since the announcement of the EU-Turkey Joint Declaration of March 2016, decision on asylum applications dismiss claims of Syrians applicants as inadmissible on the basis that Turkey is a safe third country for them. The 'International Protection Act' (IPA), which entered into force on 1 January 2020, as well as its amendments in May 2020, introduced reforms that reduced further the rights of asylum

seekers and refugees (Greek Council for Refugees, 2020, p.23). On 7 June 2021, a new Joint Ministerial Decision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Migration and Asylum was issued, designating Turkey as safe third country for asylum seekers from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Somalia.

The Asylum Application Procedure (First Instance)

The application is submitted to the Receiving Authorities, which immediately perform a full registration. The authorities that are competent for receiving applications are the Regional Asylum Offices, the Autonomous Asylum Service Units and the Mobile Units of the Asylum Service. The International Protection Application is lodged by the applicant in person. However, the application may now be lodged online through the self-registration application and applicants may also apply for the family members, provided that they are with them in Greece and they wish to do so. They should also come along with to the Asylum Service. In case they have entered the country without going through the legal formalities or staying in Greece without meeting the legal requirements, they will be transferred to a Reception and Identification Centre and, in case do not possess any document issued by an official authority that proves the identity and nationality, will undergo reception and identification procedures. In that case, in order to submit an international protection application, they will be referred to the local competent Regional Asylum Service Office, an Asylum Unit of which may be operating within the relevant Reception and Identification Centre. It will be compulsory to stay within the premises of the center for the whole duration of the examination of application, provided that the duration of this time period does not exceed twenty five (25) days. When submitting an application, there is an interpreter available in order to assist in a language that the person understand, so that the communication with the staff members of the Asylum Service is facilitated.

In case of an unaccompanied minor, i.e. a person under 18 years old and not accompanied by an adult who is responsible for care, according to the Greek law, the authorities must immediately inform the competent Public Prosecutor for Minors. The Public Prosecutor will appoint a representative who will be responsible for the minor and will defend his/her interests. In case of children are under fifteen (15) years old, the application for international protection must be submitted by the appointed representative. In case they are over 15 years old, may submit an application themselves. The authority responsible for the protection is the General Secretariat for Unaccompanied Minors of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, which, in cooperation with the Authorities, will care for protection and accommodation in a facility suitable for minors.

In case of a victim of torture, rape or any other serious act of violence, the person must inform the authorities accordingly, so that they can provide assistance. All members of the Asylum Service staff have a duty of confidentiality. A person may request to contact the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees or any Organization that provides legal, medical and psychological support. Throughout the procedure refugees have the right to ask for the assistance of a lawyer or other counselor of their choice (without any mediation by

the Asylum Service). In case of unaccompanied minors, they will have to be informed by the appointed guardian regarding their interview. A guardian will be invited and he/she may be with the unaccompanied minors during the interview. In case there is any doubt, the authorities may conduct medical examinations in order to determine the age (Ministry of Migration and Asylum, 2021).

Although the asylum process is in theory cost-free, no state-funded free legal aid is provided at first instance, nor is there an obligation to provide it in law. A state-funded legal aid scheme in the appeal procedure based on a list managed by the Asylum Service operates since September 2017. Despite this welcome development, the capacity of the second instance legal aid scheme remains limited and almost 2 out of 3 appellants do not benefit from free legal assistance at second instance (AIDA, 2021, p.22).

Various NGOs and other organizations offer significant help to the Asylum Service, such as METADRASI which is the Asylum Service's only official affiliate and is the main contributor for interpreters as the Greek State cannot currently provide any. The National Centre of Social Solidarity is also essential as it works along the Asylum Service and METADRASI to provide housing for the unaccompanied minors. Other organizations such as VAVEL, PRAKSIS and others are also mentioned as they offer psychological support, medical help and more. Coordination among these actors make the asylum process more effective (Gana, 2021, p.48).

Family reunification

According to Article 23 and Article 24 of IPA, family members of the beneficiary of international protection who do not individually qualify for such protection are entitled to a renewable residence permit, which must have the same duration as that of the beneficiary. However, if the family has been formed after entry into Greece, the law requires the spouse to hold a valid residence permit at the time of entry into marriage in order to obtain a family member residence permit. This requirement is difficult to meet in practice and may undermine the right to family life, since one must already have a residence permit in order to qualify for a residence permit as a family member of a refugee (AIDA, 2021). Family reunification requests of unaccompanied minors with family members or/ and relatives present in another EU country have been affected by the delay of the implementation of the guardianship system in Greece (AIDA, 2021, p. 78).

Legal representation of unaccompanied minors

According to the legal framework, the Public Prosecutor is the temporary guardian of all the unaccompanied minors residing in the Greek territory. The Special Secretariat for the Protection of the Unaccompanied Minors (SSPUAM) of the Ministry of Migration & Asylum, in collaboration with the National Center for Social Solidarity (NCSS -EKKA), bears the responsibility to proceed to any necessary action aiming to the appointment of guardian to unaccompanied children. However, the minors' access to legal assistance is limited (AIDA,

2021, p.78). The responsibility of the guardian includes, among others, the appointment of a permanent guardian of the minor. The law also creates the Supervisory Guardianship Board, which is responsible for ensuring legal protection for unaccompanied children with respect to disabilities, religious beliefs and custody issues. Additionally, the law established the Department for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors at EKKA, which has the responsibility of guaranteeing safe accommodation for unaccompanied children and evaluating the quality of services provided (AIDA, 2021).

Evaluating the asylum process for minors, the Greek Ombudsman noted in his Observations on the draft bill on Law 4636/2019 that there are several requirements, which may complicate the protection of migrant children and hinder the implementation of existing legislation, such as the lack of clarity in the definitions of unaccompanied and separated children, uncertainty over the competent services, and absence of any reference to the Guardianship Law 4554/2018 and secondary legislation setting out age assessment procedures. (AIDA, 2021, p.135). A last minute, most important development, is that on the 15th of September 2021, METADRASI announced that its guardianship program ended, leaving 2,404 unaccompanied minors uncovered. The reason as that in 2020 it was decided that the responsibility for the Guardianship of unaccompanied minors would be transferred to the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors in the Ministry of Migration and Asylum. However, no new competition has been announced and the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors, does not seem to have prepared itself to ensure at least some transitional period, so that children are not left without representation (METADRASI, 2021b).

Accommodation

Regarding the accommodation of migrant/ refugee children in Greece: of all children present in Greece, 48% live in urban areas (apartments, hotels, shelters, self-settled, etc.); 28% in RHCs; 1% in safe zones for unaccompanied minors and 23% in Reception and Identification Centers in the islands (UNICEF, 2020).

The initial housing program "HESTIA" was the first example of housing policy in Greece. It was a short-term program, followed by other programs. From the second half of 2019 and throughout 2020, the EU-funded FILOXENIA program, provided temporary accommodation to asylum seekers at state-leased hotels. Seventy-nine hotels were leased providing 6,898 places to vulnerable asylum seekers. In January 2021, the program was officially terminated to be followed by program HELIOS, which provided accommodation strictly for six months, as a transitional phase support to refugees becoming autonomous. As, housing autonomy is difficult to achieve in a fragile economy such as Greece's, housing security remains a concern for thousands of refugees (AIDA, 2021, p. 170). The successor program HELIOS supported beneficiaries towards independent accommodation in apartments rented on their name, by providing financial contribution to rental. The program also networked with owners, who were in general reluctant to rent out directly to refugees, as they feared refugee tenants wouldn't be able to pay rent consistently (IOM, 2011).

Regarding the accommodation of unaccompanied minors, the Greek state has distributed their care to governmental and non-governmental organizations. The control of the registration and distribution of children in NGOs is under state control. Accommodation centers are funded by the European Union. Unaccompanied minors reside mostly in specially allocated hostels, where psychologists, social workers and carers are employed to support them on a daily basis. There has been an effort by NGO Metadrasi to link unaccompanied minors with foster parents, and this program has accommodated 109 children so far (Metadrasi, 2021). But, in general, the existing accommodations are far from sufficient while the time gap between the claim for asylum and the minor's assignment to a host house is so large that most minors have to spend months at less than safe situations. Therefore, it is important for Greece to enhance foster family linking or providing the means for semi-autonomous living (Gana, 2021, p.57). Those unaccompanied minors accommodated at Supported Independent Living facilities and Safe Zones were supported by language courses and courses for socio-emotional skills (UNICEF, 2020, p.4)

The housing situation for unaccompanied minors continues to remain insecure and detention of unaccompanied children, although reduced, unfortunately continues to be imposed. However, there has been significant progress in the Greek legislation even though some continued to be detained (either in administrative detention or in "protective custody") during 2020. On 11 December 2020, Law 4760/2020 entered into force and abolished the possibility of keeping unaccompanied migrant children in protective police custody only on the basis that they have no residence. However, other legal provisions that allow the detention of unaccompanied minors are still in force (AIDA, 2021, p.25). As one 16 year-old unaccompanied minor from Syria commented about his time in detention: "The police explained to us that we are held there for our own protection and they were polite to us, but other than that, we were treated like prisoners, we were not allowed to go out and had specific times for outdoor breaks".

Life conditions at refugee camps depends on many factors. In Skaramagas, there were communities that flourished and even developed microbusinesses inside the camp (Alesevich, M., 2018). But, there are also many issues that cause concern. Security is sometimes an issue for women, especially in large camps. Hygiene, heating, and availability of space of mainland RHCs are on relative terms basic, but adequate. However, the situation in island RICs is quite different and in both settings, conditions can very quickly change, according to new arrivals. In Skaramagas case, whenever there was a mass transfer from the islands to the mainland, then mainland camps get suddenly overcrowded, with existing inhabitants (often reluctantly) accepting a new family squeezed into their container and tents are set inside (or in the periphery of) the camp. More importantly, even camps are not permanent. The largest refugee camp in mainland Greece, Skaramagas, closed down this summer, as the land was set for sale, with its 2500 inhabitants dispersed over different camps. Yet, those inhabitants with double rejection of asylum claims were not eligible for transfer and had a high probability of ending up homeless (Drop in the Ocean, 2021).

Education

One of the most powerful tools for building inclusive societies is participation and equality of opportunities in education. Inclusion and gender equality is a key objective of the European Education Area to be achieved by 2025 through the rolling out of Initiatives through the Digital Education Action Plan³² (European Commission, 2021, p.33)

Schools are essential to the integration of refugee children and their families. A striking example from Skaramagas was the 8 year old girl who did so well at her formal school that she could compete with her local classmates, but also, and most importantly, she would assist her mother to daily errands in the city because of her newly acquired fluency in Greek. If schools are accepting of culturally and linguistically diverse children, they can have a strong positive effect on their future educational attainment and on the integration of their parents and families at large. But a prerequisite is that teachers have the appropriate skills and personal commitment to teach and support children with a migrant background, as much as they would with local children (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2021, p. 34). Unfortunately, there have been teachers with skepticism towards the inclusion of refugee children in their class, whereas others embraced them with great enthusiasm.

There are currently many gaps in refugee education in Greece. For example, refugee children with disabilities need additional support to participate in education, but this area has hardly been attended to. Unaccompanied young people, even those accommodated in hostels, have very low school enrolment and attendance rates. Many see school as a waste of time, a distraction from working to make a living. After all, support measures often stop when a child reaches 18 years of age and many teenagers feel the urgent need to get into the job market before that.

It seems that only through inclusion in vocational education and apprenticeship training can many refugee teenagers be motivated to attend formal education. If education means getting an employable, recognizable qualification, this would encourage young teenagers to stay in school. Unaccompanied minors (mostly boys aged 16-18) do not in general hold the same mentality about education as their local peers. They have a heightened sense of responsibility about earning a living and only through training that is directly linked to the labour market, preferably through apprenticeship, can education become a viable option for them. Even at age younger than 18, they many feel intense anxiety about helping financially those family members left back home. It is important to remember that in today's complex world crises, it is not just war that plagues certain countries, but the economic collapse that often accompanies war. Complex, prolonged emergencies (such as in Afghanistan) mean that millions of people risk being victims of violence and hunger at the same time. The family members of unaccompanied minors probably did not have the opportunity or capacity to flee, but the minor, who fled the violence/hunger/ possible illegal recruitment often takes the responsibility for the rest of the family to support them financially. However, when the minor comes to a Western country, the priority is -of course- education, but with a longer-term perspective. This creates intense inner conflict to many minors about schooling and

many do not allow themselves the 'luxury' of school, while the relatives suffer of hunger back home. On the other hand, they are not legally allowed to work. This agonizing dead-end situation makes many unaccompanied minors drop out of school, go into depression, self-harming and substance abuse. An unknown number may even fall prey to sexual exploitation. In our view, any situation should be seen in its context: the best solution for the situation of this category of unaccompanied minors would be enrolment to paid apprenticeship programs in vocational upper high schools (acronym in Greek: EPAL), along with accelerated learning of Greek language and labour market skills. This would achieve three aims: a) keep them in education, b) provide financial merit, c) gain work experience and liaise with the labour market on healthy terms. In this way, when they reach the age of 18, they will have the skills to look for work legally and there is also the opportunity to continue their studies to higher education if they want, however difficult it may be.

Generally speaking, it is not realistic to enroll 16-18 year old unaccompanied boys to general upper high school, expecting them to be happy about finding work after they finish University (as would be expected for most local youth, who have the support of their parents). What happens in reality is that many try to find non-specialized work in the black market, have to lie about their age and very often fall prey to exploitation. There are many stories of migrant youth who work, for example, in the islands during the tourist season, in the black labor market. At the end of the summer, the promised payment for the entire season's work never arrives. There is very little the minor can do, as there is no proof he worked and maybe his own status of residence is vulnerable. An official apprenticeship through formal vocational education would provide a safe option for these minors, as the rights of undocumented workers are hardly at all protected in Greece, even for adult, local workers.

Formal Education

The Greek Constitution (Act 16) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Act 28) guarantee the right to education. Under Greek law (Law 1566/1985, Law 2910/2001), education is compulsory for all children in Greece aged between 5 and 15 years old. All children in Greece, including refugees and asylum seekers, have the right to enrol in state schools. From the age of four, refugee and asylum-seeking children can attend pre-primary school, which is compulsory after the age of five (UNHCR, 2020). Newly arrived migrant students may spend up to two years in preparatory classes or lessons (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019, p.6)

The school administrative bodies have not been able to react quickly to the new education needs of the refugee influx, issues of coordination among top-level authorities and local level educational communities have proved to be difficult in Greece (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019, p.56). However, some innovative measures have proved to be very effective. The Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs appointed 'Refugee Education Coordinators' (RECs) in all major RHCs. Their role is to monitor the integration of refugee children into state education, liaise students, parents, school

principals and teachers (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019, p.75) and this role has been pivotal in the success (or lack thereof) of refugee students joining formal education.

New arrivals can be placed in preparatory classes for all or most lessons. This preparation falls under two schemes: a) The Reception Class Scheme and the DYEP scheme:

The 'Reception Class' scheme, which accommodates all native-born students who need help with the Greek language, is offered in two cycles: Cycle I for students with elementary or no Greek language skills lasts for one year, plus one year extension; Cycle II for students with intermediate Greek language skills lasts usually for one year. Students needing to attend both cycles may take some subjects in separate classes, while also taking mainstream classes in subjects where they do not need a high level of Greek language skills. Most Reception classes operate at level I and usually, after one or two years, children are ready to join mainstream classes.

The Structures for the Welcoming and Education of Refugees (DYEP) are integrated within the school units of the primary and secondary educational system and offer specific short preparatory segregated classes for children aged 4 to 15 years in the afternoon. In 2016, DYEP that took into consideration the characteristics of the refugee population (mobility, time of arrival and duration of stay) and the size of the student population were formed for the first time (Common Ministerial Decision 152360/ΓΔ4/2016). DYEP classes have been mostly established near RHC or hot spots, as local schools were unable to cover for such a large increase in student population (AIDA, 2020). The classes take place after the morning classes for Greek children have been completed, aiming at a more gradual integration to mainstream classes.

A number of NGOs and organizations of education professionals have criticized the DYEP program for not being inclusive, for promoting social segregation and for resulting in "ghetto schools". Several parents stated they would prefer their children to register directly for morning mainstream classes. They complained that segregation with refugee-only classmates did not allow their children to mix with Greek children and learn the language. Additionally, parents whose children had some basic command of Greek complained that their children were held back by acute differences in students' levels within one class. On the other hand, according to RECs, DYEP were reserved for newly arrived children with no command of the Greek language, lasted only for one year, and were a first step to introduce them to the Greek state education system. They claim, it would have been too difficult to attend the mainstream program in Greek from the moment of arrival. It helped both refugee and local children familiarize themselves with each other and aided a smoother transition to integration with local communities. Segregation to introductory afternoon classes remains a matter of debate among educationalists (with pros and cons). Most students who had attended DYEP for one school year move on to a morning mainstream reception class the following year (Palaiologou, Kameas, Prekate & Lontou, 2021, p.323).

During the 2020-21 school year, no DYEP operated in the county of Attica (where Athens is located). This means that the segregated afternoon model is being gradually phased out.

The experience from Skaramagas shows that such a transition is possible. During the school year 2017–2018, hardly any school children attended morning mainstream classes, most attended afternoon segregated DYEP. However, during the following school year, three local primary schools, three local lower junior high state schools and four upper high schools admitted refugee students and in the year after that, the numbers rose to nine local primary schools, four junior high schools and seven upper high schools admitting refugee students. So, during the three school years from 2017 to 2020, there was a gradual shift from segregated afternoon education to local morning mainstream school education. Parents whose children moved on to morning schools agreed that it was a better and more effective educational provision for their children than segregated afternoon classes. However, some children had difficulties with keeping up with the work and there was a small number of dropouts for that reason. On a more general note, this gradual transition was important both for the children and for the educational system and local communities to adapt to the newcomer refugee student population. While not visible to parents or educational actors operating only at the camp, there was an initial reluctance in local school communities to accept refugee students when classes were already oversubscribed. The selection of schools was done on the basis of suiting student needs to local school vacancies, trying to avoid tensions with local educational communities. This proved to be an effective second step to integration in mainstream schools without straining neither the local nor the refugee communities (Palaiologou, Kameas, Prekate & Liontou., 2021, p.324)

Apart from RHCs, children living in dispersed urban settings (such as hired accommodation schemes, squats, apartments, hotels, and reception centres for asylum seekers and unaccompanied children), usually enrolled to mainstream schools near their place of residence, in morning classes alongside Greek children (AIDA, 2021, p. 183). In 2020, children's access to education was further challenged by several factors, also related to the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to record levels of exclusion of refugee children from the Greek system of education.

It has to be noted that, according to act 28 of Law 4636/2019, children beneficiaries of international protection have the same obligation to enrol in compulsory public primary and secondary education units as nationals; if they do not comply, sanctions may be imposed upon their parents. Authorities are also obliged to provide necessary and adequate means to facilitate the procedure. In practice, such sanctions are never applied, nor the authorities were held accountable for hindering access to education (Leivaditi, Papatzani, Ilias & Petraco, 2020, p.35).

As a conclusion, the formal education of asylum seekers and refugees in Greece still faces several problems and challenges, such as delays in the operation of the Reception Classes on a yearly basis, long waiting lists for enrolment, difficulties linked to the mobility of the population (transfers between islands and the mainland), a lack of intercultural services,

delays in the establishment of preprimary schools, challenges with regards to the integration of children enrolled in the Reception/Preparatory Structures, inadequate funding, reactions by local communities and a lack of specific integration attention for children aged 15 or more (Leivaditi, Papatzani, Ilias & Petracou, 2020, p.43). But positive measures have been taken, with a peak in 2018, when about half of school age enrolled and a gradual but significant transition occurred from segregated to integrated education. For all the difficulties and obstacles in refugee education, most children that did attend school, were committed and benefitted much. A common complaint for these students was holidays(!): they didn't want any school holidays! As one 12-year old girl said: "Miss, if the Greek children want the summer holiday, let them have it. But can we continue going to school during the summer?"

Informal Education

Non-formal education for pupils, mainly relies on actions and initiatives by non-governmental organizations, following approval by the Ministry of Education. The Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) is the administering platform through which every NGO is obliged to submit its educational program to be evaluated in terms of its pedagogical relevance. Based on IEP evaluation, the Ministry of Education then approves or declines the NGO proposal. An important precondition for this approval is that the non-formal curriculum which the NGO submits does not overlap with the curriculum of formal education, but acts a complementary support to formal schooling (SIRIUS Watch, 2018, p. 11).

In 2018, the City of Athens utilized 25 schools into environments open for extra-curricular activities and language courses for refugees. The school premises provided recreational, cultural, educational and sports activities. Schools remain open until 9:30 p.m. on weekdays and between 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on weekends. Experts believe that using school facilities brings local community together, increases interaction between neighbors, and contributes to a direct exchange among newcomers and resident population. In 2018, 170 courses were provided with a total of 10 thousand participants. The Council of Europe has included the program in the Guide for Good City Practices on human rights and migrant and refugee integration. (Palaiologou (2018); Council of Europe (2018) as mentioned in SIRIUS, (2018), p.27)

As a main contributing factor, UNICEF provided non-formal education (NFE) to refugee and migrant children (3-17 years old) in 13 facilities on the mainland and on the islands of Lesbos and Samos. In response to ongoing school closures due to COVID-19, UNICEF in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Institute of Educational Policy 1,068 teachers, school principals, refugee education coordinators, and school counsellors were trained on methodologies and materials to support refugee and migrant students through online teaching, developing online content and self-learning of Greek and English. In addition, numerous articles were developed, and a helpline was established (via Facebook) to provide accurate information on continuing education during lockdown. During the reporting period, 7,650 children were supported with student kits and self-learning materials. The accelerated development of learning material has been finalized and a

website was created to provide access to student material, glossaries, diagnostic tests, guides for teachers and courses on Greek, English and Math for the refugee and migrant community (UNICEF, 2021).

Vocational training

Due to a fragmented policy regarding refugees' employability and vocational training, most initiatives are project-based, with a limited scope and lack sustainability and continuity. The obstacles refugees face to enter the marketplace become obvious, as "the overall economic situation, the unemployment rate and the fact that available funding is mostly focused on humanitarian response rather than integration" (Leivaditi, Papatzani, Ilias & Electra Petracou, 2020, p.28). This research emphasizes that NGOs are once again the only providers of employability services and vocational training. Civil society organizations, NGOs and networks among refugee communities may implement projects of various degrees of scope and organization. The content of these projects is language courses, job searching techniques, writing strong CVs, computer skill programs, like for example, free IT classes at the Migrant Integration Centre in Athens (Leivaditi, Papatzani, Ilias & Electra Petracou, 2020, p.30). Regarding the formal education sector, Vocational Lyceum (EPAL) becomes an increasingly appealing option for refugee students (aged 15-19), as they offer two or three year programs, together with one year of paid apprenticeship training. However, some knowledge of Greek language would be required in order to attend. Liaising EPAL schools with refugee teenagers could increase enrolment rates. Awareness raising could help refugees learn more about how local economies work and the importance of qualifications for economic survival. As already noted, paid apprenticeship programs at EPAL upper high schools could also encourage older teenagers to stay in education.

Finally, in 2020, children access to levels of education was further challenged by the Covid-19 pandemic, "which led to record levels of exclusion of refugee children from the Greek system of education" (AIDA, 2021, p.185). Refugee camps were particularly affected, with longer and stricter measures of isolation, compared to the general public. Access to schools was already hard enough for many large RHC, but the ambivalence about whether neighboring containers at a large camp are considered as separate households (from a health perspective) and heightened fear in the general public (especially in the beginning of the pandemic) meant that an entire camp of thousands of people would go into quarantine, because of a few cases of infection inside the camp. Camp quarantine meant that only one member of each family would be allowed to go outside the camp for necessities every two or three days. During camp quarantine, children were not allowed to go to school, even when the schools were open. As noted in a joint letter issued by 33 civil society organizations, including GCR, "in some places the issues observed have to do with inconsistent interpretation of COVID-19 related movement restriction policies by the Greek authorities, which ends up discriminating against children who, as a result, are not being allowed to leave these camps [in order to attend school]" (AIDA, 2021, p. 170)

Good Practices and initiatives

From the above, it is easily noted that there is an interdependence among the above factors. For example, changes in accommodation status (moving from autonomous living to RHC) can have a direct effect on other areas, such as education. Repeated rejections of asylum status can be detrimental to the psychosocial well-being of refugees and young people have been observed to drop out of school because of this. Educational successes, particularly if they lead to employment, can change the socio-economic well-being of families to the better. Therefore, good practices regarding the well-being of refugee/migrant children should be considered holistically, and good practices on education, child-friendly procedures, family reunification, participation, career development are interdependent in complex ways.

Good educational practices were tested on-site by NGOs, such as the British Council, which operated its educational activities at Skaramagas RHC, in 2016-2018 funded by UNICEF through DfID and ECHO. Students from 12-17 years of age were offered a structured curriculum of English Language classes and Life Skills classes in English (Delaney, 2017, p.8). Intense ethnic tension during that period at the camp (f.e. between Yazidi Kurds and Syrian students) probably affected by the volatile situation at their home countries, led to students refusing to work together and often arguing. The subsequent application of positive discipline practices facilitated the students' learning and positive social-emotional-behavioral development. Self-responsibility and problem-solving skills were emphasized through class activities and as a response to conflicts. Establishing respectful boundaries and teacher authority recognition was difficult for students, as they were used to a more authoritarian, punitive teacher model from their home countries and/or because classes were held in an environment they considered as 'home' (Delaney, 2017, p.8). In this project, it was noted that most refugee students had low to moderate levels of English, mostly oral skills, used for survival, but without deeper understanding of the structure of the language and very low writing skills. Differentiation at the level and type of skill, as well as inconsistency with attendance, made it difficult for the teacher to implement a course structure. Lacking experience in communicating their needs in English led to behavioral problems, whereas difficulties in other subjects were even more pronounced. (Delaney, 2017, p.21). It has to be noted that on average, refugee children in Greece have been out of school for 2.5 years since they left their countries of origin. For some children at Skaramagas RHC, this meant that they children never attended formal school or had been out of formal schooling for a long time, being in effect de-schooled. Sitting down, following instructions, listening to the teacher, sustaining attention was very difficult for them. The uncertainty about how long they would be at camp, the incessant insecurity about their residence and life situation contributed to feelings of helplessness and resignation, reflected in students' behavior: they came late to lessons or did not attend regularly, being used to a life with little structure and consistency (Delaney, 2017, p.20). Most importantly there was a lack of vision for the future: As one 16 year old refugee at Skaramagas RHC said emphatically, when asked about his dreams for the future : "I have no dreams".

As the core values of respect, tolerance and non-violence were strongly emphasized by British Council Staff, children were told that it was not acceptable to refuse to work with someone. Even though students found it very difficult to work together, especially with other nationalities and a time of adjustment through pair work and small groups was given. Experiential classroom activities encouraged them to find things that they had in common with each other, for example, making posters on 'our group' and 'we all'. Non-verbal drama activities were introduced to develop empathy. Students worked initially with their friends, yet final feedback and discussion involved the entire group. Physical Education students selected their partners to practice volleyball and soccer, but gradually formed bigger groups, introducing the idea of teamwork. Gradually the groups became mixed in nationality and gender, and, in some cases, "students self-organized mixed gender and nationality groups to play outdoor games and sports during recess", which showed the impact of the project (Delaney, 2017, p.22). It must be noted that ethnic segregation was also used in allocating the students to different schools in formal education, as the companion-attendant in the transport bus was usually of the same nationality and spoke their language. Additionally, RECs considered that the goal of approaching and integrating with the local Greek students would be undermined if the refugee students from the camp would arrive with tensions already building among them. On one or two occasions where mixing occurred, there were intense fights, including physical fights between different refugee student nationalities, which alienated them from local students. Let's not forget that these nationalities at that time were at war in their home countries, with intense resentment in many families. It would not have been realistic to resolve this type of tension by mixing them at school, and it would distract them from integration to the local Greek society, which was the ultimate goal.

Other good practices that should be strengthened are: More intercultural schools should be established, as they tend to be very popular among refugee/migrant families, but their number is very small. More partnerships with local schools could also form and more joint activities could be initiated to provide the school inter-connectedness that is recommended (Sirius Watch, 2018); Reception Classes should be established and with the help of interpreters and cultural mediators should engage more refugee children to formal education.

Homework support and NGO educational activities at camps or in urban learning centers were helpful in assisting children attend state school, as long as there was no overlap on educational activities with mainstream schooling hours. Such activities were popular especially in RHCs and any students not attending was due to expectation of subsequent relocation in the immediate future (Palaiologou, Kameas, Prekate & Liontou, 2021. p. 326). Training of teachers for refugee/migration issues, learning how to respond to psychosocial needs of refugee students in trauma-sensitive way were also good practices offered mostly through the Xenios Zeus and PRESS projects and should be expanded to all staff involved with refugee education, including the formal education sector. Cooperation and inter-connectedness between the formal and non-formal sector seem to have worked very well, as the two sectors can complement each other in a whole-school approach. The whole-school approach can bring inclusion and equity in education. Non-formal learning has been

assessed as valuable contributor to integrating children of migrant backgrounds. This makes sense, as children spend around 85% of their active time outside school and in non-formal settings, their individual needs of newly arrived migrants can be more accurately addressed. individual needs of newly arriving migrant learners (Sirius Watch 2018b).

In a more general context, good practices by NGOs, such as Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Greek Council for Refugees (GCR), Solidarity Now, INTERSOS, Municipality Development Agency Thessaloniki S.A (MDAT), Metadrasi etc. aimed at promoting the integration of beneficiaries of international protection currently residing in temporary accommodation schemes into the Greek society, through providing legal aid services to asylum seekers, including legal representation before the asylum appeals committee, raising awareness and reducing barriers to the fundamental right to asylum. (DRC, 2019, p.19). Integration courses were also established within Integration Learning Centres, focusing mostly on Greek language learning, cultural orientation, job readiness and life skills; accommodation support was given through contributions to rental, move-in costs and networking with apartment owners; employability support was offered through job counseling, access to job-related certifications and networking with private employers, as well as integration monitoring and help to navigate through Greek public service providers (IOM, 2021); activities for the prevention of family violence; homework support clubs etc. Appropriate staff selection was of paramount importance, but in general, all state and NGO personnel working for refugee issues are experts, with high qualifications, committed to their difficult work, most with rich volunteerism experience and wishing to make a difference to refugees' lives.

Not-so-good practices

The pandemic affected refugee population disproportionately. Greece was swift to impose early nationwide public health restrictions, the lockdown measures and mass quarantining were applied more stringently and for longer periods of time to refugees and asylum seekers in RICs and RHCs. Greek authorities have consistently failed to integrate refugees and asylum seekers into national prevention and response plans and disease surveillance systems, and no coherent medical response plans have been put in place in any of the island RICs. Healthcare had been particularly difficult for refugees, even before the pandemic, making health access a continual challenge since 2015. Approaching the end of isolation measures, the Greek authorities have still not established a testing and contact tracing system for refugees and asylum seekers in Greece (Kondilis et al, 2021, p.4). Isolation rules at RHCs in lockdown were stricter than in the general population, for whom movement was permitted on a self-signed declaration. Gate control, at the entrance of each RHC, would not allow more than one member of each refugee household to go out more often than every couple of days and only for necessities. This aggravated the isolation and stagnation sentiment, already present among many refugees.

Regarding unaccompanied minors, law enforcement procedures have not been good practices. The prosecutor as the legal representative of the unaccompanied child is now limited only to his / her official legal representation. Formal information on unaccompanied minors' living conditions is not enough, and there are serious shortcomings in healthcare access for this vulnerable social group. Refugees could receive free medical care in a public hospital, but serious obstacles emerge with access to information and communication in the mother tongue.

One of the worst practices that sadly, still continue, even though it is reduced, is detention: The latest report by the Global Detention Project mentions that as Greece's response to refugee has been dramatically inadequate, with aid workers referring to thousands that have been stranded for years in the islands in "indescribable" conditions. Detention facilities have been described as amounting to inhuman and degrading treatment., whereas unaccompanied children are detained for lengthy periods because of a persistent lack of space in reception centres and shelters. Authorities detain people for their entire asylum procedures in the islands. if they come from countries with a low international protection recognition rate, rarely employing alternatives to detention. Detention facilities are often police and border guard stations (Global Detention Project, 2019).

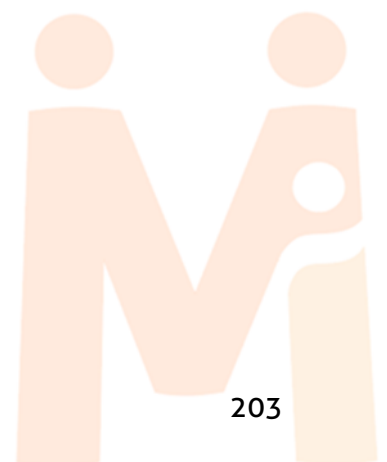
Another not-so-successful practice was access to healthcare, which is complicated due to a number of bureaucratic obstacles, despite the guaranteed right to healthcare (Article 11 of the European Social Charter). Access to healthcare is severely compromised in island RICs (Leivaditi et al., 2020). RHCs and RICs should be staffed with medical and paramedical staff, as well as logistics staff, psychosocial support and cultural mediation.

Other practices to be changed and are not limited to children only, but affect the entire refugee population, are: the massive congestion of RICs (hotspots) at the Aegean islands, especially of Lesbos and Samos should be immediately relieved with asylum seekers transferred to the mainland; accommodation evictions when housing programs terminate should not occur if families have not been occupationally rehabilitated and able to support themselves.

Reflection and conclusion

The collection of data and research results from many sources and at different levels is a first stage of holistic study for the best proposed solutions. The refugee issue in Greece is a complicated one with many unpredictable factors present, including decisions at international political level. Greece, as a transitional country was not ready to properly manage the refugee influx the country faced. The economic situation of the last years with the imposition of memoranda of austerity made even more difficult the appropriate strengthening of infrastructures for the reception but also the subsequent settlement of the refugees. The lack of central co-ordination by one body and the autonomous informal management by different, uncoordinated bodies often led the situation to a dead end. A

striking example, was the merger of the Ministry of Immigration Policy with the Ministry of Civil Protection in 2019 which proved a political failure that was finally reversed a year later. Accommodation is unstable, as it relies on short-lived programs and many face fear of future homelessness. The asylum process continues to be lengthy and complicated, although improvements have been made in the process. Regarding education, although it is provided free of charge to all citizens living in Greece, many refugee children are not enrolled due to inadequate information and/or lack of easy access. It takes the persistence of individual initiatives, such as the one by the British Council and personal commitment of state and NGO staff to encourage children to stay in school. The pandemic unfortunately reversed much of the progress made during previous years, and as its end approaches, good practices developed in the past should be re-activated. Vocational training and integration into the labor market is probably the most pressing need for young refugees, as most programs for assisted autonomy come to a conclusion and refugees are called to stand in Greece on their own two feet.



3. Qualitative research

4.1 Methodology design

Short description of how the research was implemented (copy paste the table from methodological section)

Research site			
	Type of research site	Location (urban/rural)	The number of total migrants
RS1	Field research in urban camp, Skaramagas Camp	Skaramagas is an old navy base situated 11 km west of Athens. It is located in a vast industrial area, outside the urban center and near the port of Piraeus in Attica.	The estimated population on September 18, 2018 was 1.918 people (41% men, 22% women, 37% minors) (Site Management Support, 2018).
Selection criteria of the site and procedure (gatekeepers)			
RS1	Skaramagas refugee camp is a representative place to meet the project's research aims (Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe). In addition, access to refugees held in camps - controlled by government bureaucracies and administrated by NGO - need permission in order to conduct a research study. So, our research team was interrogated about the aims, the purposes of the research project, about how the research would be used and obtained permission.		
Description of location(s) and/or institution(s).			
RS1	Skaramagas Camp one of the largest refugee camps in mainland Greece, started operating in April 2016. The space belongs to the Hellenic Navy and the camp was under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Migration. Refugees are hosted in container shelters equipped with electricity, refrigerators, air-conditioning units and plumbing. Skaramagas camp has a Safe Zone for unaccompanied children and a Child Friendly Space.		
Period of data collection & number of days at the research site			
RS1	The members of the research team visited the camp four times (16 July 2020, 23 July 2020, 29 July 2020, 01 September 2020) in order to gather and share the perspectives of refugee children on their realities and better understand the situation, the current circumstances, the main challenges that children with different socio-linguistic background are confronted with through observations and interviews with children, teachers and personnel of the camp. However, preparatory steps were taken as part of a pilot study between April 2019 and January 2020. In particular, students from Hellenic Open University (HOU) interacted with refugee children in a positive way through planned, flexible, psychoeducational interventions that aimed at illustrating the potential of art for creating and promoting dialogue in an intercultural environment. In addition, deliberative meetings were organised with the camp managers in order to get acquainted with the aspects of culture in the camp.		
Brief description of "entering" the research site			
RS1	Skaramagas camp was an open structure allowing refugees to move in and out. Police officers were present in the entrance of the camp and helped to ensure and maintain security.		
Number and roles of researchers participating in the process			

RS1	The research team consisted of six researchers, three researchers from April 2019 to January 2020 and three from July to September 2020. The role of the first team includes the initiation of the process and the facilitation by developing a quality relationship with the camp managers and by identifying internal and external societal dynamics in the camp. The research of the second team consisted in 21 interviews, participant observation and contacts with teachers of the camp. It is important to emphasise the role of the interpreter from Danish Refugee Council (DRC) as a language mediator during the interviews and the role of a facilitator between the interviewer and the interviewee.
How respondents (migrants) were selected	
RS1	Respondents were selected by the staff. It is important to underline the child's willingness to work together with us and the parental permission. The age of the participants varied between 10 and 17 years old. It is essential to note that the children in early and middle adolescence were purposively selected in order to ensure that they could answer the research questions.
How the respondents (migrants) were approached	
RS1	The respondents were approached as active participants in the constructions of their experiences and as part of the process in identifying solutions to the problems they face. The research team provided them information about the purpose of the research and explained why they have been selected. The explanations were given in a language they understand. Interviewees were welcomed in a culturally appropriate way. Additionally, interviewers respected each individual participant's experience, their privacy, the children's development level, their language abilities and emotional state. It is important to note that children had the time to express themselves and they were informed that they could stop participating at any moment without a reason or they could seek further information about the research. Of course, consent forms were prepared and we obtained parents' verbal and written consent. Confidentiality and anonymity (anonymise the dataset for analysis) were guaranteed by researchers.
How the research was facilitated by staff at the research site?	
RS1	The staff facilitated the research by giving information to the children before the first visit of the researchers and by explaining what kind of questions would be asked. They also provided useful details to the research team about current situation in the camp. The staff created a trusting and positive atmosphere and was ready to provide support to children in case that they experienced any distress. So, the personnel helped children feel safe, comfortable and relaxed and supported them in expressing their experiences. In other words, we conducted face to face interview and the staff ensured the safe participation of the children.
Difficulties encountered and ways to overcome (like getting access during empirical work, social closure etc.)	
RS1	In conducting the interviews, we considered issues such as communication problems that could limit mutual understanding, the nature of children's emotions (hesitation and shyness or memories of traumatic experiences) and the need of flexibility from the part of researcher. In front of these challenges that required solutions, we opted to speak clearly and more slowly, to encourage questions, to allow sufficient time for the interview, to establish positive relationships, to create a trusting atmosphere and to avoid direct and indirect questions that may lead to re-experiencing difficult situations. Of course, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant negative impact on research.
Additional descriptions and explanations	

RS1	Children did not answer certain questions and we respected children's feelings. The researchers tried to be sensitive to what is suitable for the children. Regarding data analysis, quantifying and qualifying the problems expressed by participants remain a barrier. The period of our research (the interviews) was four days and this can provide only a snapshot of the reality expressed by children.
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Short description of the sample

Nr.	Date & duration (min)	Gender	Age	Country of birth	status
Interview 1	16/07/2020	F	13	Syria	Refugee (pending relocation case)
Interview 2	16/07/2020	F	12	Syria	Refugee (pending relocation case)
Interview 3	16/07/2020	F	12	Syria	Refugee (pending relocation case)
Interview 4	16/07/2020	F	13	Syria	Refugee (pending relocation case)
Interview 5	16/07/2020	F	11	Afghanistan	Asylum seeker
Interview 6	16/07/2020	M	12	Syria	Refugee (pending relocation case)
Interview 7	23/07/2020	M	13	Syria	Refugee (pending relocation case)
Interview 8	23/07/2020	F	12	Syria	Refugee (pending relocation case)
Interview 9	23/07/2020	F	11	Syria	Refugee (pending relocation case)
Interview 10	23/07/2020	F	10	Syria	Refugee (pending relocation case)
Interview 11	23/07/2020	M	11	Iran	Asylum seeker
Interview 12	23/07/2020	F	12	Afghanistan	Asylum seeker
Interview 13	29/07/2020	M	16	Iran	Asylum seeker
Interview 14	29/07/2020	F	14	Syria	Refugee (pending relocation case)
Interview 15	29/07/2020	F	15	Afghanistan	Asylum seeker
Interview 16	29/07/2020	F	15	Afghanistan	Asylum seeker
Interview 17	29/07/2020	F	13	Syria	Refugee (pending relocation case)
Interview 18	29/07/2020	F	15	Syria	Refugee (pending relocation case)
Interview 19	01/09/2020	F	17	Afghanistan	Asylum seeker
Interview 20	01/09/2020	F	15	Afghanistan	Asylum seeker
Interview 21	01/09/2020	F	16	Afghanistan	Asylum seeker

4. Findings from participant observation

Description of findings from participant observation phase concerning based on fieldnotes and templates from the methodological section (approximately 2000-2500 words for the section 4)

4.1 Social dynamics

Description of physical environment

Skaramagas refugee camp is one of the largest refugee camps in Greece. Regarding the living conditions, the refugees are accommodated in container shelters with electricity,

toilets, running water, hot water, air-conditioning units and televisions. Inside the camp, there are grocery store, bakery, barber shops and cigarette booths. It is worth reporting the identification and implantation of educational programs and activities for refugee children aiming at helping them master a new language (host country language), acquire English skills (lingua franca), learn literacy skills and overcome gaps in knowledge. Furthermore, are organised recreational, cultural and skill building activities. Education equipment and materials such as blackboards, books, reading material and a basic library were available. In addition, are offered basic health care, including health education, hygiene promotion and psychosocial services (health care services were provided by Hellenic Centre for Disease Control and Prevention and before, creative actions were implemented by Red Cross for children in order to promote health and cleanliness of the area).

The general objective is to promote multidimensional support to refugee children, a particularly vulnerable group, in order to encourage a holistic development (cognitive, social, emotional, socio-cultural). The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) is responsible for the administration of the camp and provides afternoon educational activities, especially in the form of homework support to students already registered in Greek state schools (Palaologou, Kameas, Prekate, Liontou, 2021: 204).

The atmosphere of the “educational context” can be described as the process of ensuring equal opportunities for all children regardless of their glosso-cultural background and the culture of the research site can be divided into two basic principles: safety and respect.

Interactions between migrants and personnel

Teachers and staff members model positive, healthy behaviours for the refugee children while they have a responsibility in helping them understand the new socio-cultural norms and become a part of the host society. The staff try to make children feel safe, in other words, provide them a place where children can feel physically (security staff), socially and emotionally (through educational programs, structural pedagogical activities) secure by creating a warm environment and building an atmosphere of openness. It is important to underline that the staff who interact with refugee children communicate in a child-friendly way and also report the listening culture among staff. They give children full attention when they are communicating. During the observation of the behaviour and communication of the staff, it is noted that the personnel adjusts its behaviour to children’s emotional state and they try to use clear and easy to understand language. They communicate with refugee children in Greek, English or, in some specific cases, messages are also expressed by facial expressions or body language. But the body language remains neutral in order to avoid distressing children. In cases of weak communication points, the staff ask for clarifications, paraphrase what the children said, verify they understand correctly. In addition, interpreters from Danish Refugee Council (DRC) play a vital role in facilitating communication with refugees. As observed, the staff is equipped with basic (but essential) knowledge including: understanding of intercultural communication, respect of human rights, respect of child’s

boundaries, sense of culturally sensitivity and empathy. On the basis of this, we can perceive that the efforts on the one hand, for an effective communication and on the other hand, for a stable environment play a key role in reducing and preventing conflict given the fact that we were not directly or indirectly witnesses of negative behaviours /conflicts. Principally, from the educational activities, issues such as diversity, multiculturalism, religious diversity are emerged but are approached in a superficial and not in a structured way.

Interactions between migrants

The long-term presence of refugee children (between 7 to 72 months) in the camp allows them to develop relationships with other children. During the visits to the camp, we detect social interaction between refugee children, a strong need to bond with others and desire to negotiate with their environment. Through a systematic observation of the children's behaviour first-hand in the natural setting and, namely, in the class, positive relationships are noted, for example when children do not understand their teacher the others try to explain or during activities children play cooperatively and share coloured pencils, markers etc. On the other hand, negative feelings like threat among children of the camp or feelings of isolation / subordination are not registered. It is important to underline that the number of students in class at the camp (non-formal education) is limited, 4-6 children that come from similar backgrounds and interact in their mother tongue or in some cases in Turkish. The use of refugees' mother tongue is often seen as a barrier to integration that could further marginalize refugee children but in reality, the maintenance of the home language is linked to a reinforced sense of belonging, a development of a secure Identity and a greater cultural awareness. It is essential to note that friends can be a stabilising feature in the refugee children's lives but from the data captured in direct observation are not considered sufficient to gauge whether the bonds between children are strong or a conditional friendship.

Networking and identity categories

Trying to crystalize the social dynamics and the presence of formal or informal social networks requires some sort of ordinal data. But due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of visits at the camp as the length of time that we spent in camp do not allow researchers to witness the lenses of different kinds of social relations. However, we observe that refugees have encounters in the public space (in the camp) and opportunities for "extra-camp" interactions (rights of mobility) such they have access to social services as health and education (in public schools outside the camp and as mentioned above, in the afternoon special classes for the students in the camp). What is more, in the classrooms, refugee children seem to have positive peer relationships and seem to prefer same-ethnicity and same-gender peer interactions. This is considered very important in thinking about how are shaped children's friendships and by which factors are affected. Respectively, in the public space of the camp, children play with others of the same gender and same ethnic origin.

Consequently, it is shown that children have more intra-ethnic contacts and friendly relations with peer from the same group (gender) maybe because these interactions are linked to a greater sense of empowerment, feelings of protection or a sense of safety. It is also essential to note that the emerged atmosphere is this of a cooperative community.

4.2 Institutional procedures

Access to social support, health and legal protections

It is noticed that it was very difficult to respond in a timely manner to refugee's needs because of the large population but in terms of access to social support, health and legal protections, we can report that most forms of assistance are carried out by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO). Specifically, we observe targeted efforts of humanitarian assistance from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), sessions which include – among other – nutrition, women's health, food handling. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) and staff disseminate relevant and updated information on issues related to social support, health and legal aid (detailed information regarding legislative acts relevant to asylum procedures, appropriate interpretation). We observe that refugees are also informed in a more anonymous way through leaflets, pamphlets, posters in public space in the camp or face to face discussions with the personnel.

