

# Homelessness among unaccompanied minors in Europe



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# Introduction

Unaccompanied minors, often displaced due to conflict, poverty, or persecution, have arrived in large numbers in European countries for almost a decade now. Despite some fluctuations across the years, the number of children fleeing to safety has remained significant. Despite this, countries continue to fail to ensure that all children have a dignified reception that will answer to their best interests and desires, as enshrined in relevant legislation.

Unaccompanied minors have been confronted with homelessness across several European countries, often due to a combination of factors such as lack of proper asylum procedures, inadequate reception systems, and limited resources for vulnerable individuals. Countries where unaccompanied minors have experienced homelessness or extreme vulnerability include France, particularly in Paris and Calais, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Sweden and the Netherlands. In Greece, due to the overwhelming number of refugees arriving on the islands and the unpreparedness of the reception system, many unaccompanied minors have been living in overcrowded, unsafe conditions in camps, and in some cases, they have experienced homelessness.

Lacking parental care and a stable support network, children crossing international borders face heightened risks of exploitation, mental health challenges, and social marginalisation. Addressing homelessness in this demographic is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic necessity for fostering social cohesion and ensuring the welfare of future generations.

The prevalence of homelessness among unaccompanied minors has significant implications for society and policy. Beyond the immediate impact on affected children,

it perpetuates cycles of poverty, inequality, and social instability. Children without access to safe housing and essential services are less likely to pursue education or secure employment, thereby increasing their likelihood of long-term dependency on social systems. From a policy perspective, failing to address this issue undermines broader efforts to promote human rights and reduce inequalities.

This paper seeks to shed light on the experiences of homelessness among unaccompanied minors in Europe while analysing the main causes and putting forward possible solutions. Specifically, the objectives of this study are threefold: first, we will take note of how many unaccompanied minors arrive in Europe and what is known about those who experience homelessness. Second, the goal is to identify the causes of homelessness among unaccompanied minors by examining systemic and structural factors which contribute to these situations, such as gaps in immigration policies, limited access to social services, and discrimination. Lastly, we will explore current responses and propose potential solutions by evaluating existing interventions and policies. The paper aims to recommend strategies for creating sustainable support systems that address the unique needs of unaccompanied minors.

**In addressing these objectives, this paper contributes to the broader discourse on child welfare and their human rights, in the context of migration. It underscores the necessity of a coordinated, multifaceted approach to ensure that no child in Europe is left without a safe place to call home.**

# Background information

## Definitions

**An unaccompanied minor<sup>1</sup> is a minor who:**

- arrives on the territory of an EU Member unaccompanied by the adult responsible for them by law or by the practice of the EU Member State concerned, and for as long as they are not effectively taken into the care of such a person, or
- is left unaccompanied after they have entered the territory of the EU Member State.

The European Commission notes that there are significant differences between EU Member States with respect to national definitions and recording practices, for instance, concerning the age limit to be considered a minor and whether or not they are unaccompanied. In some (EU Member) States, statistics include all those who claim they are unaccompanied minors (i.e., before an age assessment has confirmed this), whereas other (Member) States only count those recognised as such by a competent authority (i.e., following an age assessment).

**AGE ASSESSMENT** is the process by which authorities seek to establish the chronological age, or range of age, of a person to determine whether an individual is a child or not. However, this process is not straightforward and has many limitations. Worryingly, an incorrect age assessment may lead to minors not accessing the protection they are entitled to under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, or moving into shared adult reception centres with a higher risk of experiencing physical or sexual abuse. The main limitations include unaccompanied minors not having official identity documents, the complexity of the process to assess age, or these methods lacking determinative accuracy (with a large margin of error).<sup>2</sup>

A **SELF-CLAIMED UNACCOMPANIED MINOR** is an individual who asserts that they are under the age of 18 and travelling without a responsible adult, but this claim has not yet been verified by an official age assessment. Essentially, it means that the person has declared themselves to be an unaccompanied minor, but authorities have not yet confirmed their age or status.

**AGEING OUT**, in the context of migration refers to young migrants who reach the legal age of adulthood (commonly 18 years old) and, as a result, they no longer qualify for protections and services designated for minors.

**GUARDIAN<sup>3</sup>** in the migration context is an independent person appointed

1 [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/unaccompanied-minor\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/unaccompanied-minor_en)

2 Kenny, M. A. and Loughry, M. (2018). Addressing the limitations of age determination for unaccompanied minors: A way forward. *Children and Youth Services Review*, Volume 92, Pages 15-21, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.05.002>.

3 [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/guardian\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/guardian_en)

to act on behalf of a child, in the absence of (both) parents or the adult responsible for the child by law or by practice, who safeguards the best interests of the child and general well-being, and to this effect complements the limited legal capacity of the child, when necessary, in the same way that parents do.

## **Data – who are the unaccompanied minors?**

Considering the limitations and differences in definitions and registrations of unaccompanied minors across Member States, as well as when it comes to measuring homelessness and additionally homelessness in the case of migrants,<sup>4</sup> it becomes difficult to obtain a comprehensive image of how many unaccompanied minors experience homelessness across Europe.

Regarding the number of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in Europe, a significant increase has been registered in recent years. According to Eurostat data, at EU-level, the share of unaccompanied minors in the total number of first-time asylum applicants aged less than 18 was on average 16.1 % over the period from 2013 to 2023, with a maximum value of 25.5 % recorded in 2015 and a minimum value of 7.3 % in 2019. The highest value was recorded during the ‘migration crisis’, but the weight of unaccompanied minors dropped quickly just after this before increasing up to 19.2 % in 2022.<sup>5</sup>

In 2023 alone, 43,000 applications for international protection were lodged by unaccompanied minors in EU+ countries, marking the highest number since 2016.<sup>6</sup> When looking at the share of unaccompanied minors in the EU countries in 2023, the highest values can be found in Bulgaria (67.8 %), the Netherlands (57.4 %), Finland (33.2 %), Belgium (30.3 %) and Slovenia (30.0 %).<sup>7</sup> In 2023, youth aged 16-17 years accounted for more than two-thirds of all unaccompanied minor applicants, while slightly over one-fifth were aged 14-15 years. Less than one-tenth were younger than 14 years.

