



POLICY DOCUMENT - Cyprus

D5.1.: The FA.B! Policy Document

FA.B!: Family Based Care for children in migration



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of the European Union

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1. Introduction

FA.B! - Family Based care for children in migration (Ref. 958056) is a transnational project, co-funded by the AMIF Program of the European Union, aimed at supporting the improvement and expansion of quality alternative family-based care system for unaccompanied migrant children in 5 European frontline Mediterranean Countries: Italy, Greece, Spain, Malta and Cyprus.

This project brings together 6 partners (CIDIS and Fondazione ISMU from Italy, Hope For Children from Cyprus, JRS from Malta, Por Causa from Spain and KMOP from Greece) and it is supported by 9 public authorities, including the Social Welfare Services of the Republic of Cyprus.

FA.B! strives to fill the existing gap between the awareness of the best solution for unaccompanied minors, which includes family-based care programs, and its application, intervening on critical aspects of establishing this alternative system to reception centers.

The key-actions of the project are:

- transfer of know-how and spread knowledge and expertise on good practices, methodologies and tools to provide quality family-based practices and tailored services to children's individual needs;
- enhancement of competencies of professionals and all actors involved in the family-based system;
- awareness raising among civil society and stakeholders about the beneficial aspects of this alternative system?
- qualification of local systems.

Visit our dedicated website to learn more: <https://www.fabtogether.net/cy/home-cyprus/>





2. The FA.B! Policy Document

Purpose

Working tables with policymakers, as well as local entities who work with unaccompanied minors took place to discuss the gaps and obstacles in the care and integration of unaccompanied minors. During the working tables, discussions focused on education, care and the communication surrounding the procedures followed by the authorities who work together with the unaccompanied minors.

This shared programme policy document, signed by stakeholders, will identify the recommended steps, that are needed to be taken to close the gaps in care and inclusion of unaccompanied children in both the short and long term, for the better implementation of national practices. These practices fall under both the international/EU, as well as the national legal framework regarding the rights of unaccompanied children with the aim of increasing the commitment of the government and the NGOs that work with UMC to fulfil their obligations, and more specifically to respect the right of participation of children.

Results from implemented project activities – identified gaps:

In relation to Unaccompanied Minors (UMCs):

- Limited knowledge of the Convention of Children's Rights and his/her responsibilities.
- Lack of awareness surrounding the reality of the unaccompanied minor about the procedure in case a parent or close relative is not located.
- Lack of cultural and language mediation to facilitate communication between schools and government authorities and asylum-seeking children.
- Difficulties in locating foster parents for unaccompanied minors

In relation to professionals and foster parents:

- Lack of quality time for professionals who work with children (self-care).
- Lack of knowledge of the professionals who work with unaccompanied minors about Foster Care and the legal framework in general.
- Comment: People who are interested in becoming engaged in foster care are interested in more examples of other families for evaluating the situation and understanding the way to approach children when they become foster parents.



- Comment: The percentage of UMC who are placed in foster families is 8%, in comparison to 70% for other cases of children who might need to be removed from their home due to other circumstances.

3. Memorandum of Understanding

Understanding the urgent need to contribute and be actively involved in the improvement and expansion of alternative family-based care system; members commit themselves to:

- Establish proper reception, information and education procedures with a child-centered approach for migrant children, including those hosted in reception centres.
- Establish a specific, individualised, assessment process for each of the new migrant children arriving, to assess their educational background, taking into account all aspects that shape the best interests of the child.
 - Migrant children arriving in the host country will be assessed taking into consideration the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to ensure that all factors as well as the child's views are taken into account before placing them in alternative care, applying for Dublin and/or asylum status or reuniting them with their families. In addition, this will allow the institutions operating in the reception centres to provide educational activities for all children, allowing them to be fully integrated into the Cypriot society upon arrival. This will stimulate the participation of migrant children.
- Develop a systematized national process that allows all governmental agencies dealing with migrant children to access the available data so that to operate smoothly in order to guarantee legal protection, access to education and the right to participate in procedures.
- Extend the existing governmental platform that has been created, so that all necessary information and the already completed procedures are posted there.
- Guarantee access to relevant information for anyone involved in care (foster care, semi-autonomous accommodation, shelters).
- Provide informative workshops to unaccompanied children in the form of



experiential workshops on their rights and obligations enshrined in the UNCRC and national legislation.