Standards for the reception and accommodation of migrant children

Children and their families are living in pre-fabricated structures in temporary accommodation, in open refugee camp. Inside the camp, there are also offices for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), a community centre, a playground, a Safe Zone for unaccompanied children and a Child Friendly Space. Refugees have access to electricity, food security, health services and education.

Access to education and/or language training

As noted earlier, Danish Refugee Council (DRC) provides afternoon educational and sport activities at Skaramagas refugee camp. Generally, in the realm of education of refugee children, it is noticed that all students can have support for developing both the host country language (Greek) and an additional language (English as an international, a world language) in the camp. From our observations in classes, some children are proving effective and efficient second language learners (second visit day at camp: *the girl had a good level in Greek language*). Children have access to non-formal education that includes various structured learning situations with accompanying psycho-social support in order to deal with the challenges facing refugees. Pedagogical and creative art activities are implemented and tailored to refugee children's strengths and needs. In this reflect, children benefit

personally, socially and emotionally (second visit day at camp: *during activities, all children are enthusiast*). These activities help children reintroduce a sense of normalcy into their lives and restore hope. Also, after-school programs in the camp seek to recover lost time by completing educational requirements. Most of the children have had limited or no access to formal schooling. Hence, we note several emerging issues in relation to the norms of school behaviour, the knowledge of how to be a student and the adjustment to a new school system. It is true that refugees face socio-cultural challenges: master a new environment and a different educational context. The following extract from field notes demonstrates this behavioural fluidity: (second visit day at camp: *children forget that they have lesson, teachers are looking for students to remind them they have lesson, students – especially boys – make noise in the class*). In this sense, their academic success can be jeopardized by issues related to lack of knowledge of value of the new school culture.

Regarding formal education, refugee children have the same right to education as nationals. So, they attend basic schooling, are enrolled in public schools where there are transported with buses. Specifically, the daily transportation and escorting of refugee children from camp to public schools are guaranteed. We have to note that with the closure of schools due to Covid-19, only distance learning was offered. In the camp, the children were "semi-excluded" due to the limited connectivity and access to on-line resources and the lack of sufficient equipment (tablets, laptops).

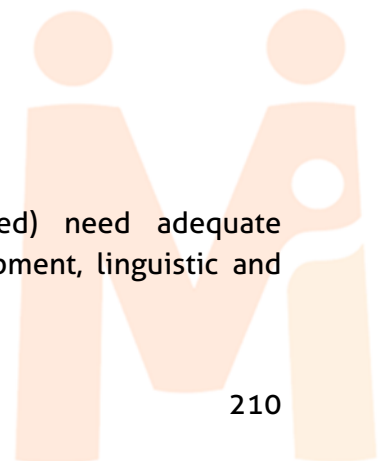
Contact with and integration in the local community

According to brief notes we take as we observed refugee's social interactions, we report that their social relations with the local society are sporadic. The institution facilitates refugees by providing freedom of movement, whereas the characteristics of the residing environment discourage contacts with host society members. In particular, Skaramagas refugee camp can be characterised as a segregated neighbourhood where ethnic minorities from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Africa are the main inhabitants. This fact limits interactions with the host community. On the other hand, we did not notice (during our stay in the camp) even from the part of host society support of intercultural events that could favour interethnic relations and promote the integration process in the local community.

In addition, the measures taken to mitigate the spread of the Covid-19 virus have fostered the deployment of temporal "bordering" practices. Specifically, significant movements restrictions are implemented which have resulted in a negative impact on social connectedness / interactions.

Access to child-friendly information,

All refugee children (accompanied, unaccompanied, separated) need adequate information adapted to their age, gender, stage of mental development, linguistic and



cultural background. It is noticed that what we lack is a coordinated effort that maximizes all available resources in terms of child-friendly information. However, we observe that the information providers (staff and teachers) communicate with children in a culturally sensitive way, try to provide age and gender appropriate information, in other words, information intellectually accessible to the child. For example, they use language that children can understand, vocabulary adapted to their age and maturity, they avoid complex vocabulary, they pay attention to tone of voice and eye contact, they avoid harmful behaviours (stigmatisation, humiliation, degrading treatment). Also, the information leaflets are written in several languages, present positives images, are child friendly such they use pictograms and colours and are putted in a place where the child could see it casually.

Access to rights and relevant procedures

During the visits at the Skaramagas refugee camp, regarding access to rights it is vital to report:

- Asylum procedures: applying for asylum is a process that consists of a series of steps, so the process is time-consuming. In this context, Greece has transformed from a short stopover to a host country. On the one hand, refugees receive information about asylum procedure in their language but on the other hand, they face severe delay in the completion of registration of asylum claim. Nevertheless, during the procedure they have right to access food, legal aid, medical assistance and education.
- Respect of human dignity – basic needs: provide an adequate standard of living conditions. As mentioned above, the refugees are accommodated in container shelters with electricity, toilets, running water, hot water, air-conditioning units and televisions.
- Security: regarding physical protection, adequate supervision is observed (security officers) in a clearly indicated place
- Access to food and sanitation: sufficient housing conditions, sufficient washing and sanitation facilities are offered
- Access to health care: health status is a complex issue that requires a comprehensive approach. In the camp, we observed medical staff
- Access to education: regarding education - a basic human right - it is observed that children are enrolled in formal and non-formal education that contribute also to the self-reliance and empowerment of refugee children

Standards and good practices to restore family links and reunify families

It seems that there is a real endeavour on the part of refugees to maintain the bonding links of the immediate family (we observe they eat together) and to build strong connections with the family abroad. Consequently, they invest in these interactions thanks to internet, mobile communications and social media. So, access to internet and mobile connectivity

(telephone services) help refugees to restore links with family members back in their home countries or in other host countries. Particularly, most refugees report having family members in other European countries and seek to be reunited with them. Separation from family is a stark reality and family reunification remains a constant theme. However, the process of reunification faces serious administrative obstacles (lengthy procedures, waiting period, costly process, documentation needed or the narrow definition of “family” (beyond the nuclear family)).

Alternatives to detention

N/A

Child-centred approach institutional support & assistance to migrant children

It is critical to report that through a systematic observation-based assessment of the nature of the support and assistance to refugee children, we are led to the conclusions that the research site seek to pursue a child-centred approach. For instance, creation of child friendly spaces with educational, recreational, sport activities in after-school programs on site which play a vital role in cognitive, psychosocial children’s development and improve refugee’s children well-being, welfare and competences. Through activities such as “portraits”, “travels”, “masks” and other meaningful activities the children as active participants and autonomous individuals are placed at the centre of the educational process giving them opportunities to move, express their views, learn independently, explore the environment, discover new things, boost their imagination. In face of such experiences, beyond traditional literacy practices, we could say that children’s voices are heard and respected but we are not witnesses to what extent children have the ability and opportunity to influence some of the things (issues and decisions) that affect them.

The right to be heard and other participation rights

It is critical to note that we do not have tangible findings from our observation regarding children’s right to participate in the procedures affecting them.

4.3 Differences in reception processes

Observations of the diversity of refugee’s experiences revealed positions of respect and appreciation for the differences. Specifically, overt behaviour is not affected by salient cultural factors such as gender, religion and ethnic identity and parameters such as legal status, age or any other distinguishing characteristic. The culture in the camp focus on unity and support. In addition, refugees are not a homogeneous group. The multiculturalism lived in the camp and the respect of difference approach adopted seem to create space where

everyone's input worth on an equal field. However, lack of knowledge or misinformation about socio-cultural differences could increase instances of intolerance. Summarizing, it is noticed effort to find the right balance, to establish productive communication with refugees free from stereotypical perceptions and to obtain wide understanding. Furthermore, the factors mentioned above are taken into consideration cumulatively in a positive way: as different groups that have special needs and face different challenges, they have different treatment according to their age, maturity, gender and origin. So, are kept in mind refugees' social and emotional needs and are detected sensitivity and responsivity toward vulnerable groups.

5. Interviews with children in transition

5.1 Institutional support & assistance

Standards for the reception and accommodation of migrant children,

Regarding the reception and accommodation of children, one child reported that: C21: «When someone comes to Greece at the first day don't have any house or any place to stay but when we came to the camp and the accommodated us and I noticed that there are some people who care about us I think that was very good moment". So, poor reception conditions and lack of appropriate care are reported for the newly arriving individuals and families. The temporary accommodation centres (camp) provide a framework of accommodation able to cover the basic life and social needs, access to health services and non-formal education.

Access to education and/or language training

Education is a basic human right and a key for the integration of refugee children. According to the findings of our research, 15 children go to school, 5 children do not attend classes (all girls) and one child responded "not anymore" without specifying the reason (maybe because of COVID-19 or schools were closed for summer vacation?). Most of the students report going to school regularly. They are enrolled in formal education and emphasise that schooling provide them opportunities later in life. However, some refugee children do not take part in any education system. Regarding refugee students' views about school culture, interactions, relations with friends and teachers, they revealed difficulties that they have already experienced. More precisely, refugee students face problems related to language (*I speak a little Greek*), literacy, lack of communication with native students and teachers (*I don't speak with Greek students*), discrimination in school settings (*We are in the corner*). The lack of Greek language proficiency remains the main obstacle. Also, they have difficulties in getting use school rules. In this point, we have to underscore that the participants had limited, interrupted formal education or had no prior schooling. Further, in a few cases, they said that the teachers and/or the school climate are not enough supportive and their individual needs have insufficient attention. Regarding non-formal education, as

noted above, it is considered as a pathway to formal education, it expands academic enrichment opportunities and help children handle the challenges of the transition from life in their country to the receiving society.

Contact with and integration in the local community

The integration of refugees is multidimensional and a complex process that is affected by factors such as lack of proficiency in the language of host community or social support. Of course, the pace of integration varies within and across families. On a social-linguistic level, acquiring a language is part of a broader process of social integration into a new society (Mesch, 2003: 42). On the other hand, social support can function as a driver that promote healthy development. The prevailing impression from the interviews is the lack of a well-coordinated and state supported integration process. The lack of national language proficiency, in other words, the non-functional Greek is the main obstacle refugee children face in social inclusion. At our question *What languages do you speak?* the interviewed children said: C1: «English, little. I have little Greek. My language is Syria», C16: «I speak a little German, a little Greek, a little Turkish and Farsi». In this regard, refugee children represent a group of particular linguistic needs and interest due to multilingual language use. Regarding their linguistic repertoires, they are multilingual or potential multilingual as they speak more than one language but they manifest insufficient skills in the majority language (Greek) and a highly uncontrolled/unstructured language performance in others (English, German, Turkish).

And the relationships (social bonds/bridges/friends) are limited, C4: *Do you have friends?* One friend, C7: *Friend from Syria*, C12: *Have you made new friends?* No, I don't have. Most of the interviewees said that they don't have friends, condition that deprive opportunities for sociability or they do not have native friends and prefer intra-ethnic relations. In this sense, friendship formation between refugees with the same linguistic and social background is reinforced by the sense of sameness or by psychological proximity. Further, the refugee children's marginalized position does not help them interact with the culture of the hosting society.

The school experience can have an influence on the sense of belonging, on the sense of being accepted and through school children have a greater exposure to the new language and culture. The participants stated: C4: *Class here, no*, C7: *I go to school. I don't talk*, C8: *I don't talk to other children at school*. There are participants who do not have relationships with peers from the majority culture. Some children do not have the opportunity to share their ideas with other children or to be involved in the local community (C1: *My family say don't go outside*, C2: *Do you go outside the camp?* No). Specifically, children are not allowed by their family to leave the camp for security reasons and then, movement restriction policies are ordered by Greek authorities aiming at limiting the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Additionally, the majority of respondents hope to reunite with family already settled in destination countries (such as Germany, Holland, Belgium) and maybe it is difficult to get into the process of adjusting to a completely new culture, new language or unfamiliar educational and social systems in Greece given the fact that they see Greece as a transit gateway and by no mean their final destination even if the host country may become a long-term home.

Standards and good practices to restore family links and reunify families

Family reunification under the Dublin III Regulation (UK, 2019) is a process that prioritizes family unity, that is, the right of all family members to live together. As the interviewees said, they want to live with their family members in another country. So, family reunification is an urgent process for them, in order to be with their family members. Many of them, 8 out of 21 they have relatives abroad, 5 of them have family members in Germany. Some others have siblings in other countries such as Holland and Turkey. There are refugees who await family reunification for many months. The asylum applicants' experience indicates that they are waiting many times to be reunited with their family members or relatives who reside in another country. There are children of the family who remain separated from their parents and siblings. Family reunification procedure under DR III was planned to give chances to asylum seekers who remain in states such as Greece which is a first entry country (Europe's south-west borders), but in practice its implementation is complicated, time consuming and arduous. Children reported: *I like Germany and I want to go to Germany because I have siblings and the siblings are minors and they want to do family reunification. We have sent the request, we got three refusals (C18), One brother in Syria, one brother in Germany (C9)*

Child-centred approach institutional support & assistance to migrant children

There is a child-centered approach support from Danish Refugee Council (DRC). The programs have a child-centered orientation that recognise children as active participants within social interaction. The educational program aims to support the emotional health of children, kindle positive feelings towards their new environment, facilitate their active engagement in learning, encourage them to be creative. It should be emphasized that personnel charged with assisting the refugees can play a crucial role in breaking down barriers to successful settlement outcomes and social inclusion.

C21: When I need something, I can ask from the employees in the camp.

Summary, afterschool programming for refugee children support refugee-background students, recognize their potential and promote personal, social skills and improve educational outcomes.

5.2 Well-being, experiences of migration & life in transit

Family and relatives

It is important to note that the children that participated in this study are with parental care. We have to note that unaccompanied and separated children represent 8% of all children arriving in Greece by sea in 2016 (UNICEF, 2017). A principal theme emerged from the responses that children provided is relationships with their family and the bond with siblings and friends that are important sources of hope (Yohani & Larsen, 2009: 255). The relationship between children and their parents is a key factor influencing children's development. The children were asked Which people in particular will you turn to for help when you need something? C2: *My father and mother, C13: Help... my family, I will let them know and my closest friends, if they will be able to help me or to give me some advice, most of the time I'm going fix the problems by my own. So, I just need some advices.* The participants indicated their family they can turn to when they have a problem and that indicates that they have positive family relationships. This practice provides an opportunity for connection and relationship-building and indicates the support family system. However, parenting practices and behaviors can affect children's social and emotional development. According to the report of SOS Children's Villages (2020: 18), 59% of the participants indicated to be able to turn to someone within their family for help, advice or support. The children need their parents to be supportive, to understand their concerns, to assist them to feel safe and secure.

The children have relatives in their home-country and maintain contact with family members. They want to remain in contact with them and the relationship with relatives helps children to have a better sense of belonging. It is essential provide to children and their families a sense of security in a new community without losing ties to their culture. The study shows that children live with part of their families and miss other family members. For instance, they try to keep in touch with relatives in home country via various communication channels. (C3: *In Syria do you have family? My grandmother. Do you talk with her? Yes*). So, they can call home multiple places. In addition, children and their families do not forge a sense of attachment with host community because Greece represent a transit point to Western Europe. In other words, refugee participants consider themselves to be still on journey and seek to move onwards in order to reach their desired destinations. Their aim is to be able to be reintegrated with their siblings. (*I want to go to Germany because my brother lives there*).

General Life in home country

Knowing that the majority of refugee children and their families have left their countries of origin due to violence, conflict and deprivation, we avoid questions that can reactivate the pain of traumatic events and we opt for a neutral question without emotional complexions / engagement. «Tell us if you went to school at your country and what did you

learn there? ». More in-depth questions or additional information on the given answers were not requested.

In absolute terms, 9 children reported to have gone to school, 5 to have never completed any formal education and for 7 children we have not elements regarding the under-consideration subject. Refugee children also spoke about the difficulties they faced in their home country (war, conflicts, insecurity, bombs).

Reason for migration

The participants in our research did not give the reason for migrating but indirect explanations. We have to note that we avoid "why" questions that could affect the extend of predicament of refugee children. In interviews, children stress that war, conflict, violence, persecution and general insecurity push displacement. C1: *«In Syria, it's not good...we have a problem... we have a difficult problem [...] and then problem like bombing at my school»*, C2: *«Life in Syria no good, and fight»*, C13: *«There was there every morning, I was like, we can go with the sound of bombs»*

Experiences related to migration (ex.travel, life on the move)

The question posed was «To which other countries did you travel to until you came here and how did you get here in Greece? ». The respondents said that they tried to cross to Greece from Turkey. Representative answers were:

C13: *«I was born in Iran, but I grew up in Afghanistan. We first met we wanted to arrive to Greece, the borders between Iran and Afghanistan was closed, so we had to travel to Pakistan and from there to Iran and then to Turkey. So, it was like 30 days until Turkey and then we went to the ship and then we came here. Then we passed the sea. It was extremely difficult like»*

C20: *«Born in Afghanistan. I travel to Turkey and Greece. It was Turkey the first country»*

At this point, it is important to mention the results from a study conducted on newly arrived Afghans and Syrians / Iraqis in Greece in early 2016. According to them, 77 per cent of the respondents came directly from Afghanistan and were not living in another country before coming to Greece and more than 85 per cent of the respondents came directly from Syria (UNHCR, 2017).

Some children reported to have arrived in Greece through different routes by sea – not always specified – and have stayed in a transit country for 20-30 days (C1: *«It's there in Syria...and then I was going to Turkey just from twenty days or little from twenty days about I have to come here»*, C13: *«So it was like 30 days until Turkey and then we went to the ship and then we came here. Then we passed the sea»*). It must be noted that the length of the journey

and the time they spent in other countries before reaching Greece are not part of our analysis.

Coming in a new country

Concerning to the question “What do you think children from other countries want to have when they come to a foreign country, eg Greece?” many refugee student replied that children want to feel safety and have quality life. This question is an interpretive parameter for themselves. May these replies reveal how they feel and what they expect from the host country. In this reflect, they indicate the tools they need to rebuilt their lives. Specifically, they need mental health support, psychological equilibrium in order to rebuilt confidence (*they like to be relax*), safe spaces to pursue their interests (*they like to be safe*), quality education to develop their skills, (*I think they want to continue their education*), stability and quality of life (*they like to have a good life*) and support for resilience (*they want to like the country that they attend*).

Everyday life

To our research question *Can you describe one day at the camp? What do you do?* Refugee children state they swim, play, go to school and read, activities that help them regain interest in the joys of life (C6: *We swim and play. We eat food and sleep*, C11: *I read English book, I learn to write and I like life in the camp*, C19: *I go to the classes and then we go to the house and we spend our day there*). Through leisure activities, children try to restore a routine, overcome the traumas and built a sense of normalcy. But are not mentioned recreational and play activities or life skills programmes in a structured environment. These “basic” activities mentioned by interviewees limit children’s quality of life and ability to fully recover.

Satisfaction with new life

In this part, our goal is to gather comprehensive information in order to gain a richer understanding of refugee children’s life in the receiving country. Moving to a new country may have important psychological and social implications. It means leaving things behind and rebuilding elsewhere. Our aim is to listen to children’s feelings and to record the factors that might influence their sentiments. A majority of the interviewees said that they like life in Greece, especially the sea and the sun, the school, but without giving further practical details. In addition, living in Greece is considered as the beginning of a new life in safety and their experience of first arriving in Greece was positive. Representative responses: C1: *«Yes, it’s nice [the sea and the sun]. I’m always swimming here now like swimming»*, C3: *«I like here.. school and friends»*, C12: *«I like life here... I am safe here... I am happy now»*.

Listening to children help us understand what they are feeling and their concerns. So, the issues emerged were the high cost of living, financial instability, sense of belonging, realization of loss of a home, fact they are separated from their families, feelings of insecurity, lack of social interactions/interpersonal relationships, and hence, social isolation. In addition, migrating to a different country signify having to learn a new language and social norms. This might be a challenging experience for children. In this reflect, refugees face a constant challenge to overcome social, cultural and language barriers.

C1: «I like it. Everybody is good in here. But just one problem. We are here to stay. We like it here, but they have too much money here, too much. And it's not good that when I go I think I need to take someone I think and like that everything is too much money»

C21: «When someone comes to Greece at the first day don't have any house or any place to stay but when we came to the camp and the accommodated us and I noticed that there are some people who care about us I think that was very good moment... I had the special feeling which I don't have now, I had the special feeling that I was home and I don't have it now... I haven't been familiarized with the culture and other behavior of Greek people because we spend most of our time in the camp and about the nature of Greece, I like it, I like the sea»

Five refugee children interviewed reported directly that they don't like life in Greece and they may have experienced sadness and depression.

C8: «I am not happy. You don't like life here? No»

C18: «Now it's pretty difficult. There is no way to come to Greek life way parts, let's say, cause it's a close and stuff like that. And for the moment, it's not really a, not adequate the country to come to, especially for this, uh, moments now. So, the last, uh, last a couple of years, we didn't have schools... I don't like life here»

The research process involves children from three countries: Syria, Afghanistan and Iran. We can find a statistically significant relationship in this response when analysed by home country and preferred country. The five children are from Syria and Greece was not their intended destination. They want reassemble the family group, restore the unity of the refugee family. C7, C8, C10 and C18 want to go to Germany and C17 to Belgium in order to join family members. In this reflect, migration – sometimes a forced choice - can be a stressful experience, can increase the emotional distress and may have a destabilizing effect on their lives.

We also invited children to tell us what they want in order to be happy in the receiving country. The participants stated basic needs, satisfactory living conditions, social interactions and opportunities for a better life/future. Specifically: C2: «*Children from other country, when they come here what they want? Friends, food and school*», «*I like play and school and food*», C13: «*Work here for a better life [...] the best way to help them is to treat*

them like a human», C20: «I think they want to continue their education and they want to be safe and they want to like the country that they attend»

Refugee children regardless of their ethnic group have similar needs (short-term and long-term needs) when transitioning to a host country (food, home, friends, safety, education, work). If we seek to identify how refugee's needs differ across nationality, we could find a slight difference. Children from Syria reported mainly basic needs (food, home), they want to have access to vital basic resources and children from Afghanistan education, friendship and opportunities for a better life. In addition, the "simplicity" of their needs highlights the struggles they have experienced. So, it is important to support protection, basic needs services and guarantee education of high quality that can empower refugee children.

Identity, belonging, role of ethnic group, religion community

One child stated: When we came to the camp and they accommodated us and I noticed that there are some people who care about us I think that was a very good moment. I haven't been familiarized with the culture and other behavior of Greek people because we spend most of our time in the camp and about the nature of Greece, I like it, I like the sea. we felt that there is someone who cares about our education in Greece (C21) . Refugees have little exposure to the receiving country's culture and they are not familiarized with the host country's constitution, culture, fundamental norms and social values. Of course, integration does not mean that refugees assimilate into the dominate culture. But acceptance, tolerance, openness, positive climate are required from both sides – refugees and host society – for a successful integration.

Well-being, health issues, mental and psychical health, trauma

Many refugee children encounter psychosocial challenges, acculturation stress, difficulties of integrating into a new culture or gaps in schooling. Refugee children bring with them a range of complex experiences and the adjustment problems they face (emotional and behavioral disorders, emotional distress, low positive self-esteem, low educational attainment, anxiety, anti-social behavior, anger control management or long-term psychological trauma) during their experience as refugees have serious implications for the future – foreseeable or in the long run. These mental illnesses can cause disturbed sleep, inattention and social withdrawals (Hussein, 2018). The stressors to which displaced children are exposed are described in three stages during all periods of migration: i) while in their country of origin, ii) during their flight to safety and iii) when having to settle in a country of refuge (Fazel & Stein, 2002; Hodes, 2000).

As mentioned earlier, knowing that the majority of refugee children and their families have left their countries of origin due to violence, conflict, insecurity and deprivation, we

avoid questions that can reactivate the pain of traumatic events because we do not want children to become nervous, scared or uncomfortable. In this sense, we opt for a neutral question without emotional complexion /engagement.

Refugee children interviewed reported:

- Sense of belonging: the process of integration in a socially and culturally unfamiliar country far from home could pose significant challenges related to mental health (C21: I had the special feeling which I don't have now, I had the special feeling that I was home and I don't have it now).
- Exposure to new language / culture: low host-country language skills and new social values can provoke post-migration stress (C1: I have little Greek... it's too much, a little difficult I say, C21: I haven't been familiarized with the culture and other behavior of Greek people). In addition, participants refer that limited Greek language skills represent a fundamental hurdle and cause a sense of isolation (C1: Greek language, a little difficult I say, C17: Do you speak Greek? A little, I prefer English)
- Inconsistent or non-existent schooling – break off their studies or never attend classes: the children interviewed for this study share their school experiences and more specifically the limited access to education (for some children) (C4: Class here, no, C5: I don't go to school, C16: I haven't gone to school yet)
- Resettlement experiences such as lack of safety, financial difficulties (C1: they have too much money here, too much) and unemployment (C12: it is difficult to find a job) are linked to anxiety
- Inconsistent, poor social support system have significant impact on integration process (C18: the very first time when I came to Greece, I was happy, but since then, nothing made us happy)
- Family separation: Family represents a fixed point of reference and being separated from family, away from their immediate microsystem of family and friends may be associated with psychological equilibrium (C3: My brother is in Holland... my grandmother in Syria, C8: my brothers in German, C10: In German, siblings two, C12: I do not have new friends, only old ones)
- Parents who were separated from their children or lose contact with them can affect negatively the children's social and emotional development (C17: My father is missing)
- Participants report poor social network (C2: one friend, C4: friends no, one friend, C5: I don't have friends). Friendship formation is of high identity forming significance and of vital dimension of child development. Children with limited social network and poor friendship quality (I don't spend many hours with friends) are at risk of loneliness, stress and emotional disorders.
- Intra-ethnic friends: Friendship formation with peers with same socio-linguistic background does not guarantee successful integration in hosting society. (C1: friends from Afghanistan, C6: my friend Afghani and Syria, C6: Do you know Greek children? No, I don't know)

- Lack of interaction/communication with natives does not help refugees strengthen their ties to destination countries (C3: *Do you have fun with Greek people?* C7: *I don't talk to other children at school*)
- Bureaucratic and lengthy procedures can be classified as reflecting stressors (C1: When we take the passport, we go in Germany, C18: We want to do family reunification. We have, every time we send request for familiar and education, we got three refusals. We got three times.)
- Refugee children spend a significant time in refugee camp (C1: I am here. I don't go outside too much) doing nothing (C20: It's really boring [life in the camp])
- It is essential to note that the lack of warm and friendly atmosphere in school (C17: It was a bit difficult, was nice but it difficult because we were just me and the younger sister was just two of us and all the rest were Greeks, and they were looking at us a bit weird), the lack of tolerance and understanding could provoke conflicts of culture and values in a society.
- Our findings highlight the effort to acclimate in the new environment (C21: I think because the person comes to a new country and a new culture definitely, he or she feel lonely and sad a bit and maybe sometimes depressed). However, post-migration experiences are considered stressful and/or harmful
- It remains clear that refugees are at risk for developing psychological disorders due to living conditions, isolation in host community (C1: *my family say "don't go outside"*, C21: *We cannot stay outside our house [...] we wait for the night in order to sleep*) or low frequency of affectively pleasant interaction (C19: I don't play, I don't...any sport or activities)
- Depression: Refugee children state directly that they are not happy in host country (C4: Are you happy? No, C7: Do you like life in Greece? No, C8: no, I am not happy in Greece, I don't like life in Greece, C10: you do not like life here? No, C18: I don't like life in Greece)
- Traumatic memory: Tragic, traumatic reasons why refugees fled their home country are mentioned and may are linked to mental health. (C1: *problem like bombing at my school*, C6: *Syria no good, because we had a fight*, C13: *I couldn't find anything happy there...I would have to risk my life in order to go to school... there is war and nobody can stop it*)

Friends and social network

Friends are an important part of children's lives and represent an essential factor of their social and emotional development. Friendships enable children to develop their own identity, to foster self-esteem, self-confidence and to cultivate social skills. In interviews, participants state friendship formation with natives (*I have friends from Greece*), with other migrants with whom they share a sense of sameness (*I have new friends, the most are from Afghanistan*) and a proportion of refugee children report that they do not have friends (*No friends, I don't have friends*), which generates emotional responses.

We couldn't find strong correlation between nationality and sociability but there is a close liaison between feelings of unhappiness and lack of friends. According to the report of SOS Children's Villages (2020: 11), having friends contributes to children's happiness. The children prefer friends from the same country of origin, maybe because they face similar resettlement challenges (psychological proximity). On the other hand, at school they have the opportunity to socialize with other children. But, from our findings, refugee children have limited opportunities to make friends and interact with them. It is shown that children are subjected to boundary drawing by socio-linguistic diversity. In this sense, some children continue to be socially and linguistically marginalized in the new community.

Leisure time, activities

Play is vital to children's psychological development, cognitive health and resilience and it helps children rebuild social capital and develop skills in creativity and collaboration. It is crucial to give children opportunities to play (leisure opportunities) and propose play-based interventions. Sports and other physical activity can promote well-being, mitigate the memories of war and normalize their behaviour (Boothby & Melvin, 2007). We invited children to tell us about their activities. A large majority of the children when asked *What do you do in the camp? Your favourite sport/game/activity?* said that they like swimming and they play seek and hide, basketball, football and volleyball. These sports – considered to be of universal appeal - based on movement can reduce stress, anxiety and promote a sense of joy and happiness represent the only recreational activities for the children interviewed. The majority of children have the possibility of practicing a sport or a leisure activity. The physical experiences can be viewed as either supporting hope or metaphors for hope (Yohani & Larsen, 2009: 255). Physical play is very essential but on the other hand, structured play or cultural, creative activities are not mentioned.

C19: I don't play, I don't ... any sport or activities

C21: Since I left Afghanistan, I really haven't played that much there is no game to play

In addition, some children reported having household/ family responsibilities (C1: When I stand up I help my mother, C12: I take care of my little brothers).

Aspiration, desires

In any attempt to understand the migrant children's educational needs and to map the educational policies and challenge posed by migration related diversity, prime importance has to be given to the children's aspirations and dreams. We wanted to hear from children about their future ambitions. The core questions that we explore are: *What are your dreams? What kind of job would you like to do in the future?*

Though the number of participants is small – our sample was composed of 21 migrant children – and taking into account the fact that the participants are not used to talking about themselves, as is the case when working with children (Vannini et al, 2015), the outcomes are indicative. The children shared with us information about their views and their dreams. Their aspirations predominantly focused on their education and they want to advance their studies. Going to school is important and the desire for quality, safe and proper education is prevalent. Consequently, it is essential to support children to reach their full potential in a peaceful coexistence with local children, pursue their dreams and achieve their goals. Like the majority of children, they want to study, to continue learning after secondary education. Education will improve their futures and is essential for giving hope for the future. In this respect, children want to have access to future opportunities in their life. After all, the children engender personal hope and adolescent hope tends to be more future-focused (Herth, 1998). We can report four characteristics of our participants: i) they feel capable, ii) they want to improve the quality of their life, iii) they have dreams and iv) they want to obtain independence. They seem to be determined to go to the university (higher level education). In our research, the number of refugee children enrolled in school is 71% (15 children go to school). On the other hand, 5 children – girls- do not attend classes. It is critical to note that they are not mentioned the obstacles that stop refugee children from resuming school. At this point, it is important to say that if a family must choose which siblings can continue with the education, boys are often prioritized (UNHCR, 2019).

According to the research findings, nearly half of the children interviewed reported that they want to become doctor to treat people, four participants cited they want to become teacher, a child dream of being able to fly (pilot) and a girl said being an airhostess was her dream job.

C13: «Yeah that's my dream to be a pilot I have that dream was since I was 6 years old and I have not travelled with an airplane until now, so whenever I see an airplane, I just make a wish and I also put all over my room pictures of airplanes that's a dream», C19: «I like to be a person in future, that my dream is to become a person in the future that can help others and I like to be a doctor»

C15 and C18 are classified as "undecided": C15: «What would you like to study? Designer or psychiatrist, I want to help people», C18: «I want to study English studies for the social center. Dr. [inaudible]. Instead, I want to lawyer in English and German. Plus like for my studies will want to study medicine»

The children cited their dream of having access to higher education and obtaining a university degree. In this way, they express the desire for a better life and get more life experience. This finding was consistent with previous literature. It is important to emphasize that the interviewed children seemed to find the question easy and gave us an immediate response. Only two children stated that they want to study but they don't know what. As mentioned above, on average, the 21 participants were 13.2 years old (range 10 -17). It is expected that during this development period (early adolescence between ages 10-14 and

middle adolescence between 15-17), adolescents begin to have interest in the future and set long-term goals.

Given our results above, it is not surprising that a large majority of the children who were asked about the job they wanted to do when they grew up, they picked from among the most popular, traditional occupations like teachers, doctors, pilots. Our findings are in concordance with the results of other studies (UNICEF, 2017). Young people's career aspirations remain frozen and concentrated in the most common professions over the past three decades. With this perspective in mind, the following questions arise: youngsters are unaware of new types of jobs or the nature of the refugee children's dreams are shaped by their experiences? To go even further in this approach, maybe refugee children cited professions that, explicitly or implicitly, symbolize the issues that they have to deal with: medical assistance / healthcare, education, safe transport?

Our findings seem to correlate with the results of a study reporting that Syrian children want to study and become doctors to treat people in Syria (World Vision, 2019). In addition, it is interesting to note that C1 answered to the question In the future what would you like to do? Me teacher, but my mother says to me to be a doctor that shows that some migrant parents have high academic aspirations for their children, as it is also referred by Brinbaum & Cebolla-Boado (2007).

In any case, it is vital that states take measures to provide inclusive and equitable quality education to migrant children and youth, as well as to facilitate access to lifelong opportunities, including strengthening the capacities of education systems and by facilitating non-discriminatory access to early childhood development» (Global Compact for Migration, 2018:23), so that the children's dream will not remain out of reach.

5.3 Models of migrant children's integration

School life

Regarding peer dynamics, there are refugees who have friends from Greece. C11, C13, C20 have friends from their school and meet them in their class. Also, they have common activities. C11: *I have been going to Greek school for 2 years now and I have met some new friends. I have friends from Greece.* Refugee children note that school offers opportunities to interact and form relationships with members of the host community. Peer relationships provide refugee students a network of support and a sense of belonging in their new contexts. On the other hand, interviewees state that they feel discrimination, social exclusion and express feelings of loneliness (*I don't speak with native students*) probably due to language barriers or cultural diversity. It must be noted that questions about the reasons of marginalisation were not addressed because this area requires more cultural-emotional sensitivity that the context of this research allow.

Four children noted that in the school environment they like their teacher and one student reported the “non-integration” that can lead to feelings of social isolation, uncertainty and helplessness. The child stated the manner in which the teacher treats them and his experience due to issues of stigmatization. C1: *«Good teacher and I think my teacher is too much nice in here but everybody doesn't listen to teacher»*, C19: *«It is nice, the teachers are helpful»*, C18: *«The first year I went the first year, we were like, uh, mostly the, in the corner in the class. She doesn't care. She said basically, I don't know. The grade, the first year we were going, uh, like we had, we were out of state students and the second year we were few, we were also like mix different ornaments»*. Therefore, students stress that they feel safe, supported and valued by teachers but an interviewee expresses concerns that teacher's indifference towards their special needs creates a vacuum of belonging and emotional protection.

According to research conducted by Chiu, Pong, Mori & Chow (2012), teacher's behaviour plays an important role on migrant children's school engagement and feelings of belonging. Teachers can promote positive cross-cultural socialising and help refugee students' psychological adjustment to the new environment. It is true that refugee movement present challenges related to promoting psychological health and social integration in educational settings and teaching students with different socio-linguistic background requires special training, adequate classroom management and inter-culturally responsive pedagogies.

In interviews, a proportion of participants said they have activities and routines in common with others which tighten them more and they feel that they belong to a group. They refer to common activities such as playing, walking, and drawing. C14: *We go for walks*, C18: *We studied together*. As these quotes show, interviewees do not state constructive activities but recreational. Despite the difficult conditions, refugee children are demonstrating strength, resilience and try to find outlet for creativity, experimentation and interaction with others. However, engagement with activities with friends restore a sense of normalcy in their lives.

Additionally, aim in these interviews – amongst others – has been to get a deeper understanding of the configuration of the individual language repertoire. The majority of the participants come from Syria and Afghanistan and they have Arabic and Farsi as mother language respectively. An important part of education policies is language learning that can foster feelings of belonging and is considered crucial for the successful integration of refugee children. We have to note that language can be acquired in different ways through interaction in a most natural way and through direct instruction in the rules of language. At our question *What languages do you speak?* the interviewed said: C1: *«English, little. I have little Greek. My language is Syria»*, C3: *«I speak English and Arabic»*, C16: *«I speak a little German, a little Greek, a little Turkish and Farsi»*, *«I read English book, I learn to write»*.

A large majority of interviewees stated that speak English and attend Greek language lessons. In other words, these results provide a glimpse of how migrant children are building up a new linguistic and cultural identity. At this point, we have to clarify the limited command of the host society language and the low levels of English (C1: *«Do you speak*

English? Yes, little», C4: «English, a little, no many English no», C6: «English, very little. Greek very little»). Through the interviews, it become apparent that interviewees manifest insufficient skills in the majority language and an uncontrolled language learning/performance. However, from these snippets of information, it is clear that all participants are potentially or actually plurilingual. In this reflect, refugee children represent a group of particular linguistic interest due to multilingual language experience and use. Approximately one quarter indicated that they prefer or want to learn English language in order to live abroad or because it is an international skill, a real global language and a way to communicate with the outside world.

6. Conclusions and discussion

Refugee children do not form a homogenous group. They have different ethnic and cultural background, different age, gender, social and legal status and different experiences. Our findings clearly support that they have in common pre-migratory traumatic experiences and post-migration living difficulties that include discrimination, low dominant host country language skills, limited social support and 'unstructured' integration process. A holistic approach to integration is considered important to empower refugees and promote a peaceful co-existence with local communities.

Our study aims to explore the challenges faced by 21 refugee children in preadolescence and early and middle adolescence and provide a better understanding of their experiences and needs. In other words, the overriding is to enter to the children's world of experience and learn what to do to help their psychosocial development. We investigated the following issues: the lives of refugee children in home country, their journey to the receiving country, their lives at refugee camp, their hopes for the future. Summary, it is essential to allow children to participate and have an active role in their treatment. Through the interviews and observations, it become apparent that refugee children and family members influence one another and friendship context is critical to socio-emotional development. Also, participants stress the importance of education in order to prosper in the future. Of course, refugee children must be considered as right-holders and their well-being and welfare must be respected. But it is important to underline that generalizations about their experiences must be avoided due to the small amount of evidence – the size of the cohort is relatively small - and the heterogeneity that characterizes the background of children. It is also critical to note the restrictions due to Covid-19 pandemic and the impact on our research. Globally, we have to encourage the establishment of the child's identity, the educational and psycho-social support, the creating of an environment in which the children can feel confident and powerful.



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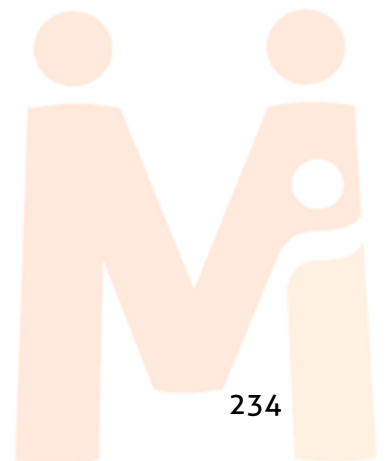
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POLAND

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1. Introduction

This is the Polish report on children in transitions – one of seven case studies on migrant children in hotspots, camps, asylum homes and detention centres in Italy, France, Greece, Slovenia, Poland and Turkey. This report contains a thorough review of existing theoretical and empirical literature on migrant children in the sites (secondary analysis) as well as an assessment of institutional support to children in those sites through public policies (public policies and legislation analysis). It is followed by the analysis of the data acquired in the fieldwork that was done with children in transition in two schools they are enrolled in. The conclusions are drawn based on the participant observation, semi-structured narrative interviews and collection of autobiographical life stories.

In Poland, a study with children in transition occurred to be extremely hard. Firstly, the Office for Foreigners that is an institution responsible for reception centres did not issue permission to enter the Linin reception centre. Researchers approached then schools where asylum-seeking children are learning and obtained relevant agreements from schools' management and parents of children. It occurred however that in the Linin reception centre that was supposed to be the primary research site there are not enough children matching project's criteria. We turn to other schools near the centres which were Bezwola and Targówek in Warsaw where twenty interviews with children seeking asylum were conducted. The state of the epidemic and its restrictions did not allow to interview more children in the study as the border was closed and the number of children in the reception camp dropped radically. Nevertheless, the interviews that were made brought a valuable source of knowledge about children living in a new country and past experiences related to the refuge.

2. Secondary analysis

2.1 Literature review

The academic papers on asylum seekers are scarce in Poland as approaching this group is problematic in Poland. There are several reasons for that. One is the fact that Poland never had any policy towards asylum seekers that would encourage them to stay in Poland. At the level of procedures, they were always harsh and unfriendly leading to a denial of any form of international protection in most cases. On the other hand, also social support for refugees was hardly sufficient. All these factors made Poland a transit country for those who were seeking international protection. Once entered European Union through Poland a great number of those who pleaded asylum went subsequently to other EU countries. It is visible in statistics of secondary movement, which will be cited in another part of the report. On the other hand, refugee flow might be characterised as family flow, which differs from other EU countries experiences. This is probably caused by the demographic structure of the people seeking international protection in Poland. Most of them flew Chechnya and usually, the persecuted head of the family takes his wife and all children for this quest. It meant that children constituted a significant part of asylum seekers in Poland.

Most of the available papers cited below are crosscutting study reports either national ones or comparative across all or several EU countries. In such reports more general issues are discussed and the issue of underage migrants in transition is rather incidental if not marginalized. Many such papers are sponsored by the EU institutions or other international organizations and bodies, like OECD, V4, as well as United Nations agencies – UNHCR and WHO.

The major problem that needs to be addressed for the refugee's children social welfare is to diminish the socio-economic gap caused by the outcast. The first step towards it is

access to asylum procedures. In EASO 2019 report we get clear recommendations on how the border procedures shall be conducted in case of accompanied and unaccompanied minors, with the particular emphasis on the best interest of the child (EASO, 2019). These instructions include the elements of a child-centred approach, like the inclusion of children's voices, the whole-child approach to services. Poland is criticized in the report for lack of formal procedures to assess the best interest of the child, considering it only in the decision-making process, excluding the child protection services from the procedure, lack of tools to assess such interest and special procedural needs, allowing accelerated procedures towards unaccompanied minors, stripping child out of autonomy when accompanied by an adult guardian and poor referral cooperation when a child is missing or abused. (EASO, 2019: 18-37). These reservations are partly confirmed by the Halina Nieć Legal Aid Centre Report, which marks the gaps in the protection procedure and personnel competencies regarding the proper identification and treatment of the vulnerable (HNLAC, 2017: 3-5). It must be noted that asylum-seeking children in Poland, in the vast majority of cases share the fate of their guardians and are not treated autonomously (Kowalczyk, 2014: 262).

Access to asylum procedures after the shift of power and forming the government by the United Right in 2015 was affected by political populism grew on the resistance against EU shared responsibility and solidarity plan during the so-called migration crisis. As a result, Polish borders were sealed and the problem of denial to access international protection by Border Guard's officers began to intensify. This led to a long-lasting crisis on the land crossing with Belarus in Brest/Terespol (Dobrowolska et al., 2018: 9), still unresolved. It happened there that asylum seekers were travelling daily on a train to the Polish border to get illegal denial to access protection procedures dozens of times, and when they were finally let in, then their attempts to get fair treatment were used as a ground to place them in the detention for multiple attempts of illegal border crossing (Chrzanowska et al., 2016; Górczyńska, Szczepanik, 2016). Children here are a particularly aggrieved group, as not being able to enter the safe country they were camping on the Brest train station for months without basic amenities and access to education.

This pattern repeated quite recently in the crisis caused by recapturing of Afghanistan by the Taliban and the refuge of its many inhabitants. Since the first days of August 2021 a group of 45 Afghan and Iraqi migrants, including minors were trapped in the border strip between Poland and Belarus and despite the clear declaration of will to plead asylum are not let into Poland. They cannot also return to Belarus as the officers there are pushing them towards Poland. Poland mobilized over a thousand soldiers to support border guards to protect the borderline as well as unrolled 150 kilometres of barbed wire. It is a clear signal that with the breach of the Geneva Convention on Refugees Poland have no will to provide access to asylum procedures. The crisis is ongoing and politically driven. Lukashenka regime brings migrants from the Middle East, Afghanistan and Iraq to the country and then push them towards Polish, Lithuanian and Latvian border. None of these countries allows them to enter causing hundreds to camp in the forests or storm the borderlines. Even if access to the procedure is granted those seeking protection, including children are subject to detention in the guarded centres for aliens, which resemble the correctional facilities. The practice of

accepting children in detention centres together with their families must be assessed negatively as an infringement of the best interest of the child principle. The same refers to unaccompanied minors where psychological and emotional stress caused by detention may be devastating. Unfortunately, in 2018 121 migrant children were detained with the average length of stay equal to 115 days (Dobrowolska et al., 2018: 40-41; HNLAC, 2018a). Legally, children might be kept in detention centres for up to eighteen months. Between 2018-2019 Szmidt and Niedźwiedzki were conducting unique anthropological academic research in detention centres to assess the situation and opinion of all actors involved with these institutions. The outcomes are not yet known in the reference of children placed there, their opportunities and education however in the statement to Newsweek (Polish edition) prof. Szmidt was pessimistic on this account.

Another problem concerning the possibility to seek international protection comes with readmission issues. Readmission might be caused by the secondary movement of asylum seekers within the EU and in such cases, it refers to the country responsible for the consideration of asylum cases. As we will see in the statistical section Poland is one of the countries with higher rates of applications made for readmission to Poland. On the other hand, we may also deal with readmissions to the safe third countries after the denial of refugee status. Poland has multiple bilateral readmission agreements, including Ukraine. As the watchdog organizations underline, in this last case, the readmission procedures are frequently used by Polish authorities also in the case of children (HNLAC, 2021: 6).

This rather hostile and strict approach to international protection obligations has its baseline cause. For many years in Polish academic discourse on forced migration or irregular migration, there was a division set between *bona fide* and *mala fide* refugees. The latter refers to people who abuse protection procedures to find a place with higher living conditions than those they had in their countries of origin (Grzymała-Kazłowska, Okólski, 2003). The relatively large numbers of those “false” refugees at the turn of the centuries affected largely the migration policy in Poland causing agency suspiciousness towards migrants at large and led to politically driven institutionalized xenophobia (Bulandra, Kościótek, 2014). Of course, many of those who ask for asylum in Poland are indeed absconding the refugee procedure and depart for the other EU countries (HNLAC 2018a: 2; Górny et al., 2019: 41; White et al., 2018: 214), but this effect is currently a kind of vicious circle in which unfriendly procedures, lack of proper integration programs and society hostility discourage asylum seeker from a settlement. Furthermore, in contemporary protection discourse, we observe opinions that many so-called economic migrants are also forced fugitives due to climate changes, natural disasters and economical wars. In such a case their grounds for protection in safe countries shall be equally considered.