The majority of these minors were boys aged 16-17 years, who accounted for 64% of the total applications. As in previous years, in 2023, more unaccompanied boys than girls sought asylum in 2023, with more than 9 in 10 unaccompanied minors being boys. Boys aged 16-17 years were the largest group of applicants, accounting for 64% of the total number of applications lodged by unaccompanied minors in EU+ countries. They were followed by boys aged 14-15 (21% of the total) and boys younger than 14 (7%). The share of girls younger than 14 years and aged 14-15 years was very low (around 2% each), while there were slightly more girls (4%) aged 16-17 years. Two in every 10 applications lodged by unaccompanied minors younger than 14 were submitted by girls.

4 [https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/challenges-to-measuring-homelessness-among-migrants-in-oecd-and-eu-countries\\_b9855842-en.html](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/challenges-to-measuring-homelessness-among-migrants-in-oecd-and-eu-countries_b9855842-en.html)

5 [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Children\\_in\\_migration\\_-\\_asylum\\_applicants#Unaccompanied\\_minors\\_first-time\\_asylum\\_applicants](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Children_in_migration_-_asylum_applicants#Unaccompanied_minors_first-time_asylum_applicants)

6 [https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2024-08/2024\\_factsheet29\\_data\\_unaccompanied\\_minors\\_EN.pdf](https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2024-08/2024_factsheet29_data_unaccompanied_minors_EN.pdf)

7 [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Children\\_in\\_migration\\_-\\_asylum\\_applicants#Unaccompanied\\_minors\\_first-time\\_asylum\\_applicants](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Children_in_migration_-_asylum_applicants#Unaccompanied_minors_first-time_asylum_applicants)

The EUUA 2023 factsheet shows that unaccompanied girls accounted for over one-third of applicants from Somalia and Russia, around one-quarter of applicants from Iraq and Sierra Leone, and one-fifth of applicants from Côte d'Ivoire and Ethiopia. Whereas most unaccompanied girls from Somalia, Eritrea and Guinea were aged 14-17 years, most unaccompanied girls from Iraq were younger than 14. There were slightly more unaccompanied girls than unaccompanied boys from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (120 compared to 105, respectively). The number of unaccompanied boys and girls from Ukraine was almost on par.<sup>8</sup>

A significant share of minor applicants originated from Syria and Afghanistan, jointly accounting for three in every five applications by self-claimed unaccompanied minors in EU+ countries. Unaccompanied minors from Syria applied the most on record in 2023, while applications by unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan dropped to the lowest since 2020. At far lower levels, applications by self-claimed unaccompanied minors from Venezuela, Turkey, Egypt, Colombia, Sudan and Palestine (in descending order) reached unprecedented levels. In addition, Eritrean unaccompanied minors have lodged the most applications since 2016.<sup>9</sup>

On 31 December 2023, about 1.4 million children (non-EU citizens) who fled Ukraine as a consequence of the Russian invasion in 2022, were under temporary protection in the EU. Poland reported a total of 421,140 children who benefited from decisions granting temporary protection. Germany (381,165 beneficiaries) and Czechia (96,535) were the other EU countries with the highest total numbers of child beneficiaries of temporary protection.<sup>10</sup>

A very worrisome development witnessed across Europe is the one of minors who disappear without anyone knowing about their whereabouts. Between 2021 and 2023, over 50,000 unaccompanied child migrants disappeared after arriving in Europe, averaging nearly 47 disappearances daily.<sup>11</sup> This alarming trend highlights significant challenges in protecting minors in vulnerable situations across the continent. According to available data, Italy has the highest number of registered missing unaccompanied minors (22,899), followed by Austria (20,077), Belgium (2,241), Germany (2,005), and Switzerland (1,226). In the UK, the government has been unable to say how many children seeking safety it has placed in temporary hotel accommodation or give the age of the youngest, because it has not kept a sufficiently accurate count.<sup>12</sup>

In Belgium, a significant number of unaccompanied minors (known as mineurs étrangers non accompagnés (MENA) in French)<sup>13</sup> are in transit, as for various reasons they wish to travel to another European country

8 [https://euua.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2024-08/2024\\_factsheet29\\_data\\_unaccompanied\\_minors\\_EN.pdf](https://euua.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2024-08/2024_factsheet29_data_unaccompanied_minors_EN.pdf)

9 <https://euua.europa.eu/asylum-report-2024/461-data-unaccompanied-minors>

10 [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Children\\_in\\_migration\\_-\\_asylum\\_applicants#Unaccompanied\\_minors\\_first-time\\_asylum\\_applicants](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Children_in_migration_-_asylum_applicants#Unaccompanied_minors_first-time_asylum_applicants)

11 <https://lostineurope.eu/investigations/data-and-statistics-investigations/more-than-50-000-unaccompanied-child-migrants-have-gone-missing-after-arriving-in-europe>

12 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/jul/28/child-asylum-seekers-placed-hotels-uk-government-numbers>

13 [https://www.caritasinternational.be/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/2023-10\\_MENA-en-transit.pdf](https://www.caritasinternational.be/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/2023-10_MENA-en-transit.pdf)

(most often the United Kingdom) to settle there or to apply for international protection. In this situation, they avoid registering with authorities, becoming dependent on informal networks that may exploit them. This also translated into limited access to shelter, healthcare, and rights, leaving the children in increasingly vulnerable situations. To answer this specific situation, the Belgian authorities, together with civil society, have set up projects and centres for pre-reception of unaccompanied minors.<sup>14</sup> Through these services, outreach and counselling is conducted, while minors can be hosted for a maximum of three months without having to be registered with the authorities.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.caritasinternational.be/en/asylum-migration-en/another-reception-is-possible-for-uam-in-transit-who-are-sleeping-on-the-street/>



# Access to housing and accommodation

## Legislative framework

Over the years, a series of communications, reports, and guidance have been issued by various international organisations and institutions,<sup>15</sup> signalling that the increase in the number of unaccompanied minors arriving in Europe continues, and that specific attention should be paid to children in this situation. Taking note of the situation, the European Commission has established a legislative framework and policies with a focus on this specific target group to offer guidance for Member States and to set up a unified approach on the reception of unaccompanied minors.

The Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors for the period of 2010 – 2014<sup>16</sup> aimed at providing a common approach to tackling the challenges relating to the arrival in the European Union (EU) of large numbers of unaccompanied minors. The action plan was based on the principle of the best interests of the child. As a follow-up of the Action plan, the EC issued a Communication titled *The protection of children in migration* (COM/2017/0211 final)<sup>17</sup> in 2017, which set out a series of actions that needed to be either taken or better implemented by the EU and its Member States to address the needs of the increasing number of child migrants arriving in the European Union, emphasising that protection should be ensured throughout all migration stages. In 2015 and 2016, children accounted for approximately 30% of asylum seekers in the EU. The document highlights the vulnerabilities of these children, including exposure to violence, exploitation, trafficking, and abuse, especially for those unaccompanied by adults.

To support MS in the implementation of the legislative framework, the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA, former EASO – European Asylum Support Office) has developed comprehensive guidance for providing appropriate reception conditions for unaccompanied children<sup>18</sup> and regarding asylum processes that are specific to unaccompanied minors, such as age assessment procedures<sup>19</sup> or practical tools for guardians.<sup>20</sup> The 2018 EUAA guidance prescribes standards and indicators for unaccompanied children in reception and care facilities, including accommodation centres, small-scale reception structures, mainstream childcare centres, and (shared) individual housing.<sup>21</sup>

A 2023 joint note titled *Children in Migration: Fundamental Rights at European Borders* by the Council of Europe and the European Union Agency

15 <https://epthinktank.eu/2016/01/20/unaccompanied-migrant-children-in-the-eu/>

16 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=legissum:jl0037>

17 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52017DC0211>

18 [Guidance reception unaccompanied children | European Union Agency for Asylum, 2018](#)

19 <https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/easo-practical-guide-on-age-assesment-v3-2018.pdf>

20 [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-euaa-practical-tool-asylum-procedure\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-euaa-practical-tool-asylum-procedure_en.pdf)

21 To be read in conjunction with EUAA Guidance on Reception Operational standards and indicators, May 2024

for Fundamental Rights<sup>22</sup> further outlines key safeguards under European law for protecting migrant children at EU external borders. The document details general safeguards, including the duty to provide protection and care, the best interests of the child as an overarching principle, the right to be heard, and the preservation of family unity. Specific safeguards for unaccompanied children cover identification and registration, age assessment, and guardianship.

Starting from 2020, the EC has initiated the latest phase in the reform of EU migration and asylum legislation, under the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum.<sup>23</sup> Regarding the protection of unaccompanied minors in migration, a comprehensive framework has been announced, aiming at prioritising safeguarding their fundamental rights, emphasising the best interests of the child in all decisions and procedures. Key measures include ensuring proper identification and registration, conducting child-sensitive age assessments, and providing guardianship systems to support unaccompanied minors as swiftly as possible. Safer, adequate accommodation and continuity of care that caters to the specific needs of unaccompanied minors and families with minors has been one of the points announced.<sup>24</sup> The Pact underscores the need for swift family tracing and reunification when possible and commits to offering adequate reception conditions, access to education, and healthcare. It also promotes durable solutions, such as integration in host countries or safe return, while prohibiting the detention of children solely for migration purposes.

Under the Pact, *Directive (EU) 2024/1346 establishing standards for the reception of applicants for international protection within Member States*<sup>25</sup> has been recast. This version of the Directive includes specific provisions concerning children, particularly unaccompanied minors, as they are recognised as a vulnerable group. In terms of reception conditions, the Directive mandates that these should be adapted to the specific situation of minors, whether unaccompanied or within families. This includes considerations for their security, protection against sexual and gender-based violence, and the provision of physical and emotional care to support their general development. Access to accommodation and housing is understood as part of the reception, emphasising the importance of providing appropriate accommodation and care for minors, including unaccompanied minors.

The Directive also stipulates that, **as a rule, minors should not be detained**. Instead, they should be placed in accommodation with special provisions tailored to their needs, ensuring their well-being and safety during the asylum process. Member States are required to conduct individual assessments to identify applicants with special reception needs promptly. Upon identifying an applicant's special reception needs, Member States must provide appropriate support to ensure these needs are met. This includes access to necessary medical and psychological care, suitable accommodation, and other essential services. This encompasses ensuring access to

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22 <https://edoc.coe.int/fr/droits-des-enfants/11766-children-in-migration-fundamental-rights-at-european-borders.html>

23 [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/pact-migration-and-asylum\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/pact-migration-and-asylum_en)

24 [https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-06/Infographic\\_minors\\_safeguards\\_pact-v10.pdf](https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-06/Infographic_minors_safeguards_pact-v10.pdf)

25 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1346/oj>

education, healthcare, and appropriate accommodation. Unaccompanied minors should be provided with a representative to assist them throughout the asylum procedure. The directive requires ongoing monitoring of the situation of vulnerable individuals to adjust reception conditions as needed.

Despite a well-established framework and further guidance on the implementation of EU law, uncertainty over some concepts and measures allows for failures in ensuring that the best interest of the child is achieved. Furthermore, implementation gaps at the national level signal the need for further monitoring and coordination with Member States. Civil society organisations have rung the alarm concerning the rights of children on the move, including unaccompanied minors, as these have been repeatedly breached, leaving them in extremely vulnerable situations and pushing many into destitution - including homelessness.