- Unaccompanied children will be able to acquire adequate knowledge and access to information on issues affecting their daily life and status in the host country. Distinguishing the Dublin Convention from a migrant child's asylum application is an important step for their psychological situation and well-being as well. A clear procedure and information sessions can facilitate their integration into the society of the host country.
- Establish a standardized operating procedure for assessing the educational level of migrant children and thus create an individualized plan before placing them in preparatory classes.
- Take into account the views, interests and needs of migrant children when placing them in preparatory classes in order to ensure that the development of their personality, talents and intellectual and physical abilities are developed to the maximum extent possible.
 - Migrant children will be able to acquire adequate knowledge, develop their potential and additional skills according to their level of education.
- Set classes based on the interests, time and needs of migrant children and the skills that the children already have.
 - Allocating migrant students to the appropriate classes will help ensure (to some extent) the class attendance process and consistent class attendance.
- Provide educational materials according to the age and learning level of each child.
- Have available of translators in the classrooms in order to facilitate communication and bridge the cultural gap. Provision of online translation tools for children and teachers.
- Interactive lessons (pictures, writing, videos, games, etc.) so that all children have the opportunity to take part without restriction.
- Train teachers on how to manage children with a migrant biography.
- Place migrant children in mixed classes during secondary subjects such as music, art and gymnastics to facilitate interaction with local peers.
 - Placing migrant children's pupils in classes with other children from different cultural and educational backgrounds will give them the opportunity to socialize



and adapt to the local context, facilitating their integration into society.

- Provide funds to recruit sufficient numbers of teachers to match the numbers of migrant children.
- Educate school pupils regarding children with migrant biographies in order to facilitate their integration.
- Establish a day of awareness-raising campaign on different cultures in schools.
- Development of a specially designed and updated training programme for learning the language of the host country as a second language. This training programme could be more easily divided into modules covering the needs of pupils from primary school to high school. The aim is to move away from a colonialist framework and recognize different cultures, nationalities and geographies. Most importantly, this education programme should allow for intercultural education at all levels.
- Offering supportive courses in teaching the local language after school for young people.
 - Migrant students will gain a better knowledge of the language and will be able to integrate into the local community and actively participate in school and community life. In addition, with a good language level they will be able to follow the procedures for accessing local services, the labour market, higher education, etc.
- Provide specific training to professionals working with migrant children, including unaccompanied minors.
- Involve more qualified and multilingual professionals who can fill the gap in effective intercultural communication and training.
- Allocate funds to experienced organisations to provide appropriate capacity building training activities for professionals and migrant children in the local context.
 - With appropriate training, professionals, including teachers and youth workers, will be able to offer guidance and support to migrant children according to their level of education. The availability of trained professionals will result in a better distribution of students in classrooms and the provision of the necessary support at each level of education.



- Provide ongoing training to foster parents. Training should provide the necessary tools and make foster parents confident in dealing with issues related to interculturalism, inclusion, management and conflict resolution.
- Develop supportive practices and provide space for foster parents to share with legal guardians and overcome barriers that arise during the foster care of an unaccompanied child.
 - Foster families are responsible for the upbringing of the child, taking into account the best interests of the child. Therefore, with their continuous training they can easily perceive and deal with any upcoming challenges. This will enable them to provide the necessary support to the child and communicate with the legal guardian about anything that may be considered difficult.
- Evolution of the Refugee Act in relation to the role and responsibilities of persons acting as guardians of migrant children.
- Make more information available to guardians on the rights of migrant children and how they themselves can contribute to their smooth integration into the host society.
 - The coordination and development of legal competences will significantly contribute to the normalization of operating procedures for migrant children. Proper clarification by the competent persons/agencies will also bring more support from them regarding the integration of migrant children.
- Issue of inconsistency in their responsibilities. Develop a modified training programme to help young people after leaving the shelters on how to organize their lives and prevent their involvement in illegality (promotion of jobs, relevant authorities to which they can have access).
 - By making the education programme more attractive to unaccompanied children, it will give them an incentive to be more present in their relevant obligations.
- Seminars for professionals (mainly social workers and teachers) who support unaccompanied migrants during the transition to adulthood, to provide them with the appropriate tools and knowledge.
- Establish a committee for public bodies, which will focus on the coordination of all actors and work with local stakeholders to ensure appropriate living conditions, legal protection and access to education for migrant children, including unaccompanied minors.



- Each body overseeing specific aspects of the process through which migrant children, including unaccompanied children, pass will report to this Committee, informing it of operations, required actions, resources, gaps, challenges, as well as successes and best practices. This will lead to better communication between service providers, smoother standard operating procedures and knowledge sharing.