Contrary to the development of the protection ideas, more or less declarative, in Poland it seems that government tend to restrict and limit the prerequisites and grounds for protection approval or use narrowing interpretations of the legal provisions. Academics warn that as a result, the Polish system is rather xenophobic, controlling and much less integrative, turning into securitization and restrictions (Fomina, Kucharczyk, 2019). It turns

to affect also a public discourse and societies attitudes towards migrants. Surprisingly discussion about the threat from culturally diverse migrants emerged in the countries that are largely emigrant-sending and who never experienced a mass immigration problem or high levels of immigrants among the societies, such as Poland and Hungary (Weinar et. al., 2019: 2). Against this rhetoric, Poland is presently open for regular migration like never before however, this agenda is hidden behind the anti-immigrant rhetoric (Duszczyk, Klaus and Pszczółkowska 2020: 15).

The major group of papers available in the field of refugee studies concentrate on the integration of asylum seekers and refugees, their welfare, including social position and health care. Most papers show that integration policy towards asylum seekers and refugees either failed or bring significant problems in achieving its goals. According to cross-cutting reports, Poland scored low or average in almost all dimensions of the Refugee integration benchmark consisting of information from 14 EU countries (Wolffhardt et al., 2020). It is worth mentioning that in our judgement in some dimensions Poland scored high unjustifiably, e.g. in health care accession where it is reported a frequent denial of access to special treatment, cancer treatment and ARV therapy for the HIV positive asylum seekers (Dobrowolska et al., 2018: 46-48). Reports show also a shortage of psychological support and vulnerability, ASD and PTSD assessment and evaluation, especially in the guarded reception centres, where it is most needed (detention facilities).

The major criticism comes with the lack of a national integration strategy for asylum seekers. There is a false belief among governmental decedents that asylum seekers do not want to settle in Poland, will leave to other EU countries and are not willing to integrate into the society. With such an approach, all integrative measures are introduced at the minimal level set by the European Union regulations. Legal provisions enforced in such a manner, like access to the labour market, education and social welfare are worth nothing if they are not linked to effective and beneficent friendly social services (Bürkin, Chindea, 2013: 80).

Integration is also futile if meets the hostile environment. Both asylum seekers and recognized refugees have significant troubles in finding accommodation and jobs on the free market rules. The public housing is barely accessible and introduced integration programs are failing in terms of vocational training and job counselling, as well as Polish language proficiency (Łodziński, Ząbek, 2010; White et al., 2018: 220; Górny et al., 2017: 26-33; Sobczak-Szelc et al., 2020: 134-136). The integration is hampered by the lack of a data acquisition system that would allow the identification of needs and the assessment/evaluation of programs introduced (Kosowicz, Maciejko 2007: 119). The integration success is though measured by the case studies rather than caused by any systemic solutions.

Another important issue concern the access to health care by those seeking asylum. As it was previously mentioned apart from basic healthcare consultations the access to special medical treatment, especially for chronic diseases is limited or hardened, mainly due to

unclear legal provisions, also on the international covenant level. In addition, pregnancy care is usually affected by forced migration (WHO, 2018: IX)

Some of the papers, attach particular groups of asylum seekers as children, unaccompanied minors or specific subjects like Covid-19 impact. Here, one report confirms that Poland register one of the greatest numbers of underage migrants however, only a small part of them were asylum seekers. The rest entered as regular migrants accompanied by parents or unaccompanied. Still, each year over one thousand asylum applications are filed for children and over 85% of them are rejected (Schumacher et al., 2019:87). Unaccompanied minors arrive in Poland in significant numbers. Most of them wish to reunify families, join the diaspora community or migrate for educational or economic reasons. In theory, the migration policy authorities and agencies are trained to identify the victims of trafficking, violence or those who have special needs, but practice proved otherwise (Górny et al., 2017; Dobrowolska et al., 2018). Unaccompanied minors are the most exposed for those encounters. Furthermore, asylum-seeking children are the group that most often is missing (EMN, 2015: 31).

The pandemic outbreak slowed down the movement of asylum seekers. In Poland, the border was closed for over fifteen months and during that time only singular applications were accepted. The most occupied border point in the application process in Terespol is still closed for train communication. The railway was the basic mean of crossing attempts for asylum seekers in Poland. Furthermore, a Regulation allowing only certain categories of foreigners to enter Poland was introduced for the time of the epidemic emergency. This extraordinary situation overlapped already hostile and pushing back policies enforced by the conservative government, which resulted in a significant drop in the asylum application, also concerning minors.

Another considerable number of papers relates to refugee and asylum seekers education. Academics estimate that the Polish reception system with the focus on educational framework, as described in comparison to other OECD countries is not an idyllic one (Cerna, 2019). Nevertheless, children who seek international protection as every other child on the territory of Poland have right to the education. It is provided by the school located in the community where such minor is residing. Recently the government announced a plan for separate education for asylum seekers but those plans seem to be not achievable due to financial and organizational reasons. When it comes to the experience of integrating migrants with education systems reports prove it was those schools that accepted asylum seekers that pioneered here, and gained the most significant experiences, then copied and implemented in other schools. The very first experiences concerned Chechen children and are very mixed and individual due to multiple physical and psychical impairments those children have (Januszewska, 2015). Furthermore, most of them are deprived of basic educational tools accessible for their peers, like laptops, speakers, microphones that was particularly important during the remote education period. These needs are completely neglected by the local and central governments.

The major issue referring to the education of the asylum seekers' children is the language barrier and children's disappearance. It often happens that children's parents did not see benefits from learning Polish or attending school in Poland as it was not their chosen destination. For the same reason, a child enrolled on school might have disappeared without any notice. Schools with the presence of young asylum seekers were also the first ones that organized preparatory classes for them and the first that tested innovative integration approaches in teaching (Torowska, 2016; Gmaj, Iglicka, Walczak, 2013: 75-76; Chrzanowska, Jachimczak, 2018: 96). Despite these efforts, from the UNHCR sponsored report on the first 21st century decade, we learn that Poland lacks a systematic response to educational challenges. Based on that assumption, this calls for a legal framework, methodological and educational guidance for schools and teachers, the structure of the school system, availability of teaching materials, necessary funding and a set of logistical models regulating the responses to the challenges linked to alien children in the country (Kosowicz, 2007: 12). This judgment is still valid in the case of asylum-seeking students.

Description of the refugee children in education until the date was rarely made from the child-centred perspective. Most papers provide adult perspectives, come from the narration of teachers and experts, discuss, and analyse their views on the situation of children. They are though not insightful but rather observatory, Most of them are focusing on the shortcomings of the system and repeat above mentioned determining factors considering the language barrier, temporariness of the stay and discontinuation of attendance. In one of the papers, public school was compared to the civic one with tuition fees that sponsored refugee's children enrolment for integration purposes. This school was shown as an example of effective practices for the integration of asylum seekers (Pawlak, 2005: 297-298).

Despite many efforts on behalf of teachers, NGOs and social workers, the infrequency of education among young asylum seekers seem to be the most challenging problem (Jasiakiewicz, Klaus, 2006). Another one is the scripts of intercultural education. There are dozens of papers exploring that issue however most reflect on case studies seeing no systemic solutions supporting such an approach (Januszewska, 2017: 139-140, Nonchev, Tagarov, 2012: 292-293). The lack of systemic support solutions is deepened by negative attitudes towards refugees and migrants that came with the so-called migration crisis and the shift in official rhetoric of the Polish government. These two factors affected the school functioning of the asylum seekers who were facing more discriminative and exclusionary behaviours (Bąbka, Nowicka, 2017: 126). There is a relatively small number of papers analysing the education of host society for the understanding of the refugees and their social situation. Such educational activities are rare, individually driven by devoted teachers, schools or NGOs (Kluszczyńska, Main, 2020: 96-102). Problems of the contemporary refugees are not the subject of the curriculum at any stage of education.

This for sure might be one of the reasons for the phenomenon observed in the Polish public opinion attitudes towards asylum seekers. Reports and analyses show that the shift of power and shift of narration towards asylum seekers in the public media caused a complete reverse in Polish public attitudes on the issue from helpful and accepting to

reserved and rejecting. The background of this change is described in detail in the other MiCreate Report (Bulandra, Kościótek, 2019: 35-37). Refugees lost the nation's sympathy and in many cases were described as dangerous invaders. It has its consequences for the relations between children in schools. The term "refugee" for some time circulated as a bad name, used for mocking. These behaviours were largely driven by stereotypes presented in the media, exploring the issue of refuge in terms of crisis, terrorist threat, ghettoization and other negative phenomena (Miazga, 2018: 35; Goździak, Márton, 2018:143). This message was enforced by unacceptable, xenophobic and sometimes racist statements of the ruling party's politicians and its acolytes (Łaciak, Frelak, 2018: 12). The power of current propaganda is so strong that even students, considered as subjects of rather tolerant and mind-opening academic education are presenting negative attitudes for asylum seekers. The proportion of them is much lower than in the whole society, however still significant (Danilewicz, 2020).

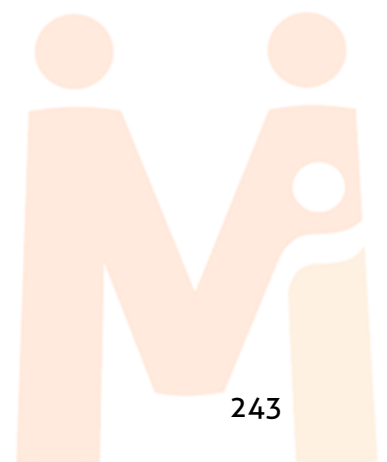
These negative tendencies are often managed on the local level where policy towards migrants, including refugees, is much independent and contrary to governmental narratives. The most developed integration strategies are delivered in the large cities as inter-sectoral cooperation between local governments and social partners. Particularly Gdańsk Integration Model had been developed with the participation of asylum seekers. Academics stressed out that particularly important in this model is its approach to education, which include the child-centred approach with the so-called Creative Pedagogics Project for the exchange of best practices in the field of intercultural education. Teachers and experts, both academic and non-academic, can meet and discuss their experiences during conferences and workshops organized frequently within this framework (Kościótek, Bulandra, 2021: 295).

In similar way consultations in Krakow are made through the Interdisciplinary Task Team comprising of local institutions and NGOs that evaluates and develops the Open Krakow program. Furthermore, Krakow is pioneering in the expansion and professionalization of cultural assistance – the integration institutions that first served asylum seekers. In general, however, it must be admitted that despite the readiness of local government to help asylum seekers their efforts are not on a large scale due to financial and legal constraints. The extent of those programs had diminished with the takeover of the AMIF Fund (that usually served NGOs in their projects) by the governmental regional representatives. In this context local governments in Poland do not consider the integration of recognized refugees and beneficiaries of international protection as a priority but, rather, incorporate it into mainstream policies intended to enhance diversity, integration and inclusiveness among local residents (Soltész, 2021: 20). Local governments are also those who are the only official bodies responding positively to asylum seekers coming in larger numbers on the territory of Poland. Many large cities like Gdańsk, Sopot, Kraków and Wrocław offered housing services for incoming asylum seekers, established ongoing cooperation with local NGOs and humanitarian organizations (Piłat, Podkańska, 2017: 25-27).

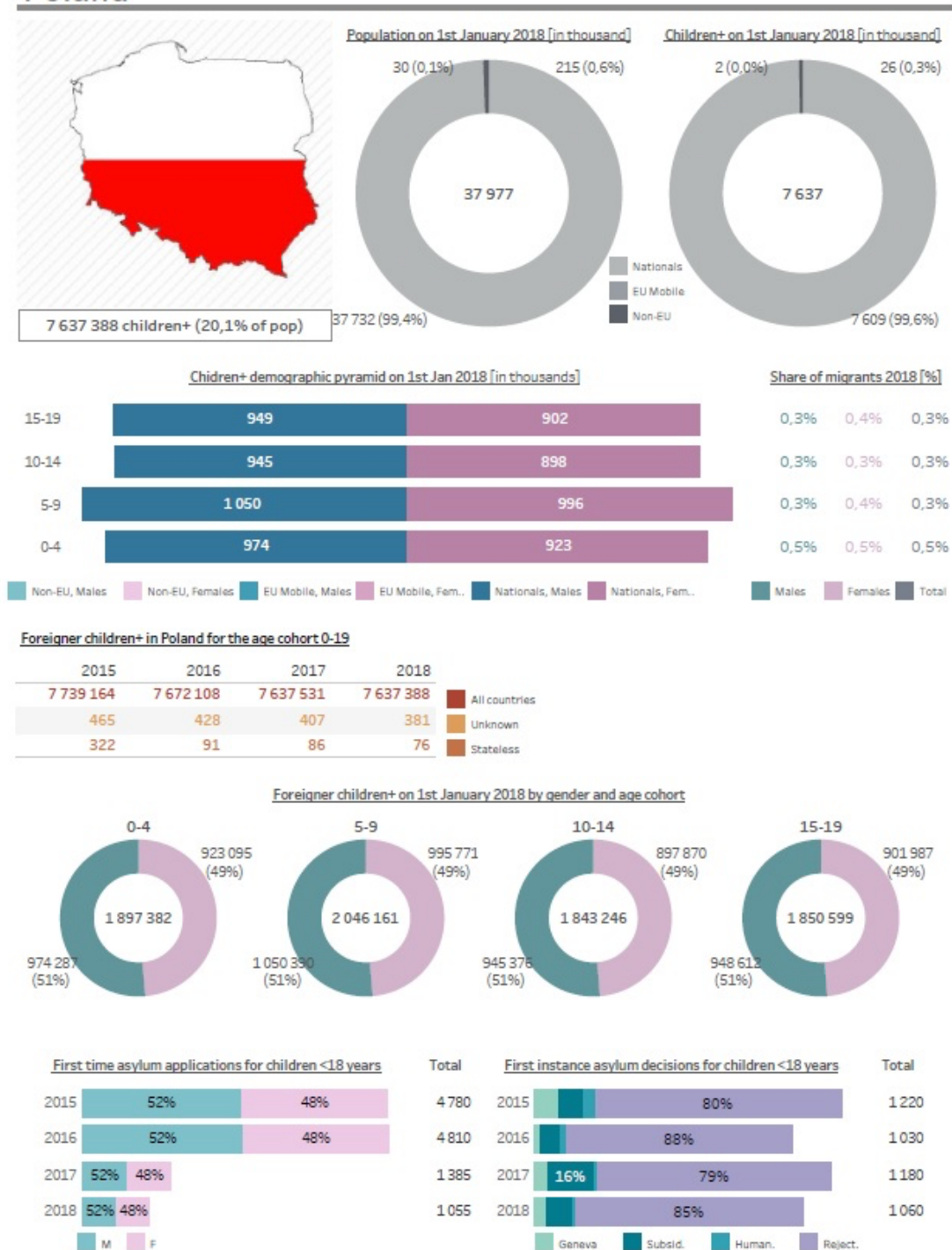
2.2 Statistical data

In terms of numbers, Poland had never been a country with large numbers of asylum seekers. The annual number of applications never exceed 15.5 thousand. Furthermore, there is only slightly above 3000 beneficiaries of international protection living in Poland. Totally since 1991, Poland granted protection to less than 23 thousand applicants (Górny et. al, 2019: 39). However from those who applied or more precisely were covered by the application 45 % were children and youth, with the domination of younger children – below 10 years old (ISP 2019: 4). What is however more important is the refugee status had been largely replaced by the subsidiary form of protection – a new instrument introduced by the European Union with less international rights, especially about travelling rights and its durability.

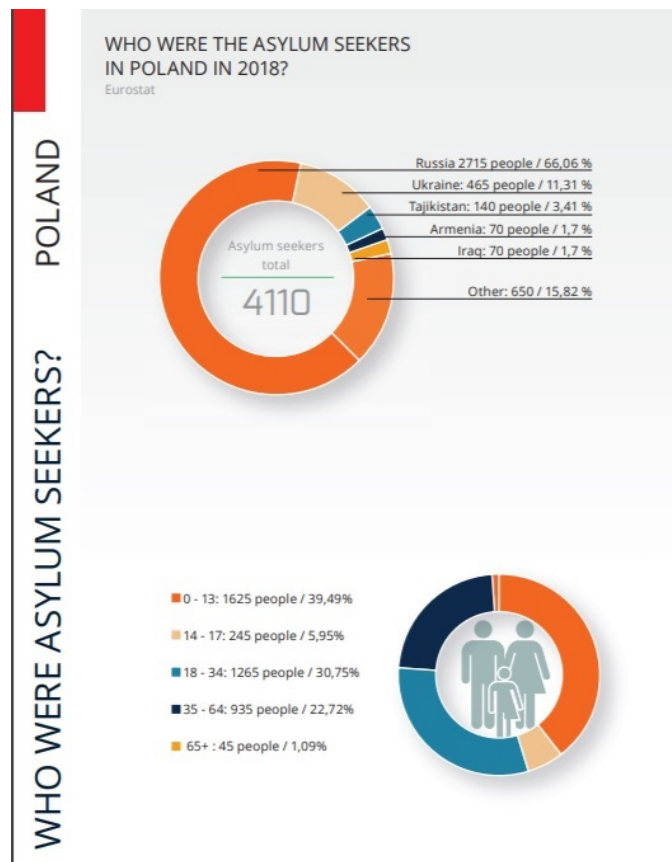
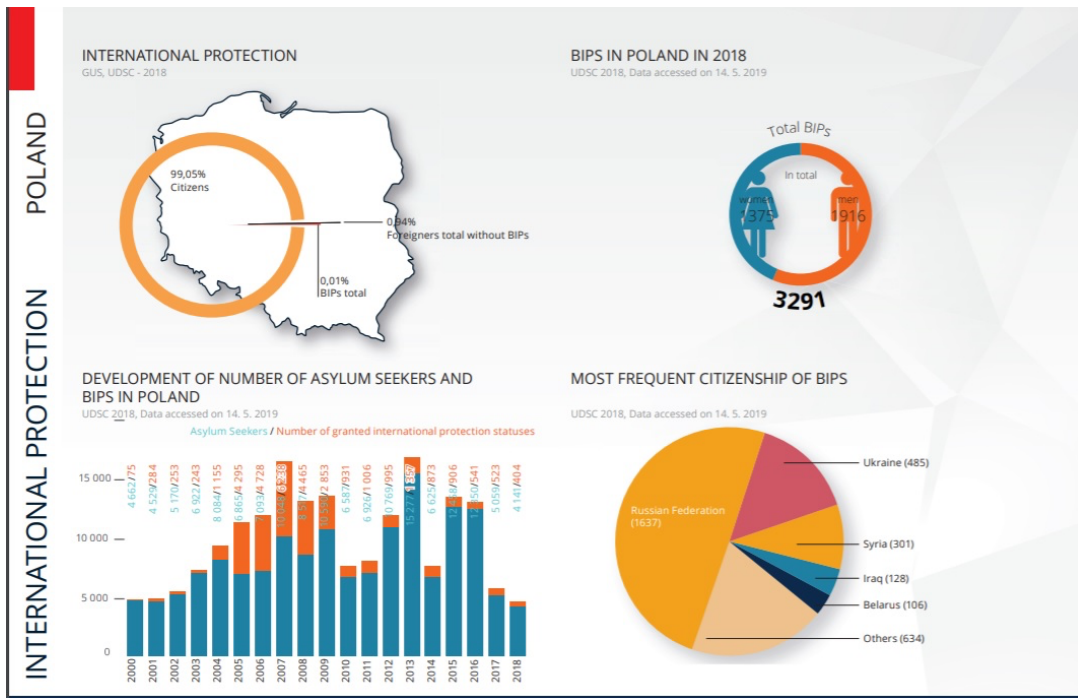
Poland as it was mentioned in previous Mcreate reports (ZRS, 2019: 43-50) is not an immigration country but rather still an emigrants-sending one. This situation is changing, however, but the real data on migrants presence is hard to assess, as there is a problem with the reliability of official data, especially this related to the short-term presence (like visa waivers stay). The data on entries are held by the Border Guards and not available to the public. This gives an enormous dispersion in estimation about the number of foreigners staying in Poland – from 900 thousand to even 4 million annually. Some data on more stable settlements of migrants in Poland will be available in 2023 as between April 2021 and September 2021 a National Population Census Register is being held in Poland. All those who are given statistical numbers (PESEL) may take part. In official data, the number of non-citizens in Poland is still below 2% of the country population while the number of foreign-born children holding residence documents is below 50 thousand. The below figures show the major statistics including the refugee children (Schumacher et al., 2019: 87).



Poland



International protection in Poland (ISP, 2019: 3-4)



The numbers in these several tables did not change significantly since they were published and if it happened all numbers dropped. Poland is still under the depopulation trend that was not stopped by the social welfare reforms implemented by the populist government.

The highest negative rate was recorded in 2006-2007 (respectively -36 thousand, and -20.5 thousand, and in 2013 – about -20 thousand). Recorded in the years 2008-2011 increase in the numbers of the Polish population was mainly caused by an increasing number of births and reduction of the negative international migration rate. Observed in the years 2012-2015 decrease of the number of Poland's population was caused mainly by increasing emigration for permanent purposes. Again this process was slowed down after 2016 by the increase of immigration that replaced the Polish people who left to other EU countries – mainly the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, Ireland and Italy or to Norway (Stańczak, Zaniewska et. al., 2019, Stańczak et al., 2019) This tendency was deepened by Covid-19 epidemic causing yet in 2020 additional 200 thousand deaths. For many months, international mobility was stopped which also affected the numbers of foreigners present in Poland.

In 2021, 505,214 foreigners were holding valid documents in Poland, from whom 321,987 had temporary residence permits and 99,705 permanent residence of third-country nationals. There were 80,883 UE residents and the members of their families, from whom only 10% were residing here permanently. A little over 3 thousand permissions were issued by the Chief of Foreigners Office – who issues documents to beneficiaries of international protection. Only a hundred dozens of foreigners were holding Geneva Passports.

Out of the all groups of foreigners, 301,079 were males. In the group of beneficiaries of international protection, there were 1789 of them. There were 20,714 minors between the age of 10-17, with an almost perfect balance between genders. In this group, 454 children have either refugee status or subsidiary protection.

282,602 Ukrainians were holding valid documents, 34,981 Belarusians, 19,773 Germans, 12,951 Russians, 10,678 Indians, 10,638 Vietnamese, 9,206 Georgians, 8,545 Italians, 6,621 Chinese, approximately 5 thousand Spanish, French, Bulgarians, British and Turkish citizens each, over 4 thousand Romanians and Moldavians each, 3 thousand Armenians, over 2 thousands of Americans, Koreans, Uzbeks, Dutch, Lithuanians, Swedish, Nepalese, Czechs, Hungarians, Portuguese, Slovaks each. Foreigners represented altogether 189 countries.

The number of minors in the 10-17 years old group were gradually age by age falling from 3032 in the age of ten to 2029 in the age of seventeen. Again, the most numerous group was Ukrainians – 13,866, followed by 1400 Belarusians, 920 Russians, 428 Bulgarians, 421 Vietnamese, 349 Germans, 280 Koreans, 252 French, 242 Chinese, 202 Romanians and others, totally coming from 121 countries.

In 2021, 2910 people applied for international protection until the 25th of August, 95 more than in 2020. Man dominated in this group in both years. As in 2020 Russian citizens dominated as asylum seekers (mostly Chechens) that confirmed years-long tradition, then in 2021 Belarusians (1048 to 723) superseded them. This phenomenon is connected with the more lenient approach of the Polish government to victims of post-election repressions of the Lukashenka regime. Most of them applied already being on the Polish territory with visas or entered Poland with humanitarian visas. If we deduct this special group from the total number of applications, we will see that the Covid-19 pandemic caused a drop in regular asylum applications by twice. Other countries are represented by Afghans, Ukrainians, Tajiks, Turkish, Georgians, Iraqis, Syrians, Iranians, Kirghiz and members of over 60 other countries.

A stable number of minors (10-17) were covered by the asylum application. There are 361 of them in 2021, while there was 351 of them in 2020. Younger children – below 13 are dominating in this group. Whereas in 2020 there was a gender balance between minors asking for asylum, in 2021 man started to outbalance women. Russians (Chechens) were dominating, followed by Belarusians, Afghans, Ukrainians, Tajiks, Turkish and other citizens of the former USSR. There were three children from Iran, Syria, two from Angola and The Netherlands (surprisingly), Yemen, and one from Venezuela, Vietnam, Congo, Chile and Finland (surprisingly again).

There is no official data on undocumented migrants or irregular migration at all. We do not have any academic, nor NGO reports with reliable estimations in this regard. In Polish schools, from the system of education information, we know that children without any legal documents are rarely enrolled on schools. Based on the “other” option in this system, we cannot judge however if the migrant is an undocumented one, as it is filled in by teachers without proper knowledge on legal regulations. To give example, in this system teachers often ticks tolerated stay as a status of a child which is not reliable at all. Since 2013 tolerated stay is granted only to those persons who cannot be expelled from Poland for humanitarian reasons but cannot get protection status due to aggravated crime committed against peace or humanity or constitute a threat to the security of Poland. This category does not apply to any child.

2.3 Assessment of institutional support to children in transition

Legal and policy framework

The law concerning international protection both about qualification for this form of residence, the procedure and the condition of reception is completely separated in the Polish system from regulations on regular migrations. This has profound consequences on the integration chances of the asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection (BIPs). The protection status is stuck to migrants for a long time and such a person has little chance to change the label emerging from the status given.

The recognition might have either form of granting refugee status or allowing staying under the subsidiary protection – a new form of protection in common acquis. On the one side, it stripped out asylum seekers given this status of part of social rights refugees usually have, on the other side is allowing protecting those who did not suffer individual persecution but were victims of war or internal conflicts.

In legal terms, separation of regulations meant that BIPs cannot switch to regular migration status, e.g. if they find a job, got married or went to school. Until the five years of residence, they will not get permanent residency. From the perspective of integration, a protection status might be stigmatizing, especially in the current political climate. NGOs reports for many years were showing that asylum seekers and recognized refugees had been severely discriminated against at the labour market, housing and property market and in the schools. This discrimination is based on bias reasons (anti-Muslim sentiments) and climate that had been politically driven. The legal impossibility of switching from protection to regular migration status does not help. The possibility of switching the status could have taken this stigma out of BIPs.

With the generally low standards of integration institutions and tools, Poland was forced to implement minimum standards for BIPs and asylum seekers. This caused a paradox in the migration realm where BIPs were given more rights in terms of access to employment, entrepreneurship, schooling, health insurance and social allowances than highly qualified specialists and experts have with regular residence permits. Generally, in the view of legal regulations, BIPs have the same rights as Polish citizens in the labour market, business activity, education, social services and health provisions. Asylum seekers are given access to the labour market after six months since lodging the application if their cases were not decided in the first instance due to circumstances beyond the asylum seeker's control. They must ask, however, for a special certificate from the Office of Foreigners, which at present takes time and significantly extend the period without access to employment.

Children who are accompanied by parents who pleaded asylum are emotionally and socially affected by their parents' position. As not being independent in the procedure they share the social status of their parents and all the problems and burdens they are experiencing. The length of the procedure is one of determining factors here. Year by year this time is extended. According to Supreme Audit Authority in 2014, the average length of the procedure was 435 days, and the longest one lasted 1034 days (NIK, 2014). Currently, there is no data on that matter, however, excluding applications where asylum seekers absconded procedure, we believe this time again extended. It is visible in reports and complaints of NGOs helping refugees who are raising this issue quite frequently (Górny et al., 2017: 59).

During this procedure, families are usually staying in the reception centres. According to the law they have however right to allowance for covering the expenses of the accommodation outside the reception centre. These allowances exceed presently half of the social expenditures on asylum seekers accommodation. Living outside the reception centres

becomes a real challenge. There is a large problem with finding sufficient accommodation for usually large families. Activists helping asylum seekers reported also discrimination from landlords and accounted that allowance is below the market average rent rate (Wencel 2011: 12,15). This allowance is 5,5 EUR per day for a person, which equal 165 EUR per person a month. It is not sufficient to rent a decent place in Poland. In such a realm most of the asylum-seeking families stay in the reception centres. Currently, there are ten of them in Poland. Except for the three of them, all others are located outside the cities, usually far from any human inhabitation – in old military bases or buildings abandoned by the industry. Our research was held in one reception centre located in the capital city – Targówek district, and one near the small village of Bezwola, close to the Belarusian border.

All persons placed in the reception facilities are provided with the catering services or allowances to cover victualling on their own. They are getting also pocket money, allowance to buy clothes, cosmetics and cleaning stuff. They can participate in free language lessons and children enrolled on schools have the right to get the tools and materials necessary for learning. If there are some funds allocated by the government, additional support might be given for extra-curricular activities and interest development. Travels from the reception centre are covered only for procedural or medical purposes and upon prior agreement on other justified grounds. This social support is far insufficient for the needs of asylum seekers, especially at the first period of their stay when they are banned from working. The one-time-paid allowance for the purchase of clothes and shoes is 30 euro, which barely gives the possibility to buy something in the second-hand shops. For children, for whom in the kid's culture outfit and presentation is an important indicator of social position, lack of possibility to buy decent clothes might be exclusionary. A monthly allowance for cosmetics is 4,40 EUR. The feed rate is 1,9 EUR daily. Pocket money is set at 11 EUR and can be raised to 22 if an asylum seeker is taking cleaning jobs at the premises, helping in translations or organizing the cultural and educational activities for the reception community. This shows that the Polish government exploits the community work of asylum seekers and praise it according to a discretionary decision with an extra 11 EUR. It is really hard to judge it in any ethical code of conduct. It is exceptionally patronizing and can be shaming for those who received aid at such a level.

In theory, children who are not accompanied by adults have the right to special treatment. They are represented by a legal guardian appointed by the family court and placed under custody or foster family/home. Such minor is informed on possibilities and organizations that can help it with family and relatives search and further reunification. During the interview before the consideration of asylum application, the legal guardian must be present and a psychologist or pedagogue who provides also expertise on the psycho-physical condition of the minor. Other minors can be covered by special treatment only upon the discretionary decision of the migration authorities.

At last, asylum seekers have the right to free legal assistance in challenging the decision of rejection of the application in the first instance or final decision of rejection before administrative courts. The scope of this assistance is too narrow as for the qualification for

international protection the most important is an interview made, as well as delivery of essential evidence. Legal aid at this stage of the procedure is most effective and often decisive for the successful applicant.

The scope of governmental assistance to asylum seekers is widely criticised. There are no sufficient proactive pre-integrative activities introduced. The level of participation in language courses is low – 14-17% of asylum seekers are learning Polish with the least intensity. No vocational training or job preparedness assessment, nor job counselling is made (Górny et al, 2017: 69).

As it was already mentioned, no children except unaccompanied ones are treated as individual and autonomous persons in the course of the procedure. They are covered by the application of their guardian and their individual story is usually not heard. The perspective of the child, its story and experiences is not part of the factual background of the decision made. Children are invisible both in the procedures and in the reception reality.

Main concepts, goals and instruments

Poland to date did not develop any comprehensive migration policy, not mentioned asylum one that would include integration or mention children as autonomous agents or subjects in the migration framework. The legal change or approach to migration was usually driven by the *acquis communautaire* and only minimal standards set by EU directives or regulations were adopted. This has changed in 2015 when Law and Justice Party came into power and for populist reasons started to question the common asylum policies. It resulted in the rejection of the “fair share mechanism of responsibility” and many other deteriorations in forced migrants’ treatment.

Currently, the ruling party is playing out the Afghan crisis to threaten society with mass migration and security threats. The government started to build a 2,5 m high barbed wire fence to stop so-called illegal migration flows from Belarus. Poland banned 25 to 32 Afghans, including minors, camping on the borderline to enter Poland and lodge applications for refugee status. Until October 20th 2021, the crisis lasts for 72 days and many of those asylum seekers are in critical health condition. No doctors or organizations with material aid or food are allowed to the site. People stuck between are hungry and dehydrated, drinking only dirty water from the swamps. As the extraordinary state was imposed on the borderline with Belarus there is no citizens’ or media control over what is happening at the border. On the 20th of October, some of the Usnars “refugees” in desperation forcibly broke the border entanglements and entered Polish territory where they got beaten and arrested by Polish Border Guards. These people according to NGOs “Grupa Granica”(Border Group) were already on the territory of Poland, willing to apply for asylum but were illegally pushed back. Furthermore, they were the object of temporary measures issued by the European Court for Human Rights that ordered to provide humanitarian and medical aid to those people and let their lawyers access. The order was

ignored by Polish authorities. It is unknown if members of this group were allowed to stay in Poland or were returned to Belarus.

Another story refers to so-called "Children from Michałowice". It concerns a group of adults with children who were caught by the Border Guards after illegally crossing the border. They were seized on the Polish territory and taken to the Border Guards' Station in Michałowice. After several hours, despite the expressed will apply for international protection they were taken to the borderline, probably somewhere in the forest and pushed back to Belarus. The case of children got the national public attention and caused severe criticism of the government, nationwide rallies and many petitions. The fate of children and families are not known, some were reported to stay in forests between Poland and Belarus, while others supposedly reached Germany. The push-back policies are presently a common practice used by Polish Border Guards for those who crossed the border illegally. Only in singular cases, those people have access to asylum procedures, regardless of their will and declarations. The borderline with Belarus is currently under the emergency state, so there is no external public or media control on the events occurring within the zone covered by the emergency state. Despite international and national protests, on October 22nd, 2021 a change in the migration law was introduced that legalized pushbacks on the borderlines. This law is another one on the list of breaches of constitutional and international law by the Polish government.

The situation on the borderline with Belarus became very complex. There are presently hundreds of attempts to illegally cross the border. Only in singular cases, these people are granted access to asylum procedures regardless of their declarations. Until October 24th, 2021 over a dozen deaths were confirmed, but many more are reported by asylum seekers and NGOs and stayed unrecorded. This must be considered as a humanitarian crisis that is not managed by the government with respect to international conventions and customs. Furthermore, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Defense organized a press conference to accuse asylum seekers of paedophilia, terrorism and bestiality. The conference was broadcast in prime time, available for children and Polish Ministers presented images of the intercourse with an animal, supposedly found on the asylum seekers' phones. As it was soon verified by journalists these images were downloaded from the web and were not found on the phones of migrants. The official propaganda was also focusing on alleged provocations of the Belarusian officers. In major news program in public media, a hair trimmer and a watch abandoned near the fence were presented as bomb dummy to support this accusation.

Society is divided into those who favour aid and entry and those who treat asylum seekers as invaders. All those are a consequence of the negligence of all previous governments and lack of civic education. In addition, the new populist government politicized the asylum and migration phenomenon, exploited this issue in public media creating an anti-immigration and anti-European narrative. In turn, there was a considerable turnaround of Polish public opinion attitudes towards migrants (Sobczak-Szelc et al., 2020: 21).

Lack of policy documents caused each time *ad hoc* reaction to incidents connected with migrants. Poland was also not able to work out any durable solutions referring to irregular migration as asylum seekers are considered in Poland. The growing numbers of undocumented migrants living for years in Poland and well integrated into the society caused several outbursts of public discussions and defence when such people or families were facing forced expulsion. As a result, short-term solutions of abolition laws were implemented twice, in 2003 and 2012. It did not solve the problem of undocumented migrants and only a very small part of irregular migrants benefited from those solutions.

Another example comes with the case of Simon Mol, a Cameroonian refugee and poet who deliberately infected dozens of Polish women with HIV. The affair went out in 2007 and since then for several years no African person was granted refugee status in Poland. Again, it happened during the first government formed by Law and Justice Party. In general, each time law or the governmental approach has changed it was always entailed by the interest of the state, not the interest of foreigners. The current widely but secretly accepted influx of foreigners into Poland again was justified by the needs of the employment market and the necessity to generate GDP efficiency.

The only strategic document came in 2012 under the name Polish Migration Policy – Current State of Play and Proposed Action, followed in 2014 with the implementation criteria. In this document, underage asylum seekers were not mentioned directly nor were any measures for integrating them proposed. This document was revoked in 2017 and replaced with the draft proposition in 2019 that was never passed by the government due to wide criticism from NGOs and academia. The vision of migration in that document was nationalistic, assimilating, driven by security threats and sometimes, even racist, like identifying Islam with terrorism or accusing Western migrants as those unable to integrate. It was prizing collective but integralist values against individual human rights protection. The education again was driven by nationalistic sentiments, out of cosmopolitan and intercultural learning. No specific solutions for a young asylum seeker or BIPs were included.

Migrant children were not recognized in education for many years. It changed only in the second decade of the century where the first integration measures were introduced. These were additional language classes, compensatory subject tutoring to diminish differences between educational systems, the aid of cultural assistants and preparatory classes. All of them were first implemented in schools where asylum seekers were attending.

Good Practices and initiatives (GO and NGO)

The fate of asylum seekers and their children were always the concern of the non-governmental organizations working in the field. The state was never interested in taking any initiative to empower young asylum seekers. If any progress was made it was either caused by the obligation to implement minimum standards or the accepted postulates of advocating NGOs. The integrative work of NGOs is widespread bringing many good practices,

often publicly disseminated however, they never turned into any large-scale policies or unified methods of social working. These practices are focusing on the language learning and teaching practices, increasing the engagement in school attendance and preventing discontinuation of education, promotion of intercultural assistance with the professionalization of the job position of such helpers. In the field of social support, typical humanitarian aid is provided, however, a few projects were focusing on job counselling and vocational training. The most numerous projects were realized in the field of cultural exchange and intercultural education. Young asylum seekers were empowered during its implementation and actively engaged as equal partners or co-creators. None of these projects had any nationwide impact. Usually, they were locally implemented practices, short-term or one-time, abandoned after the end of the financing period.

Many good practices are introduced in schools by its teachers. Usually, they rely on introducing elements of intercultural teaching, presenting the history and culture of asylum seekers homelands, and individual approaches to teaching them. Teachers often allow asylum seekers to explore and make happen their ideas in the school community believing it might be interesting to others and bringing attention to their history, which is integrative by definition.

In the field of qualification to international protection and reception practices NGOs are advocating for the inclusion of children voices during the procedure, proper identification of their special needs, problems and traumas, postulating supportive and treatment approaches to be included in official conduct, banning children detention and increasing the scope of social support.

Implementation of a child-centred approach

No child-centred approach is introduced in the realm of Polish schools. It is not part of any official document referring to the model or policy of education. Some child-centred approach is seen in the individual conduct of teachers or teaching methods in private schools. They are not transferred to any official governmental policy on the national or local level. The child-centred philosophy is covered by personalist pedagogics – a popular trend in Polish family and pedagogy studies.

As it was described in EASO Report, Poland is lacking the approach required in the guidelines concluding the report. From our experience, these guidelines are neither known nor used by Polish border control authorities. We know that frequent training workshops for the Border Guards are organized by the Halina Nieć Legal Aid Center as the implementation partner of The UNHCR Branch Office in Warsaw that covers SGBV (sexual and gender-based violence) and minors' vulnerability issues however those trainings are done according to UN guidelines and associations' long-year experience and practices. Nevertheless, some of them are similar to the recommendation in the EASO guidelines. We believe that this document is much comprehensible and shall be disseminated to the larger extent.

It is particularly important as the Polish system of asylum protection do not treat children accompanied by parents as autonomous individuals in the refugee granting procedure. The possibility to be heard is left to the discretion of adults, either child guardians or asylum authority officers who may judge if the asylum-seeking child has anything important to say about their status assessment. Some more independence is given to unaccompanied minors. They are offered help to search for their families and legal and psychological support during qualification procedures. On the other hand, reports show that custodians appointed by family courts for those children lacking competencies required to properly approach these cases, especially with cultural sensitivity,

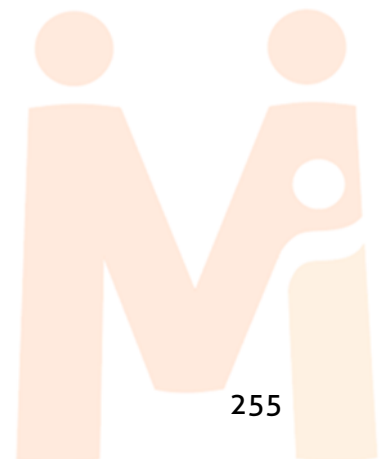
Reflection and conclusion

The Polish asylum and protection system is in the phase of decay. It was formed according to minimal EU standards however after the change of government and progression of the Law and Justice ruling we experienced an erosion of the protection instruments as well as progressing discrepancy between the law and practice. Access to asylum procedures is presently difficult or in many cases denied by authorities who are obliged to grant such access. Such conduct is illegal but politically approved. The procedures of qualification to protection and assessment of special needs are long-lasting and ineffective. Migrant children are invisible beings of the system. They are part of education but without systemic integration, measures implemented, with little funding available in this field and a high percentage of school dropouts and disappearances. Currently, most integration activities are sponsored either by local governments or by schools and devoted teachers themselves. All past and drafted policies (to be adopted) do not consider any special solutions for minor asylum seekers. All the security measures and special treatment frameworks were adopted as part of the implementation obligations enforced by EU regulations. A child-centred approach might be characterized by the behaviours and devotions of individual teachers and educators. There are no training or official study syllabuses that include teaching such an approach to future teachers. No social stabilization measures for children's parents are implemented at the national level. In consequence, Poland is not an attractive country for young asylum seekers, nor a place where they could flourish. All opportunities are the results of individual circumstances and luck of meeting the right and good people who are caring and compassionate.

As a sad supplement to this policy review, we felt obliged to report an August 30th, 2021 incident in Dębak reception centre where Afghan children were poisoned by the mushrooms they collected in the nearby forest. The incident referred to an Afghani family that was evacuated from Afghanistan by the Polish government at the request of the United Kingdom. The Polish prime minister used this evacuation for propaganda purposes to ensure they are helping refugees despite the ongoing crisis in Usnarz Górny (see above). They were temporarily placed in the reception centre where they complain about being constantly hungry and not getting proper feeding (Klauziński, Kowalski, 2021). To supplement the diet

and satisfy the hunger they were collecting mushrooms and cooking soup on them. The mushrooms occurred to be poisonous. Three children were accepted to the hospital in a critical state and two finally passed away despite efforts of the medical team and liver transplant. In response to a journalist inquiry, the spokesperson of the Office for Foreigners said that meals in the reception centre are of standard value, nutritious, diverse and culturally adjusted served three times a day. Having in mind the above-mentioned feeding rate (60 euro cents per meal) this statement is false as many other governmental statements referring to the current asylum situation. In comparison, the feeding rate in correctional facilities is twice higher.

The situation on the Polish and Belarusian border creates a humanitarian crisis. Every day there are hundreds of attempts to cross the border. Migrants are brought there by the Belarusian regime and then forced to cross the Polish, Lithuanian or Latvian border. The Polish authorities are preventing those attempts or whenever migrants are seized on the Polish territory they are brought back on the borderline and forced to go back to Belarus. This happens usually in the so-called “green zone” (forests, swamps, fields, etc.) not the official border crossing which was admitted on the official Twitter profile of the Polish Border Guards. This refers also to those who were brought to hospitals with hypothermia or other life-threatening states. After their state stabilize they are pushed back from Poland. No access to asylum procedures, or even access to fair deportation procedures is reported by NGOs and social activists. As the borderline zone is under the emergency state no independent media or organizations may control the situation and events happening. From the reports collected by NGOs directly from asylum seekers, we are informed that the humanitarian situation of people trapped between two countries gets worse every day. In the border area between Poland and Belarus several hundreds of children, including newly-born are camping without proper access to housing, warm clothes, medical assistance and food. Due to political decisions, they are not able to enter the EU or leave the Belarusian border zone. This crisis obviously needs European attention, a common EU response and decisions made on the European level on how to deal with the current situation, respecting international conventions and customs, presently notoriously breached by the Polish government.



3. Qualitative research

3.1 Methodology design

Research site			
	Type of research site	Location (urban/rural)	The number of total migrants
RS1	1. Szkoła Podstawowa w Bezwoli	1. rural	1. 26
RS2	2. Szkoła Podstawowa nr 58 w Warszawie	2. urban	2. 131 (7-15: 122)
Selection criteria of the site and procedure (gatekeepers)			
RS1	<p>To conduct the research we have chosen two centres characterized by diverse and contrasting features:</p> <p>1. Small village school in Bezwola. This school accept students seeking asylum since 2008, the first year when the reception centre was formed. In selection criteria we take into account the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• localization (the rural research environment, closed, not anonymized, small demographic changes within the community, with small fluctuation and significance of the reception centre in the life of the local community),• the size of the school (small school),• the proportion between Polish and refugee seeking students (a large percentage of refugee students, changing each year, in the year of study reaching 54% of the whole school population); <p>2. Large city school located in the capital city, acting as an area school for the near reception centre. School accepts asylum seekers since the reception centre was formed. In selection criteria we take into account the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• localization (the large city research environment, opened, anonymous, fast demographic changes within the community, with extensive fluctuation, the marginalized significance of reception centre for the community – small impact for the city, larger within the district,• the size of school (big school),• the proportion between Polish and refugee seeking students (smaller percentage of refugee students, changed over the years – in the year of study reaching 41 per cent of the whole school population).		
RS2			
Description of location(s) and/or institution(s).			
RS1	1. The research was conducted in a countryside school in Bezwola, a village in the Wohyń commune in the Lublin Voivodeship. Among other schools in Poland, it is distinguished by the fact that it is a school that has for many years admitted children with an irregular legal status living in the nearby centre for foreigners. The first foreign children appeared in the school in 2008. Until the year 2020/2021, a total number of 378 schoolchildren with unregulated legal status studied here. Those children came from countries such as Chechnya (majority), Dagestan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Ingushetia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Russia, Mongolia, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Lithuania, and Belarus. Therefore, we can assume that teachers in this school are pioneers in the field of education in a multicultural and multilingual school environment in Poland. Many years of work in Bezwola school allowed		

RS2	<p>teachers to perceive education and upbringing as a dynamic process. The professional experience gained first in a homogenous school with exclusively Polish children attending transforming into a multicultural school, is a valuable fundament for self-reflection and self-observation.</p> <p>2. The second site, where research was conducted was a large city school located in the Tagówek district in the capital city of Warsaw. The monocultural character of the school changed in 2010 with the organization of the reception centre in the area covered by the school enrollment. From the very beginning, the school was accepting residents of the centre. These are women with children, usually large families from Chechnya, Belarus, Asians and Africans. The structure of students require the employment of the Russian speaking assistants (native speakers) and established preparation classes, where also foreign children outside of the centre are enrolled, usually Ukrainian one.</p>
Period of data collection & number of days at the research site	
RS1	1. September- November 2020, 5 days of observations, followed by the interviews with Bezwola school students, with also remote research (interviews with teachers)
RS2	2. September- November 2020, 5 days of observations, followed by the interviews with Targówek school students, with also remote research (interviews with teachers)
Brief description of "entering" the research site	
RS1	1. School in Bezwola employs very open educators and headmistress. First contact with the manager proved her open-mindedness: researchers were invited to come to the school on suitable dates for them, and any sufficient period. The first contact was made through the Polish language teacher who was seeking assistance to find computers and laptops for children in the reception centre. The contact was via Messenger, and then via phone. The relation with the school was not formalized, all details were agreed upon via phone and then confirmed through email exchange. The emerging of researchers in the school community was an event for the society, they were introduced to personnel and students (an information meeting with the school community was organized). The presence of guests was met with interest, and support on each occasion. Researchers were not anonymous.
RS2	2. School in Warsaw employs Ukrainian teachers, who are working with students assigned to a preparatory class and which enabled the researcher to enter the site. The procedure was formalized. The gatekeeper needed to schedule the meeting with the headmistress, presenting the project and the aim of the researcher presence and getting permission. It is important to emphasize that without the personal engagement of this teacher entering school would not be possible. The researcher remained rather anonymous (not being noticed or bothered by anyone) in the school and help was offered only by the aforementioned teacher.
Number and roles of researchers participating in the process	
RS1	1. In Bezwola school the research was conducted by the project leader, senior researcher and junior researcher – 4 people in total. Observation and interviews with personnel were conducted by junior researchers.
RS2	2. In Warsaw school two researchers were involved: a junior researcher in the team (observations and interviews) and a teacher – gatekeeper from the school (interviews with children not speaking Polish).
How respondents (migrants) were selected	
RS1	1. In the Bezwola School the conversation with the headmistress and one of the teachers played a key role in indicating students with migration backgrounds who match the age category for the research. In the study, younger children were excluded but interviewed due to demand from the group. Interviews were
RS2	conducted with all children indicated by the personnel.