Regarding the most recent reform of EU law under the Pact on Migration and Asylum, critical concerns have been raised about the protection of children's rights within the migration system. Child rights organisations, like Save the Children, have warned that the Pact could result in blatant violations of children's rights—ranging from the systematic detention of children to severe restrictions on access to asylum and family reunification. Increasing risks of family separation and dangers in the case of children on the move are expected.<sup>26</sup>

Another problem raised concerned the insufficient child-specific safeguards in the new screening regulation<sup>27</sup> and during border procedures.<sup>28</sup> This will translate into subjecting children, including unaccompanied minors, to the same screening and border procedures as adults. The risk of de facto detention, particularly during the screening process, which can last up to seven days and may occur in facilities that do not meet the required standards for child protection is of important consideration.<sup>29</sup> While the regulation emphasises the “best interests of the child” it lacks provisions for consistent involvement of child protection actors and clear mechanisms and deadlines for immediate guardianship. It is also worrying that in the context where the EU Pact establishes accelerated processes, in combination with serious capacity shortages and overwhelmed and underfinanced national asylum and reception systems, conditions for conducting proper identification of unaccompanied children and a correct assessment of their age, or their best interests run a high risk in not being met.<sup>30</sup>

Children are being routinely subjected to migration-related detention at European borders and across Member States. Detention of migrant children is counter to the general prohibition articulated by international and regional human rights bodies, and international organisations. The UNHCR position states that detention of children in the immigration context (whether unaccompanied, separated or as part of a family) is ‘in violation of

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26 <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/historically-bad-new-eu-pact-migration-and-asylum-normalises-rights-violations-and-endangers>

27 A new screening regulation - Consilium

28 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-migration-policy/eu-migration-asylum-reform-pact/asylum-procedure/#border>

29 <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/it-does-not-feel-like-real-life-childrens-everyday-life-in-greek-refugee-camps/>

30 [https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/Safeguarding%20the%20Rights%20of%20Unaccompanied%20Children%20at%20EU%20Borders%20\\_EN%20%281%29.pdf](https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/Safeguarding%20the%20Rights%20of%20Unaccompanied%20Children%20at%20EU%20Borders%20_EN%20%281%29.pdf)

the CRC [Convention on the Rights of the Child] in many respects and should be stopped'.<sup>31</sup> Despite this, the EU Pact failed to embed a unified regional prohibition of children's detention, and more unaccompanied children will be at risk of being put into detention or de facto detention unless Member States explicitly prohibit it in their national legislation and effective alternatives to detention are introduced.

## **Homelessness and poor living conditions**

Some of the countries where unaccompanied minors have experienced homelessness or extreme vulnerability include **France**, particularly in Paris and Calais. With a significant number of people arriving by sea, in **Italy** unaccompanied minors have often been left in limbo, facing homelessness or residing in inadequate shelters. While **Germany** has invested heavily in the accommodation of refugees, there have still been reports of unaccompanied minors facing homelessness, especially in cities with high numbers of asylum seekers, or in situations where they fall through the cracks in the system. Unaccompanied minors in **Belgium** have faced challenges, including being left without proper accommodation when shelters are full or when there are delays in the asylum process. Although **Sweden** has been a destination for many refugees, unaccompanied minors sometimes face homelessness due to shortages in appropriate housing or delays in the asylum process.<sup>32</sup> There have been instances in **the Netherlands** where unaccompanied minors have been left without adequate accommodation, especially when the asylum process is prolonged, or the number of arrivals exceeds the capacity of available shelters.<sup>33</sup> In **Greece**, due to the overwhelming number of refugees arriving on the islands such as Lesbos, many unaccompanied minors have been living in overcrowded, unsafe conditions in camps, and in some cases, they end up in homelessness as well.

The 'Study on Homeless Unaccompanied Children in Greece' examines the challenges faced by unaccompanied asylum-seeking children experiencing homelessness in urban areas of **Greece**. Conducted between February and October 2020, the research involved 251 individual interviews with children in Athens and Thessaloniki.<sup>34</sup> The study was centred on children's perspectives and emphasised the importance of considering children's views in planning and implementing activities concerning them. Transparency and dialogue were highlighted as essential for building trust and fostering a sense of ownership among the children regarding decisions about their lives.

The services of the Greek Council for Refugees received requests for support from 1,461 people registered as homeless and/or squatting tenants, from early 2020 to mid-November 2021. These numbers included women, victims of human trafficking, as well as unaccompanied children. Between January and November 2020, the overwhelming majority of these cases (94%) concerned asylum seekers, including those whose asylum applica-

31 [https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/Safeguarding%20the%20Rights%20of%20Unaccompanied%20Children%20at%20EU%20Borders%20\\_EN%20%281%29.pdf](https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/Safeguarding%20the%20Rights%20of%20Unaccompanied%20Children%20at%20EU%20Borders%20_EN%20%281%29.pdf)

32 <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/06/09/seeking-refuge/unaccompanied-children-sweden>

33 <https://www.irishtimes.com/world/europe/2023/05/29/hundreds-of-minors-missing-from-dutch-refugee-centres/>

34 [https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-03/Panteion\\_Research%20Study%20on%20Homeless%20UAC.pdf](https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-03/Panteion_Research%20Study%20on%20Homeless%20UAC.pdf)



tions had not yet been registered but also cases (5-6%) involving persons already granted international protection status in Greece.<sup>35</sup> Living conditions of unaccompanied children in Greece continue to be precarious. Many unaccompanied children continued to face homelessness/unsafe living conditions, as highlighted by the 1,122 housing requests received by the National Emergency Response Mechanism between April and October 2021 that concerned unaccompanied children.<sup>36</sup>

While measures have been taken to stop the detention of children and to relocate a significant number of those experiencing homelessness, the situation remains worrying. A 2024 report published by the Greek Council for Refugees and Save the Children paints a very bleak picture of life in camps for unaccompanied minors.<sup>37</sup> Camps are often remote, overcrowded, and inadequately maintained, with poor sanitation, mould, and infestations. Many lack child-friendly spaces or adequate recreational facilities. These conditions, combined with a detention-like environment, have a psychosocial impact on children, fostering feelings of isolation, anxiety, boredom, and hopelessness. A lack of structured activities or support exacerbates these issues. Furthermore, food quality is poor, often expired or nutritionally inadequate. Suspensions in cash assistance compound food insecurity, leaving children at risk of malnutrition.