	2. In Targówek school in Warsaw the gatekeeping teacher was a decisive person. She knew the school community and was able to convince parents to participate in the study including students in the age matching project's criteria.
How the respondents (migrants) were approached	
RS1 RS2	Students who were interviewed could count on individualized contact with the researchers who conducted interviews. The date of the interview was always set in a manner not colliding with the classes. Students were treated with attention, embraced resulting in tying good relations between interviewer and respondents. The difference came with the comparison of the observation process in the country and city school: in the village school teacher was visible and recognized, students paid attention to her and eagerly made contact with her, while in the big, city school was less visible and students did not show any affection to her presence, not will establish closer contacts.
How the research was facilitated by staff at the research site?	
RS1 RS2	<p>In Bezwola each staff member felt responsible for the researcher and the matter of the study: starting from the headmistress, teachers to administrative assistants and janitors. The school personnel was helpful on each occasion, paid attention to the researcher's comfort (e.g. showing the quiet and comfortable room, offering coffee or dinner) and made all children come to interviews according to schedule. During observation, the researcher was introduced to the class, could learn about teachers and students, met with openness and support.</p> <p>In Warsaw, the school researcher was anonymous and could count only on the help of a Ukrainian teacher, who made a lot of effort to obtain formal permission for a study. This distance was so evident that when the project leader contacted the school a few months after research to obtain some statistical data headmistress did not remember that such a study was ever made. The researcher did not have much contact with other teachers, and limited relations with teachers during classes she observed. She had no access to school management, did not make interest and was practically left to her own.</p>
Difficulties encountered and ways to overcome (like getting access during empirical work, social closure etc.)	
RS1 RS2	<p>It might be said that studies in Bezwola have not met any organizational or social difficulties. The community was accepting and acquiring parents' consent was not a problem at all. It happened that children forgot to bring the consent form, but this was quickly solved by teachers. There was a friendly environment, willing and talkative, inclusive, introducing school traditions and customary scripts.</p> <p>In Warsaw school, the entry was much more formalized and getting permission took time. It was possible only with the help of teachers employed as cultural assistants in a preparatory class.</p>
Additional descriptions and explanations	
RS1 RS2	<p>It was much appreciated for the teachers' community that the research team proposed methodical training on the work in the multicultural and multilingual classes and bought educational materials for the school helpful for teaching Polish. The good relations were backed up by researchers support and aid in the dispute with a governing body who opted to close the school. Researchers engaged in advocacy for saving the school, negotiated with major, relying on merit arguments emphasizing the importance of the school as a model institution for integration practices and child-centred approach. Unfortunately, the school was eventually closed in June 2021, ending one of the best educational experiments in intercultural education with the participation of asylum-seeking children.</p>

	In Warsaw, there were no similar efforts as circumstances were formalized and ambivalent to school personnel.
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Short description of the sample

	No.	Date & duration (min)	Gender	Age	Country of birth
S1	1. DL	4.11.2020; 21 M	M	13	RUS (C)
	2. MK	5.11.2020; 34M	M	15	RUS (C)
	3. WK	07.05.2021; 07M	M	15	UA
	4. HA	15.09.2020; 11M	K	10	RUS (C)
	5. AA	15.09.2020; 45M	K	15	RUS (C)
	6. IA	15.09.2020; 47M	K	13	RUS (C)
	7. AA	17.09.2020; 25M	K	12	RUS (C)
	8. SA	17.09.2020; 27M	K	15	RUS (C)
	9. MD	17.09.2020; 32M	M	17	RUS (C)
S2	10. JL	17.09.2020; 43M	M	11	RUS (C)
S1	11. MK	18.09.2020; 38M	M	14	RUS (C)
	12. KA	18.09.2020; 47M	K	10	RUS (C)
	13. SA	19.09.2020; 26M	K	10	RUS (C)
	14. SL	19.09.2020; 38M	K	15	RUS (C)
	15. MM	22.09.2020; 10M	K	10	RUS (C)
	16. SM	22.09.2020; 12M	M	12	RUS (C)
	17. MA	22.09.2020; 18M	K	11	RUS (C)
	18. AA	22.10.2020; 32M	K	16	RUS (C)
	19. AA	23.10.2020; 27M	K	12	RUS (C)
	20. KA	23.10.2020; 33M	K	16	RUS (C)

4. Findings from participant observation

4.1 Social dynamics

Description of the physical environment

The reception centre of Targówek is located in the industrial part of this district in Warsaw. It is surrounded by numerous production facilities and other industrial or commercial businesses. The inhabitancy of the district is 120 thousand people. The maximum capacity of the centre is around 150 people. The space allocation allows to place up to 7 people in one room. The centre is dedicated to families, mostly women with children. It is run by a private entity under agreement with the Office for Foreigners. The reception centre is a complex of separate buildings in terraced housing of over seven thousand square meters, fenced and guarded by security agencies. It has 47 rooms with 17 sqm of the area. All rooms were heated and air-conditioned. Catering service was provided for the inhabitants however centre provided also all amenities for self-victualling (NIK 2014a). According to Gazeta Wyborcza, this facility will be closed by the end of August 2021 as the property was sold for commercial purposes to one of the biggest logistic corporations (Chęłmiński, 2021). It is another crisis in the life of children here as they were well integrated with the school they were attending and if the centre will be dislocated to other district or area children would need to change the school according to the rules of enrolment. Temporarily asylum seekers are supposed to be transferred to Dębak, which is a central reception centre in Poland, run by the Office for Foreigners. This facility is again located far from human settlements.

The reception centre in Targówek – img. Sławomir Kamiński, Agencja Gazeta



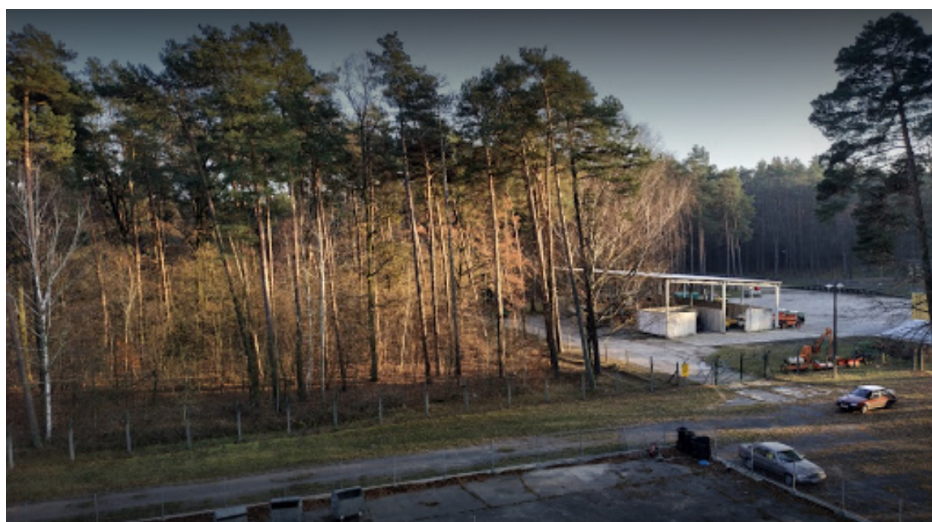
© Agencja Gazeta

The mural near the reception centre of Targówek – img. Fundacja Sowa



The reception centre in Bezwola is larger allowing to host around 250 people. It is located on the outskirts of the village inhabited by approx. 1200 people in an old military building, surrounded by forest. This centre is isolated from human settlements, which deteriorate asylum seekers integration opportunities, especially those related to finding a job. Another problem is the lack of social work. One of the social workers we have been spoken to in Grotniki Reception Centre told us that they are not present on daily basis in the reception centres but often need to travel between Grotniki (already closed), Łuków and Bezwola camps. There is little known about the conditions of reception. We had not been allowed to enter any of the reception centres except Grotniki near Łódź at the very early stage of the project. After six months since writing the application to the Office For Foreigners with permission request and the explanation of the project's aims and work packages, we received a reply that foreigners living there are not interested in participation and there is no possibility to organize the research on the site due to lack of social workers. After the epidemic emergency introduction due to the Sars-CoV-2 outbreak, reception centres were closed for the outside persons, also for the humanitarian organizations that were present there on daily basis.

Bezwola reception centre – img. Google Maps



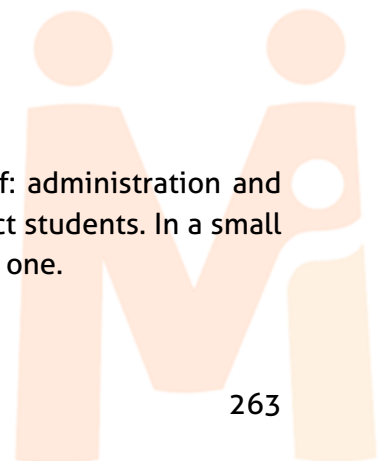
School in Bezwola is a small, two-story building with a garden and small sporting area – a track, sandpit and a green area for playing games, fenced and located near the country road. The technical state is good, school is clean, well-kept and decorated. There is a library and common room. Dinners are paid but cheap (single dish dinner costs less than 1 EUR as it is partly paid by subvention). They are cooked in the school's kitchen and are not culturally accustomed, especially to Muslim tradition (pork is the basic meat), but respect Catholic traditions (no meat on Fridays). Nevertheless with the level of allowance provided by the government to asylum seekers they still cannot afford those dinners.

The atmosphere in the school is shaped by the culture of approach: all employees are open, less formal in relations, straightforward. Teaching personnel and headmistress say by their names, but use polite expressions to administrative and service workers. Doors to the headmistress room are always opened when the person is present. Access to management and personnel is granted without spare formalities and difficulties. All enter the school with the main entrance. During the pandemic restrictions, a sanitary regime was enforced. A health condition was assessed by interview (statements on feeling and symptoms replaced temperature measurement and filling in the self-evaluation forms). Teachers paid attention to all entering schools: pupils, parents or researchers. They say hello, ask for the purpose of a visit, and offer help. Each teacher is calling students by their name. Nobody is anonymous in the school. All pay attention to children safety. There is a family-like approach in the school. The teachers' methods of work enhance straightforward contacts, provide a high feeling of safety and eliminate the possible strains between students and teachers in difficult or conflict situations. Teachers maintain positive relations with pupils, have time for them not to formalize the school schedules (lessons/breaks) and are talking with students on every occasion, answering questions and listening to stories. The most important elements of school ideology is direct, sincere relation, mutual respect and safety.

School in Warsaw's Targówek is a large facility, located in one of the outskirt districts of the capital city, in a two-story building surrounded by green area, consisting of recreational space and sports area, including track, sandpit, football pitch and basketball field. School doors remained closed and in case of moving out and in a school employee is present who control who is coming in. School entrance is via side doors, and through the cloakroom. The main entrance is reserved for teachers and guests, e.g. parents. On corridors, when students are present, teachers have shifts, but they do not speak to students. There are plenty of students and a lot of them are not known to teachers with their names. A school bell is a formal tool that starts and ends the lesson. As the school is large teachers finishing lessons leave class with the doorbell and head to the teachers' room.

Interactions between migrants and personnel

School personnel is divided into teaching staff and assisting staff: administration and services. All have the opportunity and sometimes obligation to contact students. In a small school, it is less formalized and more straightforward than in the large one.



In Bezwola students or parents (if arrive at school for some reason) are welcomed by janitor or teacher. Cases are dealt directly with the headmistress (there is no secretary in the school, and the management office is opposite to the entrance and remains open, provided the headmistress is not reaching classes). Polish remains the main communication language however many teachers speak Russian and use it in communication with Chechen children. It often happens that conversation is bilingual. The parents is speaking Russian, while the teacher or headmistress respond in Polish. It is practical as passive language abilities (understanding) are always higher than active language abilities (speaking). This form of contact is effective with reception centres inhabitants as they, being in Poland for a certain period understand simple Polish phrases. In the first days in school communication with asylum seekers are dealt with similar manner.

Personnel is always helpful, e.g. in filling in the forms. It is not a teacher's duty, but this aid is necessary for the circumstances where a person is obliged to act in Polish not knowing the language. Parents of young asylum seekers are trusting teachers and other school personnel and are counting on and appreciate support provided each time they come to school with an issue. It is worth mentioning that these issues are not always connected to a child's education but also with residence issues.

In contact with children, teachers are empathic and child-centred. Teachers reveal interest in all students' problems: they monitor education progress, ask about mental condition, if a child is not hungry. They show interest in the child's family life and offers help in every matter. Teachers are using Polish as a rule, but if encounter a blockage they switch to Russian which is appreciated. It happens that children are addressing teachers with the aid of older siblings or colleagues who have better language proficiency and can draw the issue more coherently. Teachers usually are familiarized with students' family life, their social status and adapt their approach to such knowledge, not having expectations exceeding children's abilities. It was apparent during remote education when teachers engaged in social crowdfunding to get computers and laptops for reception centre inhabitants. In the interim period, they contacted children via phone and visited the reception centre to provide training on the use of software and platforms they intended to use.

It was observed that the school introduced free of violence communication as a rule. All possible conflicts are well managed but sometimes such situations take place. Foreign students are talking to Polish students in Polish, but use Chechen and Russian language in private conversations. It was not observed however that the choice of the language led to any kind of exclusion: when the language abilities of the group are considered, students are using a language known to all team members. Those who speak Polish well are helping those with weaker knowledge.

In the course of observation, no conflicts were encountered, but interviews with teachers allowed the researcher to gain information about such conflicts in the past. From the data obtained, it was evident that teachers tended to assess what was the background of the

conflict, avoiding the assumption that the reason comes with the culture. They still saw culturally driven inner conflicts between Chechen children.

Topic related to interculturalism and diversity has been subject to the didactic work of teachers. This context is explored whenever an opportunity arises, i.e. not only as a planned element of didactic/educational work but also in situations where it is natural to take this context into account: e.g. in history, geography, biology, etc. Students often have the opportunity to perform comparisons and the so-called intercultural negotiations. This applies to all students, while teachers not only explain cultural and religious differences to refugee students but also Polish students to teach about different cultures and religions, often engaging refugee students as messengers. The teachers' sensitivity and tact in the approach to religion and the issue of national symbols were particularly evident for the observer. Chechen students were introduced to the subject, teachers explained to them the meaning of certain traditions and customs, but did not enforce them to participate. As a result, most often Chechen students took part in religious events voluntarily, e.g. playing in nativity plays, singing Christmas carols or carrying the Polish flag. The observer witnessed a situation in which this kind of approach was applied: it took place during the walk commemorating the fallen during WWII. The teacher in charge asked everyone to commemorate the fallen with a minute of silence and explained that this type of behaviour was culturally neutral, and then asked the children to say a prayer while explaining to Chechen children that this is normal behaviour in Poland, but that they are not obliged to do so. Chechens took it with full understanding and acceptance.

A separate topic at school is the question of clothing: it was especially apparent during PE lessons, which were co-educational. The culturally sensitive approach of the teacher made him not require Chechen girls to dress up, and also in the earlier years to take off their hijab. The teacher encouraged every activity and selected those that could be carried out in any outfit, not only sport ones. In turn, the class tutor in one of the classes explained the cultural meaning of outfit and its adequacy to certain social circumstances and aesthetics including religious and customary requirements.

There was no person in the teachers' milieu in Bezwola who would declare hostility towards or dissatisfaction with the presence of foreign students. In the Bezwola school, one of the teacher's motto "The nationality of children is childhood" pertains. Based on the observation of behaviour, processes and communication style in this school, it can be concluded that attitudes presented by the teaching staff are conducive to the acceptance of cultural differences, intercultural dialogue and inclusion. Migration is a completely natural phenomenon for them, they see it more broadly, not only as migration to Poland but also migration from Poland. They try to understand its reasons and take actions to integrate people around common values, such as e.g. eating, spending free time together, local values (traditions, cyclical events, education). School staff do not stereotype migrants, they are open-minded and appreciate the value of cultural and religious diversity. They do not feel threatened either in their place of residence or in the labour market.

The large-city environment of Targówek school creates a largely anonymous community, which to some extent results from the size of the school (a large number of students and teachers). The researcher had contact with three persons: intercultural assistants employed in preparatory departments and a teacher. The observations allow for the conclusion that a great value in this environment was connected with the fact that these three people taking care of students with migration experience could communicate with them in their language. On the other hand, however, it could slightly inhibit the children's language acquisition process. Certainly, the possibility of communicating in Russian and Ukrainian was of great importance and great value to the parents, with whom, in particular, one assistant was in constant contact.

In Targówek, the researcher did not encounter hostile attitudes towards foreigners, but teachers sometimes signalled that their work was easier before foreign students arrived. It does not affect their hard work and perception of the importance of the school in the community. For that reason, they not only teach but also take the integration opportunities as school and extracurricular activities. In these actions not only the school community is involved but also the district community and office for education.

The interactions between teachers and students are limited to the school environment – classes and breaks. In the breaks, there are only shift teachers present on corridors. Individual conversations between teachers and students during breaks were not observed. The researcher was also unable to see how those vertical relations are made. Teachers who seemed to be befriended maintained informal relations, while to others they use polite forms. The headmistress is not visible to the community, doors to her office are closed. With students teachers are kind, calling them by their names. Classes are large so an individual approach is rather rare.

Interactions between migrants

Migrants in the Bezwola School were of mixed gender and age. It was however a homogenous group about the origin (Chechnya), religion, language and culture. The relationships within the group appeared to be discreet, so the observer did not note any specific, appealing behaviours. The interviews with teachers revealed that children according to them are copying the cultural scripts learned in their country of origin, e.g. the opinion of a boy is more important than the girl. This problem was not observed. All migrants, but one boy, built and maintained relations and interactions like their Polish peers. The social contacts have two aspects: the first one official, during lessons and conversations with Polish peers and teachers during breaks – in this scheme the Polish language was used, and the second one, happening within the inner circle of migrants, seemingly exclusive and refer only to Chechen children who spoke in Chechnyan that could be an exclusionary factor. Observation of such behaviour was not worrisome to the observer as the context of those foreign language conversations revealed no intentions (with high probability) to hide anything from Polish who did not know the language spoken.

Many situations could be interpreted indirectly by observing behaviours subsequent to conversations in the native language of migrants when they started to talk to peers in Polish. Observer thought that switching to Chechnyan was linked to the need for fast consultation in a language better known to children and make sure that message in Polish was understood correctly. After alike small talk, children returned to speaking Polish being more confident. Chechnyan language is often an intermediate language during lessons. It needs to be underlined that better speaking migrant children were sensitive to confusion experienced by less advanced children and in the moment of disorientation caused by not understanding the matter of conversation or lecture offered their help and translated words/sentences/situations. Except for one person, the Chechen group was integrated, ready to help each other. The integration factor was both inner and external, connected to the community.

During breaks, they were not sticking together but had contact with Polish peers. The separate case referred to the oldest Chechen boy, seventeen years old, still covered by compulsory education who was not interested in schooling. His appearance in the school was met with enthusiasm but his contact with other Chechens was rather limited (all other Chechens were much younger). The boy stayed self-isolated, silent both in Polish and his native language. He performed school obligations but was not interested in learning, the school community or his peers, having low motivation for progress.

The behaviours of migrant children were similar to Polish children. Only in the conversations with teachers researcher learnt that migrant children had so-called adaptation training which accustomed them with Polish culture and expected behaviour in certain situations. One of the stories touches on such issues as using the toilet, toilet paper, flushing the toilet, washing hands. Teachers agreed they were prepared for cultural differences but some behaviours shocked them. Anyway, quite fast children adapted to expectations and abandoned behaviours that were culturally odd. Teachers encountered however problem of not respecting personal and collective property by Chechen children who did not take care of books, destroys didactic materials and their backpacks or pen-boxes. This referred to school and personal property to the same extent. The reason for possible trauma as an explanation did not come up.

Migrants in Targówek school are mostly residents of the district. They are differing according to gender and age and reach 131 people. Around one-third of them are just living in the neighbourhood with regular migration status. Observation in the school showed that migrant children and their Polish peers behave characteristically to their age and situation encountered. Migrant children are communicating in the language best known to them when they are within their national group (Russian, Chechen), but use Polish in contact with Polish children, often helping each other. Migrants did not group in national groups during breaks but had lively contacts with Polish peers. Their behaviour did not stand out from those of Polish children. More frequently migrant children took occasion to bother teachers, especially Russian speaking with their problems and questions. It was very visible, that by

entrusting such a teacher they counted on fast solutions of the addressed issues, understanding good communication. During the lesson, when it is led by a Polish teacher they maintain the Polish communication standard, but it happened they provided aid to their peers who had problems with the message perception and understanding.

From the researcher observation, it might be concluded that gathering children not speaking Polish fluently in one preparation class might delay the language acquisition as the community of such class use different language for effective and easier communication. The interesting fact observed in Targówek was grouping children of different ages in one class. Preparation classes are established for so-called education stages, which group children from different grades with a small age difference but not exactly peers. Children from 7 to 9 are placed in the early education preparation class (grades 1-3), while children 10 to 14 are placed in the basic primary education preparation class (grades 4-8). This situation is complex in many dimensions. Firstly, the teacher is obliged to implement a curriculum of different grades in just one class, secondly, there are children with diverse cognitive conditions, related to their age. For example, a child in the first grade who do not read or write in none of the languages meets the third-grade child who writes and reads fluently (at least in the native language). Yet greatest problems are encountered in higher grades classes as stages of development between 4th-grade ten-years-old and 8th-grade fourteen-years are incompatible. There is too deep a psycho-social and intellectual difference.

Networking and identity categories

During observations in the schools, we did not observe situations where migrants functioned in specific, or distinguished social constellations. There is a natural division between younger and older children. It was caused by the age difference, but also by the organization of the school agenda. Younger children were placed on the ground floor while older ones learned on the first floor. Ethnicity – the same for the whole migrant group – was not included as criteria for bonding and group forming. There was visible care among siblings. Schools were attended by many siblings (families in the reception centre are the large ones). Girls were speaking with each other more often than with boys, and than boys do. All such divisions are quite natural for early adolescence.

4.2 Institutional procedures

Access to social support, health and legal protections

The observation phase did not bring situations that would allow the researcher to acquire data on social support, health care or legal protection. However, based on the interviews with the headmistress and teachers it might be assumed that school and its personnel play a key role in this sphere of student's and his family life. Parents address teachers with trust and expect aid, eg. in filling in certain forms (also for social support). In Bezwola teachers are

eager to help them. During the presence of the researcher, came a parent of the oldest student, the one with the least motivation for learning and unwillingly participated in the lessons. His father had a long conversation with a class tutor to learn about his son situation and the usefulness of learning. The parent was very understanding. Simultaneously he took the occasion of the meeting to consult a family problem he had with social support. He was filling in the relevant forms he wanted to deliver to the social service in the commune and asked the teacher for consultation in that matter receiving her help.

The interviews with the headmistress revealed that she tried to obtain a special additional purposeful allowance for children to cover the costs of meals for children. She intended to adjust the menu to cultural culinary customs. She also desired all children to receive meals in the school. It occurred to be not possible for legal reasons: the beneficiaries of reception centres and social support connected with this stay could not get another allowance to cover the costs of meals in school. On the other hand, with scarce and insufficient support parents were receiving in the reception centre they were not interested or could not afford to pay for school nutrition. This problem was very important to the headmistress as she repeat it twice also to other research team members. She explained that it is exclusionary for migrant children if they see Polish children eating and often stays hungry for the whole school day.

During observation as well as during interviews it was not possible to acquire data on how the medical support is implemented for students. Children from the reception centre were brought in and back from the school with the bus sponsored by the commune. They benefited also from the subsidy for the school trip that was settled by one of the teachers. They benefited also from some national programs and was given manuals for certain subjects free of charge. The separate issue comes with the psychological and pedagogical help, that headmistress wanted to organize in form of meetings with children. It occurred to be impossible for logistical and administrative reasons. The governing body (commune of Wohyń) agreed to hire a psychologist for 30 minutes a week. Such low working hours did not secure children's needs and it was not possible to find anyone who would take such duties.

In the Targówek school, the situation was better as the school employed a pedagogue and cultural assistant, who helped migrant children in all difficult situations, also in their native language. None other forms of social, medical or legal support could be noticed during the observation phase in that school.

Standards for the reception and accommodation of migrant children

Due to the specifics of the research that was not conducted in the reception centre due to lack of governmental permission to access centres, the researcher could not observe any kind of reception conditions. She only noticed that children are neatly and decently dressed and are being brought in and driven back from school by bus. The problem with meals was already mentioned. The researcher went to the reception centre in Bezwola one day but was able only to observe the premise outside the fence. The area of the centre, located in the

forest was built with several blocks of flats in good standard, renewed, with new elevation and windows. The surrounding area is neat, cared and green (lawns, flowers, bushes). The access to reception centre is via paved road in good condition. In the reception centre terrain, there are meeting places organized with benches and tables and children playgrounds. The access to the reception centre is restricted and it is guarded by the security agency. The residents have however freedom of movement.

Access to education and/or language training

All children who are residents of the reception centre and are between 7 to 18 years old are subject to compulsory schooling. Researchers observed that children from the reception centre were regularly present in the schools. In Bezwola children were learning with Polish peers in the same classes. They have also additional language classes – twice a week when other children have religion lessons. Adequate manuals and materials for the second language learners are used and the competent person holds the classes. There were not observed any compensatory classes for children, but from interviews, it was obvious that children had it earlier. Children have free transport to school and reception centre (3,5 km distance) but this is was provided with certain schedule (bus left at 2 p.m.) which often prevent migrant children in participation in additional, extracurricular classes. The Bezwola school organized such classes in the afternoon, including choir, theatre classes and school sports club. The cultural assistant who was able to integrate both worlds and let the proper immersion of migrant children in the Polish language led this choir and theatre classes. Furthermore, this cultural assistant promoted elements of the migrant children cultures into the general learning framework. In addition, certain subjects were organized in joint classes which deepen the integration around certain projects that were implemented in Polish.

In the Targówek school, there were additional language classes provided and preparatory classes organized. Its functioning was seen as controversial due to separation from Polish peers but generally, they helped children in adaptation. The work of cultural assistant was valuable for migrant children who could address their needs through its agency. Children in the large city environment had much more possibilities to interact with the host society and living culture. There was also much more occasions for informal or non-formal education, especially via initiatives of different NGOs working in the centre or entering it with their cultural and education projects.

Contact with and integration in the local community

Time spent in the school did not allow to observe children in transition efforts to adapt to the local environment and contacts with the local community. Teachers told us however that one of the Bezwola school aims was to include the migrant student in the local affairs and to facilitate their active integration. School organized integration picnics and all teachers confirmed interest from the local community, but also from the reception centre residents

whose engagement was deeper. Poles who represented the local community was sometimes distant in contact with asylum seekers. The best way to break the ice between representatives of different cultures and religions was food – willingly prepared by reception centre residents and shared with Poles. Polish dishes were most frequently cooked by school teachers. The researcher learned from teachers that many reception centre residents found a job in the local meat industry and joint work with Polish had an important and positive impact on their integration. Both schools were aware of the significance of integration efforts and introduced many of such activities not only within the school but also in the open space to the public – like a football pitch, park or squares.

Access to child-friendly information,

School in Bezwola implemented a communication strategy based on needs and perception possibilities analysis of children. All organizational information is provided to children in oral and written messages. The other form of communication is school wallpaper, where apart from narrative texts there are also graphics and ornaments. Wallpapers are hung at a height that is visually accessible. There was no information published in the language of migrant children. All information is in Polish, but with the use of language that is adapted to a certain age group.

Access to rights and relevant procedures

During the observation phase observer had no opportunity to acquire such data.

Standards and good practices to restore family links and reunify families

During the observation phase observer had no opportunity to acquire such data.

Alternatives to detention

During the observation phase observer had no opportunity to acquire such data. Reception centres are not centres of detention. In both sites, there were no nearby detention centres for foreigners, so this issue was not explored.

Child-centred approach, institutional support & assistance to migrant children

In the child-centred approach that would refer to institutional support and aid to migrant children, no information was assessed, except the educational support. Children were provided with additional language classes twice a week implemented as a group learning.

No individual learning was organized. In school, there were no compensatory classes organized, but children were able to take the opportunity of interest and talents development in extracurricular workshops (dancing group, choir and school theatre). Institutional backup came with the employment of a cultural assistant who took care of migrant children, younger to a larger extent, however, due to lack of Chechen/Russian knowledge she was not able to support children in classes. Despite these specific forms of support children benefited from the general support, e.g. free manuals, free transportation, subsidies earned by teachers, e.g. for participation in school trips. Apart from school, children benefited from educational and adaptive support organized by the reception centre. In Warsaw, school migrant children were covered by the same forms of support as Bezwola children and additionally was enrolled on preparatory classes, an institution particularly important in the first year of the child's presence in the new school, where his language competencies are still low.

The right to be heard and other participation rights

During the observation phase observer had no opportunity to acquire such data. In general children in Bezwola could address teachers and educators with any issue and their request was heard and processed. Children were cared for and had put trust in teachers. In such small school relations between all persons were quite intimate. Such an approach was not observed in the Targówek school.

4.3 Differences in reception processes

During the observation phase, observers had no opportunity to make such a distinction. The group covered by research was homogenous ethnically and religiously. There was no point of relevance to make any comparative analysis. Polish law does not differentiate reception conditions according to any discriminative factors. The Targówek reception centre is specific as it accepts only women with children. Presently it was closed and asylum seekers were temporarily transferred to the Dębak reception centre which is mixed again.

5. Interviews with children in transition

Twenty interviews with migrant children became an important part of the study on migrant children in transition. We were not able to do more interviews since the 2015 number of children migrating with the intent of international protection was rapidly decreased. This was caused by the strict asylum policy implemented by the government but also by secondary movement phenomenon and children disappearances, usually caused by further migration to other EU countries. Another factor causing the low number of interviews is connected to statistical regularity that rather younger children are coming – those below the project's criteria.

The interview script allowed to draw a general insight into the childhood experiences, however – according to the child's age – some memories from the past might be difficult to recall. Younger children did not have many memories from their past. Older ones used selective filters and did not want to share their experiences and past directly.

In interviews with children, the most difficult was to access information on the experience of the seizure (here children did not perceive it to the same extent as their parents did), access to social support and legal protection (it was hard to formulate a question on that issues in simple, understandable language). It was also difficult to acquire data on (un)safety and daily experience of living in transition: basically, children always felt safe when close to families, and – after the adaptation process – in the school. In conversation we were able to reach information on pre-migration experiences (except situations when children filtered information for some reasons), access to education, learning Polish, contacts with peers in school and beyond (children being driven in and back from the reception centre to school did not have opportunity to meet friends outside the school), contacts with relatives, staying abroad.

In interviews, it was possible to rebuild children views on shortcomings and advantages of existing integration models, but it was not possible to gather information on children's opinions related to support deficiencies, as they do not reflect on this question like adults. Children may evaluate the certain action, but no method or model of integration. The same refers to children opinions on overcoming the integration challenges about specific needs of children as those children did not judge their needs as specific ones. They do not refer directly to their wellbeing but it was possible, based on their statements, to conclude on their condition of living and social status. The questions relating to the cultural background are blurred as well as to gender issues. Conceptualization of religion is difficult. Children are taking part in rituals but do not reflect in this regard, they accept it as a part of their life and tradition. The language competence might be judged during the interview, however, ambiguities were met by researchers, when the researcher did not know if a recalled misunderstanding of the question was an effect of lack of language proficiency or the adopted strategy to hide some information. This concerned often older children who wanted to keep some information secret and refrain from the answer.

The question about the future was a particularly good part of the interview. Most children were willing to follow this plot, had inner confidence, feeling of strength and opportunities, aspirations and beliefs in controlling their lives. Children planned their education and future according to adopted direction, not detailed solutions. Based on this fact it would be wise to provide those children with job counselling.

In general narrative interviews with children in transition were more informative, and insightful, longer and more sincere than those performed in the group of regular migrants and local children in WP 5-7. It was observed that children have a great desire to tell stories and to be heard by someone who came to listen. Such openness was rarely seen in the case

of interviews with non-asylum seeking children. It might be that it was somehow facilitated by the specifics of the countryside school as local children in Bezwola showed jealousy that our researcher is interviewing migrants and as a result, she needed to spend additional time talking to Polish children as well. Such a situation was not encountered in Targówek.

5.1 Institutional support & assistance

The indicated scope of research in this part of the report was mostly not cognitively accessible to children who took part in the study. Younger children did not realize their families are covered by family and social support, health care, and legal protection. They could not talk about it or answer questions related to such aid and support. Some consciousness on such support was visible only in interviews with older children. Children did not recognize their migration or legal status. Older children knew only that they can live in the reception centre or outside ("on private")

R: Do you and your parents know enough about your legal situation in Poland? Is someone telling you about it? Do you know where your case is heard and when you get the reply?

I: We do not have permanent residence. But we can be here.

23.10.2020.33M.KA.K.16.RUC.01

R: Is there anyone who help your family with this?

I: No. Well, I guess lawyers, but I do not know, mom was not talking with me on that.

19.09.2020.38M.SI.K.15.RUC.01

They can assess the accommodation standards and their judgment – with a small number of dissenting – is positive. Children in Bezwola see those conditions more positively than children from Targówek, however, it must be underlined that the Targówek sample is too small to justify any solid outcomes.

Targówek:

I just need, for sure, my room. Because in one small room with my mother, it is not possible to live.

07.05.2021.07M.WK.M.15.UA.2015.02

Bezwola:

I: We are living in a flat with three bedrooms, with my family. I live in one room, and my sister and another sister. Father, mother my little brother and little sister are living in one room and yet in the big room, my sisters are.

R: Is it comfortable?

I: It is good. Better than before. In one room, there were three families, separated by curtains. It was in Germany.

R: (...)

I: Here I like it. It would be nice to have my room, but I do not know where such a chance occurs. When we get the residence permit, we will buy the house.
15.09.2020.45M.AA.K.15.RUC.01

All children appreciate that the Polish education system and people in the reception centre take care of their language needs and are organizing Polish language lessons. This experience is very positive in all respondents and concerns teachers in schools and employees of the reception centres who are responsible for integration, adaptation and language development of foreign students.

R: How many hours are you learning Polish?

I: Well, now we are online so in a day we can have one or two hours and once a week we have, I guess two hour-long lessons with Miss Jola, where we have different essays, writing exercises, we learn good writing. Well, in a week it might be six, I guess.
07.05.2021.07M.WK.M.15.UA.2015.03

R: And do you have any additional classes?

I: We have Polish when other children are going to religion class. And we are learning words there, for example, we write, we learn to write well, so it looks nice. And we have additional Polish on Fridays.
19.09.2020.38M.SI.K.15.CZE.01

The integration issues often are perceived as an interschool experience only. Researchers observed that children do not name this process and do not understand the word „integration“, but after explanation, they can describe their experiences in this regard. This process is less felt in the local community, outside the school.

R: Exactly. You like being here, you feel well, have your friends, it is all very important. And do you know what integration means?

I: I heard it but I do not know.

R: This is an expression about the situation when for example children from one country meet children from another country, from Poland and Chechnya, and those children are doing something together, talking with each other, are open, help each other, they like each other. This is integration. It can happen that they do not like each other, do not talk and here there is no integration. In your opinion in this school there is integration or not?

I: It is. We are talking with Poles, we are saying different things to each other, and have the same classes together. My brother likes Polish, he speaks to everyone, tries to speak, speaks with everyone around, he is not ashamed. When I say something wrong, I am ashamed of it, he is not.

R: Why are you ashamed? Everyone makes mistakes!

I: Yes, I learned fast. And we need to help our mom, translate something.
19.09.2020.38M.SI.K.15.RUC.01

In the sphere of access to information, children did not complain and the school usually take care of important messages to be understood. It was much visible during the lockdown epidemic period when children had individualized contact with the teacher and cultural assistant. Messages were delivered through different means, concerning children level of language knowledge and access to technology.

R: Did you receive understandable information on the epidemic threat, about Covid-19, the precaution and restrictions?

I: Yes, we know all. We need to wear masks, sanitize our hands and be careful outside.

23.10.2020.33M.KA.K.16.RUC.O1

There were no interviews in which experiences of children on standards and good practices in family reunification and family reestablishment were revealed. Children sometimes maintain contact with their grandparents or cousins, sometimes they feel that those left behind shall come also to Poland, but among respondents, any plans of reunification had not been introduced. In one interview there is a heartbreaking testimony on the loss of bonds with a father who probably was jailed. The child experienced this as a great loss in her life.

[older sister]

R: Are you satisfied with your life in the reception centre? What would you change to feel better? What do you need? What shall change or what shall be done?

I: I would like my father to come to us. He is not here. He is in prison and I feel sad without him. I would like more people in the centre.

23.10.2020.33M.KA.K.16.RUC.O1

[younger sister]

R: So how it is without you dad? When he comes back?

I: I do not know we are waiting for him, he is better now. When we could not sleep, he was taking us to the sofa, he sat on the floor and was telling fairies and we fall asleep. These were great stories. All was good at the end, always.

15.09.2020.47M.IA.K.13.RUC.O1

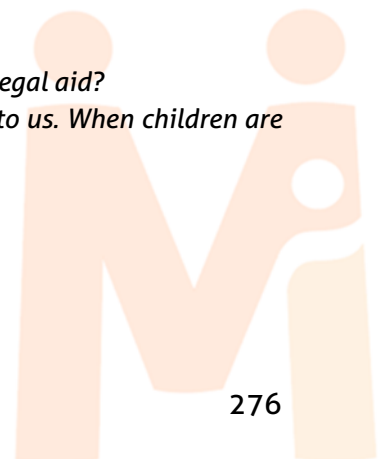
Children realise that they are in the transition period. Particularly older ones are telling that their living in the camp will end someday and they will buy a house and will be on their own. ("on private" as they say). This alternative to reception centre reality is attractive to children and they are talking about it as a next step that is expected and that gives hope, although they do not have a true judgment on difficulties connected with it. When speaking about this future it is not linked to criticizing current living conditions, as most feel good here.

Interviews with younger children directly or indirectly do not reveal the experiences and emotions of children referring to support they are benefiting from. In the case of one older girl we believed she perceived the institutional support, connoted it but could not understand how it works.

R: Is your family receiving financial support? What kind? Did you get legal aid?

I: Yes, each month we receive and on Fridays, they are giving money to us. When children are going to school then the money is given for that.

23.10.2020.33M.KA.K.16.RUC.O1



Social support received by children cannot be considered as part of a child-centred approach as it is part of larger family support services dedicated to asylum seekers. Children are not a keeper of such support, they are just counted as family members and their guardian is free to decide how money is spent. Social support is not connected to the right of being heard or to participate. The approach focused on the children wellbeing is much more observed with school learning, especially in Bezwola where teachers individually approach each student and help solve its problems, patiently listen to their stories and adapt their methods to the experiences of those children.

The child-centred approach to children at school means that they do not feel stressed either during learning - they feel the support of teachers and their efforts to make them advance, and adapt, or in terms of socialization aspects: even if they cannot name the integration process, they talk about such an experience.

5.2 Well-being, experiences of migration & life in transit

None of the interviewed asylum-seeking children in Poland felt unhappy and dissatisfied. Poland seemed to them a safe country, people were perceived as kind and open-minded, and all this contributed to their well-being.

I: Yes, I am happy here.

R: What makes you happy here the most?

I: It's easier here than in Chechnya. It's nice, I like the place. There was no nice toilet in Chechnya, the school was small and there weren't many friends.

09/15/2020.45M.AA.K.15.RUC.O1

Well-being is associated with good living conditions, care at school, the feeling that each child has a chance for success in Poland and finding his or her place in the school community, with a sense of security or plans and ideas for a good future. It is often important for children that they are among the closest family members: parents and siblings. In one situation, the absence of a father, held in prison was indicated. However, the opposite situation also occurred: in Targówek, a centre for single mothers with children, the absence of a father was a positive factor as for those children who left their homes, it was also a form of escape from the father. And only in Poland, those women and children regain a sense of security.

R: And tell me, when you were supposed to come to Poland 5 years ago, were you happy? Do you remember?

I: I was happy.

R: So you wanted to leave Grozny?

I: I wanted to leave because my father was there, he wanted to take us from my mother, so ...

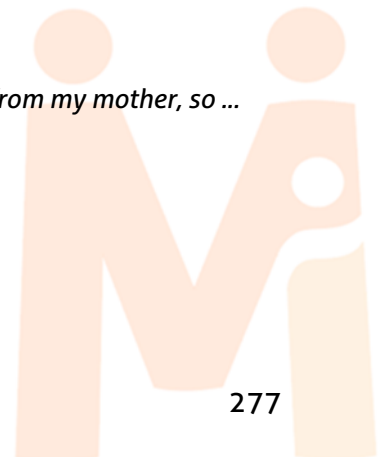
R: It was tough, sure.

I: We wanted to stay with mom.

(...)

R: Is there anything you are afraid of?

I: Yes, my father will take us from my mother.



R: I understand ... but when you are in Poland, you must be safe, right?

I: Mm.

(...)

R: And tell me, do you have any dreams?

I: I have two dreams. Get a stay and live nicely, so that my father would not take us away from my mother, that we could live with my mother in Poland.

22.09.2020.18M.MA.K.11.RUC.02

Such cases could be connected to the custom of forced marriages with underage girls exercised in the Caucasus. In these traditions fathers take care of and prepare daughters for marriage and marriage itself is a contract of high financial value.

Older children still remember childhood images in their country of origin, younger ones do not remember much. This also applies to the recognition of the reasons for migration – it is not aware for children. The same pattern applies to the first years/months in Poland – this period is not remembered by the interviewed children. All children admitted to having memories of family members who stayed in the country or emigrated to a country other than Poland. Modern technology allowed them to maintain contact with them and is perceived as important by them. It happens that they have entered into close relations with Poles, e.g. in the place of their first stay in Poland and that they maintain these relations. The pre-migration period is remembered only by older children, as well as the burdensome of travel, impressions of the first place of residence in Poland, etc. The same observation also applies to the comparison of education systems: younger children do not have experience from school in their country of origin, because they left the country before they went to school.

I: I was 6 when I came to Poland. We had a cat and he was very nice. I was too young so I don't remember everything, but there was a big river behind our house and I used to swim there, but only with my big sister who was watching over. We all had fun together and had a large garden. I ran and played there, I was too young to work in it.

R: Did you go to school there?

I: No, I didn't even see the school, I was too young. I started going to school here.

09/18/2020.47M.KA.K.10.RUC.01

R: Do you come back with your memories of life in your country? Are these memories good or bad? Do you want to share them?

I: I remember. These are bad memories. My father had problems all the time, and we were taken to Grandma, so we weren't afraid, we lived there. There was nothing normal there.

22.10.2020.32M.AA.K.16.RUC.01

Among the experiences of migration, there are memories of other places in Poland where children lived or transition places in Europe (France, Germany) where they also spent some time. The specifics of refugee flow to Poland comes with the problem of secondary movement, where asylum seekers after pleading asylum are leaving Poland for other EU countries and then are returned to Poland according to Dublin Regulations referring to the country responsible for the qualification to protection. These experiences were not

necessarily good. In children's accounts there are comparisons and assessments in which Poland is assessed well - better than previous places, but also statements that prove that the child misses, for example, the previous country of migration and would be happy to be there again.

R: Would you like to return to your country or stay in Poland, or maybe go somewhere else? Where?

I: I would like to come back and then to Poland again.

R: So visit Chechnya and come back again?

I: Yes.

R: Would you like to go somewhere else?

I: I only want to go to France.

23.10.2020.27M.AA.K.12.RUC.O1

The common experience of all children is the experience of multilingualism. Each of them knows several languages and had contact with many others. Some children just came up with the idea, during the interview that multilingualism is their asset, and others consider this to be completely natural. Children are not able to assess this competence as their advantage as they do not build their self-esteem hereof. For most people, Polish is not a very difficult language and everyone is good at it. It can be said that children have an open approach to learning Polish in Poland and they cope well with it. They appreciate the help they have received, undertake individual activities, use books and materials received at school from teachers and like learning Polish. They also like to actively participate in extra-curricular activities (choir, theatre, dance, sport), which are carried out in Polish. These classes are also a form of integration - they are organized at school for all students, and the language of communication during these classes is, of course, Polish.

The children's experiences of everyday school life, their relationships with teachers and peers are very positive. In the single case of the boy outstanding by age the satisfaction is contested and future associated with professional work rather than learning. Lack of satisfaction is connected to disbelief in learning, hardship with Polish language acquisition and social isolation caused by age differences. All other children established relations in their ethnic/national group and at the same level other relations with Polish students. Every interview shows that living in the centre is not conducive to deepening these relations: contact with Poles takes place only during their stay at school and - possibly - during local and integration events organized by the school or during trips and excursions. As admission to the centre requires many procedures, including permission from Warsaw authorities, Polish children do not participate in such events as birthdays organized by children living in the centre. Foreign children report that they have Polish friends, but answering subsequent questions it turns out that they only maintain contacts at school environment and timeframe.

The school carries out its tasks in the same way towards Polish and foreign children. This applies to both extra-curricular activities (inside the school or at excursions) and events resulting from local and school traditions or Polish customs and traditions.

The other important activities are events organized for whole families (family day, the school celebration day, family picnic). Similar events are organized also by commune but with the least frequency. In such an event schools located in the commune are engaged in the organization.

Excursions organized by schools have integrative elements as they covered all school children. The importance of those events was proved by teachers who sought financial support for children with migration backgrounds to not exclude them for economic reasons.

All children identified as Chechens/Ukrainians and indicated Chechnya/Ukraine as their homeland, but they associate their future with Poland and want to live and spend time like most Poles. In a few cases, there is a hesitation about nationality/ethnic group affiliation. Interviewers noticed children to be confused for a moment when the question "who are you, where is your homeland" was asked. This was due to their growing attachment to the new place where they live. It happened that being Chechen is socially attractive and for this reason, children felt distinguished in their peer environment.

R: Has anything good happened to you about being a refugee? Can you describe such a situation?