Recent reports highlight significant challenges faced by unaccompanied minors in **Belgium's** asylum system. In October 2022, Belgium's asylum reception crisis led to 21 unaccompanied minors, aged 16 to 18 being left without shelter, forcing them to sleep on the streets. This situation arose due to a chronic shortage of reception places, with the state agency Fedasil unable to accommodate the increasing number of asylum seekers.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, in 2023, the number of young asylum seekers going missing nearly doubled compared to the previous year. Child Focus, an organisation for missing children, registered 244 disappearances of unaccompanied minors, up from 136 in 2022. This increase is attributed to the growing number of minors arriving in Belgium and the vulnerabilities within the reception system.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, as of late 2024, approximately 3,500 unaccompanied minors were reported to be wandering in Belgium without proper support, making them vulnerable to criminal networks and exploitation.<sup>40</sup>

Unaccompanied migrant minors in **Spain**, particularly in the Canary Islands, face significant challenges due to overcrowded facilities and limited resources. As of 31 December 2023, the Canary Islands hosted 5,436 unaccompanied minors, accounting for 36.5% of Spain's total. Efforts to redistribute these minors to other regions have been hindered by political

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35 <https://eu.rescue.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/IRC%20housing%20report%20Greece%20-%20English.pdf>

36 National Centre for Social Solidarity, 15 November 2021, Ibid. as referenced in <https://eu.rescue.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/IRC%20housing%20report%20Greece%20-%20English.pdf>

37 Agapi Chouzouraki, Greek Council for Refugees (GCR), and Anne-Lise Dewulf, Save the Children Europe (SCE). © Greek Council for Refugees and Save the Children Europe – October 2024

38 <https://www.brusselstimes.com/304243/asylum-reception-crisis-brussels-centre-once-again-closes-doors-to-new-arrivals>

39 <https://www.brusselstimes.com/belgium/689967/worrying-young-asylum-seekers-going-missing-have-nearly-doubled-in-2023>

40 <https://www.brusselstimes.com/belgium/1319918/over-3000-unaccompanied-foreign-minors-left-vulnerable-in-belgium>

disagreements, leading to resource shortages and inadequate care.<sup>41</sup> The Spanish government has recognised the strain on the Canary Islands and has pledged €100 million to support unaccompanied minors. However, the implementation of a mandatory distribution system across Spain's autonomous communities has faced political obstacles, with some parties opposing the reform.<sup>42</sup> Upon turning 18, many former unaccompanied minors are required to leave youth centres, often without adequate support, leading to homelessness and vulnerability. This transition highlights systemic issues in providing continuous care and integration support for young migrants.<sup>43</sup> In response to these challenges, a delegation of *the Left in the European Parliament* visited the Canary Islands in November 2024 to assess the situation of unaccompanied migrant children. Their mission aimed to engage with local authorities and civil society to advocate for a coordinated European response to protect these vulnerable individuals.<sup>44</sup>

Unaccompanied migrant children in Paris, **France**, face significant challenges, including homelessness, inadequate shelter, and limited access to essential services. Many unaccompanied minors in Paris lack stable housing. Authorities have been dismantling migrant encampments without providing alternative accommodations, forcing these youths to seek hiding places to avoid detection. This has led them to isolate themselves, making it difficult for aid organisations to offer support.<sup>45</sup> In some instances, unaccompanied minors have taken refuge in abandoned buildings. For example, a group occupied an unused school building in Paris to find shelter. However, such solutions are temporary and often lack basic amenities. The process of obtaining recognition as minors is fraught with challenges. Many youths await age assessments to access child protection services, during which time they often remain unsheltered. Even after being recognised as minors, some have been reclassified as adults without clear justification, leading to the loss of protection and support services.<sup>46</sup> The lack of stable shelter and official recognition severely limits access to healthcare, education, and other essential services, leaving these children vulnerable and unsupported.

The Irish Refugee Council's report, 'Now I live on the road'<sup>47</sup> highlights the severe impact of homelessness on individuals seeking protection in Ireland. Since January, nearly 1,400 asylum seekers have faced homelessness for periods of up to ten weeks due to the state's failure to provide accommodation upon arrival. Among those affected are unaccompanied minors, with four children being forced to sleep rough for up to six weeks after being deemed ineligible for state childcare services. Two of these children were eventually taken into state childcare after their minor status was confirmed.

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41 <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/62257/canary-islands-spain-races-to-house-unaccompanied-minors>

42 <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/60770/spanish-government-promises-100-million-euros-to-support-unaccompanied-minors> and <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/58708/spain-three-parties-sink-reform-for-migrant-minors>

43 <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/teenage-migrant-spains-canaries-sleeping-rough-after-com-ing-age-2024-07-12/>

44 <https://left.eu/left-meps-travel-to-the-canary-islands-to-look-at-the-situation-of-unaccompanied-migrant-children/>

45 <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/48137/unaccompanied-homeless-youth-in-paris-we-used-to-look-for-shelter-now-we-look-for-places-to-hide>

46 <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/18755/three-teens-recognized-as-minors-in-paris-turn-adults-overnight-and-lose-protection>

47 <https://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/now-i-live-on-the-road-new-report-on-homelessness-among-people-seeking-protection>

The remaining two have provided evidence of their age and are awaiting reassessment while currently residing in adult accommodation.