I: For example, I am a refugee, all Poles are very curious about who I am. They want to know who I am, what I am, what I say and they want to know Chechen. Often my friends say "A,...a, A...a, how will it be in Chechen ..." since I am a Chechen, they want to be friends with me and I am very pleased. I am glad that they are interested in me.

22.10.2020.32M.AA.K.16.RUC.O1

Children did not report health problems, except one girl who has spoken briefly about the experienced trauma and its consequences, i.e. the failure to cope with aggression. She also confessed about the path she had gone through in working with herself and mastering aggressive behaviours. According to her statements, the person who helped her in this process was her father, who offered his daughter a classic method of transferring aggression and taught her to control it in relations with other people.

I am talkative, I read very well, I write well, but the character is such that I can shout at teachers and students. If they make me angry. In the fifth grade, I fought a lot. I never start first, but only when they upset me. I had a fight with Poles and Chechens three times in this school. But I don't want to fight and I don't fight anymore, I try not. When I was in the sixth grade, my dad taught me to beat trees, not people. When someone upset me, I would go to the forest and dig trees. In class, when I get angry, I go out and sit alone to calm down.

09/15/2020.47M.IA.K.13.RUC.O1

The closest circle of friends are formed by people from the religious/cultural/linguistic community of the migrants. It is also here that hierarchies and dependencies are formed. For example, in the Chechen community, boys have greater esteem in their opinions than girls do. Relations with peers from Poland have a complementary character and this contact is limited to the time spent in school. Migrant and Polish children do not visit each other at home and do not spend time together after school. Also, those who have recently become residents of a village (not a centre) have not yet established many neighbourly relations.

Many institutional and logistic obstacles prevent faster bonding which was discussed in the report concerning the observation phase of the study.

R: Do you have Polish friends?

I: Chechens and a little bit Polish, from the fourth grade. We like each other. We argue a little sometimes.

09/18/2020.47M.KA.K.10.RUC.01

When contact with the family is considered, social media and apps like WhatsApp, Skype etc. are important. Thanks to these opportunities, children stay in touch with their grandparents, cousins and siblings in their country of origin.

Foreigners living in the centre spend their free time socializing at the site. An important element supporting education and different forms of spending free time are employees of the centre who carry out integration, educational and supportive tasks. Children who needed help with learning, Polish lectures or were looking for contact with other children and Polish employees of the centre spent their time in the common room. In the case of the centre in Bezwola, which is located in the forest, it happens that children go to pick up mushrooms and share them with the employees of the centre. Sometimes they visit a nearby town for shopping or just spend time in a city park accompanied by parents.

None of the interviews included any disturbing information concerning, for example, xenophobia, racism or ethnic or national conflicts.

The respondents revealed their aspirations, appropriate to the age, planned their future in Poland, drew the nearest stages of education, defined their aspirations by showing who they want to become, or admitted that they see their future with Poland, but are not yet able to define their professional role in the future. One girl is thinking about leaving Poland for France, where she spent some time and which seems attractive to her. The children do not want to return to Chechnya and Ukraine, although they sometimes talk about the need to visit the family who stayed there.

R: Who do you want to be in the future?

I: A policewoman.

R: So you have to go to some high school, then to the police school, or you can go to college and become a policewoman after graduation. Will you be a good policewoman? When I meet you on the road, will you be nice or mean?

I: Nice.

R: Why do you want to be a policewoman, where did this idea come from?

I: I don't know, I like it.

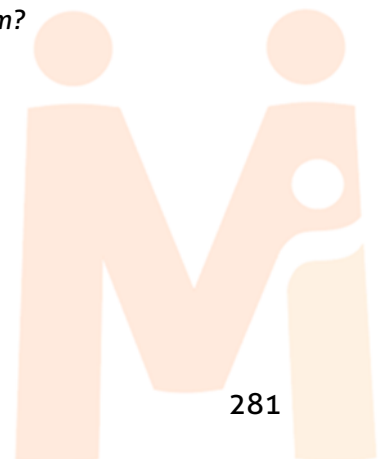
19/09/2020.38M.SI.K.15.RUC.01

R: Oh, who do you want to be?

I: A doctor of teeth.

R: A dentist, stomatologist! Wow! I will come and treat my teeth.

15/09/2020 / 11M.HH.K. 10.RUC.01



When asked about their socio-economic status children are not able to determine it, often not knowing the actual value of money. They do not report unmet needs and can enjoy gifts purchased by their parents, e.g. a new pencil case or a backpack. At school, they do not differ in appearance from their Polish peers: they wear clothes bought in the same stores, they have similar school equipment.

5.3 Models of migrant children's integration

The knowledge on integration practices, observing it and its evaluation is a meta-situational competence and the study group did not manifest it. They do not know what integration means and only after explanation provides confessions and judgment. The same applies to the evaluation of integration models: children cannot speak about integration from other perspectives than participant one, so they cannot evaluate any other hypothetical model and describe desired changes. In their experiences certain processes are natural, emerging from social life and are activities (not perceived as such) resulting from model and integration plan.

Children do not inscribe roles, tasks and responsibilities for integration to any person or institution. They do not assign any role for themselves, nor tasks or responsibilities. It does not change the fact that indirectly, according to responses received such process is taking place both in school and reception centre and children and their families benefit from the one. The good practice is the approach of the school that include foreign children in school life with the same engagement as it includes Polish students. It happened despite religious differences, for example, Chechen children are included in the Catholic rituals, which do not happen without their consent and acceptance. The Muslim rituals are not promoted on the other side. Chechen children are reserved in the process, they do know that they play a role, which is not emotionally engaging or it is not religious on their behalf (when singing Carols during nativity play they felt like actors, not participants of the religious event). Children are also included in patriotic or national events, in which they willingly participate as they perceive Poland as their new home (but not a homeland).

Older children appreciate when teachers notice their talents and engage them in contests, overviews and festivals. Children representing school enhance their relationships with school, community and Poland, and their parents take the opportunity to be proud.

R: Did you since you left felt happy? In what situation? Was there any event you remembered that made you happy, satisfied or amused?

I: Here, we sang with Ms Justyna and we went to the contest in Wohyń for the Day of Foreign Languages. We performer at the stage. We sang there a Chechen song of Markha Makkaeva (in next year Makha Sagaipova) and we were the only girls there from Chechnya. There were also Hasan and Malik, who danced leginka (lovzerg), our Chechnyan dance. Our educator was with us. We had long skirts. There were many children there. It was loud and children were singing in English, German and Russian. Poems were read. And when we arrived on the stage and started to sing a perfect silence came. Everyone observed us as we looked totally different in our outfits

that represented our cultures. I was quite calm that day, comforted by the educator but A..a was very nervous and she went off the stage during the performance. She experienced it deeply.
23.10.2020.33M.KA.16.RUC.01

The efforts made in the reception centre had much less significance for integration as Polish people cannot easily access the centre. The common rooms there secure the language tutoring, educational support or arranging spare time activities. All those efforts are solely directed at reception centre residents so by definition they do not integrate migrants with the host society. The separate children experience comes with the excursions organized by schools or centres – in children stories the memories of such trips brought enthusiasm and admiration of the possibility to see Poland, its villages and cities and participation in attractions. The excursions organized by the reception centre were not integrative as only residing children were participating. They were however cognitive, touring, bringing Poland closer.

R: Does school or class organize any meetings or integration activities for migrants?

I: Yes, Plays or carnival ball.

4.11.2020.21M.DL.M.13.RUC.01

R: Exactly. You like being here, you feel well, have your friends, it is all very important. And do you know what integration means?

I: I heard it but I do not know.

R: This is an expression about the situation when for example children from one country meet children from another country, from Poland and Chechnya, and those children are doing something together, talking with each other, are open, help each other, they like each other. This is integration. It can happen that they do not like each other, do not talk and here there is no integration. In your opinion in this school there is integration or not?

I: It is. We are talking with Poles, we are saying different things to each other, and have the same classes together. My brother likes Polish, he speaks to everyone, tries to speak, speaks with everyone around, he is not ashamed. When I say something wrong, I am ashamed of it, he is not.

R: Why are you ashamed? Everyone makes mistakes!

I: Yes, I learned fast. And we need to help our mom, translate something.

19.09.2020.38M.SI.K.15.RUC.01

I: It was about two years ago when we have gone for five days on a trip to Lublin. It was so pretty there. We were there for five days, my friend, two sisters, brothers. At night we were walking there.

R: What exactly you were doing on such a trip?

I: When we went then we were to the cinema, twice in the trampoline park, and at the end, we need to return to the bus.

R: A long trip! It must have been a nice time. And have you been in Kraków? Maybe you will come someday?

I: Yes, we would like to go on trips with Mr B.

R: It is likeable. And the idea of trips came from the reception centre or the school?

I: The centre. We had also volunteers. We went for trips with them as well, to Lublin, Warsaw, in summer several times.

19.09.2020.38M.SI.K.15.RUC.01

R: Does school or class organize any meetings or activities to integrate foreigners?

I: Yes, there were different parties. There was cooperation with volunteers. There was an event in the centre. An open day. We all met there.

R: You offered us your food, your deliciousness?

I: Do you remember when we came on Saturday, there was air blown castle (the playground), a snack area. I liked it and wanted this to happen always. It was organized for the family day in the school.

23.10.2020.27M.AA.K.12.RUC.O1

A school is an attractive place for children from the centre. They talk about it especially in the context of the pandemic that has kept them at home. At school, they value contact with teachers and peers. In their statements, they report difficulties in the first days at school due to a lack of familiarity with a place. Despite already having some friends from the centre, the Polish part of the school community was a new social setting for them. After a few days of adaptation, relations between students were going well. Depending on individual predispositions, children have established relationships faster or slower. Often, in the first stage, foreign students had a peer tutor - also a foreigner who had started school earlier. Later, the group of their friends grew to include Polish children.

R: Do you have friends? How many? How often do you meet with them? Where? What are you doing? How do you spend your time? What countries do they come from?

I: Yes, I am friends with A...a, but I do have Polish friends. We meet in the school locker room and speak Polish while we teach them to speak Chechen. One girl came to me and asked if I would teach her Chechen? (Laughter) I said I'd teach, although it's a difficult language.

23.10.2020.33M.KA.K.16.RUC.O1

It is worth underlining that contact with Polish children is limited to school only - Polish students are not allowed to visit their friends or colleagues in the centre. This significantly limits out-of-school contacts of migrants, impoverishes the relationship and hampers the integration process. That is why the open days organized at the centre once a year are so important.

We are open to everyone and we talk to everyone. And in our centre, "prazdnik" was organized, it was an open day. When Ramadan ended, it was that day then, everyone could come to taste our dishes, see our apartments, how we live. You could also find out what the Chechens are doing and learn about our culture.

23.10.2020.33M.KA.K.16.RUC.O1

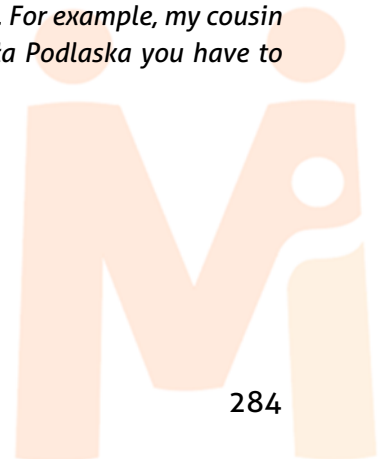
R: Are you visiting your Polish friends, or are they visiting you?

I: No, because in our camp only foreigners can come, I cannot invite them. For example, my cousin can't come in, she would have to make a card first to let her in. In Biała Podlaska you have to choose where you want to come.

R: Why are they doing it, these cards?

I: Because without them, you cannot enter the facility, there is security.

09/18/2020.47M.KA.K.10.RUC.O1



All interviewees felt accepted by their Polish peers, and possible problems and misunderstandings did not have a cultural background, but rather peer misunderstandings. None of the respondents felt rejected.

5.4 School life (if they attend school)

Naturally, the class is the inner peer environment where the first inclusion strategies are implemented with a large participation of the school's teaching staff. The next level of inclusion is acceptance within the group of foreigners, which most often commence during Polish language lessons. These are organized for foreign students from various classes grouped in one. The out-of-class integration of all students is facilitated by any other additional activities organized at the school: sports, artistic and compensatory. They are of great importance not only for individual development (teachers discover students' talent, include them in sports or artistic events outside school), but for the entire environment: students get to know each other, integrate, and achieve joint success (at reviews, festivals, sports competitions), and win recognition and success. These are important elements for the student's self-esteem, but they also bring pride to the parents. In this case, the limiting nature is again the institutional shortcoming. Children from the centre use school bus transportation that goes only once at a specified time. If the extracurricular activities last longer, the student is forced to drop them to catch the bus. Polish language classes organized, for example, during the lessons of religion are a form of additional supporting activities. Language classes and educational support are also an important part of the centre's tasks, carried out in a day-room for foreign children. They are praised by those children. The name of the teacher/caregiver from the day-room appeared in almost every statement and the memory of this person was each time very positive. Children appreciate the possibility of consulting problems with someone sympathetic to them. The issue of school success is, of course, a very individual matter and independent of educational success in the education system. Over time, foreign children are improving in assessment, which naturally comes with language acquisition and receiving better marks. This is a kind of systemic weakness: teachers are not yet able to evaluate knowledge or check it other than through linguistic activity. The school generally underestimates what is an out-of-school competence of students, e.g. proficiency in several languages, knowledge of the local topography, fluency in mushroom type recognition, etc. These might be considered as another institutional boundary for the fast integration of migrant children.

R: What are your grades, are you a good student?

I: Yes. I have a six in English and I don't know what for Polish.

R: Well, six is great!

I: Yes, because I learned the alphabet for English and my teacher gave me a six.

15/09/2020 / 11M.HH.K.10.RUC.O1

R: What are your grades?

I: Different, twos, but I also have good grades.



R: In your opinion, have you achieved any success in a Polish school? In your opinion, does Polish school appreciate the efforts of students? Do teachers approach students individually?
I: Our performance for the Foreign Languages Day was our success. Teachers appreciate our efforts and help us.

23.10.2020.33M.KA.K.16. RUC.O1

In contact with parents, schools make efforts to ensure that the parent receives as complete information as possible about his child. This is possible, for example, due to the employment of an intercultural assistant or when a teacher knows Russian. It happens that a child becomes an interpreter in their case – this is a solution that should not take place. School principals and teachers foster a good relationship with parents/family and show a high level of sensitivity to the needs of migrants.

No issues of discrimination or racism were reported at any of the interview sites.

In response to the question of whether something should be changed in Polish schools, children most often honestly answer that everything is working well and very well.

R: Is there anything at school that you particularly like?

I: Everything is fine. The stage, because we sing there.

R: Do teachers notice you? If so, how do they help you?

I: When I cannot log into the electronic journal on the phone, they help me. They say what needs to be done in the housework, they explain everything.

23.10.2020.27M.AA.K.12.RUC.O1

R: What do you like?

I: I like everything because Poland is a cool country, it is nice here, a nice language. I like everything here. Very nice cities are here, pretty. It is really good to speak Polish, I like it here. (...)

R: And if you could change something, to feel better in the centre, to feel cooler, what changes would you introduce? What could be done?

I: I would like children to talk to each other nicely, not to say ugly words, have fun, clean up toilets after using them, because they are very dirty, the kitchens too ... Well, that's all normal, it's cool.

22.09.2020.18M.MA.K.11.RUC.O2

6. Conclusions and discussion

All analysed interviews have been conducted in the school environment of students in the transition period, living in one of the two reception centres: in Warsaw's Targówek or Bezwola (Lublin Province). The interviews provided general insight into selected children's experiences, however, depending on the age of the child, access to past experiences could be difficult since younger children did not remember their past and the older ones often did not want to talk about it.

All children assessed the standards of accommodation as good, but it could be noticed that children from Bezwola assessed the standard of accommodation better than children from the centre in Targówek.

The greatest deficit of information concerns the situation of seizure, placing in the centre and the current legal status and institutional assistance provided to the family, as well as its economic status. Children either do not understand these issues or are not familiarized with these topics by their parents or are simply unaware that their families benefit from social welfare, health protection and legal protection (mainly younger children).

Common to all children is a high sense of security in Poland. Children do not conceptualize the integration process, and neither do they know the word, but their stories can indirectly draw conclusions about the quality of this process and the activities that instigate it. Children cannot talk about integration from a perspective other than the participant's perspective, so they cannot describe and evaluate any theoretical models and propose any changes. The integration model reflects the organization of school work: the first environment in the class, and inter-class integration takes place during extracurricular activities. Foreign children get to know each other and integrate during joint Polish language lessons.

From the pupils' and parents' perspective, events, when pupils achieve mutual success (at reviews, festivals, sports competitions) and gain recognition, are very important.

All children appreciate the fact that the Polish education system, as well as activities in the centres themselves, take into account their language needs and organize Polish language lessons.

Children do not report problems with access to information - schools make sure that children understand information that is important to them.

Children sometimes maintain online contact with their grandparents or cousins, sometimes they think that it would be good if the remaining part of the family could join them, although among respondents there was no case of implementing the idea/plan of family reunification.

Children are aware that staying in the reception centre is a transitional period. Children feel happy and contented in Poland. According to them, people here are helpful and kind. The well-being of children is associated with good living conditions, care at school, the feeling that each child has a chance for success in Poland, finding his place in the school community, with a sense of security and freedom of ideas about a good future.

A child-centred approach to children at school makes them feel less stressed during learning - they feel the support of teachers in their achievements Children's experiences of everyday life at school, their relationship with teachers and peers are very positive.

Children often do not know the reasons for migration and do not remember the first years/months in Poland. Thanks to new technologies, they stay in touch with their family in their country of origin, as well as with friends they met in former detention centres.

The common experience of all children is the experience of multilingualism. Each of them knows several languages and has had contact with many other languages. They are very open to learning Polish with excellent or good outcomes. They appreciate the support received, take an active part in additional activities (choir, theatre, dance, sport), which they carry out in Polish.

All children have relations both in their ethnic/national group and in relations with Polish students. Living in the centre inaccessible from outside hampered relations with Polish peers as contact takes place only during their stay at school and Polish children do not have the opportunity to participate in such events as birthdays organized by children living in the centre. Contact with Polish and foreign children is limited to the time spent at school - Polish children cannot come to the centre, and foreign children are not invited to Polish children's homes. This is the problem that could be easily solved if the government allow external people to visit the centre. There is no reason to prevent such social relations, especially that centre is an open one – do not detain foreigners.

The school carries out its tasks in the same way (it does not exclude any child) towards Polish and foreign children (additional activities, excursions, etc. are for everyone). In the difficult financial situation of the family, it recruits sponsors.

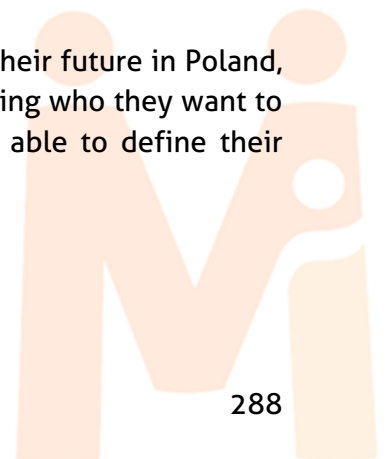
All children declared Chechenyan/Ukrainian identity, indicated Chechnya/Ukraine as their homeland, but they associate their future with Poland and want to live and time like Poles.

There are no health issues among migrant children.

The closest circle of friends are people from the religious/cultural/linguistic community of migrants. Here, too, hierarchies and dependencies are formed.

Foreigners living in the centre spend their free time socializing at the site, rarely coming outside of it. Center employees are important people supporting education and spare time activities of children.

Respondents revealed their age-appropriate aspirations, planned their future in Poland, drew the next stage of education, defined their aspirations by indicating who they want to become, or admitted admiration to stay in Poland, but are not yet able to define their professional role in the future.



School is the entity that organizes the most integration events in the local community - these are events for the whole family. Children representing the school in external challenges strengthen their bond with the school, community, Poland, and their parents have the opportunity to feel proud. Activities undertaken in centres to which Poles have no access are much less important for integration. There are common room activities in the centre, which include learning Polish, educational support and developing talents or interests during the free time. These activities do not facilitate integration with the local community.

A school is an attractive place for migrant children, which became particularly apparent to them during the pandemic period. Often, at the first stage of adaptation at school, foreign students had a peer tutor - a foreigner who had started school earlier. Later, the group of their friends grew to include Polish children. All interviewees felt accepted by their Polish peers. None of the respondents felt rejected.

Over time, foreign children are assessed better and better by teachers: at the beginning of their stay in school, subject assessment is combined with the level of the language knowledge. The school makes efforts to ensure that the parent receives as complete information as possible about his child, and remains in contact with the family. School principals and teachers foster a good relationship with parents/family and show a high level of sensitivity to the needs of migrants.

There were no cultural or religious conflicts. No issues of discrimination or racism were reported at any of the interview sites. In none of the interviews appeared any disturbing information concerning, for example, xenophobia, racism or ethnic or national conflicts.

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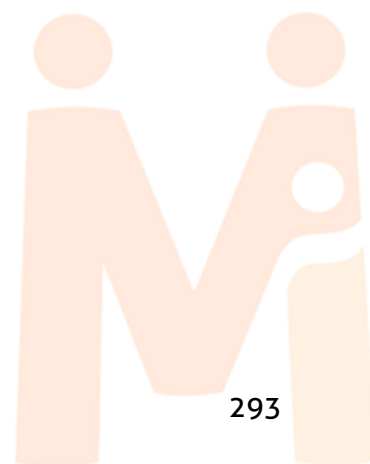
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SLOVENIA

Barbara Gornik

1. Introduction

Field research as part of workpackage 8 Migrant Children in Transition in Slovenia was conducted in asylum home in Logatec and in the student home in Postojna in the period from June 2020 to August 2021. Male unaccompanied asylum-seeking children aged between 14 and 18 participated in the study. The main objective of the study was, on the one hand, to investigate **migrant children's subjective experiences of migration processes** (e.g. pre-departure experiences, experiences of detention, social support and legal protection, access to education and/or language classes, contact with and integration into the local community and experiences of well-being and daily life in transit, etc.) and on the other hand, to explore **the (non-)presence of a child-centred approach asylum policy and procedures** (e.g. legal aid for migrant children, access to child-friendly information, access to rights and relevant procedures, standards and best practises for family reunification, standards for reception

and accommodation of refugee and migrant children, and alternatives to detention and the like).

The research conducted in Slovenia began with a review of the existing theoretical and empirical literature on migrant children and assessment of the institutional support offered to asylum-seeking children through public policy and existing practises. Already at this stage it was possible to evaluate how children's rights are taken into account in organisational procedures and to what extent asylum-seeking children are recognised as individuals with special interests and needs.

The fieldwork at the asylum home in Logatec took place from August 2020 to October 2020. We were two researchers who visited the facility regularly to conduct participant observations (about 30 days). During this time, we had eight interviews (individual and group) with 18 migrant children. These were interviews with migrants who had not spent much time in Slovenia (up to one or two months); most of them could give assessment of the preliminary border procedures and reception conditions, but not also of the asylum procedure, as they usually left the asylum home within one week after arrival, that is before the lodging the asylum application at the first interview for international protection.

For this reason, we conducted additional interviews with two asylum seekers in student home in Postojna. The latter accommodates unaccompanied minor migrants who are in Slovenia for a longer period of time and are involved in asylum procedure. At the time of the research five unaccompanied asylum seekers were staying in Postojna, but only two agreed to participate in research. Their participation was important and valuable to assess how the child-centred approach, in particular respect for the rights of the child, is implemented in the administrative procedures.

During the fieldwork, we found that in general, asylum-seeking children are able to provide some but not comprehensive insight into the child-centred approach to asylum procedures, mainly because they are not entirely familiar with the rights they have. Therefore, data was complemented by information obtained through formal and informal interviews with actors working with asylum-seeking children, including legal guardians, legal experts, social workers and reception centre staff. This stance broadened the research process in that the understanding of adults was also taken into account when interpreting the research findings.

For the purposes of this report, the concept of a *child-centred approach* is used as an approach in which children are conceptualized as a social class, i.e. recognized as individuals *here and now*, as active agents of their lives, viewed through the lens of their present "being" rather than their "becoming" (Qvortrup, 1994; Lansdown, 2005: 1). Additionally, since this report reflects on the elements of child-centred policy, it also understands this approach as one that considers children's rights and their realisation as the main goal and objective (Leviner, Kaldal and Lainpelto, 2015; Goldson and Muncie, 2012). The term child-centred policy can be thus used for any policy (or its elements) that is consistent with the UN

Convention of the Rights of the Child (hereafter CRC) and perceives children as individuals and the main reference person. In this regard, Skivenes (2011) conceptualises child-centred approach as a distinctive perspective that entails the following: (1) the legal protection of children and participation rights in organisational procedures; (2) the recognition of children as individuals with particular interests and needs in interactions with adults; and (3) the use of the child's individual perspective as a way of interpreting what the world means to children.

The report begins by presenting basic statistical data. This is followed by an assessment of institutional support for asylum-seeking children at the legal and policy levels in Slovenia, with a particular focus on the child-centred aspects. The empirical findings of the field research in Logatec and Postojna are then presented, first the findings from the participant observation phase and then the findings from the interviews with asylum-seeking migrant children and other stakeholders. In line with the workpackage objective, the empirical analysis focuses in particular on migrants' experiences of migration and the asylum process and analysis of asylum policy from a child-centred perspective.

2. Secondary analysis

2.1 Statistical data

On 1 January 2021, 8.0% (168,651) of the entire Slovenian population (2,108,977) were foreign citizens. According to statistics from 2018, 250,226 (12.1%) of Slovenia's residents were born abroad; more than half of them (137,000) have Slovenian citizenship. Some of them were born as Slovenian citizens (e.g. as children of Slovenian parents abroad), while others became Slovenian citizens through naturalisation.

Table 1: Number and percentage of Slovene and foreign citizens

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total populations	2.064.188	2.065.895	2.066.880	2.080.908	2.095.861	2.108.977
Citizens	1.956.422	1.951.457	1.945.005	1.942.715	1.939.510	1.949.326
Non-citizens	107.766	114.438	121.875	138.193	156.351	168.651
Foreign born	241.203	245.369	250.226	n.a	n.a	n.a
Newly arrived	16.623	18.808	28.455	31.319	36.110	n.a

Source: STAT

In 2018, 170.572 Slovenian residents were born in one of the republics of the former Yugoslavia. The largest majority were born in Bosnia and Herzegovina (107.677), followed by Serbia (25.372), Northern Macedonia (17.128) and Kosovo (17.051). The number of persons born in EU Member States was 65.808, while 6.702 persons were born in other countries. In 2021, there were 25.673 minors with non-Slovenian citizenship living in Slovenia, including 13.395 males and 12.278 females.

Table 2: Foreign born population by country or region

2018	
Foreign born TOTAL	250.226
Bosna in Hercegovina	107.677
Montenegro	3.344
Kosovo	17.051
Severna Makedonija	17.128
Serbia	25.372
EU Member States	65.808
Other European States	7.144
Other countries	6.702

Source: SURS

Table 3: Number of newly arrived migrants by gender and age.

0-19 years	Total	Male	Female
2016	2.714	1.453	1.261
2017	2.829	1.501	1.328
2018	3.655	2.017	1.638
2019	4.037	2.243	1.794
2020	4.401	2.367	2.034

Source: SURS

Table 4: Number of underage foreign citizens by age and gender, 2021

2021			
	Total	Male	Female
0 years	1.639	841	798
1 years	1.488	751	737
2 years	1.553	805	748
3 years	1.556	836	720
4 years	1.601	815	786
5 years	1.576	834	742
6 years	1.530	805	725
7 years	1.500	789	711
8 years	1.530	812	718
9 years	1.428	766	662
10 years	1.417	738	679
11 years	1.386	709	677
12 years	1.280	618	662
13 years	1.282	678	604
14 years	1.187	637	550
15 years	1.203	600	603
16 years	1.267	666	601
17 years	1.250	695	555
TOTAL	25.673	13.395	12.278

Source: SURS

The trend of migration to Slovenia for economic and family unity reasons has steadily increased in recent years. The overall number of newly arriving migrants per year gradually increased from 13.760 in 2016 to 24.740 in 2020. In 2016, 2.714 migrants aged 0 to 19 immigrated to Slovenia, while their number increased to 4.401 by 2020. The numerical difference between female and male newly arrived migrants is minimal for migrants under 15 years of age. Among newly arrived migrants in the age range of 15 to 70 years, we observe a significantly higher share of men.

Due to its geographical position on the Western Balkan Route, Slovenia encounters also irregular migration. In 2020, 14.592 irregular border crossings were registered at the state border, representing a decrease of 10,2 per cent compared to the previous year, when the police reported 16.252 irregular border crossings. Most of them were crossings by citizens from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Morocco. Official statistics report that 4.008 irregular migrants expressed their intention to apply for international protection in 2020. This number is down 19,7 per cent from the 4.993 intentions expressed in 2019. These migrants were handed over to the competent authority in the field of international protection for further processing. Based on international agreements, Slovenian police officers handed back 10.025 foreigners to foreign security authorities in 2020 (11.164 in 2019), most of

them at the border with Croatia – 9.950 (11.039 in 2019). Pakistan had the highest number of returned citizens at this border – 3.012 (3.517 in 2019).

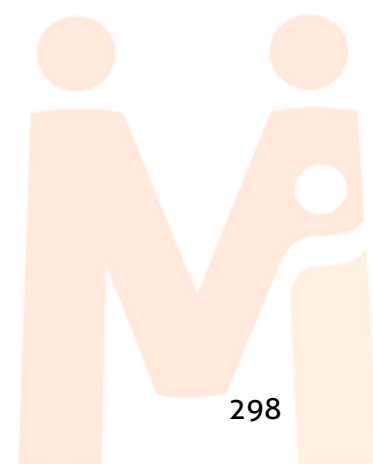
In period from 1995 to 2018, 818 persons were granted international protection in the Republic of Slovenia, of whom 599 were granted refugee status and 219 subsidiary protection status. The number of applications for international protection was constant in the period from 2008 to 2015, ranging between 200 and 385 per year. After the 2015 “refugee crisis”, the number of asylum applications increased sharply: 1.136 applications were filed in 2016. Compared to 2015, the number of asylum applications increased by 428.65%. In 2017, there was a small increase in applications when 1.476 asylum applications were filed, while in 2018, the number of asylum applications almost doubled compared to 2017, reaching 2.875 applications for international protection. Compared to 2015, when 277 applications were filed, this represents a 938% increase. In 2020, 3.548 asylum applications were filed. 783 asylum applications were filed by minor asylum seekers, of which 550 were unaccompanied minor migrants (PIC, 2020).

Table 1: International protection: decisions by year (until November 2021)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total no of asylum requests	1.308	1.476	2.875	3.821	3.548	4.568
Final decisions	1.136	1.572	2.886	3.838	3.636	4.392
Positive decisions	170	152	102	85	89	15
Negative decisions	96	89	135	128	215	149
Cessation procedure	621	949	2.372	3.273	2.875	2.979
Rejected applications	249	382	277	352	457	1.250
Resettlement	0	0	40	0	0	0
Relocation	124	108	21	2	0	5

Source: Ministry of Interior

Applicants from Pakistan, Algeria and Afghanistan accounted for as many as two-thirds of all applicants in 2018. An increase in the number of applications from North Africa was observed. In addition to the nationals mentioned above, citizens of Morocco ranked first in the number of applications in 2020 (1,226). The statistical data shows that Slovenia remains a country of transition for migrants, as 79% of all asylum applications were discontinued after the migrants left the country (Mol, 2021).



2.2 Assessment of institutional support to children in transition

Legal and policy framework: preliminary and asylum determination procedure

In Slovenia, the procedure for international protection is divided into two parts: first, the person expresses the intention to apply for international protection and second, person files an asylum application for international protection on this basis. A person may express his/her intention to apply for international protection upon arrival in the Republic of Slovenia to any state agency or organ of a local self-governing community. In practise, most persons do so after they have been stopped by border police for unauthorised entry into Slovenia via the land border with Croatia. Migrant children applying for international protection in Slovenia are therefore typically initially processed by the (border) police in the preliminary procedure and then transferred to the asylum centre, where they start the official asylum procedure (procedure for international protection).

During the preliminary border procedure, the migrant children are identified and provided with an interpreter. They are questioned about the reasons for migration, travel route and means of travel, family circumstances, country of destination and the like. Migrant children give a short statement about the reasons for international protection and other basic personal data (they fill out a so-called "registration form"). Slovenian legislation provides that unaccompanied minor migrants are immediately assigned a guardian (*ad litem*). At this stage of procedure, the function of guardianship is performed by the regional centre for social work, which checks whether it is in the best interest of the child to apply for asylum. In practise however, the guardianship provision is not consistently applied.²⁴⁰ If it is not, migrant children are taken to a detention centre and given a guardian (*ad litem*) once they are placed there. As soon as their intention to apply for asylum (whether at the border or in the detention centre) is confirmed, they gain status of *applicant of asylum intent* (hereafter the applicant)²⁴¹ and are taken to an asylum home.²⁴²

Migrant children who apply for asylum are allowed to move freely within the territory of Slovenia. They are accommodated in an asylum centre in Ljubljana or in Logatec; the latter is a dislocated unit for vulnerable groups of migrants (families, women and unaccompanied minors). The youngest unaccompanied minor migrants usually stay at student home in Postojna. Before the application is submitted, the staff at the asylum centre conduct a medical examination, photographs, and take fingerprints for verification in the EURODAC

²⁴⁰ The Human Rights Ombudsman of the Republic of Slovenia reports that there were procedures for unaccompanied minors in which social services were not notified about their arrival and inclusion in the preliminary procedure, and in which procedural guarantees for minors were not respected (PIC, 2020).

²⁴¹ Person, who has expressed intention to apply for asylum, may not be removed from Slovenia. If they arrived in country without entry permit, the procedure for the offense of illegal crossing of the state border is suspended until the international protection procedure concludes. In case that the procedure ends with the recognition of international protection, the person is not fined.

²⁴² The personnel at the Asylum Home conduct a medical examination and take a photograph and fingerprints for Eurodac database.

database. No fingerprints are taken from persons under 14 years of age. Migrant children receive basic care, have a right to education and medical care.

Upon arrival to asylum home, they are provided with information on the further course of the procedure, including information on the consequences of leaving the reception facilities arbitrarily, and on procedures under the International Protection Act as well as their rights and duties of applicants, possible consequences of non-compliance and non-cooperation with the competent authority, deadlines for redress and information on refugee counsellors and non-governmental organizations working in the field of international protection (Article 6 of the Rules for International Protection Procedures²⁴³).

Migrant children officially start the asylum procedure with lodging of asylum application (first hearing) at the International Protection Procedures Division Office of the Migration Directorate at the Ministry of Interior (decision-making body). This usually happens within one week after the transfer to the asylum home. At this point they are assigned their new legal guardian (ad litem) and given full asylum-seeker status (they are not entitled to the rights of an asylum seeker until they formally lodge the application for international protection).

The lodging of the asylum application (first hearing) is very short, as it serves to register the child so that he or she can enjoy the rights of an asylum seeker. At the first hearing, applicants are asked about their personal data, route, means and reasons for their migration to the Republic of Slovenia. The procedure is carried out in presence of interviewer, minute taker and interpreter who, at the end of the hearing, orally translates the contents of the minutes to the applicant to comment on. With the signing of the minutes, the migrant formally obtains the status of applicant for international protection (asylum-seeker status).

At the second hearing, the reasons for granting refugee status are examined for the first time. The applications of migrant children travelling with family members are not assessed separately to assess child-specific forms of persecution and migrants below 15 years are not questioned at the hearing. When unaccompanied, migrant children participate at the hearing with their appointed legal guardian. They are asked to provide basic information about his/her identity and of his/her family members who may be joining him/her in another country via Dublin regulation. This is followed by asylum-seeker's explanation of the reasons for the application, supplemented by additional questions from the officer, the legal guardian or an authorised legal expert if present.²⁴⁴

The case is then forwarded to a "decision maker" who makes a decision on the application or, if necessary, decides to conduct a second hearing on the merits. There is no formal communication between the official, who conducts the interview and the decision-maker,

²⁴³ Rules on the procedure for aliens who wish to apply for international protection in the Republic of Slovenia and on the procedure for accepting applications for international protection

²⁴⁴ Legal representation of asylum seekers is performed by NGO.

who decides on the application²⁴⁵ (PIC, 2020). Each decision must be approved by a competent official of the International Protection Procedures Unit before it is issued. Before the final decision, the files, documentation, country of origin information and the decision of decision-maker in the individual case are examined.²⁴⁶ In the case of a negative decision, migrant children cannot appeal the decisions. Instead, they can initiate an administrative dispute, a judicial review of an administrative procedure initiated by filing a complaint against the Ministry of the Interior. The Administrative Court of the Republic of Slovenia decides on the judicial review, with the migrant as the plaintiff and the Ministry of Interior as the defendant.

If a negative decision is issued for unaccompanied minor migrants, they are usually not deported to their country of origin: they are allowed to stay in Slovenia since the Slovenian authorities are obliged to officially ensure that minors are received by the authorities of the country of origin in accordance with the best interests of the child – in a procedure, which is difficult to implement in practice. These migrant children are usually not detained after a negative decision but are allowed to stay for the period of time provided for their voluntary return. However, the status of unaccompanied minor migrants who have been denied international protection puts them in an extremely precarious position. The extension of this period does not give them any social or economic rights. They cannot apply for a residence permit but can only extend the period for voluntary return until they reach the age of majority.

Assessment of child-centred approach at the level of law and policy

Slovenian legislation and policy on reception and asylum procedures follow to some extent a child-centred approach. As mentioned earlier, one of the key indicators of a child-centred policy is that children are treated as children with special rights and needs. In this context, Article 14 of the International Protection Act (hereinafter IPA) obliges Slovenian authorities to assess whether the migrant is an applicant with special reception needs or an applicant requiring special guarantees in the procedure, and the nature of these needs must be assessed. The legislation considers all migrant children and unaccompanied minor migrants as vulnerable and entitled to adapted reception conditions and additional protection measures. They should receive a standard of living appropriate to their psychological and social development, as well as adequate support to enable them to exercise their rights.

²⁴⁵ There are about 12 people in the Directorate of Migration who decide on asylum applications. In order to speed up the procedures, the tasks related to the asylum decision are divided between an interviewer and a decision-maker (PIC, 2020).

²⁴⁶ Some staff of the International Protection Procedures Unit of the Migration Directorate have received specific training from the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) on three modules: Interviewing Vulnerable Groups, Interviewing Children, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation. The EASO training on victims of trafficking and COI was conducted in the first half of 2019, while the training on the Dublin Regulation and interviewing vulnerable persons took place in 2020 (PIC, 2020: 16).

Furthermore, a child-centred approach is closely related to Article 3(1) of the CRC, which states that "in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, court of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration." The IPA refers to this principle in its Article 3, in which it sets out the basic principles and procedural guarantees to be taken into account when dealing with minor asylum seekers, including the best interests of the child.

The best interests of the child are dealt with in more detail in Article 15 of the IPA, which states that in assessing the best interests of the child, the authorities should take into account the possibility of family reunification, the minor's well-being and social development, in particular taking into account the environment from which the minor comes, and issues of safety, especially where there is a risk of the minor becoming a victim of trafficking. Based on the best interest principle, minors must have access to leisure activities, including age-appropriate play and recreational opportunities, and outdoor activities in the premises where they are placed. Minors who have been victims of abuse, neglect, exploitation, torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, or who have suffered as a result of armed conflict, should have access to rehabilitation and receive appropriate psychological treatment and specialist counselling. Minor applicants must be placed with their parents, their unmarried minor siblings or with an adult who is responsible for them under the law or in practise, provided this is in their best interests.

The effective implementation of the right to expression (Article 12 of the CRC) and the right to seek, receive and impart information (Article 13 of the CRC) is equally important with regard to the child-centred approach. The realization of the child's right to express his or her views requires that the child be informed about matters, options and possible choices and their consequences. While the IPA does not provide for free legal counselling and representation of applicants in first instance proceedings, this service is provided through the activities of a selected NGO based on a project funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Republic of Slovenia. Article 16 of the IPA also stipulates that unaccompanied minors must be informed of their rights and obligations in a child-friendly manner when an application is accepted and that procedures affecting unaccompanied migrant minors should be adapted to their age and level of mental development. In addition, asylum seekers must be provided with an interpreter and a translation of the procedure in a language they understand (Articles 4 and 6(1) of the IPA). This need not necessarily be the person's mother tongue and it is up to the Ministry's staff to assess whether the person understands the language.

Another aspect of Slovenian asylum policy that could be described as child-centred is the age assessment. In fact, the age of migrant children is not checked in the preliminary proceedings. Migrants who claim to be minors are treated as children and the benefit of the doubt applies, even if they physically look like young adults. While this approach can be considered child-centred, it also carries the risk of trafficking, especially when adult migrants claim to be minors and are placed with younger migrant children. Nevertheless, age is sometimes checked during the asylum procedure. When this is the case, the

unaccompanied minor and his or her legal representative must be informed in writing and in a language the unaccompanied minor understands of the possibility of an age assessment by an expert (Article 17 of the IPA). An examination to determine the age of an unaccompanied minor may only be carried out if the unaccompanied minor and his/her legal representative consent to it. If the unaccompanied minor and his/her legal representative do not consent to the examination to determine the age of the unaccompanied minor without justified reasons, the unaccompanied minor shall be considered as an adult for the purposes of processing his/ her application. If, after obtaining an expert opinion, there is still doubt as to whether the applicant is a minor or an adult, he or she is considered a minor.

An important feature of the child-centred approach to the asylum processes in Slovenia is also that unaccompanied minors are assigned a legal guardian who assists them in the procedure for recognition of international protection and in the areas of health protection, education, protection of property rights and benefits, and in connection with the exercise of reception rights.

Finally, the lack of a child-centred approach is reflected in the fact that the right to family reunification is only granted to persons who have received status of a refugee status or subsidiary protection, a (Articles 47a and 47b of the Foreigners Act). The refugee may be joined by a spouse and partner in a partnership, minor unmarried children, minor unmarried children of his/her spouse or partner and his/her parents if the refugee is an unaccompanied minor. A permanent residence permit may be granted to a refugee's family member upon application by the refugee, who must submit the application within 90 days of the decision recognising refugee status.

Main concepts, goals and instruments

In 2019, the Slovenian Government adopted Strategy on Migration (hereinafter the Strategy). According to the Strategy, with reference to Article 1 of CRC, all persons under the age of 18 are treated as children and as a vulnerable group of migrants who may be exposed to various forms of danger during their journey. The strategy distinguishes between different types of migration, including regular (economic) migration, political migration and irregular migration. Given that asylum-seeking children arrive in Slovenia without a valid entry permit, their rights and status are mainly affected by irregular migration legislation and international protection law.

With regard to irregular migration, the strategy underlines the need for effective migration management. As an EU Member State and full member of the Schengen area, Slovenia is responsible for controlling the 670 km land border with the Republic of Croatia. At the EU internal borders, Slovenian authorities are obliged to prevent secondary movements in accordance with the Schengen Borders Code. The main objectives mentioned in the strategy concerning irregular migration are:

- implementation of border controls and the use of the latest technologies for the implementation of border controls and the protection of the state border
- management of illegal migration at the Schengen external and internal borders and the effective return and removal of aliens
- ensuring adequate human resources in accordance with the Schengen Agreement, continuous training and improvement of knowledge and skills for the protection of national borders; and
- monitoring the situation in countries of origin, transit and destination, which could influence developments in the field of illegal migration in Slovenia.

When it comes to the definition and rights of refugees, Slovenia's asylum policy is based on the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its protocols, as well as the EU asylum acquis. Political migration is considered a global phenomenon that requires cooperation between countries of origin, transition and destination. It is also seen as a phenomenon that requires shared responsibility, solidarity and mutual support in short- and long-term solutions to migration management. The strategy is in line with the Global Compact for Refugees and its main objectives, namely:

- to reduce the pressure on host countries,
- to strengthen refugee self-reliance,
- to increase access to solutions in third countries, and
- to support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.

The Strategy presents the components of human rights, humanitarian law and EU asylum law are presented as the cornerstone of Slovenia's asylum policy, while international protection is defined as constitutional category. As stated in the Strategy, the approach to political migration has three main objectives:

- provision of quick and efficient procedures for determining eligibility for international protection;
- implementation the principle of solidarity and burden-sharing between EU Member States through resettlement within the reception and integration capacities of the Republic of Slovenia; and
- resettlement of persons in need of international protection from third countries, thereby promoting legal channels.

Good Practices and initiatives contributing to child-centred approach (GO and NGO)

Reception and asylum procedures in Slovenia are mainly carried out by state institutions and offices. This gives the state authorities considerable power to shape decision-making procedures, policies and practises in accordance with the interests of the nation state. In this context, it is particularly welcome if certain services that should be provided by state organisations are carried out by non-governmental sector. Allocating tasks to non-

governmental organisations balances competing interests and contributes to procedural justice on several levels. Three practises can be referred to as examples of good practise in Slovenian reception and asylum processes: 1) institution of legal guardians (ad litem) for unaccompanied migrant children; 2) legal counselling and representation in asylum procedures by non-governmental organisations; and 3) programme for unaccompanied minor migrants in student home in Postojna.

Program of legal guardians (ad litem)

For unaccompanied minor migrants, a legal guardian is appointed before the proceedings begin. Legal guardians assist unaccompanied minors in the procedure for recognition of international protection and in the areas of health, education, protection of property rights and benefits (including accommodation, pocket money, leisure activities), as well as in the exercise of rights related to the reception procedure, until the decision issued under international protection is enforceable. The legal guardians are obliged to consult the minor in all important tasks and decisions concerning him/her and to take his/her opinion into account in accordance with his/her age, maturity and developmental capacity. The legal guardians must inform the minor in an appropriate manner and on a regular basis about the activities affecting the child's life and consult with him or her beforehand. They do not represent the minor in court proceedings as legal experts but participate to ensure the best interests of the minor. The legal guardians are selected by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, which publishes a public call for candidates. After the interviews, the selected candidates who meet the requirements for a legal guardian are invited to attend additional training (16 hours of theoretical work and 24 hours of practical work). Based on the training certificate issued, the Ministry draws up a list of legal guardians²⁴⁷.

Legal counselling and representation in asylum determination procedures

In Slovenia, asylum seekers are not entitled to free legal counselling in first instance proceedings. However, legal advice and representation is provided by a non-governmental organisation Legal Information Centre for Non-Governmental Organisations (PIC) as part of the AMIF project funded by the European Commission and the Republic of Slovenia. When the project was running, PIC maintained an office near Asylum Home in Ljubljana. The legal experts were available to asylum seekers every working day between 8 am and 3 pm also by phone and email. In addition, they visited the asylum home and other units at various about once a week.

PIC ran the legal advice programme and provided information and legal advice to persons intending to apply for international protection and applicants for international protection.

²⁴⁷Decree on the implementation of the statutory representation of unaccompanied minors and the method of ensuring adequate accommodation, care and treatment of unaccompanied minors outside the Asylum Centre or a branch thereof.