Lastly, in **Italy**, Law 47/2017 (so-called “Zampa Law”) is considered to be quite advanced in ensuring the protection and dignified reception of unaccompanied minors. It is the first comprehensive legislation in the country targeting specifically this group of children, and it notably establishes that they should be placed in reception facilities only for minors.<sup>48</sup> Despite this being a remarkable achievement, the challenge persists in implementation, which prevents unaccompanied minors from enjoying the rights they are entitled to under this law, including the right to adequate and child-friendly accommodation. Organisations like Save the Children and other CSOs have asked the government for an integrated national system of reception immediately after these minors arrive in Italy, and for their transfer to devoted facilities after 30 days of stay in these first reception centres, as established in Law 47/2017.<sup>49</sup>

## **Pathways into homelessness**

### **Insufficient and inadequate accommodation facilities**

A significant shortage of child-friendly housing options forces many unaccompanied minors to live in precarious conditions or on the streets. Many reception facilities lack adequate capacity or are overcrowded, forcing minors to leave prematurely or live in substandard conditions. Some children leave accommodation centres due to various reasons, including feeling unsafe or dissatisfied with the conditions, leading them back into homelessness.

### **Ageing out of child protection systems**

When unaccompanied minors reach the legal age of adulthood (often 18), they lose access to child welfare services, shelters, and protections, leaving them unprepared for independent living. A persistent lack of transitional support leaves many struggling to secure housing or employment, leading to homelessness.

### **Inefficient asylum and immigration processes**

Lengthy or inefficient asylum procedures can leave unaccompanied minors in temporary accommodations for extended periods. When their asylum claims are denied, or they lack support to transition to adult protections, they may be left without legal residency or housing options. Additionally, limited referral mechanisms for directing unaccompanied minors to appropriate services and shelters contribute to their homelessness. Many unaccompanied minors have experienced significant trauma during migration, which can result in mental health challenges that undermine their ability to navigate housing systems or access support.

48 ASGI (2021). Unaccompanied minors: critical conditions at Italian external and internal borders. [https://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/ASGI\\_Unaccompanied-Minors\\_DEF.pdf](https://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/ASGI_Unaccompanied-Minors_DEF.pdf)

49 <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/49919/law-for-the-protection-of-unaccompanied-minors-in-italy-critical-issues-persist>

## Exploitation and abuse

Minors who face exploitation or abuse in temporary accommodations may run away, leading to street homelessness. Lack of sufficient care or time from staff, inadequate reception facilities, situations of violence between unaccompanied minors or with adult employees, or economic exploitation from informal work done outside reception centres are risk factors and pathways into homelessness.

### ‘Hypermobility’

This is a concept coined by Naami et al.,<sup>50</sup> after studying the lived experiences of North African unaccompanied minors in the Dutch child protection and asylum system, called *Nidos*. The authors use this concept in contrast with that of ‘waithood’ which characterises the reception system: unaccompanied minors can only wait until they reach 18, with their lives organised around routine activities such as eating and sleeping, which create a stable tempo. During this time, minors do not have access to education or leisure activities, and their physical mobility is restricted to the vicinity of their assigned place of residence, often located in remote areas of the country.

To contest this reality, unaccompanied minors engage in ‘hypermobility’, meaning intra- and cross- border movements, in and out of the care system, that is usually chaotic and unplanned. Young people move in the hope of finding long-term security through legal residency or ‘papers’. These minors reclaim control over their time, but they are also likely to end up in homelessness during the process. Since ‘hypermobility’ can be very stressful and traumatising, after some time young people go back again to a state of ‘waithood’, creating a continuous feedback loop.

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50 Naami, M., Mazzucato, V., & Kuschminder, K. (2024). Alternating temporalities experienced by North African unaccompanied minors in The Netherlands: a story of waiting and hypermobility. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2024.2432445>



# How to support unaccompanied minors in homelessness

## General guidelines

### **Use of trauma-informed care**

When working with unaccompanied minors, it is important to keep in mind the long history of trauma that is often associated with their migration journey. Firstly, human rights violations have been identified by both the United Nations and Amnesty International as a decisive factor in children's migration. Children are particularly vulnerable in contexts of torture, sexual violence, displacement or war crimes. Other factors like economic downturns, high unemployment and poverty rates, or lack of a governing authority may also play a role either separately or combined with the factors described above.<sup>51</sup>

Secondly, more traumatic experiences may follow from the migration process itself. Minors typically leave their homes without an entry visa and depend on other actors like smugglers, CSOs or religious organisations, or fellow travellers to arrive in Europe. Migrants, regardless of age, are exposed to inhumane treatment, assaults, or death in their journey, which also may involve long periods in transit countries waiting for the right conditions to cross borders.<sup>52</sup> All of these are even more dangerous for unaccompanied minors, who often lack the means to defend themselves against these threats and rely on adult migrants to succeed in their migration journey, who could take advantage of this dependence.

The traumatic experiences which characterise the migration journey of unaccompanied minors suggest that housing provision alone is not sufficient, thus it should be accompanied with a high degree of psychosocial support. In this regard, the implementation of trauma-informed care has a huge potential to improve the well-being of unaccompanied minors and to help them into sustainable autonomy after they turn 18.<sup>53</sup> In turn, trauma-informed care may comprise a variety of interventions suitable for different national policies and contexts. For example, the Youth Welfare Officer (YWO) introduced in the UK to support 18–25-year-olds might also be good to replicate for minors. The model proposes the placement of YWO's in all initial accommodation. YWO's provide onsite psychological, emotional, welfare and social support, guidance and information and would also liaise directly with local authorities and services for guidance.<sup>54</sup>

51 Menjívar, C., & Perreira, K. M. (2019). Undocumented and unaccompanied: children of migration in the European Union and the United States. *Journal of ethnic and migration studies*, 45(2), 197–217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1404255>

52 Idem

53 For more information: Menschner, C. et al. (2016). ISSUE BRIEF: Key Ingredients for Successful Trauma-Informed Care Implementation.