They informed asylum seekers about the procedure, their rights and obligations, gave advice on the applicant's specific legal problems and provided legal assistance in preparing applications in the procedure. PIC also provided legal assistance throughout the first instance procedure, which includes representation during the application and any subsequent personal hearings, legal assistance throughout the asylum procedure, preparation of information from the country of origin, and assistance in accessing refugee counsellors when a judicial review needs to be initiated.

In 2020, PIC represented more than 1.342 people in the asylum process (PIC, 2020). At the end of April 2020, the AMIF programme ended. This coincided with the formation of a new government in Slovenia, which decided that it would not issue a new call for proposals for the AMIF project. Since then, fewer asylum seekers in Slovenia have received legal counselling and representation. This resulted in a lower recognition rate for some nationalities (e.g. Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan) and had a negative impact on the ability of individuals to access refugee counsellors to appeal detention orders or asylum decisions.

The programme for reception of unaccompanied minor in Postojna student home

The programme for the reception of unaccompanied minor migrants in the Postojna student home is funded by the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. Professional and administrative-technical staff was hired to perform their professional work. In 2016, the programme employed seven professional staff members, namely two social workers, a social pedagogue and family therapy specialist, a professor of geography, economist, culturalrologist and anthropologist, and a doctor of biotechnology. The staff also attended various trainings on social skills, multiculturalism, communication with youth with behavioural problems, etc.

The programme has a capacity to accommodate 22 unaccompanied migrant minors. The minors are provided with adequate, safe accommodation and 24-hour care. They are offered various activities, from (non-formal) education and literacy to learning about culture and social norms. They also participate in activities with local civil society organisations. As a part of the programme, they take part in various joint activities, day trips and summer holidays, they participate in events and projects. Together with their peers from the local area, the asylum seekers also take part in various sports activity, organized at school or in student home. This type of accommodation enables more efficient and faster integration and socialisation in local community. Accommodation in such a facility also promotes the minors' agency, autonomy and competence, which improves their life prospects, transition to adulthood and leading an independent life.

The Postojna student home also acts as a hub for numerous other projects. For example, one of the projects carried out was PlurAlps, which was funded under the Interreg programme. This project set up ArtCaffe at the student home as a place for meeting, socialising and creative activities. The activities carried out there were co-created by

unaccompanied migrant minors and were designed to identify and develop their talents and knowledge and to connect migrants with the local community. The project brought together the locals and the young people involved in the implementation. Locals showed interest in the events at ArtCaffe, which shows that cultural events are an excellent way to build connections and relationships between migrants and the local community.²⁴⁸ Another project recently launched in Postojna is the Arrival Regions project, which sets up a contact point to help foreigners mainly with practical issues, such as logistical and administrative problems, language acquisition and career guidance.

2.3 Reflection and conclusion

Slovenian asylum policy is based on respect for the rights provided for in UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, there are some inconsistencies between migration law (and human rights principles) and its implementation on the ground. As the empirical part of this report will show, the protection of migrant children's rights is affected by their status of foreigners (asylum seekers or irregular foreigners). Although unaccompanied minor migrants as children should have the same rights as citizen children under the CRC, national authorities negotiate their position with the interests of the nation state - migrant children are always treated as migrants first and children second.

The discrepancy between the human rights and humanitarian approach (which forms a visible part of the policy principles and legal provisions) and the factual practises (which are driven by concerns for national security, identity and the functioning of the state) shows that the migration debate in the Slovenian political landscape has a dual character: On the one hand, the debate revolves around the state's obligation to protect people fleeing persecution, while at the same time it carries a very strong connotation of "security threat". In this context, it can be observed that Slovenian politicians rarely take a genuine human rights position. In general, they behave humanely and tolerantly towards the part of asylum seekers perceived as 'genuine', but at the act very strict toward "false" refugees; in this manner, they defend the classic 'firm but fair' position, where fairness serves as a cosmopolitan disguise and firmness is the real goal they pursue with their positions.

This ambivalent attitude stems in part from the position of government decisionmakers, who claim that Slovenia, as a relatively small state, does not have sufficient capacity to accommodate and provide social services to refugees under the reception and integration

²⁴⁸ The project included 15 different events, including an art, dance and singing workshop, four short and three feature films on migration and inclusion and conversations about them, an art exhibition, an exhibition of drawings "Trees" and a photography competition "Standing through my eyes". ArtCaffe's offer included recognizable drinks - Turkish coffee, special teas, refreshments and oriental snacks, where recipes and ideas originating from their home countries were suggested by the minors themselves. In the planning and implementation of events, they also connected with local artists - musicians and cooks, and local residents from Postojna and the surrounding area also regularly participated in the events. In this way, ArtCaffe promoted the meeting and mutual learning of all residents of Postojna, both those who have lived here all their lives and those who have recently joined the community and are in the process of creating a new life.

procedures. The main elements of the migration debate arise from a combination of nationalist (xenophobic) attitudes on the one hand and *raison d'état* on the other. Namely, the aim of government is to "minimise the risks", "ensure security" and keep the number of migrants within an "acceptable" and "controllable", where the "acceptable" is usually determined by estimating the costs that asylum seekers and refugees will incur in terms of administration, integration support, provision of social care, public services and legal advice, combined with the (negative) impact of migration on social security systems, security and national identity. Nationalist tendencies manifest themselves in mistrust and suspicion that asylum seekers are "false refugees", economic migrants who exploit the European asylum system under the pretext of seeking international protection.

The exclusionary implementation of 'human rights-based' policies can also be seen in other examples, such as the extremely low number of positive decisions on asylum applications, the very low number of refugees accepted under resettlement and relocation programmes, the low standard of reception and accommodation and the like. In many ways, this practise shows that the *modus operandi* of the state authorities is to keep the number of asylum seekers as low as possible. This is also shown by the fact that access to the Slovenian territory (and thus also to the asylum procedure) is often made more difficult by the border police. In recent years, we have seen a high number of returned migrants on the one hand and a low number of asylum applications on the other. Migrants who were sent back to Croatia and then on to Bosnia by the Croatian police reported to the Slovenian NGO PIC (PIC, 2020) that they were misinformed by the Slovenian police during the procedure, e.g. that there was no asylum in Slovenia, that they were not entitled to asylum or that they were accommodated in asylum shelters but were in fact sent back to Croatia.

While the actual number of returned migrant children is not known, overall statistics on migrant returns suggest that the number may be high. The Human Rights Ombudsman (2021) and non-governmental organisations (PIC, 2021) expressed concern about the discrepancy between the number of irregular border crossings (total 14.592), returned migrants (total 10.025) and asylum applications (total 4.008) in 2020. The disproportionately high percentage of returned migrants based on readmission agreements with Croatia on the one hand, and the extremely low percentage of asylum applications on the other, indicates that access to the asylum procedure in Slovenia may be systematically denied (PIC, 2020). These readmission agreements allow for the return of migrants without a return decision and without access to legal assistance or the possibility to appeal. As individual circumstances, protection needs and the principle of non-refoulement are not assessed in practise by national authorities (ibid.).

Finally, it seems that Slovenian politicians and decision-makers are content with Slovenia being a transit country for asylum seekers. As the statistical data show, 79% of all asylum applications were discontinued after the migrants left the country (Mol, 2021). This seems to be appreciated both by migrants who had chosen other EU countries as final destination countries and by local political actors and the local community, who implicitly or explicitly agree to minimise the number of asylum seekers in Slovenia.

3. Qualitative research

3.1 Methodology design

	Type of research site	Location (urban/rural)	The number of total migrants
RS1	Asylum home for vulnerable groups (minors, women and families)	Logatec (small town)	Between 100-120
RS2	Student home	Postojna (town)	Between 5 to 10
Selection criteria of the site and procedure (gatekeepers)			
RS1	<p>There were two gatekeepers at the Logatec research site. The key person for granting access was the head of Government Office for the Support and Integration of Migrants in Ljubljana. She was contacted by email in February 2020 with a request for access to the asylum centre in Ljubljana. The head of the office assigned a contract person, an employee of the office, to communicate with the lead researcher. The planning of the research was abruptly interrupted two weeks later due to the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic. Research activities were postponed until later in the summer, when the situation regarding the pandemic was expected to improve.</p> <p>In June 2020, a new attempt was made to obtain approval for the research site. The main contact at the office informed us that they could not grant us access to the asylum home in Ljubljana due to the Covid 19 situation and the regulations requiring a 14-day quarantine for migrants. The asylum home was overcrowded with migrants. Considering the official response, we assumed that the management did not want researchers on site because of the conditions they were facing. After receiving a negative answer, we privately contacted an acquaintance, a staff member of the asylum home in Ljubljana. She helped us with a new request to the head of the office and got us access to the asylum home for vulnerable groups in Logatec. Requesting access with the help of the internal staff proved to be very helpful and valuable in this context.</p> <p>The second gatekeeper we approached was the head of the Logatec asylum home. She was informed in advance about our research activities by the head of the Ljubljana office, who approved our presence at Logatec. In this respect, there were no problems from her side. She explained to that she had no problems with our presence at the site as long as we have permission from the head of the Ljubljana office. We arranged a meeting where we presented the MiCREATE research protocol before entering the field. We were allowed to move around freely on the premises of the asylum home on the days and at the hours we decided ourselves. We had the impression that we had a trusting relationship with the staff of the asylum home, especially with the head of the department. All of them were willing to give us additional explanations when we approached them with specific questions.</p>		
RS2	<p>Entering the Student home in Postojna was initiated with contacting headmaster with a request to approve access for research purposes. Researcher was immediately redirected to gain the approval by migrant children's legal representatives. She was given contact details for five legal representatives, while only two replied with positive</p>		

	response. After meeting the legal representatives, She was allowed to invite two asylum seekers to participate in the research. They both agreed to take part in research. Access to this site was thus approved by student home headmaster and migrants' legal representatives.
Description of location(s) and/or institution(s).	
RS1	The fieldwork took place in asylum home for vulnerable groups of migrants – families, women and children – in small town of Logatec, where at that time most of the migrant children stayed. The facility is located the outskirts of the town. This is a large open space with several ground floor buildings and paved road traversing the area, which leads to the container zone at its upper side. The place is quiet, embraced by calming atmosphere, in the midst of large trees and nicely mown patches of lawn.
RS2	Student home in Postojna is a place which accommodates local students attending high school as well as unaccompanied minor migrants, who stay in Slovenia for longer period. The facility is located in town centre and has good access to town infrastructure and services.
Period of data collection & number of days at the research site	
RS1	We were two researchers, who were present at the asylum home in Logatec several times a week from August 2020 to October 2020, spending approximately three hours for each visit. Researchers spent approximately 30 days at the research site.
RS2	Additional two interviews with migrant children and legal representatives were carried out in Postojna and Ljubljana in August and September 2021. No participant observation day were conducted there. Researchers spent 2 days at the research site to conduct the interview.
Brief description of "entering" the research site	
RS1	<p>In our fieldwork we tended to adopt a combination of observer (passive observation) and friend role (moderate observation). On the first day of fieldwork, we used passive observation techniques as we were not familiar with the place and wanted to observe what was happening from a distance first to feel the atmosphere of the place and observe the migrants' behaviours before engaging more actively with them. We were observers of the dynamic and happenings in the asylum centre; we observed the activities in different parts of the asylum centre from the side. We did not approach the migrants or engage in activities. Instead, we used the 'fly on the wall' technique to observe things as they happened, naturally and as undisturbed as possible by our presence. The technique of passive observation was useful for us to get used to the new environment and to feel more secure when we started talking to the migrants. We did not know how they would accept our presence, so we wanted to take it slowly and not rush to enter the field.</p> <p>It soon became clear to us that we could not act as passive observers for too long without making ourselves suspicious to migrants. Immediately after the first day, we started to make contact with them, feeling that we had to explain our presence to them somehow. Breaking the ice was a challenge because we did not know what they would like to talk about, what we could ask them and so on. From the second day on, we moved to moderate observation and started to actively spend time with the migrants.</p>

	We felt that it was very important to be present in the asylum centre on a daily basis, as the turnover of migrants was very high. The daily presence was crucial to gain the trust of the newcomers, as they saw us talking to the migrants who lived there. Also, we felt that if more than three days passed without our presence, we were back to at the beginning of the research, especially because the migrants we had met and could involve in the research were most likely already gone.
RS2	In Postojna only two interviews were carried out. Researcher was welcomed by integration programme coordinator, who introduced her to migrants. She did the interviews without participant observation phase.
Number and roles of researchers participating in the process	
RS1	Two researchers participated in the research process. Our role was to do participant observation and conduct interviews with migrant children.
RS2	One researcher participated in the research process. My role was to conduct interviews with migrant children.
How respondents (migrants) were selected	
RS1	<p>Respondents were selected among the minors accommodated at the asylum home. We aimed to achieve diversity across age and gender, but soon realized that this will not be possible due to extremely low number of girls and migrants below 14 years. We also saw that girls and children below 14 years usually travel with their family members, and thus did not communicate much with other people at the asylum home. Moreover, we saw that most of the migrants leave premises of the asylum home in matter of days after arrival and continue their way toward other European countries. In this context we acted pragmatic and decided to approach those migrants who were more eager to talk to us, in our case unaccompanied male migrants between 14 and 17 years old.</p> <p>During the participant observation, we spent considerable time talking to migrants before inviting them to participate in the research. We paid particular attention to inviting migrants who claimed to be minors, and at the same time manifested their minority also physically. This approach proved to be important since migrants are familiar with the fact that being regarded unaccompanied minor migrant brings significant advantages in treatment by the police and in the asylum process. In this context, we found it is not uncommon for young adults to claim to be younger than they are. Some of the interviewees who claimed to be minors admitted to being over eighteen and revealed their true age after they had left Slovenia, when we communicated via social media.</p>
RS2	In the last phase of the research in Logatec asylum home, we realized that we will not be able to obtain relevant information concerning asylum determination procedures since most of the migrants leave the premises before the procedure starts. For this reason, we contacted the facilities in Postojna, where unaccompanied asylum seekers are accommodated. At that time approximately five asylum seekers stayed at the student home, among which two were invited with through their legal representative.
How the respondents (migrants) were approached	
RS1	In interviews with asylum-seeking children in Asylum home in Logatec we aimed to learn more about their experiences in relation to pre-departure, detention and deportation, access to social support and legal protection, access to education and/or language courses, experiences of separation, (in)security and daily life in the 'liminal' phase.

	<p>In our approach, we tended to adopt a friend role. Our aim was to deal with unaccompanied minor migrants on a relatively equal basis and to express our desire to listen to them. We avoided being pushy and imposing our presence when we felt that the migrants showed obvious distrust or lack of interest in talking to us. We wanted to connect with them in a spontaneous way, just as relationships are formed in other interpersonal relationships. Because of their age, life experiences and developed personalities, we felt that we could build a relatively equal relationship. However, we felt that there were status differences between us and them, which made the power relationship unbalanced.</p> <p>In order to reduce the power imbalance (knowing that it is impossible to reduce it completely), we made an effort to spend as much time as possible with them. We approached them with questions like: How are you? Where are you from? How long have you been here? We took time to talk to them about their journey to Slovenia, their experiences before arriving, their home and family, their country of origin, their plans for the future and the like. We joked with them and tried to find common ground. We tried to build relationships of reciprocity and respect. We connected with migrants through social media profiles (Facebook) where we could chat even in the afternoons when we left the premises of the asylum centre and where they could see what we do professionally (that we are researchers dealing with migration issues).</p> <p>To build a relationship with the migrants, we responded to their needs, when possible, provided them with hygiene items and clothes, lent them our phone, allowed them to connect to our personal internet hotspot, helped them with money matters and gave them information about the asylum process. We offered to buy coffee for them several times and responded positively when we were invited to have a cup of tea in their container. This seemed especially important, because we saw that they felt good when being able to offer us something. With the youngest ones, who were not included in the interviews, we also played games, painted and watched videos.</p> <p>In order to build a relationship with the migrants, we also felt that we need to demonstrate that we were not part of the asylum home institution. Therefore, we avoided talking to security staff or taking coffee breaks with social workers. We felt that the fact that they saw us in the areas of the asylum home where the migrants were staying and not in the headquarters of the asylum home strengthened our 'neutral' position and our distance from the institution.</p>
RS1	In interviews with asylum-seeking children in Postojna, we paid particular attention to the evaluation of asylum procedures through the lens of the child-centred approach, including access to rights and child-friendly procedures, effective protection measures, and measures to promote children's well-being of children.
How the research was facilitated by staff at the research site?	
RS1	Staff at the research site was generally very helpful with providing information in informal interviews and off-the-record conversation. We talked other stakeholders (security staff and social workers in asylum home) to complement the information obtained at the level of desk research and fieldwork with children. This stance

	broadened the research process in that adult understanding was also taken into account when interpreting the project findings.
RS2	Staff at the research site was very helpful with providing information in informal interviews and off-the-record conversation. Researcher talked to other stakeholders (legal representatives and integration programme coordinator) to complement the information obtained at the level of desk research and fieldwork with children. This stance broadened the research process in that adult understanding was also taken into account when interpreting the project findings.
Difficulties encountered and ways to overcome (like getting access during empirical work, social closure etc.)	
RS1	<p>One of the biggest challenges we faced during the fieldwork was the high turnover of migrant children in the asylum home. Many of them came and left the facilities within a few days. In this respect, we never knew if the migrant children we wanted to invite to participate in the study would stay in the asylum home long enough to conduct the interviews. We felt that we had to hurry and speed up the process of involving the migrants in the research activities to avoid seeing them leave the asylum home before the interview.</p> <p>Another challenge was that sometimes we could not achieve a relaxed atmosphere during the interviews. This usually happened when we had not spent enough time with the unaccompanied minor migrants before the interview. In these cases, the interviewees were not very talkative, gave short answers and were not very critical of the asylum procedures. We had to lead the interview and ask very specific questions, which deviated from the child-centred approach.</p>

Short description of the sample

	Nr.	Date & duration (min)	Gender	Age	Country of birth	status
S1						
	Interview 1	13.08 Not recorded	Male	16	Pakistan	Asylum seeker
	Interview 2	28.08.2020 1 h 51min	Male	16	Morocco	Applicant
			Male	17	Morocco	Applicant
			Male	17	Western Sahara	Applicant
	Interview 3	04.09.2020 1h 30min	Male	15	Pakistan	Applicant
			Male	14	Pakistan	Applicant
	Interview 4	07.09.2020 1h 40min	Male	15	Afghanistan	Applicant
			Male	13	Afghanistan	Applicant
	Interview 5	21.09.2020 1h 03min	Male	16	Alegria	Asylum seeker
	Interview 6	03.10.2020 1h 45min	Male	15	Bangladesh	Asylum seeker
			Male	15	Bangladesh	Asylum seeker
			Male	16	Bangladesh	Asylum seeker
			Male	17	Bangladesh	Asylum seeker
	Interview 7	03.10.2020 1h 21min	Male	17	Morocco	Applicant
			Male	17	Morocco	Applicant
			Male	16	Morocco	Applicant
			Male	16	Egypt	Applicant
	Interview 8	Multiple dates Not recorded	Male	17	Palestine	Applicant
	Interview 9	08.08.2021 42min	Male	18	Algeria	Asylum seeker
	Interview 10	18.08.2021 Not recorded	Male	17	Algeria	Asylum seeker

4. Findings from participant observation & interviews with stakeholders

4.1 Social dynamics

Description of physical environment

At the time of the research, most of the unaccompanied minors were accommodated in the asylum home in Logatec. This is a former veterans' centre of the Slovenian army, which now serves as a reception centre for vulnerable groups of migrants, including families, women and unaccompanied minor migrants. The centre consists of different areas, including the headquarters, the quarantine building (where newly arrived migrants are housed for ten

²⁵⁰ Asylum seekers are migrants who have filed asylum application at their first interview for international protection.



Interactions between migrants and personnel

In our study, we have seen that communication between the migrants and the facility staff was sparse. The main language of communication was English. Cultural, religious and racial diversity, integration and cultural coexistence were not particularly important aspects of organisational practises in the asylum home. Social workers often showed little interest in talking to migrants because they were overwhelmed with the organisational aspects of life in the asylum home. Some of them lacked adequate training, especially in working with migrant children. We did not find that staff pay extra attention to children and unaccompanied minors. However, there were representatives from UNICEF, who visited the facilities and play with the children. In case conflicts among migrants arise, we saw during observation phase that these were resolved by the intervention of the security staff and the head of the asylum home.



Interactions between migrants

In general, migrants come to the asylum centre in small groups. During our observation phase, we saw they tend to socialize with migrants of the same nationality or religious background. In this respect, a common linguistic, cultural and religious background was noticed as a very important factor for network dynamics. However, migrants of different nationalities played together in sporting activities, such as football. On the other hand, due to the linguistic proximity, Arabic-speaking migrants socialised regardless of their different ethnic backgrounds. Networking and social interactions also took place online when migrants talk to their family members and friends from different countries. Some migrants offered services (e.g. hairdressing or bringing goods from the shop for those who did not have permission to leave the asylum centre) to earn money. During our visits we did not notice much explicitly negative behaviour and conflicts among the migrants.



4.2 Institutional procedures

Access to social support, health and legal protections

Unaccompanied minor migrants receive pocket money, which amounts to 17 euros per month. They receive additional meals, basic clothing, bedding and hygiene items. At their first interview, they are assigned a legal guardian who helps them with health issues, education, protection of property rights and rights concerning reception. Unaccompanied minor migrants are not entitled to specific legal advice at the state level. NGOs occasionally provide legal assistance, but this assistance is *ad hoc* and not systematic. From this perspective, we have witnessed a lack of effective legal protection for unaccompanied minor migrants and migrants in general. Migrant children are entitled to health care, but during the participant observation it was difficult to assess whether health care for migrants is adequate. As we could see, a doctor regularly visited the asylum centre and treats migrants with simple problems, yet some migrants complained about the treatment they received from the doctors. For more serious illnesses and injuries, migrants were taken to a local hospital. Migrants who reported having posttraumatic stress syndrome were prescribed sedatives.

Standards for the reception and accommodation of migrant children

As mentioned earlier, the camp is divided into two areas: the container area, intended for migrants who have expressed the intention to apply for asylum (applicants of intent) and the area with ground floor buildings for migrants who have filed the application for asylum at their first interview for international protection (asylum seekers). The containers, which housed up to four people, and the rooms for asylum seekers suffered from lack of space,

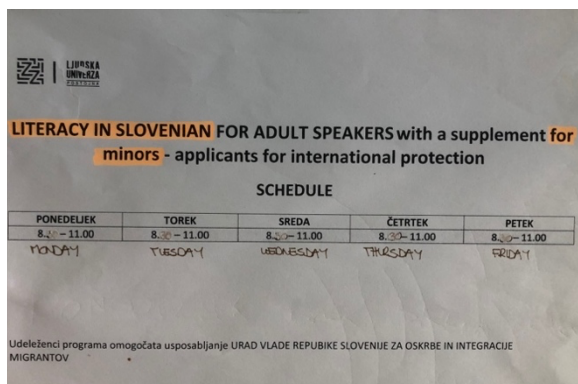
inadequate living conditions and lack of privacy. Poor reception conditions were not appropriate for migrant children, especially as they may have complex emotional problems due to traumatic experiences of loss and violence, as well as experiences of social exclusion, feelings of insecurity, uncertainty and helplessness during migration and the asylum process.



Migrants with full asylum seeker status had access to a playground, a playroom, a washing machine, modest cooking facilities and Slovenian language classes, while applicants of intent were not allowed to use these facilities and services. Migrants housed in one or the other area were not allowed to visit each other, even if they came to the asylum centre in a group. The latter in particular had a potentially negative impact on the well-being of migrant children, who expressed on numerous occasions that interaction with their peers was central to maintaining positive thoughts.

Access to education and/or language training

Applicants of intent are not entitled to education, while asylum seekers formally have this right. During our visits we could see that some of those who have applied at the first interview attend a Slovenian language course; the latter took place every weekday morning (from 8:00 to 11:00) and afternoon (from 16:30 to 18:00). Since most migrants rarely stayed until their first interview or left Slovenia soon after, it could be held that the language courses are not run effectively and do not serve their purpose.

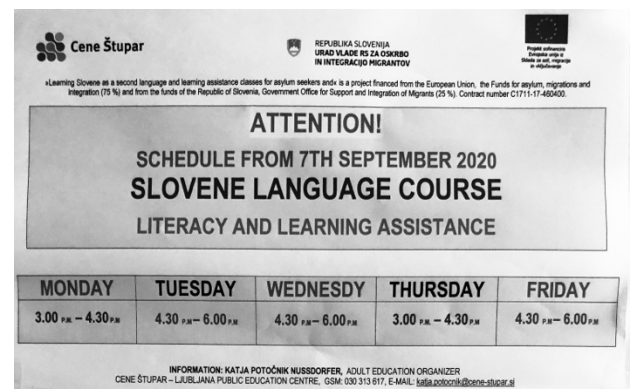


LITERACY IN SLOVENIAN FOR ADULT SPEAKERS with a supplement for minors - applicants for international protection

SCHEDULE

PONEDELJEK	TOREK	SREDA	ČETRTEK	PETEK
8.00 - 11.00	8.00 - 11.00	8.00 - 11.00	8.30 - 11.00	8.00 - 11.00
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

Udeleženci programa omogočata usposabljanje URAD VLADE REPUBLIKE SLOVENIJE ZA OSKRBE IN INTEGRACIJE MIGRANTOV



ATTENTION!

SCHEDULE FROM 7TH SEPTEMBER 2020

SLOVENE LANGUAGE COURSE

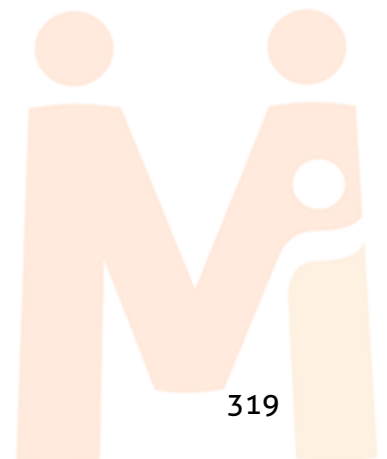
LITERACY AND LEARNING ASSISTANCE

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
3.00 PM - 4.30 PM	4.30 PM - 6.00 PM	4.30 PM - 6.00 PM	3.00 PM - 4.30 PM	4.30 PM - 6.00 PM

INFORMATION: KATJA POTOČNIK NUSSDORFER, ADULT EDUCATION ORGANIZER
CENE ŠTUPAR - LJUBLJANA PUBLIC EDUCATION CENTRE, GSM: 030 313 917, E-MAIL: kaja.potocnik@cene-stupar.si

Contact with and integration in the local community

Unaccompanied minor migrants in the asylum home in Logatec have no contact with the local community. The asylum home in Logatec is located on the outskirts of the town, which gives the impression that the location was chosen to make them as quiet, inconspicuous, and invisible as possible to the local community. The migrants visit the town of Logatec (on foot) or Ljubljana (by bus) mainly for shopping.



Access to child-friendly information

From our observation, it was difficult to assess the actual extent of migrants' access to child-friendly information. We noticed that there were no translators available at the asylum centre, so communication between the migrants and the asylum home staff was mainly in English and sometimes in German. Some of the basic rules and information were translated, but we still found that much of the information remained in English and even Slovenian. Considering that the migrant children asked us many questions about their options and the asylum procedure, we presumed that they were not effectively informed about the asylum procedure.



Access to rights and relevant procedures

Unaccompanied minor migrants in the Logatec Asylum Home usually have their first interview in Ljubljana within a week of arriving in the camp. While we have not observed the interviews in person, we were explained by one of the legal experts that in the asylum procedure, migrants are provided with information in a language they understand, with the help of a translator. Before the first interview, the migrant children receive basic information from the Ministry of Interior and watch a short ten-minute video about the asylum procedure. The video describes the steps of the procedure and the obligations of asylum seekers but does not contain explanations of the grounds for asylum and is not adapted to minors. After the video, they have about ten minutes to have an initial conversation with the legal guardian to introduce themselves and explain their role. If the legal representative (NGO legal expert) is present at the first interview, he/she also explains the grounds for international protection so that migrant knows on what basis a person can apply for asylum. The legal representative also provides additional explanations if the migrants do not understand the procedures.

Standards and good practices to restore family links and reunify families

Family reunification procedures are rarely carried out. During our participant observation we did not witness any example.

Alternatives to detention

Asylum home in Logatec is an open-type facility. Nevertheless, at the time of research, some migrants were quarantined for 10 days due to covid-19 pandemics. These migrants, including unaccompanied children, were *de facto* detained since they stayed in locked building and were not allowed to leave the premises. Food was brought to the migrants' rooms. The rooms in the quarantine were overcrowded and lacked privacy, making it impossible to hold on to safety distance. Their dignity and rights were severely compromised in this case. They were not tested for Covid-19 unless they developed disease-like symptoms.

Child-centred approach institutional support & assistance to migrant children

There many examples showing that the asylum home lacks a child-centred approach. The facility functions as a total institution (Goffman, 1962); migrants are cut off from the wider society and lead closed, formally administered lives; they must submit to the rules of the asylum home in order to use its services; they face loss of privacy and lack of comfortable living conditions; food must be consumed at specific times; they need to ask for clothing, sports equipment and hygiene items; staff have open access to asylum seekers' bedrooms; their day trips outside the asylum home must be announced and registered by security at the entrance; there is a complete lack of assessment of child's best interest in the context of reception conditions for asylum-seeking children as a social group or at the individual case-by-case basis. This kind of institution has a profound negative impact on children's agency.

4.3 Differences in reception processes

We have observed that the division of migrants into the two categories – applicants of intent and asylum-seekers – has significant implications for their dignity, well-being and access to rights.²⁵¹ Migrants with full asylum seeker status have more rights, including basic

²⁵¹ The banality of this division and its impact on the lives of migrants in the asylum home can be illustrated by the following example: Once we were asked by a migrant if we could get him a nail cutter to cut his nails. When we passed this information on to one of the social workers, we received a negative response saying that he could not give him the nail cutter because this migrant did not yet have the full status of an asylum seeker. On another occasion, we witnessed a verbal attack by the security staff on one of the unaccompanied minor

services at the facility, right to education and leisure activities. Inability to practice these rights has a negative impact on the well-being of migrant children. The reasons for the division into one and the other category were not made known to us.

5. Interviews with children in transition

5.1 Well-being, experiences of migration & life in transit

Pre-arrival experiences

The asylum-seeking children we spoke to were unaccompanied young boys, aged between 14 and 18. Most of them were travelling in small groups, in agreement with their parents, and had been away from home for more than half a year. They stayed in Turkey, Greece, Serbia and Bosnia, countries on the so-called Western Balkan route. Most of them lived in one of the official or unofficial camps in Bosnia before they reached Slovenia.

I1: I am away from home for 19 months, almost two years from home. I was 14 months in Bosnia, and I didn't try to run away. I felt like I was at home.

I2: I was first in Turkey for year and a half, within that year and a half, three months I was in totally closed room, where 24 hours I was locked. Only for food and maybe for shower etc. they would open. Shower was inside, only for the food, for five minutes I could go outside. In Turkey, three months I was in that camp. Otherwise, year and a half I was in Turkey. In Serbia, I was one month, in Bosnia six months. In Bosnia I met with him, I was six months, and he was fifteen ... fourteen months. And then together we came here.

Our respondents said that they used different ways of travelling. Some of them walked most of the way, others travelled part of the way hidden in the undercarriages of trucks. They explained that it is important for them to have a mobile phone, especially because they use it as a navigation device on their way through the forests. They did not tell us any information about traffickers. We felt that this was a very sensitive issue and that sharing such information could put them in a difficult situation. As they explained to us, it usually took them more than ten days to cross Croatia and reach Slovenia. The journey was exhausting for them. They slept in *the jungle* – their word for forest – without proper accommodation. Wild animals, low temperatures, bad weather, lack of food and water were just some of the challenges they faced along the way.

I: We were planning to come to Slovenia, and we lost one telephone, it got broken and we got only one telephone, you know. And the only one that had a phone that was

migrants. The reason for the security staff's reaction was that he was playing football in the playground that was "reserved" only for asylum seekers and did not understand that he was not allowed to use the playground.

working, I didn't want to come to Slovenia. Because of that, we were following them, you know. Because we didn't have navigation, we didn't have a phone ... And without that, we didn't know the way, you know, we didn't know how to come here.

I: We were in Croatia for seventeen days, in the forest, rained and it was a very difficult time for us. And we found one, like, old house to sleep.

I: 22 days on the way from Kladuša to Austria. And in the way, we saw river and we were going a different way not to go inside the water and because of that it takes a long time.

R: Was there a ... razor wire fence? How did you pass?

I: We jumped somehow, climbing and a little bit jumping ... It was difficult, very difficult. I got these wounds from there, actually. And lost my clothes there...

Their journey was also very dangerous and many of them relied on the information they received from their friends in the camps. Many of them were caught by the Croatian police and returned to Bosnia or Serbia several times before they managed to finish *the game*, as they say, the arduous crossing through Croatia, past barbed wire fences along the river Kolpa, to reach Slovenia or other European countries. Some of them reported experiencing violence at the hands of the police, while others reported being returned to the Croatian authorities by Slovenian border police in a procedure that took less than an hour.²⁵²

R: Did you know that there will be a razor wire on Slovenian border, did you know this before?

I: Yes, in some places, yes, we know, in some place not, but I am not sure. The first time we go, sometimes we hear from their friend: "Here maybe you'll find this, here that, here this ..." And we ask friends, and they gave information: "Don't go from here because here is dangerous; go this direction ..."

I: In the night, we were running from the police. Someone said: "Put the light off, the police is there, put the light off!" And they have a stick, you know. They go and they beat you, you run, you want to escape and there is a fence. You hit the fence and you are like ... In Kladuša, they were also treating us very bad.

I: After being on the road for days, we were caught, and it all happened so fast that I did not understand what was going on. Before we knew it, we were handed over to the Croatian police, who then sent us back to Serbia.

All our interviewees entered Slovenia without a valid entry visa and many of them also without identity documents. Unaccompanied minor migrants are exempt from repatriation under the Dublin Convention or bilateral agreements with Croatia, however, their access to

²⁵² The Ombudsman confirmed that the issue of returning migrants persisted in 2020 and further raised doubts as to whether individuals are properly informed by police authorities on their right to apply for asylum.

rights is often subject to nation-state exclusion measures, as practise at the Slovenian border shows.

Arrival to Slovenia: preliminary procedures and detention

Our respondents disclosed different experiences with the Slovenian police. Some of them complained about the way they were treated and reported that they were subjected to physical and verbal violence during border procedures. Others reported that their mobile phones, clothes, backpacks and money were taken from them by the police. Most of them had not received their personal belongings back by the time of our interview. Nonetheless, some of them were satisfied with the treatment they received when they were apprehended at the border.

I: On the border, the police were not good with us, like, we were slapped and that guy who was keeping money here, hiding ... they beat him a lot. And they were using this slang, these bad words. So, we were not happy with this border police.

I: The police came, thank god, they were very nice, kind, they were with us, they were joking. They gave us food and water. We had good luck. And then I asked for the asylum here, in Slovenia, and I gave the fingerprint and then they brought one ... One lady, she came, she said that she will be responsible, I mean, for ... Guardian or something... Never in my life I have seen the police on the border so kind like here.

As we found out that although they lack information on their rights, some unaccompanied minor migrants were familiar with the fact that being a minor brings advantages in the treatment by the police and in the asylum procedure.

R: Were you scared when you were caught by police in Slovenia? Were you feeling insecure?

I: No, it was okay. One translator, she came, she said that "don't worry, you are minors, they will not send you back."

R: Okay, they explained right away, the translator.

I: I wasn't worried because I am a minor. All the other group was very scared.

Some of the migrant children we spoke to spent between one and five days in detention before being taken to an asylum home. Others were taken directly to an asylum home. When we asked them about their experiences of detention, they gave different answers. There were few who did not express negative feelings. These stated that the police were nice to them, that they had access to computers and that they felt they were treated respectfully. On the other hand, some of them felt stressed and uncomfortable in detention centre; many of them could not talk to their family and friends. As one of the interviewees said, one of the hardest things to cope with was having their mobile phones taken away by the police. Others also reported that there was nothing to do in detention, no television, no sports and no leisure activities.

I: There was one closed room, where we could not come out, we were locked. Only for toilet and shower we could come out and otherwise we had to be five days only in this room. Food and etc. they would bring us. Kind of like a closed jail almost.

I: There was nothing to do, only one puzzle, so I would sometimes put the puzzles together. But 24 hours I had nothing to do in the closed room, only for toilet they could go out, and for shower and the food would come inside the room, so it was totally closed.

R: No phone ...? No TV ...?

I: So, once I asked, as there was no TV, no enjoyment, nothing, I told that, I need to call, I need my phone. So, one policeman brought a laptop, so I could communicate through the internet.

I: It was difficult to be locked up for 24 hours without a mobile phone, without anything.

I: When I was in detention, I didn't have any phone. when I went to lunch, I would say, "Please, can I have my phone? Can I call my family?" They're like, "No, no." So, I didn't have any phone.

Being in Slovenia and knowing that they would not be sent back to Croatia proved to be very important for the well-being of migrant children; deportation seemed to be one of the biggest fears. In almost all interviews with underage migrants, a lack of information during detention was reported. From the interviews, it could be concluded that they could not effectively exercise the right to information they have as children and that the information they received was not sufficiently culturally sensitive and age-appropriate.

R: Okay so, what was the worst thing here? What was the worst thing in these five days?

I: Nothing. Everything is okay. Difficult to worry to go back to Bosnia now.

R: You've got worries, you're worried, okay.

I: We would like to stay here, we wouldn't like to go back to Bosnia or Croatia. No problem for us at all, just this. The biggest problem, you know.

I: The main thing was that we felt like we were suffocated, our heart was feeling closed. You know, we cannot see anything, we do not know... They did not tell us, 'After five days you will go there'. So, we did not know anything. It's just unexplainable."

Overall, they showed a lack of understanding of official procedures and their rights. Their frequent statements, uncertainties and worries about their future indicate that children not only need to be informed about the procedures, the opportunities, possibilities and outcomes involved, but also need to be assured that they will be taken care of. The findings also suggest that migrants experience detention more positively when the authorities treat them with respect.

Reception conditions and well-being in asylum home

The migrant children from our study were in Slovenia for between five days and two months. As mentioned above, some of them spent a few days in detention, while others were taken directly to an asylum home. The first hearing for the asylum determination procedure usually took place one or two weeks after their arrival at the asylum home. When asked about their satisfaction with life in the asylum home, they were generally not critical of the reception conditions; many of them said they felt comfortable and would not change much. However, dissatisfaction with life in transit became clear in many interviews, especially with regard to spending time, communication with staff and religious practise.



The difference between the rights and physical separation of the applicants of intent and asylum-seekers had a negative impact on the well-being of migrant children, especially when this separation practise affected their relationships with their friends. For migrant children, being able to stay with friends was particularly important. As they explained, this promotes feelings of security, socialisation and mutual support. We also found that migrants tend to be with migrants of the same linguistic, cultural and ethnic background.

R: Do you also talk with other people who are here? Like, who are not from Pakistan?

I: We are not talking so much. Maybe, like, yes and no... and maybe little greeting. But the main problem is their language. Is not the same language. And then... sometimes we also keep fighting, other people, so we are not going too much with them.

R: You keep to yourselves.

I: Yeah, we keep to Pakistan ...

R: How do you feel about not being allowed there to go to the “asylum- seekers” zone?

I: Ah, for me it is not much ... making difference, but it was making a difference when my friend was living there. So, that was more... I was feeling – oh, I should go to that building because our friend is there. But now I got used and they got used and... it’s the same for me...

R: So, from what you’re saying, the big problem is that you are bored, you don’t have ...anything to do here.

I: 12 or 13 days we felt very well, because we had a lot of friends. But now, gradually they are leaving, so we feel that boring, a little bit ... Loneliness.

R: Okay, what is here, anyway, that makes you feel at least a little bit good?

I: When there were friends, we could talk. That is the main thing, so it is so many friends we feel like we’re in Pakistan, so ... so sometimes we can spend time there and come here like this. And plus playing volleyball and football.

Our findings have shown that it is crucial for the well-being of unaccompanied minor migrants in the asylum home to have at least a certain degree of freedom of choice. Few of them stated that games and sports would improve their well-being and quality of life in the facility. Having limited leisure activities, not being able to decide for themselves how to spend their days and waiting to be interviewed had a negative impact on their experience of the asylum process. A mobile phone was particularly welcome in this context, because without a phone, the migrant children do not have much to do, just talk and spend their time. As they explained, a phone is also very important for them to keep in touch with their counterparts in other countries, exchange useful information and get advice from them on how to continue their journey. In contrast, those who had a mobile phone used it to play games, listen to music, watch videos and movies, communicate with family and friends through social media or other means of communication.

I: So, right now among all these things awaiting, that if we get a mobile phone. That would be the best thing among all these things right now.

R: At the moment?

I: Yeah, we can talk, we can spend our time, we can fill our time with that

R: So, Facebook is very important for you?

I: Just, you know, cannot sit boring here. I use that. I mean it makes the time go faster.

R: How would your life be without telephone?

I: Difficult. When I was in the closed camp, I was without the telephone, I was, like, almost crazy, but thanks god that one friend gave me the telephone. And then in the closed camp, we were working out early in the morning.

In some cases, the unaccompanied minor migrants mentioned their families in the interviews. Talking to family back home proved comforting for some; they said they kept in regular contact with their parents. Others, however, said that it is stressful for them to talk to their parents, mainly because they feel that they are worried about them. Furthermore, as

most unaccompanied migrants travel in consultation with their family, they felt responsible for reaching the destination country and managing the journey. Being in Slovenia - not in their final destination country - they felt that they had not met their parents' expectations.

R: What is the problem that you don't have connection to your family? Is it the phone or something else?

I: I talked already, once, but I do not want to give my family any bad news...

R: Was it difficult, like, not talking to your family for you?

I: Yes, it was difficult. They get worried, you know, for us. They got worried since we started from Morocco, you know. They were worried for us. They were asking us, "When will you be in Europe, when you will be in which country ...?" They were worrying about us.

Apart from a good relationship with friends, interviews with migrant children revealed that a good relationship with the staff of the asylum centre was equally important for them. We received different answers from unaccompanied minor migrants when asked about the relationship with the social workers at the asylum home. While some of them were satisfied and happy about the treatment they received from the staff, others felt that they were treated without care and respect. The problem we observed was not that the social workers were impertinent but that they were overwhelmed with the organisational aspects of life in the asylum home. Based on testimonies of children, we could conclude that caring approach by social workers and staff seems to be crucial for the well-being of migrant children:

I: Here I feel like I am in prison. Today, after talking to you, I feel much better. I feel better because someone comes and cares for me. So, that makes me feel like a human being... But who on the staff comes here and talks to us? No one... So, I feel like I am in a prison. Of course, it's not a good feeling, but you came, and you talked, I feel fine.... In Bosnia, we felt much better.... people were more friendly, like the guard, there was like, with the children, there was very good communication. So, though it was closed camp, we felt much better in Bosnia.

R: So, in Bosnia, when you were in Bosnia, you said that you did not want to go because you felt at home. What was the most important factor that you felt at home?

I: With Save the Children, we felt like family. They were taking care of us like a family, like a mother and ... I didn't feel like I am missing mother, father because they were such ... care, giving to us, Save the Children.

R: There was always someone present, some person or how ...?

I: Night and day, there was someone at least. We would drink tea and we would, like, sit together like us, talking ... Like, maybe, imagine, you are from ... Just like this. No separation, you know. You bring drinks and for similar kind of care they're getting tea and ... In the night-time they would come, asking us "why don't you sleep?" ... Like this. So, definitely nobody would feel like they're out of home.

Boredom was another aspect that came up frequently in the interviews, especially if they did not have many friends in the asylum home. Unaccompanied migrant minors who do not

yet have full asylum status were not allowed to use the playground for football or basketball. Some of them admitted that they had nothing to do and spent most of the day sleeping.

R: How are your days here, what are you doing?

I: Sleeping. We get up in the morning, take the breakfast and then we come and continue sleeping again, then the lunch, and then we come to sleep again ... And because on the way in the forest we couldn't sleep well, it was too cold for us, you know. We like to play football yesterday, but they said, "You're not allowed to go here, to go down ... after the interview." In the playground.

Some of our respondents expressed they would like to have more security. They would appreciate having the ability to lock their rooms and containers. Security was particularly important for the migrants' general well-being and their sense of safety.

R: But generally – how do you feel here, like, you know, in this place?

I: Two things I feel ... Like, one thing is that the security here is quite weak, you can go anywhere, you can run away, people can come inside and stay. And they only take the attendance in there, so here, what happens, they don't know.

R: Behind, they can go in the wood...

I: Anybody can come, and anybody can go, they feel like it is easy for them. In Bosnia, we felt much better. There was a camera, there was a net, in the area was covered by the net.

5.2 Institutional support & assistance

Access to social support, health and legal protections,

In Slovenia, unaccompanied asylum seekers receive accommodation, food, basic clothing and hygiene items, and 17 euros pocket money per month. However, the clothes they receive through the social support and reception mechanisms are not new and often too big for them, and the money they receive is far from sufficient to cover their needs. Lack of appropriate clothing and sufficient financial resources were cited as the main problems when it comes to social support. Even if family members sent them extra money through Western Union, they could not withdraw it because they were minors.

I: It would be good for us to get some money and then, of course, we would get some clothing – here, we don't get clothes. Once, we got at the beginning maybe something. But not after, then they asked for more... after the interview. Only we have this thing, blanket ... nothing else.

I: The main problem is for, like, the clothes. Like, even if I wash this, I have nothing to wear in this winter. So, if it's just dirty, I have to wear this on, I'm saying; if you wash them, I'm without jacket. This is difficult, with one pair of clothes.

I: We are wearing twelve days the same and the one same clothes. We're getting skin problems because of this, we did not wash, only one clothes. Then, when we ask for clothes, they give something old, maybe it's not washed, god knows who wore it, it is maybe out of size ...

Migrant children formally have the right to health services. Yet some complained that the doctor did not give them the medication they need. Some migrants admitted to having sleep problems, but did not describe it as a health problem. Nevertheless, an unbalanced daily routine and irregular sleeping patterns can be signs of anxiety and post-traumatic stress.

R: What time do you go to sleep?

I: Morning, four o'clock.

R: Oh, what do you do all night?

I: I don't get sleepy, I don't feel sleepy, so what I can do ... This is very difficult if you don't feel sleepy, you can't watch the TV, then you go out and find something to do and then in the morning, of course, it comes the ... you know, tiredness, then I sleep...

In addition to the right to medical care, unaccompanied minor migrants also have a right to a legal guardian, who is assigned to them at their first international protection interview. The legal guardian assists them in the international protection recognition process and in the areas of health, education, protection of property rights and benefits, as well as in the exercise of reception rights. However, some of unaccompanied minor migrants reported that the support they received from their legal guardians was not effective.

R: Are you in touch with you legal guardians? Because when ... the interview, there was a person assigned to you who also should be responsible –

I: The first time when we got the legal guardian – only that time we have seen him and after not.

R: At the interview? In Ljubljana?

I: Yeah, and then there is no more

R: You talked to him at the interview?