54 Refugee Rights Europe (2021). Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people seeking asylum: the case

## Youth development and agency

Unaccompanied minors are, above all, children and young people in need of protection. As such, they are in a development phase at all levels – cognitive, emotional, physical, relational, etc. – that needs to be acknowledged and worked on, even more so if they face housing exclusion or homelessness. They are learning to make choices for education and work, to build friendships and partner relationships, to develop their sexuality, or to set goals for their future. If this is a process all young people undergo, it is even more difficult for minors who need to adapt to a society that is different from the one they come from, without the support of their parents or usual care-takers. In addition to these developmental stages, they also need to cope with losses and traumatic experiences of their migration journey, which ‘is much more difficult for minors when they have to do it without the support, advice and affection of their parents, and cut off from the wider network of relationships they have grown up in’.<sup>55</sup>

In this regard, reception facilities or homeless services need to adopt a youth lens, in a similar vein as policies and services tackling homelessness for the local population need to adapt to the specific needs of youth. The distinctive features of youth homelessness also apply in the case of unaccompanied minors, including that the majority have left homes and relationships on which they were dependent; exiting homelessness is not only about a transition to housing but must also include a healthy transition to adulthood; or that social services will often be avoided due to fear of authorities after a history of being failed.<sup>56</sup>

At the same time, it is important to recognise the agency of unaccompanied minors as much as possible, allowing them to express their preferences and make their own choices as soon as possible. Children are not only *becoming* individuals, but they *are* individuals. Most of them migrate to save their lives and are aware of the dangers and vulnerabilities they will face in their migration journey. In addition, the concept of “childhood” is also culturally embedded and therefore can have different meanings depending on the cultural background of unaccompanied minors. Childhood may have a shorter duration than in Europe and imply responsibilities like taking care of younger siblings or starting work very early in life. These cultural differences need to be acknowledged in the social work with unaccompanied minors, as well as their aspirations, needs and choices, in conjunction with the principle of “the best interest of the minor”.<sup>57</sup>

## Protective factors

In a literature review of the post-migration protective factors among refugee children, the researchers Marley and Mauki describe these as multi-layered, including individual, family, school, community, and society levels. Important factors are self-esteem, maintenance of cultural identity, social support from peers and family, or a sense of safety in school and

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for evidence-based and trauma-informed care and support.

55 Derluyn, I., & Vervliet, M. (2012). The wellbeing of unaccompanied refugee minors. In D. Ingleby, A. Krasnik, V. Lorant, & O. Razum (Eds.), *Health inequalities and risk factors among migrants and ethnic minorities* (Vol. 1, pp. 95–109). Antwerpen, België; Appeldoorn, Nederland: Garant.

56 FEANTSA (2020). *European Framework for Defining Youth Homelessness*

57 Zachariadou, R. (2024). Małoletni bez opieki: nadzór i prawa. *KULTURA – PRZEMIANY – EDUKACJA*, 317–331. <https://doi.org/10.15584/kpe.spec.crae.2024.26>

community. Nevertheless, one factor stands out to be especially important: the social inclusiveness of society, which is crucial for refugee settlement policies to be beneficial. Indeed, social inclusion and community support are found to have a predictive power on psychosocial functioning and the maintenance of well-being. In turn, social inclusiveness entails several aspects: availability and ways to access resources for children to develop adaptive abilities, the safety of their immediate living environment, the involvement of the local community, or resilience-focused interventions.<sup>58</sup>

The type of accommodation where unaccompanied minors live may also be an important protective factor. It has been found there is a strong relationship between placement type and psychological well-being. Children living in foster families are found to be the ones with the best mental health outcomes, followed by those in small living groups and campuses. In contrast, children living in large reception centres experienced the highest prevalence of mental health disorders, including anxiety, depression, externalising, and PTSD.<sup>59</sup> The inadequate conditions of these centres, together with the lack of resources or staff to carry out proper supervision, lead to a sense of unsafety that threatens the well-being of minors and their transition into healthy adulthood.

### **Prioritise community-based approaches over residential care**

Following the argument that residential care in large reception centres is the least desirable type of accommodation for unaccompanied minors, community-based solutions should be prioritised as much as possible. These include, among others, family/kinship care, foster care, small group care in the child's community, and supervised independent living. They are preferred because they ensure a certain continuity in the development of minors, promote their integration into the local community, and increase the likelihood of time and supervision invested by adult caretakers.<sup>60</sup>

However, residential care might be unavoidable on some occasions. It can be defined as 'a group-living arrangement in a specially designated facility where salaried staff or volunteers ensure care on a shift basis, [including] short- and long-term placements in institutions, small-group homes, places of safety for emergency care, and transit centres.'<sup>61</sup> When unavoidable, living arrangements in small groups of minors should be given priority, along with measures to minimise staff turnover and provide an adequate carer-to-child ratio. Children in residential care should also be allowed to meet with children outside the facility, to enhance their sense of belonging to the local community and to provide more opportunities for socialisation. Besides, residential care may be in the best interests of children with specific physical or mental health needs that cannot be addressed in a family-based care setting.

In the case of adolescents, supervised living arrangements or child-headed households may be suitable options, if family-based care is not available.

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58 Marley, C. and Mauki, B. (2019). Resilience and protective factors among refugee children post-migration to high-income countries: a systematic review. *European Journal of Public Health*, 29(4), 706–713, <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/cky232>

59 Daniel-Calveras, A., Baldaquí, N., and Baeza, I. (2022). Mental health of unaccompanied refugee minors in Europe: A systematic review, *Child Abuse & Neglect*, Volume 133, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2022.105865>.