I: So only that time on the interview he talked with him on the phone, and he said later and later he's no more here, so ... neither the contact is there, nothing.

R: Nothing? No phone number ...?

I: No.

R: E-mail?

I: No.

R: Nothing?

I: Nothing. Like, he just showed up once and he's signed ... that's it. Then he's disappeared. So, I don't have any guardian.

As we have found in discussions with unaccompanied minor migrants as well as with legal guardians, the problem is that there is no monitoring of how the role of guardianship is actually performed. There is a great deal of variation in how this important function is

implemented, often depending on the personal characteristics of the guardians and their willingness to engage.

Access to child-friendly information

At the asylum home in Logatec, we saw that information for unaccompanied migrant minors was not provided in a child-friendly manner. For example, in the middle of interviewing four unaccompanied minors, one of the staff entered the container, looked at the boys and said: "You two, come with me, you have an interview in Ljubljana in two hours. Get ready, the car will pick you up in five minutes". Completely unprepared, they put on their shoes, took a jacket and followed her outside. From this we could see that migrant children are not informed in advance about the upcoming hearing for the asylum procedure. Two boys who had stayed with us, explained that every day the social workers put a list of names on the toilet door for the interview the next day. The information is hence easily overlooked, not only because it is in English, but also because the social workers do not inform the migrants individually about the interviews.

I: In this toilet room there will be written your name, your age, interview and date. So, in English... from there they can guess okay... Because they got used now, everybody knows a little. So, there will be interview, then ... we see that the car comes and takes – from that they guess. But there is no communication, like "Okay, tomorrow is your interview." Not like that, they are not explaining anything. So, we see the list and then we guess from there – okay, tomorrow will be my interview and this car comes ...

In many cases, unaccompanied minor migrants expressed that they would very much appreciate receiving more information during the asylum procedure. From the interviews we could conclude that they could not really exercise their right to information and that the information they received was not adapted to their cultural background and age. Migrant children showed an obvious lack of understanding of the asylum procedures and their rights. On the other hand, as many of them reported, they received information from friends, which was consequently less relevant to their legal protection and decision for asylum.

R: Do you know what will you be asked in the interview?

I: questions they ask, like, how you came, how much money you paid to the guy who had taken you, like, we call agency or something. Or, which countries you crossed when you came here, what your family does, what your father does – like a profession; what is your plan to go ... Family – how many members are in the family, education etc. Or, like, if you want to go to France or Italy, if there's anyone who is going to receive you or something like that, also. And how many days you have stayed in which country, for example, how many days in Croatia, how many days in Bosnia, how many days ... such ... all information, they ask.

R: Who gave you this information? I mean, about the interview?

I: Those who go to the interview, like, they talk and they explain.

R: So, no information from the social workers?

I: Only from our friends and the calls we have received, but not from ...

R: Okay. Would you need more information? I mean, would you be happy to receive more information about this?

I: Yeah, we'd like that definitely that the social comes – not from a friend – the social comes and gives all the information and instructions, it would be much better, definitely.

In interviews with unaccompanied minor migrants, they also frequently expressed insecurities and worries about their future. This implied that children need to be informed about follow-up procedures, possibilities and opportunities, including education and employment prospects, as well as to be comforted that they will be protected and taken care of. It was made clear to us that a lack of information about what happens next has a negative impact on children's wellbeing.

R: Did you talk to social workers? How was it? Did you get any information?

I: Yeah, one person was here, who introduced – like, "You have to be in this room, then lunch and dinner is here," and bed and all this they have ...

R: Did you have a translator or in English?

I: So, that was in English, there was no translator and if there is somebody who understands, so they help you – other friends. And I understand a bit, so...

R: Okay. What about the procedures? Did anybody say anything about the asylum procedure?

I: No. So we don't know anything. Nothing we know – when will we get the paper, when will we have the interview. Nothing yet.

R: So, do you think this conversation between you and the social workers should be improved or is it okay like it is?

I: Yeah, we agree, if the conversation goes like this, like we know – what is waiting for us, next, that'd be much better. Like, we don't know nothing – whether we're going to stay here, or we'll have to move somewhere ... If we don't get the paper yet, then we will decide to go to our country. So, we don't know, who will get us the paper and if we are going to get the paper. Like, there's little conversation or little somebody gets in touch ... What are next steps. Could be better.

Access to child-friendly information in administrative asylum procedures is also critical. During the interviews we found that unaccompanied minor migrants only meet their legal representative for the first time when they arrive in Ljubljana. The latter has less than an hour to explain his or her role and the asylum procedure. On numerous occasions, the migrants admitted that they did not understand the procedures properly. They showed an obvious lack of knowledge about the follow-up procedures and expressed confusion about their rights. As they said, they would welcome more legal advice and information about the options they have and, more importantly, about what will happen to them in the coming days, weeks and months. From their testimonies, we could conclude that these children have not benefited from the safeguards to be effectively heard, especially as they have not been

fully informed, which is necessary for the full implementation of the right to be heard and to express their views. As one of the legal representatives stated:

I: Migrant children are most interested to know, when will the decision be made and on how to submit certain documents. They are also very interested in family reunification, that is, when they can bring a family; whether they can go to other family members in another country; what happens after you get status, when you can bring a family, if that costs anything, things like that. Then, of course, how these interviews go, what they're going to have to say, what they don't need to say and so on. The process is complex, and they find it very difficult to understand. So, they have to be explained the same things several times after each stage and basically guide them a lot in the process, what is their duty, what is their right, how should they communicate with officials. And then this is the information that we give them away, plus preparing them for the personal interviews they have with them, especially for knowing a little bit about what to expect, what's relevant in their story, what's not relevant.

Child-centred approach in asylum determination procedure

Our research has shown that in Slovenia migrant children in asylum procedures are not given voice in asylum procedures in full extent. Children travelling with family members who are younger than 15 are not interviewed at the asylum hearing – this is what Pobjoy (2017) calls the *invisibility of children*: In this case, their asylum claim is not considered separately from that of their parents, even though the children themselves may be prosecuted. Such practice negates children's active participation and involvement in decisions that affect their individual lives and is a violation of Article 12.

Furthermore, we have found that in the case of children travelling unaccompanied, asylum procedures in Slovenia are not sufficiently adapted to the needs of children - this is what Pobjoy (ibid) calls *incorrect assessment* of the asylum claim: In this case, the assessment of the asylum claim often does not take into account that the applicant is a child and therefore may need special support during the asylum procedure. As a result, children are not sufficiently recognised as a social group with special needs in asylum procedures.

For example, while the first hearing is usually completed in half an hour, explained one of the legal representatives, subsequent hearings usually last 3 or even up to 6 hours and are much more detailed. Although the legal representatives explained that the hearing protocol is adapted to children (e.g. minors can take short breaks during the hearing), these adaptations do not seem to be sufficient. One of the asylum seekers described these interviews as extremely exhausting and stressful:

I: Every time after the interview, I go to straight to sleep

In addition, some migrant children admitted that they were nervous and anxious before and during the interview, especially the first time when they did not know what to expect. Some said they would feel more comfortable if they were accompanied by friends, while others thought it would be easier for them to tell their story to a person they trusted and felt close to.

R: Yes, what could be good to change.

I: I don't know. Aside from the place and food, I don't have any objections. The only thing is if we could go with our friends together for the interview. Otherwise ...

R: Like, today? Or before, with the other friends from before?

The one who ... those friends who went before, it would be much better with them to go, for the interview... those friends that went before, they are a little bit senior than we. So, they were also taking care of us, like elder brothers.

R: Yeah, I remember, yes.

I: If they would be with us, like we would feel better, we are a group, we are together, they will take care of us ...

Another critical point in relation to a (lack of) child-centred approach in asylum procedures that we found is the assessment of the credibility of the child. Migrant children often give different stories during the preliminary procedure at the border and later in the asylum procedure. Sometimes this happens because they believe they can protect themselves in this way, sometimes they lack confidence or feel insecure, and sometimes they are too stressed and exhausted, especially during the preliminary procedures at the border, to give comprehensive information. Sometimes it also happens that a child does not remember all the details, or they simply do not understand exactly what is being asked because the procedure has not been adapted or conducted in an age-appropriate way.

The circumstances that lead to inconsistencies in the child's story, are occasionally considered by the decision-makers in the asylum procedure. However, as we found in our study, it is more common for decision-makers to disregard these contexts; instead they examine the information provided by a child and look for inconsistencies between the first and second interviews and consider these discrepancies as a factor in determining the child's (lack of) credibility.²⁵³ As one of our interlocutors explained:

I: They ask a lot about years, for example, when you went to school, when you started working, how long you have been out of school, and so on, to check if I am really a minor as if they want to catch you, get you on a lie, as if they know in advance that the decision will be negative".

²⁵³ The asylum procedure also includes documentation made at the preliminary procedures and statements made by migrants at the border are used in practice to assess inconsistencies between the applicant's statements, as a part of the credibility assessment of the applicant. This is problematic, especially in view that migrants in the police procedure often do not have a translator, and the procedures are not conducted individually (PIC, 2020: 22)

Interviews with migrant children and their legal representatives have also revealed other shortcomings. For example, translation is reported to be a major problem throughout the asylum procedure. The lack of professional translators in the Slovenian context proved to be a major problem raised by my interlocutors. One of the legal representatives explained, interpreters for some languages in Slovenia are not available or only available for a limited time, or the interpreters provided are of poor quality. In addition, translators are often not sufficiently qualified, so they often interpret rather than translate what the asylum seekers say. The incorporation of common-sense assumptions and subjective opinions into interpretation has immense implications for asylum decision-making, particularly because asylum applications are predominantly assessed and decided on the basis of what applicants say and not necessarily on the basis of objectively verifiable conditions. This can have a negative impact on both the asylum process and the assessment of credibility.

Our study also revealed that research, the rights of the child are rarely considered in asylum determination procedures. In Slovenia, a migrant coming from a country without war or political conflict is never granted refugee status. Convention of the Rights of the Child is apparently not used as a basis for reinterpreting, recontextualising and expanding the refugee definition under the Refugee Convention. However, forms of child-specific persecution are considered under the subsidiary protection procedure. The latter is granted to minors who do not qualify for refugee status if there are reasonable grounds to believe that they would be at risk of serious harm, including sexual exploitation or child labour, if returned to their country of origin.

Another major shortcoming is also the failure to recognise the principle of the best interests of the child. Article 3 of CRC states that the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children, including international protection procedures. This article requires decision-makers to ensure that the best interests of the child are adequately considered and consistently applied, including a description of how the best interests of the child have been considered and assessed and the weight given to them in the decision (UNCRC 2013, 5). In Slovenia, the assessment and determination of the best interests of the child is completely lacking.

5.3 Models of migrant children's integration

Almost 80 per cent of all asylum applications in Slovenia are discontinued after the migrants have left the country (Mol, 2021) and clandestinely continue their way to the country of their choice. Against this background, it is impossible to speak of integration in the usual sense. There are basically no integration activities implemented in the asylum home in Logatec. We had the impression that the asylum home is organised as a mere "pit stop", where the migrant children can take a few days' break to rest before they are "allowed" to continue their journey to the chosen countries. An interesting factor in this context is also the fact that the asylum centre is located on the outskirts of a small town, as if the location was chosen to make migrants as quiet, inobtrusive and invisible as possible to the local community. We had the impression that because these migrants come and go

within a few days or weeks, staff of the asylum centre believe that their main task is to maintain this *transitional* system running. The fact that migrants leave the premises of the asylum centre within a few days of their arrival was seen as an obstacle to building more child-friendly and trusting relationships between the migrants and the asylum centre staff. On the other hand, the short length of stay of the migrants was often cited by the social workers as an explanation for why services at the asylum centre were kept to a minimum.

6. Conclusions and discussion

The report described institutional support for asylum-seeking children at the legal and policy levels in Slovenia, with a special focus on child-centred aspects. In turn, the empirical findings of the field research in Logatec and Postojna shed light on migrants' experiences of migration and the asylum procedure, as well as on the analysis of asylum policy from a child-centred perspective. From the analysis it can be concluded that there is a significant discrepancy between policy and practise in dealing with unaccompanied minor migrants: While Slovenian legislation establishes many principles of the child-centred approach, these are overridden in practise.

The exclusionary application of 'human rights-based' policies is evident at various levels, e.g. in the low number of positive decisions on asylum applications, the low number of refugees admitted under resettlement and relocation programmes, the low standards of reception and accommodation and the like. The high number of migrants sent back on the basis of readmission agreements with Croatia on the one hand and the low number of asylum applications on the other, the so-called pushbacks, indicate that access to the asylum procedure is systematically denied in Slovenia. All these practises show that the state authorities strive to keep the number of asylum seekers as low as possible.

The exclusionary tendencies are also evident in the inadequate implementation of many important principles and protections enshrined in Slovenian legislation. These include recognition of the vulnerability and needs of migrant children, the best interests of the child, adapted reception conditions, additional social support and protection measures, procedural assistance and the like. As shown in the previous section, the implementation of migrant children's rights is strongly influenced by nationalist interests. In Slovenia, state authorities tend to focus on a child's status as a migrant (leading to discourses on immigration control) rather than on his or her status as a child (leading to discourses on protection).

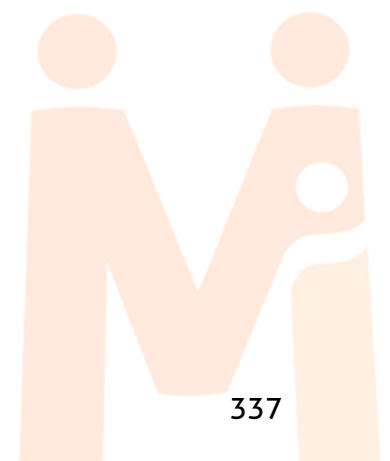
When it comes to reception procedures and protection mechanisms, of particular concern is the fact that asylum-seeking children in Slovenia are often detained while the best interests of the child are repeatedly neglected. They receive limited care, protection and support. Poor reception conditions are not appropriate for migrant children, especially as they may have complex emotional problems due to traumatic experiences of loss, violence and social exclusion. Family reunification procedures are rarely implemented. Finally, there

is no monitoring of the implementation of legal guardianship, leading to wide variations in the implementation of this important function, which often depends on the personal characteristics of the guardians and their willingness to engage.

The results of the interviews with migrant children indicate that the well-being of migrant children depends primarily on the personal relationships with their counterparts and the staff of the institution. The findings suggest that migrants experience border and asylum procedures, including detention and reception in the asylum centre, more positively when the authorities treat them with respect. Unaccompanied minor migrants also frequently expressed insecurities and concerns about their future, which means that children need to be informed about follow-up procedures and reassured that they will be protected and cared for. In our interviews, they were not very critical of reception; many of them said they felt comfortable and would not change much. However, it seemed that many accept life in the asylum centre as a temporary but necessary situation, as the price they have to pay if they want to reach and settle in their country of destination.

Regarding child-centred principles and guarantees in asylum procedures, of particular concern is the fact that asylum-seeking children often do not receive legal assistance, as IPA does not provide free legal advice and representation for applicants in first instance procedures. This service is provided through the project-funded activities of a selected NGO and is not offered systematically. The findings also indicate that unaccompanied minors are not adequately informed about their rights and obligations in a culturally sensitive and age-appropriate manner. The asylum procedure could be more adapted to their specific needs. In addition, many of the asylum officers are not qualified to work with children and asylum seekers are provided with poorly qualified interpreters, which can have a negative impact on the outcome of the asylum application.

Given the fact that almost 80 per cent of all asylum applications in Slovenia are discontinued after the migrants have left the country (Mol, 2021), one cannot speak of integration of asylum-seeking migrant children. Moreover, this high turnover seems to be condoned by Slovenian politicians and decision-makers who are content with Slovenia being a transit country. Moreover, this seems to be appreciated both by the unaccompanied minor migrants who have chosen other EU countries as their final destination countries and by Slovenian political actors and the local community, who in one way or another agree to minimise the total number of asylum seekers in Slovenia.



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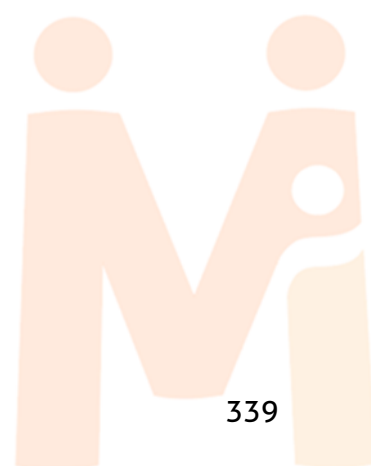
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TURKEY

Sedat Yağcıoğlu

1. Introduction

This is a research report conducted with Syrian migrant children living in Şanlıurfa, Turkey, as part of the scope of the project "Migrant Children and Communities In A Transforming Europe". The first part of the report makes a secondary analysis consisting of a literature review on Syrian migrant children living in Turkey and statistical data on migrant children. Second part of the report conducts policy analysis on regulations and social policies.

The third part of the report informs on the methodological design of the research that is given in the form of tables.

The last section presents research findings. First, it discusses insights from participant. Second, it shares the findings obtained from the interviews with the children. The last part of the report emphasizes the important dimensions of all these findings in a summary and presents suggestions of the researcher.

2. Secondary analysis

As an important dimension of every research process, literature review is done by examining previous research on the topic at hand. In this way, research determines what kind of information sets the research and interprets findings in a richer way. In this context, in the first part of this section, a literature review will be offered regarding Syrian children living in Turkey.

In the second part of the section, basic statistics on migrant children will be analysed. In the last part, policy analysis will be provided on the basis of international and national legislation, legal procedures and rights that will allow us to understand the political background regarding migrant children in Turkey.

2.1 Literature review

Childhood is most commonly defined as a developmental stage/period in a chronological order. All international regulations, especially the Convention on the Rights of the Child, define that "everyone under the age of 18 is a child". Thus, on a biological basis, childhood becomes a chronological category defined on an age scale. Social systems form social mechanisms and relations based on the distinction between "childhood" and "adulthood". Undoubtedly, this definition of "child" in the modern paradigm has very important advantages, particularly in the context of child protection. Defining children as "individuals who need more protection" compared to adults brings along establishing protective mechanisms for children. In addition, the "child-centred approach", which also constitutes the main perspective of this research, emphasizes that childhood cannot be interlinked only to age on a developmental level and suggests that children in the same age group do not have unitary qualities and life experiences. Therefore, it accepts every child's experiences and expectations as unique. Different living and family conditions, different histories and geographies lead children towards different life and childhood experiences. For this reason, approaching childhood not only as "a chronological or developmental category based on biology, but also as a social category" (Postman 1995), would offer important possibilities for understanding children. The most important achievement of this approach would be to accept each child as unique while valuing each child's life experiences and allowing children to have a say about their own lives. Otherwise, the modern childhood paradigm, which forms the basic theoretical ground of today, creates childhood as a category and institutionalizes. This contributes to the paternalistic system by objectifying children and ensuring continuation of children's dependency to adults (Yağcıoğlu 2014).

This discussion on who is accepted as a child is and what is called childhood that is coupled with the issue of migration opens up a philosophical discussion. What is migration? Where is a homeland? Who is a child? Where is a child's homeland? What do children experience if they are deprived of their homeland and forced to live in another country? Searching answers to such questions would undoubtedly go beyond the scope of this study. However, since it is important to keep such philosophical questions in mind, this study finds it appropriate to start the discussion with this brief reminder. It is significant to have such an initial discussion in order to establish the conceptual basis of this research project, which focuses on the "child-centred approach". This theoretical background draws the basic framework both for the policy analysis and for examining field research findings.

What are the needs of children in certain situations in a particular time and place? If we ask within the framework of the current research, what are the needs of Syrian children who migrated to Turkey? How do Syrian migrant children living in Turkey feel? What are their educational and medical needs and to what extent are they met? How is their adaptation process in Turkey? In seeking answers to all these questions, it will be helpful to consider more fundamental issues.

We need to add the question of "what is migration" next to the question of "who is a child". According to the Glossary on Migration published by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), migration is defined as "the movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a state". It is a movement through which people change places that might have various structures and reasons. This includes refugees, displaced people, economic migrants, or people moving for family reunification. As this experience fundamentally shakes people's lives, migration has undoubtedly crucial effects on children's lives as well. Psychological, social, and economic problems caused by a migration could affect children more than adults due to higher vulnerability of children (Tatlıcioğlu 2019).

During the migration process, children may experience biologically, socially and psychologically a very traumatic process, they may witness death and violence, and may have difficulties adapting to their new living spaces. In addition, they may have difficulties in reaching their basic needs including housing, education, medical needs and may be exposed to discrimination and social pressure in the country of immigration (Gencer 2019).

When we look at the literature, there are limited studies adopting a child-centred approach that scrutinize experiences of migrant children in general and Syrian migrant children living in Turkey in particular. This report offers a literature analysis that situated the "well-being" of children at the research centre and studied poverty and child labour, education opportunities, access to health services, family and social relations, and living spaces of migrant children.

Parallel to the reasons of child labour in general, the main reason of migrant child labour is poverty. In addition, due to the socio-economic inadequacies of immigrant families, language problems, and the conditions of the labour market, migrant parents might not

enter the labour market or not earn an adequate income to provide for their livelihood that forces migrant children to enter in the labour market in order to support livelihood. (Toran 2010). In other words, Syrian migrant families ask their children to work in order to meet their basic needs and fight against poverty (Harunoğulları 2016). The characteristics of refugee children also play a role in participating in the labour market in Turkey. As households are usually crowded and have many children, more than one child participates in the employment market to provide for the family. It is revealed in the interviews that age and gender of children are also determinant for employment. Being male and older age affects the order of the child's entry into the labour market (Sallan Gül 2019).

Immigrant children do not have the same work opportunities in the countries they migrated that force them to accept to work in worse conditions while such conditions may be worsened according to ethnicity, gender, and age of children (Atasü Topcuoğlu 2015). Syrian migrant children work for very low wages in informal and insecure jobs that require physical strength and have heavy and unhealthy working conditions. The main working areas of Syrian children are small industries, services sector, knitwear workshops, textile factories, shoe manufacturing workshops, and car repair shops (Tarlan 2016). They also work in agricultural labour or do other jobs, such as selling tissues and water on the streets (Tarlan 2016). As a result, the labour of migrant children is exploited as cheap labour. As Tarlan (2016) puts it, this "forced labour" of Syrian children in Turkey causes them to be seen as "fresh labour force".

In the absence of effective control of the labour market in Turkey in general, child labour is not prevented while deficiencies and inadequacies in controlling the working conditions of the labour market cannot be eliminated (Türkmen 2018). Under such working conditions where labour regulations are mostly insufficient to protect children, the only way for children to protect themselves is a job change that is not enough to secure labour protection (Sallan Gül 2019).

Incomes of Syrian child migrants are at a very low range and the main reason behind their entry into labour market under low wages is the families' need for extra income (Türkmen 2018). Although the official number of Syrian working children in Turkey is unknown, Mutlu et al. (2018) revealed that approximately 29% of Syrian children are working.

It should not be forgotten that children's participation in employment forces them to deprive from their most basic rights of reaching out opportunities and processes for development and self-realization. The most vital consequence of migrant child labour is being excluded from education. The demand for child labor as cheap labor and the necessity of contributing to family income in poor households cause children to never go to school or drop out (Sallan Gül 2019).

Examining the effects of poverty and child labor on education; certain research themes appeal to be investigated, such as children's attendance in education, duration of education, quality of education, impacts of education when entering the labour market, structural inequalities, and discrimination in the education system (Uyan Semerci et al. 2012). In these

studies, the following factors have been identified that determine the education process of migrant children: socio-economic status of the family and family harmony, problems of adapting to the new culture, language acquisition problems, parents' education levels, schools' discriminatory practices, intergenerational differences, and refugee status (Harttgen and Klasen 2018).

According to the Temporary Protection Regulation in Turkey, the education of Syrian children within the scope of temporary protection is provided by the Ministry of National Education (MEB). A dual system has been established that Syrian migrant children can participate in. These are the Temporary Education Centers (TEC) where the Syrian education curriculum is followed with Arabic language and the public schools where the Turkish education curriculum is followed. In public schools, Syrian children and Turkish children are educated together. Ministry of National Education does not provide a general budget for the financial compensation in support of Syrian children's education. Educational needs are supported by NGOs, international organizations, local governments, and school and family budgets (Tatlícioğlu 2019).

Although significant efforts have been made for the participation of Syrian children in education, approximately 38% of the children are still not in the education system that means, approximately 600 thousand children do not receive education (Tatlícioğlu 2019).

Studies that examine educational problems of Syrian children in Turkey emphasize the following points: language education, enrollment problems in schools, marginalization, need for valid diplomas and educational documents, children who need special education and rehabilitation, teaching in Turkish and material problems, status of Syrian teachers, dropping out of school (Tanrikulu 2017). In another literature, it has been stated that Syrian children in Turkey experience basic educational problems such as low access rates in schools, language barriers, and lack of qualified teachers (Tunga, et al. 2020). A study conducted in Istanbul pointed out that the main factors determining the quality of education received by children are language and effective language education. In the same study, it is revealed that encouraging the education of immigrant children with psychosocial support services is important in terms of the quality and continuity of education. It is recommended that a gender-based perspective should be taken as a basis in the formation and implementation of education policies in order to make different access levels of boys and girls to education system recognizable (Kılıç and Özkor, 2019).

Education is a crucial issue that should not be considered only as a service to citizens. Turkey's policy approach to education of Syrian children, which has not supported principles of common society building based on a culture of living together, needs to be replanned on a new educational policy. New educational policies are urgently needed that would initiate permanent and sustainable holistic solutions. In this was, it would be possible to create a long-term policy for newly arrived children (Yeşim Özer, 2016).

One of the significant impacts of migration on children appears in medical service. Health and well-being, nutrition and shelter, psychological problems caused by war and violence

as well as living in a new culture are important issues that immigrant children encounter with. There is also a strong relationship between migration and health. Migration that takes place under conditions of loss of lives, the problems regarding obtaining a status in the country of destination, and living and working in poor conditions for long periods affect both physical and psychological health seriously (Tatlıcıoğlu, 2019).

It would be useful to review the studies that investigate health conditions of Syrian children living in Turkey, their access to services, and difficulties they experience. A study conducted with Syrian children working in Kilis observed that children who are deprived of family support, care, protection, and attention have physical and psychological problems (Harunoğulları, 2016). Another study which was conducted in a psychiatry unit serving immigrant children concluded that 75% of the children had one acquaintance killed, 87.9% had witnessed an armed conflict, 31.7% of the children had anxiety disorder, 31.7% had depression disorder, and 24.4% had post-traumatic stress disorder (Çeri et al., 2018).

Another significant social phenomenon that effect immigrant children's well-being is social exclusion and discrimination. The "hospitality" discussions that Syrian immigrants were offered when first came to Turkey has switched to exclusionary practices as immigration has reached to immense numbers over time and immigrants have started to settle in Turkey permanently. Increasing numbers of Syrian immigrants day by day, local populations' problems in receiving health services, emergence of judicial cases, security concerns, rent increases, and deterioration of the labor market have changed the hospitality claims while tensions have led to social exclusions (Erdoğan, 2014).

According to Erdogan's (2014) large-scale research on the social acceptance and integration of Syrians, 70% of Turkey's citizens stated that they are culturally different from Syrians, 50% do not want Syrian neighbors, 20% believe that Syrians will adapt to Turkish society, and 66.9% believe that Syrians will not be able to adapt to Turkey. These results show that Turkish citizens do not approach Syrian migrants positively. There are studies showing that children are also directly affected by these exclusionary practices. In school environments and in the neighborhood Syrian children have experienced exclusions and humiliations by local children (Demiröz et al., 2016; Emin, 2019).

In addition to issues of poverty, child labour, education, health service, and exclusion, which determine the well-being of children, conditions of living places have also been important factors. Today, many studies carried out through home visits – including this research – show that physical conditions of the houses are at very insufficient levels. Homes of immigrants are mainly rented houses that are under extremely negative and insufficient conditions to meet basic needs. Some are under risk of collapse while many have moist and cannot adjust to heat and cold. Most of the houses have only a few items, such as a few old mattresses, carpets, a few kitchen utensils without basic house supplies that increase the quality of daily life, such as refrigerators and washing machines (Karabaş, 2018).

When looking to religion, Syrian children easily adapt their religious identity to Turkey. In a study, Syrian migrant children stated that they see themselves as religiously close to

Turkey. In this regard, religious identity of children come play an important role in social life, schools, friendship relations, choice of spouse, and adaptation to Turkey. It has been observed that religious feelings facilitate adaptation processes in friendship and social relations. Moreover, children emphasize their ethnic and national identities while describing themselves (Çelik, 2019).

As the literature on Syrian migrant children living in Turkey shows, poverty, child labour, education, health service, social exclusion and discrimination, living places, and identity are the main factors affecting children's well-being. The findings of this research will be evaluated within the framework of this literature.

2.2 Statistical data

It is not possible to have access to the migration statistics in a proper way in Turkey. However, in recent years, the Directorate General of Migration Management and relevant ministries have shared very basic demographic statistics. In this section the statistics on Syrian immigrants who are under temporary protection are given based on these data.

According to the results of the Address Based Population Registration System (ADNKS), as of the end of 2019, the population of Turkey was 83 million 154 thousand 997 of which 22 million 876 thousand 798 were children. According to the United Nations definition of child which includes the 0-17 age group, the child population was 27.5% in 2019²⁵⁴.

The number of registered Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey is 3 million 665 thousand 946 as of March 31, 2021. 1 million 737 thousand 502 (47.4%) of this population are children between the ages of 0-18.

Based on these two statistics, the ratio of Syrian children living in Turkey to the total number of children in Turkey emerges as 7.5%.

Number of Syrians Living in Camps (Temporary Shelter Centers)

As of March 31, 2021 the number of Syrians staying in temporary shelter centers was 57 thousand 502. Only 1.5% of Syrians live in camps.

Number of Syrians Living in Cities

As of March 31, 2021 the number of Syrians living in cities was 3 million 608 thousand 444. 98.5% of Syrians live in cities.

²⁵⁴ Data accessed from Turkish Statistical Institute on 06.05.2021
<https://tuikweb.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=33733>

Ratio of Syrians to Turkey's Population

The ratio of registered Syrians under temporary protection to Turkey's population is 4.38%. Turkey's population was recently announced as 83 million 614 thousand 362 by Turkish Statistical Institute (As of 31 December 2020).

As of June 30, 2020 is 35 thousand 553 Syrian students study in kindergarten, 338 thousand 807 study in primary schools, 222 thousand 703 in secondary schools, and 89 thousand 518 study in high schools.

The statistics in this section were taken from The Association of Refugees website.

According to the data of the Directorate General of Migration Management, the distribution of Syrian children living in Turkey by age and gender is as follows:

AGE	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
TOTAL	1.975.013	1.696.748	3.671.761
0-4	259.706	242.438	502.144
5-9	289.412	271.816	561.228
10-14	217.522	204.342	421.864
15-18	137.371	117.650	255.021

The Directorate General of Lifelong Learning and the Department of Migration and Emergency under The Ministry of National Education coordinate the education processes of Syrian children and stated that as of 2019, 62% of Syrian children who are in schooling age are in schools. According to these data, approximately 450,000 Syrian children have been left out of the education system (Tatlıcioğlu, 2019).

	KINDERGARTEN	PRIMARY S.	SECONDARY S.	HIGH S.
RATIO OF SCHOOLING	33.86 %	96.50 %	57.66 %	26.77 %

Although the exact number of Syrian children who are working is unknown, a study reveals that approximately 29% of Syrian children are working (Mutlu et al., 2018).

2.3 Assessment of institutional support to children in transition

In this section, the legal framework and policies regarding migration and children will be evaluated. Through child-centred approach migrant children's situation will be analysed and good examples of policies and services will be given.

Legal and policy framework

Legislation regarding immigrants in Turkey can be examined in three different frameworks: International conventions and regulations, national laws, and regulations that define and guarantee legal processes.

According to the Article 90 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, all ratified international agreements become a law by transforming into domestic law norms. Therefore, when examining the legislation for migrant children, it will be useful to examine general human rights declarations, conventions for migrants, and international conventions that include children's rights. In this report, the International Convention on Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Social Charter, and the Geneva Convention will be examined in the context of their positive and negative obligations.

International Legislation

International Convention on Human Rights

It is essential mention the International Convention on Human Rights, which was declared by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 and was signed by Turkey in 1949. While the Convention guarantees fundamental rights, civil and political rights, it also defines economic, social, and cultural rights and imposes positive and negative obligations on states in line with the general perspective of human rights. It is necessary to point out that the International Convention on Human Rights is the first and most important international convention in terms of creating the general framework that migrant children should also benefit from. The principle of protection of "fundamental freedoms" and "human rights" imposed on states by the Convention provides the widest legal framework for migrant children.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Another important international legislative instrument in the field is the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention, which was opened for signature by the UN General Assembly in 1990 was signed by the Republic of Turkey in the same year and it entered into force in 1995 by being published in the Official Gazette. The Convention on the Rights of the Child obliges four basic principles for children. These are the principle of non-discrimination stated in the Article 2 of the convention, the principle of the best interests of the child stated in the Article 3, the right to life and development guaranteed in the Article 6, and the right to participate defined in the Article 12. These four basic principles, which can also be described as general rights, ensure the vital needs of immigrant children. Against the social exclusion and discriminatory practices that may develop towards immigrants, it is of great importance that the principle of non-discrimination against immigrant children is applied decisively. The development of policies and services, especially in areas of health and education that are based on children's right to life and development in their new lives

in Turkey is under the obligation of the state in accordance with the principles of the convention. The principles of the convention that define the child's best interests and the right to participate shape the basis of the child-centered approach, which is also used in this research. Putting the best interests of children at the center in all decisions, social policies, and practices regarding immigrant children. Putting children's thoughts at the center by running a participatory process is one of the obligations of states.

Geneva Convention

One of the main international policy instruments for refugees is the United Nations' Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1951. In 1961, the Republic of Turkey became a party to the convention and in 1968 joined the New York Protocol of 1967. While Turkey became a party to the convention, it has put a geographical limitation annotation and has maintained this limitation until today. The fundamental importance of the Geneva Convention for Turkey is that it is the first non-ethnic-based protection document for international migrants. Until the 1951 Geneva Convention, only an ethnic emphasis was made in the legislation and no official protection was provided to foreign immigrants. With the Geneva Convention, only those who came from Europe and the Former Soviet Republics before 1951 were granted immigrant status. The time limit was removed with the 1967 additional protocol, however it has continued with the geographical restriction (Kirişçi, 2004). Within the framework of this geographical restriction, while being a refugee is a status given to immigrants from Europe; "Asylum seeker" status has been defined for those coming from outside Europe. The main reason for the geographical limitation to the 1967 protocol is the political fluctuations in the Middle East and Asian regions and the concern that the economy would pull refugees to Turkey (Türkoğlu, 2011). Due to these political considerations, a dual situation has emerged that can cause international conflicts regarding the definition of "refugee". Turkey is the only country in Council of Europe that place a geographical limitation on the Geneva Convention. There are criticisms about the fact that immigrants coming to Turkey from outside of Europe cannot obtain refugee status and could not be guaranteed full protection. Amnesty International evaluates that non-European asylum seekers who do not receive refugee status poses significant obstacles to benefiting from many social, economic, and cultural rights, especially the right to work and long-term future planning in Turkey (Özkerim Güner, 2016).

European Convention on Human Rights

Another international regulation to which Turkey is a party is the European Convention on Human Rights. Turkey signed the convention in 1954 and recognized the right of individual application in 1987. The European Convention on Human Rights is adopted by the members of the Council of Europe to guarantee the rights defined in the framework of the International Convention on Human Rights. The ECHR provides broader protection, primarily for the protection of civil and political rights, rather than economic, social, and cultural rights. Although there are no direct regulations for asylum seekers and refugees in the ECHR, the right to apply to the European Court of Human Rights has been recognized for the

violation of rights of asylum seekers and refugees. The ECHR has a wider scope of application compared to the 1951 Geneva Convention aiming to protect refugees. Unlike the 1951 Geneva Convention, neither the definition of refugee nor the principle of non-refoulement are subject to any limitations in the ECHR. In this respect, the ECHR provides a broader protection (Özkerim Güner, 2016). Article 3, 5, 8 and 13 of the ECHR provide protection for the fulfilment of the principle of non-refoulement. Article 3 of the ECHR has also become an effective tool for the protection of unaccompanied minors.

European Social Charter

The European Social Charter, which is supplementary to the ECHR, was opened for signature in 1961 and put into practice in 1965. It is a convention that guarantees the basic social, economic, civil, and political rights of the member states of the Council of Europe and other signatory states. As a binding convention of the Council of Europe, the European Social Charter can be considered as the equivalent of the European Convention on Human Rights in the field of economic and social rights. With this convention, the issues related to human rights and freedoms and the mechanisms to monitor the practices of the countries that are party to the convention on these issues are discussed. It has granted certain economic, social, and cultural rights to immigrants living in the territory of a contracting state. Article 11 of the convention guarantees the right of foreign children to access health services and Article 17 guarantees the necessity of their social, legal, and economic protection (Özkerim Güner, 2016).

In addition to these international conventions, which have turned into a domestic legal norm and gained the status of "law" in accordance with Article 90 of the Turkish Constitution, national legislation on immigration and acceptance of immigrants has been established over the years. Legal regulations have been issued in parallel to the needs of the time. In addition, standards have been established by trying to eliminate the uncertainties regarding the implementation processes. After presenting a brief history of the Turkish national legislation for immigrants, it is useful to look at the current legal regulations, especially the obligations of the Turkish state in terms of immigrant children. Evaluating the immigration legislation in Turkey before and after the Syrian crisis, starting in 2011 and accompanying mass migration, will be useful in understanding the current legislation structure and policies.

National Legislation

1926 Settlement Law

It is possible to consider the Settlement Law of 1926 as Turkey's first immigration legislation. It is a short regulatory law issued for the population exchange conditions between Turkey and Greece in order to control the migration flows in the first years of the Republic of Turkey. According to the legal regulation, which can be defined as the first immigration policy of the Republic of Turkey, the resettlement processes of immigrants of

Turkish origin who migrated from Greece were arranged. The nation-state approach, which was the official ideology of the period, was taken as a basis and the permanent and temporary residence conditions of immigrant Turks were arranged. Therefore, basic regulations such as immigrant rights and the principle of non-refoulement, which will be guaranteed years later, were not included in this law (Abacı Yıldız, 2019).

1934 Settlement Law

Turkish citizens' entry to the territory of the country, their settlement or acquisition of citizenship was reconsidered with the Settlement Law No. 2510 that was entered into force in 1934. Although the settlement laws enacted during the population exchange periods were positive in terms of providing immigrants with the opportunity to settle under difficult conditions, they are criticized in terms of being ethnicity-based settlement policies. There are also criticisms that it is a "forced migration" law which restricts external migration, tries to keep internal migration under control, and aims to "settle" "peasant" populations through forced migration (İçduygu et al., 2014).

1994 Asylum and Sanctuary Regulation

Until 1994, there were still no regulations in the national legislation of Turkey that expanded the settlement laws enacted in the early years of the republic. The Asylum and Sanctuary Regulation, proposed by the Ministry of Interior in 1994, aimed to determine the procedures and principles for foreigners who seek asylum in Turkey or who request a residence permit in Turkey in order to take refuge in other countries as well as foreigners who come to the borders for collective asylum. The main importance of the regulation is the Article 2 which recognizes the possibility to apply for an asylum through illegal means which says "those coming to our country through legal or illegal means". The current regulation has been criticized for not making radical decisions within the framework of immigration policy. However, 1994 regulation is important in terms of determining the conceptual and institutional basis of the country's asylum and immigration policy until 2005 which was the beginning of the membership negotiations with the EU.

In the Turkish legal system, the concept of immigrant was first included in the regulations issued in 1994 and 2006. It can be said that the regulation enacted in 1994 is the first comprehensive regulation in the field of international protection of immigrants. This regulation determines the procedures for foreigners who come to Turkey individually or collectively for asylum and defines the institutions and organizations responsible for implementing these procedures (DGMM, 2018).

Legislation Based on the European Union Accession Process

In response to the legislative obligations of the European Union and member States, short and medium-term targets were set in the Accession Partnership Document, which was signed by the Turkish Government in 2001 and revised in 2003. In the short term, it aimed to continue to strengthen the fight against illegal immigration and to negotiate a

readmission agreement with the European Commission. In the medium term, other objectives have been set to prevent illegal migration, such as the EU practices would be adopted and put into force, harmonization in the field of asylum would be secured, removal of geographical restriction imposed in the 1951 Geneva Convention would be initiated, asylum application and evaluation system would be strengthened, accommodation units for asylum seekers and refugees and social support would be established. The 2006 Regulation, which is the second fundamental regulation of Turkey's domestic law in the field of asylum and migration includes the regulations regarding the asylum procedures as well as the rights and obligations of refugees and asylum seekers (Demirhan Y and Aslan, S., 2015).

Turkish National Legislation After the Syria Crisis

It is possible to say that Turkey has faced the migration phenomenon seriously after the mass migration that took place after the Syrian crisis. Until this period, the existing legal regulations in the fields of migration, immigrant rights, and protection of refugees were insufficient in terms of rights-based approach, protection mechanisms, and holistic approach. As of 2011, when the first entries from Syria began, a strong need for law emerged at the national level. By eliminating the deficiencies of the 1994 and 2006 regulations, the scattered legislation was tried to be recovered with a unitary regulation. It is significant to consider the national legislation in Turkey before and after the Syrian Crisis.

Foreigners and International Protection Law (YUKK)

It has become a necessity to determine migration policies in Turkey and to deal with the insufficient legislation from a human rights-based and holistic perspective, especially after the Syrian crisis. Considering the inadequacy of the regulations issued in 1994 and 2006 together with the European Union accession process policies, the need to create a single refugee law arose. Accordingly, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (YUKK) was published in the Official Gazette on 11.04.2013 and entered into force.

The law with a total of 126 articles consists of 5 parts and subsections. YUKK provides assurances in the following areas: Foreigners entering and leaving Turkey, their residence permits and deportation processes; application for refugee status, conditional refugee status, and subsidiary protection, evaluation and granting refugee or temporary asylum status; establishment and duties immigration administration, immigration policy board, and the establishment of central, provincial, and foreign organizations (Demirhan Y and Aslan, S., 2015).

The sixth section of the Temporary Protection Regulation defines the services to be provided for migrants under temporary protection: Ministry of Interior's Directorate General of Migration Management in general, health services at the temporary accommodation centers by Ministry of Health, education activities of foreigners at temporary accommodation centers by Ministry of National Education, labor market access services by Ministry of Labor and Social Security, access to social services for those in need regarding access to social assistance and services by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies.

Services provided by public institutions and organizations will be carried out under the coordination of AFAD (Demirtaş, 2019).

Main concepts, goals and instruments

When Turkey's migration policies are examined historically, it is seen that there are important differences at several different turns and that the policies have been shaped in parallel with historical experiences. From the founding years of the Republic to the Geneva Convention, it is seen that the ethnic-based immigration approach formed the basis of immigration policies. Although immigration policies based on displacement with immigrants of Turkish origin in the first years of the Republic seem to open the door to the first "rights-based" approach, with the Geneva Convention refugee status was not granted to immigrants coming from outside Europe due to "geographical limitation". This situation has been criticized as a discriminatory policy for creating a duality in the international arena and discriminating immigrants with the statuses such as "asylum seeker" and "temporary protection" and not granting refugee status.

There were not any changes in policies in terms of limitations until the beginning of the 2000s. However, it is seen that Turkey started to develop a rights-based and holistic policy in the early 2000s, especially within the framework of the start of negotiations and the creation of the harmonization required by the EU membership accession process. During the EU accession process, the state of the Republic of Turkey has set goals to re-evaluate the geographical limitations to the Geneva Convention and establish an integrative system of "protection of foreigners".

The main factor that constitutes Turkey's current migration policies is the Syrian crisis and the mass migration movement from Syria to Turkey. With the start of the first wave of migration from Syria, Turkey followed an open-door policy and adopted the approach of accepting all Syrians crossing the borders. Undoubtedly, the main argument of the open-door policy was the idea that Syrians would stay in Turkey temporarily. Due to the low number of Syrian immigrants who came to Turkey since April 2011 and the perspective that they would return soon, they were first defined as "guests". However, since this definition does not have a legal equivalent, it does not provide permanent guarantees for Syrians and they have been taken into "Temporary Protection Status" in accordance with Article 10 of the 1994 Regulation of the Ministry of Interior. After this date, the first legal regulation regarding the situation of Syrians was the "Directive on Acceptance and Accommodation of Syrian Arab Republic Citizens and Stateless Persons Residing in the Syrian Arab Republic who came to Turkey with a Mass Asylum" which was dated 30 March 2012 and numbered 62. This directive accepted that Syrians are under "temporary protection". In Turkey, temporary protection is perceived as a new status for Syrians (Demirtaş 2019).

However, a constructive process has been entered in national legislation and policies as the crisis in Syria deepened and Syrian immigrants began to settle in Turkey permanently. In this regard, with the Foreigners and International Protection Law enacted in 2013 and the

2014 regulation, a rights-based legislation was created for the first time in the history of Turkey. The approach of permanent protection of Syrian immigrants started to be developed and the organizational process for immigrants was started.

The 2014 regulation stipulates that foreigners under temporary protection be given temporary protection identity documents in order to carry out their legal and social affairs in Turkey. The identity document is very important in terms of providing people with basic rights such as access to health, education and labor, as well as social assistance. One of the main shortcomings of the law is that it does not provide the right to shelter for refugees living outside the camps. Refugees, who have to provide their own housing needs with their own means, are forced to live in poor and inadequate conditions due to the inadequacy of their financial means. The Ministry of National Education provides foreigners with an access to education which was regulated in 2014 regarding the right of persons under temporary protection to receive education in public schools (Şimşek, 2018). The temporary protection regulation also guaranteed the right of refugees to access to health services. Work permits of refugees and asylum seekers in Turkey are subject to the Law No. 4817 "Law on Work Permits of Foreigners". The regulation also recognizes that those who have a temporary protection identity document, which means being a registered immigrants, can obtain work permits in sectors, business lines, and geographical regions determined by the Council of Ministers (Şimşek, 2018).

There are two important organizations for asylum seekers in Turkey. The Directorate General of Migration Management is the governing institution organized in 81 provinces of Turkey in areas such as creating migration policies, producing projects in line with the requirements, and working in cooperation with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. The Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) is the institution responsible for the coordination of all services provided to Syrian refugees. Under the coordination of AFAD, the Ministry of National Education is responsible for education needs, the Ministry of Health for health needs, the Ministry of Labor for employment processes, and the Ministry of Family and Social Services and Social Assistance Foundation for social assistance and social service needs.

In support of these services of public institutions, non-governmental organizations also work for the needs of immigrants, especially in regions where immigrants live. Civil organizations such as Support to Life, Humanitarian Relief Foundation, Mazlum-Der, Association for the Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants, International Blue Crescent Foundation, and Helsinki Citizens' Assembly provide services in areas of education, accommodation, and health (Araz, 2019).