60 Inter-agency Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separated Children (2017). *Field Handbook on Unaccompanied and Separated Children*, p. 205

61 Idem

Some youngsters may already live independently, and young mothers may, for example, feel undermined by foster mothers and benefit from independence. Supervised independent living, together with financial or professional support, may also be useful as a transition arrangement between residential care and housing autonomy.<sup>62</sup>

## Examples of good practices

### **Mental health and access to psychological support**

- ZEUXIS, Greece: In their day care centre, they support young migrants between six and fifteen years old, with two complementary programmes. The first one is the advice and therapy sessions by a clinical psychologist, and the second one is about non-formal educational activities, used as a tool for recovery but also for developing their skills.<sup>63</sup>
- Cordelia Foundation, Hungary: Established in 1996, they assist torture survivors and other severely traumatised asylum seekers, refugees and their family members in reception centres. Their team consists of psychiatrists, psychologists and non-verbal therapists, but also trained interpreters and intercultural mediators. Besides, they provide training and supervision for professionals working with refugees.<sup>64</sup>

### **Accommodation**

- **Finland:** The reception system for unaccompanied minors is based on group homes, who are accommodated in these facilities until they receive a residence permit. Then, they move to a family group home established by the municipality.<sup>65</sup>
- **Norway:** The programme 'Our new children' focuses on supported independent living for unaccompanied adolescents. It is implemented with the municipality of Asker, which first finds suitable housing for groups of two to five minors and then recruits foster parents. This model is further backed up by close and frequent support from competent professionals.<sup>66</sup>
- The National Emergency Response Mechanism, **Greece:** Launched in 2021, it is estimated this policy has contributed to preventing homelessness for 3,528 unaccompanied children. There are three main components: a) a more effective tracing and referral mechanism, b) better coordination between relevant actors, such as asylum services, hospitals, municipalities or NGOs, and c) a 24-hour helpline for children to obtain guidance or immediate protection if there are risks of trafficking, exploitation or abuse. This helpline is a joint initiative of the Greek National Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors and the UNHCR.<sup>67</sup>

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62 Idem

63 <https://www.zeuxis.org.gr/index.php?cat=eisagogiko-keimeno>

64 <https://cordelia.hu/en/about-us/>

65 European Commission (2018). *Approaches to Unaccompanied Minors Following Status Determination in the EU plus Norway*, p. 22.

66 Idem, p. 24

67 Support to unaccompanied minor migrants



- Sponsoring scheme in Bremen, **Germany**: the youth welfare authorities fund the SchlüsselBund programme, which connects housing sponsors with young adult asylum applicants and refugees. People with a spare room or flat offer them to young migrants, with guidance provided by the youth welfare authority.<sup>68</sup>

## Safe housing transition after turning 18

- Norrbotten, **Sweden**: In this region, migrants who turn 18 are offered the possibility to sublet flats from social services. Social workers from the municipality regularly visit the flats and support these youngsters and, after one year, the person usually has the lease transferred to them. The fact that subletting is done through social services is a guarantee for landlords.<sup>69</sup>
- **France**: the ‘young adult contract’ (*contrat jeune majeur*, in French) allows both local and migrant individuals aged 18 to 21 to continue receiving the support provided while they were minors. This can take the form of a) keeping their stay in the accommodation centre they lived in before turning 18, b) a financial allowance, and/or c) social and educational support. However, after the changes introduced in the new migration law, those migrants with an expulsion order cannot access this programme.<sup>70</sup>
- Antwerp, **Belgium**: the CURANT project, which was in place between 2016 and 2019, provided housing and social integration for young refugees under the EU’s European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The project consisted of a ‘co-housing’ model in which a young refugee and a local, Dutch-speaking buddy lived together as flatmates. There were 63 available accommodation units. The goal was to broaden the social networks of young refugees, foster their integration into the local community through spontaneous social interaction, and improve their Dutch skills. In addition, the project had an important component of case management, by social workers providing support in job search or independent living, or organising leisure activities and career guidance. Once the ERDF ended, the City of Antwerp continued this project in September 2021.<sup>71</sup>

68 Fundamental Rights Agency (2019). Integration of young refugees in the EU: good practices and challenges, p. 59

69 Idem, p.60

70 Ex-mineurs étrangers devenus majeurs : le «contrat jeune majeur», c’est quoi ? - InfoMigrants

71 PICUM (2024). Stepping up: A collection of projects and practices helping migrant children transition into adulthood., p. 9

# Recommendations

- Ensure that the implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum aspects concerning minors is guided by the principle of the 'best interests of the child'. This includes: ensuring access to territory and to asylum procedures, with child-friendly processes that prioritise their safety and well-being; child rights compliant reception conditions; child-adapted processes in border procedures and within the EU territory; safeguarding the right of children to be heard at all times; conduct age assessments that prioritise the well-being of minors; banning the detention of children as part of migration policies; appoint a legal guardian for unaccompanied minors as quickly as possible, and provide free legal counselling, interpretation, and child-friendly provision of information and appeal procedures in courts.
- Under the European solidarity commitment, establish a standard relocation mechanism for unaccompanied minors to ensure real protection of this particularly vulnerable group and to alleviate the persistent pressure on EU countries with a large number of arrivals.
- Prioritise the types of accommodation that will most likely foster the well-being and social inclusion of minors, like foster care or supported independent living (for adolescents), rather than stays in large reception centres.
- When unaccompanied minors need to be accommodated in reception centres, they should be in facilities for children and young people only, separated from adults. This will increase the sense of safety among minors and reduce the risks of exploitation or abuse.
- Provide sufficient funding and staff resources to support unaccompanied minors as part of the reception process. Minors are facing several complex processes at the same time, e.g., establishing in a different country, recovering from traumatic experiences in their country of origin and during the migration journey, growing up without their parents, etc. Addressing these complex challenges requires a dedicated, multi-disciplinary team of social workers, psychologists, education specialists, etc., disposing of appropriate time and material resources to provide adequate care for the minors they support.
- Mainstream trauma-informed care among all the organisations, personnel, and processes that are involved in the reception and support of unaccompanied minors. This methodology has proven to be very effective with marginalised groups that have been or are exposed to traumatic experiences, therefore with a great potential to help unaccompanied children arriving in Europe.

- Put minor's voices at the centre of their case management. Listening to their needs, in balance with the principle of the 'best interests of the child', will foster their sense of agency and their inclusion in the local context. This will also likely prevent them from running away from accommodation facilities, and from moving to other places within the same country or in other EU countries.
- Design policies and fund programmes to foster the transition into stable housing when unaccompanied minors turn 18. This is a critical moment for children in state care since they will stop having access to the legal protection and services they relied on typically for years. Many are exposed to homelessness and 'aging out' of the system is a key factor leading to housing instability or homelessness in the life trajectories of unaccompanied minors.



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