In the research conducted, when the Turkish society was asked about their belief that they would live in peace with the Syrians, a serious rate of 75% said that they could not live in peace. Again, the results of the survey showed that the rate of Syrians who received any aid in the last year is 30%. This shows that they are in labor market and even more than one person in families are working due to low wages. 54.6% of Syrians think that Turkish people exploit Syrians. This issue may cause tensions in the future (Erdoğan, 2017).

A pre-university education system was also established for Syrians, including the dual education pillar (temporary education centers and public schools) that lasted until 2016. In 2016, the Ministry of National Education started to end this duality gradually and direct students to Turkish schools (Şimşek, 2019).

Future planning has been made by the Ministry of National Education in order to meet the educational needs of foreign students. With this planning, it primarily focuses on the main issues such as increasing language skills and language teaching, adaptation of students to school, and construction of new schools and relation of teaching capacity. In this direction, it intends to enrol migrant children in schools where Turkish students continue their education within the scope of formal education as well as to increase knowledge and skills of teachers working in these schools for an “inclusive education” system which includes the principles of multicultural education. In this way, Syrian students can receive quality education and not have difficulties in adapting to education life. The most important factors that make it easier or more difficult for asylum-seeking children to adapt to society are language barriers, relationship of Syrian students with schools, profile of their parents, status of receiving guidance and psychological support, and income levels of the parents. In order to meet the basic needs of Syrian refugees such as food and clothing, the “Social Cohesion Assistance for Foreigners” program has been implemented and Syrian refugees can apply to this program through the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations in all 81 provinces and districts.

Good Practices and initiatives (GO and NGO)

Many studies and projects are carried out for Syrian immigrants in Turkey and these works are delivered to immigrants in cooperation with the public and local administrations and NGOs in order to meet the needs of immigrants in areas, such as housing, health, education, and employment. One of the important public work in Turkey, which can be described as a “good example” for Syrian immigrants, is the distribution of “Red Crescent Cards” to immigrants in need. The Social Compliance Assistance Program for Foreigners is funded by the European Union and is jointly run by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Associations, the Turkish Red Crescent (Red Crescent), and the Ministry of Family and Social Services. The Social Compliance Assistance Program for Foreigners is designed to provide cash assistance to all foreign nationals living under international protection or temporary protection who need assistance and live outside the camps. The Social Compliance Assistance Program for Foreigners, which is an unconditional cash aid that allows basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing is carried out through the Red Crescent card. Although it is not a permanent solution, it is aimed to meet the urgent needs of families by establishing a rights-based social assistance system, which is provided with cash support to ensure that household members meet their basic needs, such as shelter, food and clothing on a monthly basis.

Concern is another international organization which can be shown as a good example in the field of civil society. Concern, which has been working for Syrian immigrants in Turkey since 2013, provides livelihood, education, and protection services. Having delivered its services to a total of 28 thousand Syrians until 2018, Concern provided direct livelihood support to 2615 Syrian immigrants and provided direct or indirect educational support to 4922 children and adults.

Another non-governmental organization operating for Syrian immigrants is the Support to Life Association. A community-based protection program is carried out in 4 community centers established in Hatay, Istanbul, Şanlıurfa and Diyarbakır. Acting on the principle of living together in peace, the association aims to develop and strengthen the capacities of immigrants by organizing various activities. Psychosocial support is offered to immigrants who are affected by the migration process.

The YanYana - Psychosocial Support Project for Syrian Children operates for Syrian children living in Istanbul and can be considered as another good example in this area. Projects are offered for Syrian and Turkish children aged 7-11, public teachers, and therapists working in the public and private sectors and aim to reduce discrimination and xenophobia while developing tools for the integration of Syrian children and Turkish children in school environment. The project carries studies to improve well-being of children by treating the deep effects of traumas.

Implementation of a child-centred approach

It is very difficult to say that a child-centred approach is taken as a perspective in the policies and services provided for migrant children. Although Turkey guarantees child participation as being party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it can be claimed that a participatory approach and child-centred approach are not taken seriously not only in regard to migrant children but also in general.

It would be useful to examine the results of a study which investigated participation processes of Syrian children in school, family and neighbourhood (Tatlıcıoğlu, 2019). According to the research findings, children cannot use their participation rights in school environments. The study observed that Syrian children are not members of school clubs and are not candidates for class presidents (Tatlıcıoğlu, 2019).

In the same study, children stated that their views are taken into consideration and their needs are listened to within the family. This means, in families a participatory process is operated by taking the opinions of the children in decisions making (Tatlıcıoğlu, 2019).

Unfortunately, research on this subject is very limited. In summary, it is not possible to talk about immigration policies towards a child-centred approach in Turkey. Depending on cultural factors, it can be said that children experience a more participatory process within families.

Reflection and conclusion

When the policies and services for Syrian migrant children in Turkey are evaluated as a whole, it can easily be said that there is a dual situation in terms of children living in and outside the camps. While they can receive much more disciplined, programmed, and needs-based services in the camps, it is not possible to talk about the same situation for children living outside the camps. Considering that most of the Syrian immigrants in Turkey live outside the camps, there is a need to develop rights-based and holistic policies and mechanisms that put children at the centre and in line with their basic needs.

It is seen that the “fate” of the children living outside the camps depends on the opportunities provided by their families, aids they benefit from, and decisions of their families. Although they have the right to basic health, education, and shelter to a large extent, inadequacy and temporary nature of these aids pose concerns for the future.

The child-centred approach is not taken as a basis at any stage in migration processes. In every process, from public institutions to non-governmental organizations, children’s right to participate should be effectively operated together with participatory policies and mechanisms.

3. Qualitative research

3.1 Methodology design

Research site			
	Type of research site	Location (urban/rural)	The number of total migrants
RS1	Field research at living spaces of children: homes and neighbourhoods	Urban	15
Selection criteria of the site and procedure (gatekeepers)			
RS1	<p>The city of Şanlıurfa, where the research was carried out, was determined by the project coordination. Factors, such as the geographical proximity of Şanlıurfa – and especially the Suroç district – to the Syrian city of Kobani, the mass migrations to Şanlıurfa, and the current number of immigrants living in Şanlıurfa were considered for this selection. Şanlıurfa is the 4th city in Turkey which has the highest number of Syrian refugees compared to the provincial population. This was an important factor to chose Şanlıurfa. According to 2021 data, a total of 421,367 immigrants live in Şanlıurfa, which has the 20% ratio to the local population.</p> <p>Haliliye and Eyyübiye central districts were chosen to conduct research. Through the information that Kurdish immigrants from Syria live in Haliliye and Arab immigrants live in Eyyübiye district, these two central districts were determined as research sites. The translator’s established personal communication with the families were used to reach children.</p>		
Description of location(s) and/or institution(s).			

RS1	The research was carried out in Şanlıurfa's Halliliye and Eyyübiye central districts. In Halliliye, interviews were held in the Ahmet Yesevi Neighbourhood, where Kurds from Syrian cities of Raqqa and Kobani live. A significant part of the population of the neighbourhood consists of Kurdish Syrian immigrants. The inadequacy of roads, infrastructure and landscaping outside the main streets of their neighbourhoods is immediately striking. The houses and the buildings are in a very neglected and repair condition. The buildings, which are generally built in the form of slums with 2-3 floors, are preferred by immigrants because they have very low rental fees compared to other parts of the city. As stated by children, parks and playgrounds for children or adults are insufficient. As a result, there is an intense children activity in almost all of the streets of neighbourhoods as children spend their free time playing in the streets. There are temporary education centres and health centres that directly serve immigrants in the neighbourhoods. It has been observed that almost all businesses such as grocery stores, markets, greengrocers, barbers, tailors, and clothing stores are operated by Syrian immigrants. When all these are evaluated, it is seen that immigrants have created a micro-urban system that maintains their own culture.
Period of data collection & number of days at the research site	
RS1	First field research period: 12.11.2020 – 17.11.2020 Second field research period: 01.02.2021 – 05.02.2021
Brief description of "entering" the research site	
RS1	Field research was conducted through home visits of the families who were identified by personal connections of the translator. The appointments for the homes to be visited were confirmed one day in advance and the visits were made at the scheduled times. Upon entering the houses, parents were met with the translation support and after a short conversation, information was given regarding the research and consents were obtained for children's participation in the research. A separate room was arranged to interview children. Thus, we entered the research field with a child-centred approach and ethical requirements.
Number and roles of researchers participating in the process	
RS1	In both field research periods, the study was conducted by one researcher and one translator.
How respondents (migrants) were selected	
RS1	The participants of the research were determined informally by using the translator's personal connections and snowball method. In the determination of the participants of the research, attention was paid to balance the distribution of participants in terms of demographic characteristics, such as ethnicity, gender and age. For this reason, both Kurdish and Arab children were included in the research. Although it was aimed to represent all age groups in the selection of the participant children, it was not possible to achieve this in the field. The research was carried out with children in the age of 11-17 due to various reasons, such as the reluctance of children aged 7-10 to participate in the study and the language and expression problems – despite the support of a translator. Gender was another important factor in the selection of the participants and gender was balanced with the participation of seven girls and eight boys in the research.
How the respondents (migrants) were approached	
RS1	Home visits were made through appointments. During the visits – accompanied by the translator – first, family members were met, parents of children were informed in detail about the research project, and permissions were obtained from the families to interview children. After that, children who wanted to participate in the study were informed about the study. When their consent was obtained, they participated in the study voluntarily.
How the research was facilitated by staff at the research site?	
RS1	Since the research was not carried out at institutions, the researcher and the translator were the only participants of the research.

Difficulties encountered and ways to overcome (like getting access during empirical work, social closure etc.)	
RS1	<p>The most important challenge encountered in the research process was the Covid-19 pandemic, which also affected all other countries where research was conducted. The process of the pandemic in Turkey, which emerged right after the planning of the field research as well as the precautionary policies taken by the government necessitated the change of all plans regarding the field research. The period of April – May 2020, which was planned as the first field, was devoted to the literature review and policy analysis process of the research. In the same period, conditions for the realization of the field research was by reconsidered. In November 2020, when the pandemic began to deteriorate and the infection rate in the city of Şanlıurfa was very high, it became mandatory to go to the field. Thus, the first contact with the field was established during this period. However, due to the worsening of the pandemic conditions, especially in Şanlıurfa, it was not possible to obtain permission both from state institutions and non-governmental organizations to carry out the research. After a meeting with the experts working in the migration field in Şanlıurfa, it was decided to carry out the research by using informal home visits. A psychologist who immigrated from Syria also participated in the research as a translator. In this way, we reached children by using his personal connections.</p> <p>Another difficulty was to provide the necessary pandemic measures during the home visits process. It is important to maintain physical distance, however, entering different houses during the day and being in “compulsory” contact with different people created a mutual health risk. This risk was tried to be reduced by keeping the precautions as high as possible.</p>
Additional descriptions and explanations	
RS1	<p>If it was possible to conduct research in camps and in international and national non-governmental organizations, it would have been possible to access more qualified data. Undoubtedly, the observation of children's living spaces through home visits has provided a rich analysis of the information regarding children's daily lives. However, it was not possible to make macro analyses, such as services provided for children, planning mechanisms of institutional services, and making of social policies and accessibility.</p> <p>Therefore, when the research findings are evaluated as a whole, children’s experiences in their lives were presented in a rich way. However, decisions and practices of international and national actors and public authorities in areas of migration fall short of analysis and can be considered as an important limitation.</p>

Short description of the sample

	Nr.	Date & duration (min)	Gender	Age	Country of birth	Status
S1	G01	16.11.2020 45 min.	M	11	Syria	Temporary Protection
	G02	16.11.2020 19 min.	F	13	Syria	Temporary Protection
	G03	16.11.2020 27 min.	M	13	Syria	Temporary Protection
	G04	16.11.2020 11 min.	M	7	Syria	Temporary Protection
	G05	16.11.2020 40 min.	F	15	Syria	Temporary Protection
	G06	16.11.2020 21 min.	F	13	Syria	Temporary Protection
	G07	02.02.2021 27 min.	M	13	Syria	Temporary Protection
	G08	03.02.2021 24 min.	M	13	Syria	Temporary Protection
	G09	03.02.2021 16 min.	M	11	Syria	Temporary Protection
	G10	03.02.2021 19 min.	F	14	Syria	Temporary Protection
	G11	03.02.2021 19 min.	F	11	Syria	Temporary Protection
	G12	04.02.2021 22 min.	M	16	Syria	Temporary Protection
	G13	04.02.2021 13 min.	M	15	Syria	Temporary Protection
	G14	04.02.2021 14 min.	F	12	Syria	Temporary Protection
	G15	04.02.2021 15 min.	F	11	Syria	Temporary Protection

4. Findings from participant observation

As explained in detail in the reflexive methodology section, it was not possible to obtain legal permissions due to the negative course of the Covid-19 pandemic in Turkey which disabled to visit the institutions and to conduct interviews within the institutions where migrant children are present and receive service. Unfortunately, although various public and non-governmental organizations were contacted and requested appointments during visits in both periods of the field research, no positive response was received due to the pandemic. Therefore, the process of obtaining institutional observation and information, which is one of the objectives of the research, could not be carried out within the scope of this research.

4.1 Social dynamics

Description of physical environment

Due to the fact that institutions were not possible visit and interviews with children were conducted at homes, it was not possible to observe institutional processes. However, home visits have provided very rich information in terms of observing children's living environments.

Interviews were conducted in mixed areas in the central districts of Şanlıurfa, Halliliye and Eyübiye, where Syrian immigrants live. When the common features of the three neighbourhoods are considered, it was observed that they poor neighbourhoods, the houses were generally 2-3 floors, buildings were old buildings, the neighbourhoods and streets were insufficient in terms of social facilities. Instead of big stores and markets, the neighbourhoods had small shops, mostly operated by Syrian immigrants. Despite being in

the pandemic process, streets were crowded, human activity was high, and many children played various traditional games in front of the apartments.

Primary languages spoken in the neighbourhoods visited were Arabic and Kurdish, the mother tongues of the Syrians. As in the discourse among the local people, these neighbourhoods seemed almost like “Little Syria”.

The physical structures of the neighbourhoods and the opportunities they offer are far from being child-friendly. For the interviews with children, there were no places where children can spend time together and there are no playgrounds such as playgrounds. In summary, the basic characteristics of the physical environment in which children live, based on first observation, were quite primitive and inadequate. There is no place that supports the development of children in the neighbourhoods. However, neighbourhood socialization was lively among immigrants and children in particular.

Interactions between migrants and personnel

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is possible to answer this section, as studies could not be carried out in institutions.

Interactions between migrants

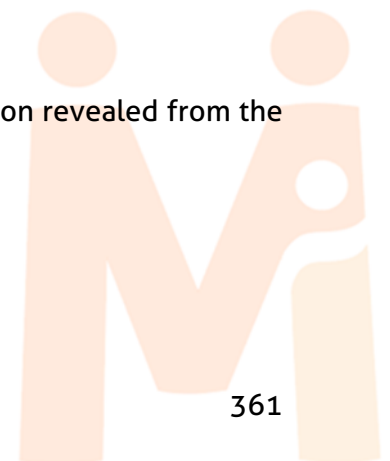
When the neighbourhood observations and the views of the children in the interviews are evaluated as a whole, it is seen that there is an intense relationship and solidarity between immigrants. In a sense, they seem to bring their cultural structures from Syria to Turkey and created a local culture with a new adaptation process within this culture. There was generally a positive interaction between children in the neighbourhoods visited and they spent time together.

Networking and identity categories

When the elements of the local culture created by the Syrian immigrants are examined, it is possible to say that there is a religious and ethnicity-based coexistence. However, the interviews with the children show, children are in interactions with local children at schools that is based on their childhood existence instead of an ethnic-based coexistence.

4.2 Institutional procedures

The observations shared in this section are based on the information revealed from the interviews with the children.



Access to social support, health and legal protections

The interviews with children show that the most important social support mechanism for children is provided by the family. No results were found regarding the psychosocial service for children in the context of social support. Thanks to the “foreign identity document” that children and their parents have, they can access health services free of charge and have legal rights.

Standards for the reception and accommodation of migrant children

As mentioned in the policy analysis section, a very low percentage of Syrian immigrants stay in refugee camps while the majority of them stay in rented houses supported by their own means. Living spaces are in inadequate conditions for children. In general, houses have limited means and inadequate furniture in which children seem to be far from opportunities to realize themselves.

Access to education and/or language training

Children receive their education in the schools of the Ministry of National Education, within the co-education system. Turkish language education is offered both in temporary education centres and in public schools of the Ministry of National Education.

Contact with and integration in the local community

Children's adaptation to the city they live in is insufficient, mainly related to poverty and policy deficiencies. Children do not see many parts of Şanlıurfa even for travel purposes. They generally stay in the neighbourhoods and there are no interaction channels outside the schools.

Access to child-friendly information

Since there was no opportunity to visit the institutions, there was no opportunity to observe the child-friendly nature of the services provided. However, when the legislation, social policies, services produced by local governments and non-governmental organizations are examined, it can be claimed that they are far from a child-friendly structure.



Access to rights and relevant procedures

From the rights perspective, the situation is above average in terms of education and health services that children can access.

Standards and good practices to restore family links and reunify families

A significant part of Syrian families is left to their own fate and there is not enough and systematic initiation for solving family problems or reunification.

Alternatives to detention

There is not enough information regarding this question.

Child-centred approach institutional support & assistance to migrant children

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is possible to answer this section as studies could not be carried out in institutions.

The right to be heard and other participation rights

Parallel to the problems of children's right to participate in Turkey, it is possible to say that Syrian migrant children share the same problem. Policies and services are determined by adults at each institutional level, based on their own interests.

5. Interviews with children in transition

The interviews scrutinized the well-being of the children, the situations they encounter during and after the migration process, policies and services, adaptation processes, and school life while the views of the children were analysed around these themes. As discussed in various parts of the report, due to the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic in Turkey, home visits were made with informal contacts instead of meeting with children at institutions. Instead of 25 interviews which was determined at the beginning, only 15 children could be reached due to the limitation of informal selection. Interview analysis was carried out under these limitations. The fact that a significant part of the children has not have any communication with the institutions and not receive services from the institutions, and the fact the interviews were not held in the institutions, information collection at institutions was not impossible. Well-being of children was discussed and analysed in the context of living spaces of children.

5.1 Institutional support & assistance

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was possible to answer this section, as studies could not be carried out in institutions.

5.2 Well-being, experiences of migration & life in transit

This section analyses fill-in-the-blank questionnaires and the art-based approach. These reveal the feelings and thoughts of children that cannot be expressed directly. The analysis used the technique of theme clusters which is one of the basic analysis methods of the qualitative research method. The questionnaires were created through intended focuses and similar themes emerged in the analysis. As explained before, since 15 children could be interviewed due to the pandemic conditions, the opinions of the children were grouped around some themes. Research findings should be evaluated within the framework of this limitation.

Social life, well-being, social support processes, basic needs of children, social life and relationships, education and school life, adaptation, exclusion and discrimination practices, identity, home, and neighbourhood were the main themes that emerged. Particular, needs, social support, education, adaptation, exclusion and discriminatory practices were main themes that children expressed intensively. Findings on cohesion, social exclusion and discrimination are included in the next chapter of the report on cohesion and integration. Apart from this, other themes that children expressed relatively less were evaluated by adding researcher's observations.

Needs

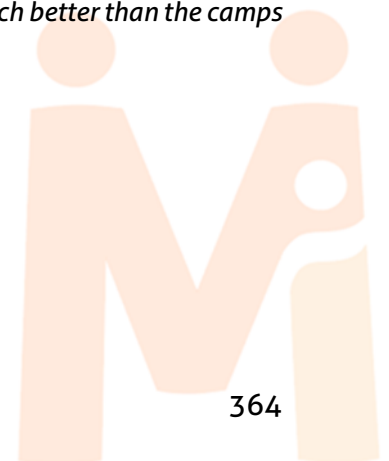
The interviewed children frequently mentioned certain basic needs both in the open-ended question form and the fill-in-the-blank questionnaire based on the art-based approach. Under the theme of needs, the most common one was to own a house.

"For example, they do not have a house, if you have money they will be bought houses. (G07 – 13)"

"If they give a house, if they provide it, it's like property, you know, there are daughters of the family there, they have children there, let them take shelter at home. Much better than the camps (G12 – 16)"

"If it does, it would be great. Big house and nice car." (G09 - 11)

"I need my house and our car. (G07 – 13)"



"If it rains now in the camps from Syria, I cried when I saw it. For example, he has no home. Really, I would help him if I could (G12 – 16)"

As it can be understood from the children's views, their most basic need was having a home either through rent or ownership. As stated in the participant observation section, the houses where children live are generally decayed, neglected old houses that do not offer a suitable living. In this context, children also stated that they lived in better and more beautiful houses.

Another requirement that we come across regarding the subject of the house is that the houses were small and therefore children did not have private rooms.

"Our house was bigger there, our house is a little smaller here. (G08 – 13)"

"I want a nice room for myself. (G02 – 13)"

"So get a nice house on a big street A big house. we all have a separate room (G06 – 13)"

During the home visits, observations supported the views of the children. Houses generally consist of a living room and one room or maximum of two rooms which are generally small. Creating an opportunity to interview children in a separate room was not easy. The fact that families generally have many children, it impossible to give each child a separate room. This makes it difficult for children to create their private spaces. Moreover, it creates a problems in families where multiple of children had o follow distant education during the lockdowns.

Another home need was inadequacy of household items necessary for a household. When children were asked about their needs, they shared that needed household items.

"Let them bring furniture. (G01 – 11)"

"Turkey can buy household items. (G07 – 13)"

"I need the most items. (G02 – 13)"

During the home visits, it was seen that the houses were insufficient in terms of the basic needs. There is no heating system in some of the houses and there is a lack of basic items other than television. While some houses do not have washing machines and dishwashers, most of the houses do not have desks, bookshelves, etc. for children to work. Thus, children's requirements are understandable.

In addition to home, one of the most important needs of children is to have a basic income. Parents of the significant portion of children did not have a job that generates regular income. Their fathers work as daily wage earners as far as they find a job. Therefore, the Red Crescent Card given by the Red Crescent partially meet the basic needs of a family.

"Turkey gave us one card. With that card, we live, so we pay for our house, we pay for water, electric..." (G02 – 13)

"They were giving us a card, they were giving us the Red Crescent card before. For example, we used to buy items at BİM's [a low price supermarket chain]. They were doing our things, our needs (G05 – 15)

As will be discussed in more detail in the education section, children also need educational materials and books:

"For example, well, books. (G02 – 13)"

"I mean, they would also give books to little people coming from Syria." (G11 – 11)

It is quite dramatic that children point out food as their basic needs. Some of the children participating in the study state that they or some of their friends cannot eat and they need to reach out basic food:

"Children need food" (G08 – 13)

"For example, one day we went home. My mother did not have food at house. I will bring food and clothes" (G14 – 12)

"I am ashamed to eat at other people's homes." (G09 - 11)

In summary, in line with the literature and the observations of the researcher, children's needs appear as home ownership which has better conditions, basic income, school supplies, and in some cases, basic food.

Social support

Children also expressed striking views on the social support that they need, including their psychosocial development that are in parallel to basic needs, as stated in the previous section. The closest accessible social support mechanism for children is a family support. Most of the children participating in the study said that they received basic social support from their families. Children demand their basic needs from their families, and when they face any problems, they first get support from them.

"I tell my need to my parents" (G03 – 13)

"My father is the closest. I am with him, for example, and he is with me. For example, I asked him to give, so there is no problem for him (G12 – 16)

"The most important thing to me is my family." (G02 - 13)

"My father never makes us feel lacking in anything. (G04 - 07)



"My father and mother are my biggest supporters in this life, they are people who help me and treat me well." (G11 - 11)

Along with their families, their friendship seems to be important for children as well. Some of them said that the support of their friends is important and some of them shared their problems with friends.

"Yes, I have many Turkish friends. They help me a lot." (G05 – 15)

"(if I have a problem) my friend is most helpful" (G01 – 11)

"I feel best when I'm with my friends. (G04 - 07)

These show that children first receive support from their families for the problems and needs they encounter in their daily lives and then they share their needs and problems with their friends. None of the interviewed children stated that they received institutional/professional help in case of any need or they did not mention any arguments in this regard. They try to receive social support only from their primary and secondary environment.

Place

Considering that it has been about 10 years since the mass migration process from Syria, it becomes clear that children immigrated from Syria at a very young age – as children participating in the research were between 7 and 18. Almost no children remember clearly their old cities, homes, and Syria. For these reasons, it would not be an exaggeration to claim that life "began in Turkey" for children. Thus, children's perception of space and feelings of "home, neighbourhood, city, and country" has developed in Turkey and in Şanlıurfa, the city they live in. The formation of self-identities, the processes of adaptation to a living space, and the examination of the space in which they perform their development and socialization practices are also very important for this research.

There were important reasons for families for choosing Şanlıurfa to immigrate: the geographical proximity of Şanlıurfa to the cities of Kobani and Raqqa in Syria, having relatives currently living in Şanlıurfa, the possibility of speaking their mother tongue in Kurdish due to the presence of Kurdish population in the city, and religious and cultural closeness.

"I have an aunt. He said you can find a house here. We bought it here because we are relatives. Because it was close and then we called school. Then my father asked for paper or something, my father did it at school. Then we entered the school" (G12 – 16)

"For example, we have Turkish relatives far from us. They helped us a bit "(G05 – 15)

In response to the question whether children liked Şanlıurfa, almost all of them stated that they like the city.

"Everywhere in Urfa is beautiful." (G02 – 13)

"I love so much. I love exploring Urfa" (G05 – 15)

"Actually, I love Istanbul more, but because I have relatives here, I spend more time with my cousins and so on, so this place is better for me." (G10 – 14)

As it can be seen in the social life section of the report, although the children seem to like Şanlıurfa, the place they experience is limited to their schools and neighbourhoods and they only visit the houses of their relatives as part of exploring the city.

"(What do you like in Urfa?) Everything, we started our school here." (G06 – 13)

"I'm going to my sister's house, I'm going there with my grandmother. (G01 – 11)

"I would like to get out of this street, so I don't like our street. There is always a fight with the cops or something here at night or something" (G06 – 13)

"My friends are here, our relatives are here, so we go and come" (G13 – 15)

Children participating in the research have limited access to the historical and social areas of the city.

"I especially love to go to Göbekli Tepe, but I can't go. My family can't take me at all because they don't know what there. I am in this city the most depressing thing. I cannot research Göbekli Tepe, I cannot know what. Other people come from foreign cities. I am also in this city, but cannot do it" (G05 – 15)

"For example, we go to the Plaza, we go to Balıklı Göl. And we're traveling, it's very nice, so no one says anything to us. (G02 – 13)

When the relations of children with the places they live considered, we see that their socialization is limited to their neighbourhoods and their relatives' houses. Schools function as important social spaces while children have problems in accessing the important historical and social areas of the city.

Social life

Before examining the social lives of the children participating in the study, it should be taken into account that the study was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic which posed special restrictions for children that intersected with conditions of poverty and living in ghettoized neighbourhoods. When these factors are considered together, three basic areas emerge for children's socialization: These are family and kinship relations, schools, and neighbourhoods they live in.

The common answers given by the children to the questions of their social lives were that they spend time at home, in front of their apartment buildings, and in their neighbourhood.

"When I come home, I sit, I go to the grocery store, I come, I take food. Sometimes I play with my friends. I go to the store with my father or something" (G13 – 15)

"For a day, I play games with my siblings, study, help my family, spend time with my family." (G10 – 14)

"I'm going to my brother's house, I'm going there to my grandmother" (G01 – 11).

"Sometimes I study at home and spend time with my family" (G10 – 14).

Children state that they spend time outside the home, at schools, in the neighbourhoods, and in parks, if there is any.

"We play games or do sports with my friends. Football training" (G11 – 11).

"I'm going out, actually there is a park here, we play with my brothers there sometimes" (G10 – 14).

"Mostly, for example, I go to the park with my friends, go for a walk, come back to the park" (G07 – 13).

"I have friends. I am going to school. I'm playing in the park" (G15 – 11).

Observations of the researcher support the views of the children. Although children were asked questions about their social life in different ways (by asking questions, such as what do you do in your free time, what are your hobbies, how is your day?) children gave very limited answers. It is important to note how limited the social lives of children are especially during the period of learning and play-based development. Although some activities for children are organized by public service, local administrations, and non-governmental organizations, none of the children mentioned them. This means, suggests that these services are insufficient and not accessible to different migrant groups. It was striking to observe in the neighbourhoods that the playgrounds and public spaces where children can come together were very inadequate and limited.

Social support

Although both the public and non-governmental organizations have social and professional support mechanisms for immigrants, these services are quite inadequate when the mass number of immigrants is considered. There is no professional support mechanism that children can apply when they encounter any problem and have a need or psychological help. Children receive support from their family, relatives and friends for these needs:

"So I see my friends, I also see my mom, dad, and cousins" (G02 – 13).

"(when I am sad) I say it to my mother" (G01 – 11).

"My father is the closest. I am with him, for example, he is with me. For example, I asked him something, and he provides. So there is no problem for him" (G12 – 16).

"My father helps me when I want something" (G08 - 13).

"I feel best when I am with my family" (G09 - 11).

These examples can be multiplied. When children have any problems, they first share them with their families and good friends. However, children feel lonely and are afraid of loneliness.

"When I need something, I can't share it much with anyone" (G05 – 15).

"For example, if no one is with me (I am very scared)" (G02 – 13).

This section can be considered as one of the most vital parts of research findings. It shows that there is no professional support mechanism for children. Children are mostly "alone" in crowded families and schools and can only share their problems with their parents. Considering that there are many difficulties that migration imposes, it would be useful to draw attention to possible problems that loneliness can create.

Language Problem / Language Learning

It may be useful to mention a few important points about the use of language use and language learning among children coming from Syria. The Syrian Kurds who came to Şanlıurfa region from the cities Kobani and Raqqa of Northern Syria due to the geographical proximity, they do not have a significant difficulty in terms of daily communication in Kurdish. Similarly, although it is not as common as Kurdish, since Arabic is one of the mother tongues used by local people in Turkey, immigrants whose mother tongue is Arabic can easily use Arabic as the language of communication in their daily life and thus do not experience language problems. However, since only Turkish is accepted as the official language in Turkey, it is obligatory to use Turkish in all official institutions and official correspondence. For this reason, it is a necessity for immigrants, especially children, to learn Turkish as well.

Education is undoubtedly the most important factor for children in terms of language. The official language of education in all educational institutions in Turkey is Turkish. At first, since the "Temporary Education Centres" were established for Syrian immigrants in camps and later outside the camps that gave education in Kurdish and Arabic, the children did not experience significant difficulties in terms of language at the first stage. However, over time, as the number of immigrants increased, Syrian children were given the right to enrol in public schools, instead of temporary centres, with the goal of integration. In this process, it has been compulsory for children to learn Turkish.

"I was going to school in Arabic. Then I went to the fifth grade in Turkish. I was very good because I knew Turkish. I went to Arabic and also learned Turkish" (G02 – 13).

"There was also Turkish, our teacher would teach four hours. In Arabic, it was for three hours" (G05 – 15).

However, during the implementation process of the research, although interviews were conducted in the presence of an interpreter, whose mother tongues are Kurdish and Arabic, and children were given the instruction that they could speak in any languages in which they express themselves most comfortably, all of the interviewed children, without an exception, proceeded the interview in Turkish and unless they had difficulties. In this sense, it can be considered that they have motivations to use Turkish. However, it was observed that children's Turkish usage skills were weak – especially younger participants' – both in answering open-ended questions and in the fill-in-the-blank section applied for the art-based approach. Therefore, far as it is seen, Turkish education support remains at an insufficient level.

Dreams / Future Construction

Children's beliefs about building their future, their thoughts, and dreams were other striking parts of the research. It is common knowledge that children have a wide imagination. In this context, when children were asked about their dreams about their future, they were expected to give deep and creative answers. However, a rather surprising situation occurred. A significant part of children had a difficulty in imagining while some of them shared their dreams on what kind of occupation they would like to have in the future.

"(to make my dreams come true) I have to study" (G09 – 11).

"I should continue my school and become something in the future. A lawyer or engineer" (G03 – 13).

"Let it be home. A big home" (G03 – 13).

From these limited views that can be obtained when children are asked about their dreams, it is understood that children dream about their daily needs to be fulfilled and think that their education is important to secure their future.

5.3 Models of migrant children's integration

As in all migration processes, the first emerging political, sociological realities in the migration process from Syria to Turkey have been their adaptation and exclusion and discrimination practices. The mass migration of Syrians to Turkey and Turkey's changing policies in this process have been a direct determinant in terms of adaptation and exclusion processes. In 2011, the process of entry of a small number of Syrian immigrants into Turkey was welcomed in a positive atmosphere based on the discourse of "guest" on the social ground. However, when the migration has reached massive numbers, especially with the

demographic concentration of Syrian immigrants in the south eastern provinces of Turkey over the years, their visibility increased in the cities and tensions have started to arise between local populations and immigrants. In line with the policies developed by the state as a result of the increasing number of immigrants and their duration of stay, the granting of citizenship rights to Syrian immigrants – albeit at a limited level – and the entry of Syrian immigrants into the job market in time, local people of Turkey, surrendered to the discriminatory ideology against Syrian immigrant due to increasing nationalist policies and economic hardships in the labour market. Undoubtedly, children were also seriously affected by this process. The social exclusion and discriminatory practices are clearly revealed by the children participating in the research.

"Some of them behaved very badly. They called us Syrians. They were saying things about the bombs or something. So ridiculous, I guess. Ignorant people were saying this" (G05 – 15).

"They are bad, we were here in our old house, there was a woman who always called us Syrian. They were bad. The kids were bad too" (G08 – 13).

Exclusion and discrimination practices against children in their daily lives mostly occur in schools, education processes, socialization processes, and playing environments.

"For example, they fight because I am Syrian. For example, I just left school, I go back home. He says where are you from. I say I am Syrian. He says 'why did you come to this country? Turks fight because you came to this country. Nothing has come good Turkey because of you'" (G12 – 16).

"Because I'm Syrian, they didn't play with me a lot, so it's just that, that was my only problem. Maybe our principles are different. I think it might be because we come from different places" (G10 – 14).

"Yes, well, they are angry with me, for example, you are sitting here. Get up and do not sit here" (G02 – 13).

It is possible to see in the words of children that discriminatory practices against children have changed due to the changing policies towards Syrian immigrants over time:

"No, it didn't exist before, but now it is. They say, why don't you go to Syria now, they say, the war is over, why don't you go there" (G09 – 11).

"So we're here as guests. But don't do that to a guest" (G09 – 11).

It is considered important that especially the emphasis on identity is prominent in the narratives of children when they express exclusion processes. Children who are exposed to forced migration at the age of developing their personal identity development and who need to develop their identity in a new country have been discriminated on the basis of being "Syrian".

"Everybody called me 'Syrian! Syrian!'. I mean, I don't have my features. We are the enemy. I mean, something had happened, a war had started in Syria. Started in Syria, but Turkey, but they blame us" (G11 – 11).

"Let them actually talk. For example, your finger is not in the same place. Let him talk, no problem for me. No matter how much he wants to talk, I live here. For example, if Turkish citizens gave to me, I became Turkish. I am both Syrian and Turkish" (G12 – 16).

Exclusion and discrimination practices, as it is known, mostly do not remain only in ideologies and are directed to foreigners and immigrants through violent cases. The children participating in the research also stated that various fights broke out because they were Syrians which made them afraid.

"I want them to change their perspective on this neighbourhood. For example, if an incident occurs, if there is a problem, they take it directly on Syrians, 'Syrians do these things'. So it's good if he changes his point of view" (G12 – 16).

"The most difficulties here, for example, there are fights, there are unrest, there is nothing more than that, in general, this is about it" (G14-12).

"So there is a problem, they take all Syrians in front of them one by one. I mean, he has a shop, he makes his pocket money, and what is his fault. But they break his window. If it is open, they shoot. For example, cars outside, they break their windows outside. There was such an event recently" (G12 – 16).

It is seen that children propose solutions against social exclusion and discriminatory practices. As stated in the participant observation section of the report, the fact that Kurdish or Arab Syrians have both ethnic and religious connections with Turkey's population, these facilitate harmony at some points. Children use these connections to suggest to prevent discrimination.

"We are all the same" (G02 – 13).

"Let's be united, so it doesn't require such things, so it would be better if we were united. Let's say Turkish, Arab or Syrian, it would be better if we unite. We live here anyway, we live together. The most important point is unity. For example, if there is something given for Syrians, Turks are offended. 'Why is it given to them, why not to us'. I want to get rid of these things. Altogether, there should be no discrimination like Turkish-Syrian. Whatever happens, happens for all of us. The most important point is unity" (G12 – 16).

"Yes, but they say Şanlıurfa is the city of prophets. Most of this place, people support it. Believers and our prophets were always emigrating. That is a normal thing. It's something every person does. They gave us a lot of support and did not make any discrimination. May Allah be pleased with them of course" (G05 – 15).

"We are all Muslims, that is why" (G12 – 16).

"We are all brothers and sisters. We are not different, we are all one. Because there is nothing to separate" (G13 – 15).

In addition to these negative examples, a small number of children also shared their positive experiences.

"So some are bad and some are good. Some of them helped us a lot, they were very supportive. Half of our house was given to us by them" (G05 – 15).

"I am very happy with the support of my friends and the fact that our teachers do not discriminate between Syrians and Turks" (G02– 13).

It is important to give a detailed view of one of the children participating in the study in particular to understand what exclusion causes in the lives of children. Discrimination that is reflected in the legislation, social policies, and practices affect development, career plans, and future plans of Syrian children living in Turkey. The future plans and dreams are discussed in another section, but in this section it is important to pay attention the following voices as it shows what can happen in case of a conflict between the dreams of a child and the discriminatory policies and practices implemented in the country:

"There are difficulties at school because we are not citizens. Our dreams are very big, I actually want to have a profession in Turkey. I want to work for this country, for the country that supports me. But sometimes I can't take most exams because I don't have citizenship, I can't win a lot" (G05 – 15).

"It is a very bad thing, I want to establish new things for this country. So even now I want to do a lot. For example, I want to publish a book or something, it can be an example for children. I would like to distribute this book especially to children who are immigrants like me. To show how it started here, how I worked, how I started. I have a lot of relations with the Turks [what was said could not be understood], I love them very much, I love their customs and everything, and my family also wants to go to foreign countries, Europe or something, they apply for everything. But I don't want any. Neither to return to Syria nor to go to another country. I will only work for Turkey and I want to have a profession here, I will work for this place" (G05 – 15).

Although Turkey puts Syrian immigrants under "temporary protection" and issues "Foreign Identity Cards", it does not recognize equal rights with its citizens in many respects. Although being a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child entails the obligation to treat all children living within its borders equally, immigrant children face discriminatory practices at multiple levels, mainly due to economic and nationalist concerns. While basic education is provided free of charge, children are unable to apply for some exams that hinder their dreams for the future. As seen in the example above, even children, who have achieved a successful psycho-social adjustment process, face obstacles in establishing a future in Turkey due to discriminatory practices in legislation and practices. This has a negative effect on the motivation and success of children.

Adaptation, social exclusion, and discrimination, which have become almost a natural extension of migration phenomenon, bring along very important negative experiences for

Syrian children. When the views of children participating in the research are examined as a whole, it is clear that they are exposed to systematic discrimination especially at schools, in their neighbourhoods, and in their daily lives. These experiences of discrimination have a significant impact on their identity formation processes while exclusions pose strong challenges for their future imaginations. As can be seen from the last example, these discriminatory practices have the power to have a significant impact on the lives of children who have successfully adapted in Turkey.

5.4 School life (if they attend school)

All of the children participating in the study went to school. This finding, which supports the increase in the schooling rate of Syrian children, is a very important in the transition in education policies for immigrants which supports co-educational system in public schools. Children give great importance to their school life which is an important part of their daily lives. Although there are controversial issues such as school achievements and discriminatory practices, the importance of going to school is an indisputable reality.

The fact that schools were closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic during the research period and that education was carried out remotely via internet, it should be considered as a fundamental factor that could change the research findings. Schools were closed in both periods of the field research and children were continuing their distance education. Based on the fact that schools were completely closed and education was carried out remotely, the narratives of children on this issue come from their old lives and are affected by the conditions of distance education.

The first important finding in this section is that children generally have a positive perspective towards their teachers.

"I love my teachers" (G01 – 11).

"The teachers at the school, our principal is very good" (G02 – 13).

Children participating in the research compare temporary education centres with public schools and state that they are more satisfied with public schools.

"Primary school was like this, it was Arabic. Our school was very small, it was a building. It was private school. I studied there the third grade. I studied Arabic. Then, when I was in the fourth grade, there is a school in Bağlarbaşı, the Imam Hatip School [religious school], which is my school until now. I went there and studied the fourth grade there. I still remember, so it was better there" (G05 – 15).

Although it seems like an advantage that the language of education in temporary education centres was children's mother tongue, children think that they receive better education in public schools both because they want to learn Turkish and because of the quality of schools in terms of physical conditions, staff, and content.

In the process of this research, as the education was conducted remotely and online, it required high-cost tools, such as internet connection, computer or telephone. As stated in the participant observation section and requirements section, a significant part of children did not have an internet connection or basic educational equipment, such as a computer at home. Children could only follow their live lessons by telephone.

"For example, let's have a separate phone, for each person. They is currently distance education. It is not enough because there are only two phones at home and there are four people. We need a separate phone." (G06 – 13)

"Telephone. My father's phone. It is not enough" (G07 – 13).

"Yes, I was able to follow it (distance education) a bit. As much as I found a phone" (G10 – 14).

"Yes, it works, but the internet, our neighbour gives us internet. He gives the phone" (G02 – 13).

"We are six siblings and there are only two phones and the internet is not enough" (G05 – 15).

"I'm getting my dad's phone" (G01 – 11).

One of the problems that children face in school life is social exclusion and discrimination. A significant portion of children state that teachers do not discriminate and treat them equally. However, some children claim that they are discriminated especially by their friends.

"When I first started school, I was very afraid when I was with the Turks. First, I wondered how people behave, how do their teachers behave, whether they can make friends with us, will we get along, but it went well. The teachers helped us. They helped a lot" (G05 – 15).

"For example, I am sitting and talking to my teacher. Then they came and said teacher did he did something. I didn't do anything at all. Actually, I'm a Syrian in the classroom. But when the bad guys are doing it, they say Ismail did it, Ali did it, Ahmet did it. They say so" (G12 – 16).

Considering the educational life of children as a whole, according to the results of the research, following statement could be made: Children are generally satisfied with the education they receive in public schools. Due to the pandemic, the remote and online education leads to disruptions due to the limited access to the internet. The discriminatory practices against Syrian children mostly come from peer groups.

6. Conclusions and discussion

When the well-being and adaptation processes of Syrian migrant children living in Turkey were investigated from the perspective of children's rights and with a child-centred approach, it revealed important findings that will shed light on future studies.

First of all, it would be significant to repeat once again: the research was carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic period that caused significant changes in our daily lives. For this reasons, it was not possible to achieve some of the research targets set before the pre-pandemic period. Before summarizing the findings, it is important to reconsider these limitations to define the framework for the analysis of the results. As the details are given in the methodology section of the report, it was not possible to visit the institutions, conduct

interviews in the institutions, and scrutinize institutional services and needs of children. Moreover, reaching children through informal relations and personal connections did not allow to reach 25 children – which was envisaged at the beginning. The research had to include 15 children for the interviews. In addition, the necessity of conducting interviews at children's homes allowed the study to visit homes and neighbourhoods where children lived which provided the researcher with an opportunity of participant observation. These observations are detailed in the reflective methodology section of the report.

Interviews opened important discussion themes emerged from the findings. Especially children's needs, education, social support, adaptation, social exclusion and discrimination, language learning, space, social life, and dreams were the main themes. Discussions on each theme are given in detail in each chapter. Through an operation of a meta-analysis system, this section aims to re-evaluate and discuss these findings and to share some suggestions developed by the researcher.

A large number of Syrians immigrated to Turkey and started to live here. The massiveness of migration makes it very difficult for Turkey to manage the migration processes economically and politically. Although there are many shortcomings and inadequacies, Turkey – hosting approximately four million immigrants – has developed a structure that is open to development in legislation, social policies, services, and practices.

However, from a rights perspective, there are problems for migrant children that need to be resolved quickly. The most important of these is that the "child-centred approach" on which this research is based both in principle and methodologically, is quite inadequate. As a country that is a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and thus as a state that has guaranteed the child's right to participate, Turkey needs a set of policies and mechanisms where children can express their views, be included in decision-making mechanisms, and therefore, establish their right to participation through a child-centred approach.

For Syrian migrants, poverty appears to be the root of many other additional deprivations. Syrians live in small houses under poverty conditions and do not have basic goods and equipment that children need both for living and education. The study observed that there are no areas or playgrounds where children can socialize, and children spend time at home during the pandemic. In some homes, there is only a television which children watch to spend time at home, however there are no broadcasts suitable for their development in general. It is important to implement social housing projects for Syrian immigrants as well as social assistance mechanisms that will meet basic household needs.

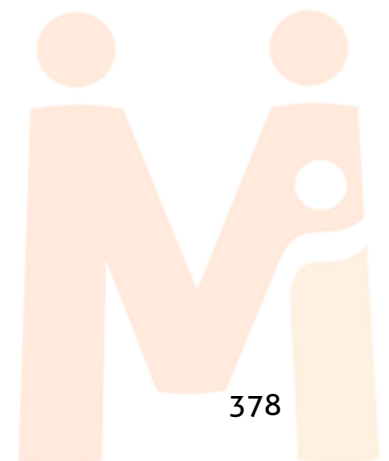
Depending on these conditions, it is understood that children's social lives are also very limited. They spend time only at home, in the neighbourhood, and at school while they cannot reach services that support their psychosocial development. In order to improve personal and social aspects of children, it is essential to develop services through cooperation of public authorities, local governments, and non-governmental organizations by considering developmental characteristics of children.

Children try to find solution to their problems with their families and friends that characterize their social support. There is an urgent need to initiate or expand professional and psychosocial support services and make them accessible for children who go through process of migration, which can leave very traumatic traces.

One of the striking findings of the study is that children have difficulties in dreaming. It is quite dramatic that children so distant and incapable of daydreaming, which is one of the important tools of their development. It is of great importance to develop and deliver models that enable children to develop their imaginations and hope for the future – both in their educational and social lives.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, there is an urgent need for legal, political, and practical mechanisms that will ensure the successful integration of children into their new lives and protect them from the discriminatory practices they face systematically in daily lives. To a certain degree, although Syrian immigrants have common religious and ethnic similarities with Turkey, both the large number of immigrants and their involvement in the market economy has led unrealistic assumptions among local populations that the state impose “positive discriminatory practices” against immigrants. These unrealistic assumptions should be discussed with the public in a transparent manner. There is an urgent need to develop macro-scale public mechanisms within the framework of public savings that would eliminate these discriminatory practices narrowing lives of children.

In the light of these discussions on the situation of Syrian children in Turkey and considering the limitations of the research due to the pandemic, it is inevitable to emphasize the need for further research. It is clear that, each child leads their own life in freedom and hope making us all free and hopeful.



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