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On embargo

TEACH US FOR WHAT IS COMING

The transition into adulthood of foreign unaccompanied minors in Europe: case studies from France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, and the Netherlands

Epim

Never Alone

DISCLAIMER

This project has been supported by the Fund 'Never Alone – Building our future with children and youth arriving in Europe of the European Programme for Integration and Migration (EPIM), a collaborative initiative of the Network of European Foundations (NEF). The sole responsibility for the project lies with the organisers and the content may not necessarily reflect the positions of EPIM, NEF or the Foundations contributing to the Fund.

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The RISE UP – Unaccompanied minors transitioning safely into adulthood project is led by Oxfam Italy in partnership with the Greek Council for Refugees and Oxfam International.

Oxfam Italy and the Greek Council for Refugees directly carried out the qualitative research in Italy and Greece. For the implementation of the research in the Netherlands, France and Ireland, the RISE UP consortium has relied on passionate contribution of the Dutch Council for Refugees, ACLI France, and Oxfam Ireland, respectively.

Oxfam Italy is part of Oxfam global confederation, which aims to help people fight poverty and social exclusion through a vast portfolio of programmes in many countries of the world. In Italy, these programmes focus on asylum support, integration services and advocacy for migrants' rights.

The Greek Council for Refugees (GCR) is a Greek non-government organization which has been active since 1989 in the field of asylum and human rights. It provides free legal and psychosocial services to persons in need of international protection (from reception to integration), while advocating for their rights. GCR is active in multiple locations in Greece (Athens, Thessaloniki, Evros and the Eastern Aegean islands).

Oxfam Ireland is part of Oxfam confederation and works directly with communities and local partners to support people to make their way out of poverty and exercise their social, economic, political and civil rights.

The Dutch Council for Refugees is an indipendent non-government organization that has been protecting and defending the rights of refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands since 1979. They offer support during asylum procedures and in the process of integration into Dutch society.

ACLI France is a non-profit private law organization, a social network of professionals in Italy and 20 other countries that offers free services to support and sustain Italian citizens in those countries. They recently extended their scope, starting to research and work on asylum issues and the integration of third country nationals.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

The RISE UP – Unaccompanied minors transitioning safely into adulthood project, funded by EPIM (European Programme for Integration and Migration), was launched in April 2020. The project's main goal is influencing policies and practices related to the transition from childhood to adulthood of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) living in Europe, encouraging the provision and/or an extension of safeguards in order to allow young migrants to gain effective autonomy.

The lack of specific support schemes for young migrants once they become adults is both the premise and the major finding of the project. Apart from some good practices, normally rooted in local contexts and experiences with associations or non-government organizations, once young migrants move into adulthood they abruptly lose their rights in key aspects of their life, such as to residence permits, housing, social support and access to services. This puts many of them at risk of marginality, and negates the investments and efforts made in the reception centres when they are minors to prepare them for an independent life.

This publication reports on the findings of research into the transition into adulthood of foreign unaccompanied minors in Europe. The RISE UP research team collected data in five EU countries: Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and France. This selection reflects the need for the analysis to include very different contexts, in terms of the presence of UAMs and young migrants, migratory pathways, and responses from institutions. Researchers were selected based on their specific expertise and relevant active professional networks.

Data were collected through qualitative research, combining desk analysis, semi-structured interviews and focus groups of key informants. Interviews aimed to gather responses from civil servants (both at national and local levels), professionals working with UAMs and young migrants, legal guardians and mentors, and researchers from NGOs or academic institutions. A plurality of perspectives was considered to be a crucial aspect of the research.

Young migrants aged 18-25 attended the focus groups, where they expressed their views and described their experience of the passage to adulthood and the difficulties they met both when minors and once adults.

Fieldwork took place between June and December 2020. For both for semi-structured interviews and focus groups Oxfam Italy prepared thematic and methodological guidelines to share with the researchers. Interviews with stakeholders, professionals and young migrants were conducted at different times in the five countries. Irrespective of whether they remain valid at the time of publication, the experiences and views expressed can only reflect the situation up to that point in time.

Please note: the COVID-19 pandemic affected the data collection process in all five countries. All the interviews were conducted via Skype or other online platforms, and four out of the five focus groups were arranged remotely, due to safety reasons or national restrictions. The research team recognizes that these constraints may have had an impact on group interaction and non-verbal communication, which are important benefits of in-person focus groups.

2. THE TRANSITION INTO ADULTHOOD: AVAILABLE DATA AND EXISTING LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

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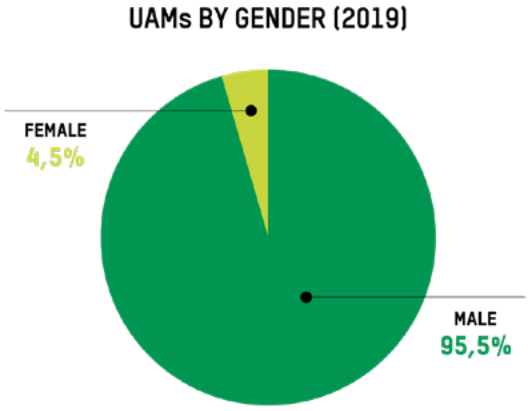
This section presents an overview of the numbers and living conditions of UAMs and young migrants who have recently turned 18 in Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and France. It outlines existing legislation and practices related to UAMs' rights, reception conditions and access to services, and identifies the legal context for young migrants turning 18.

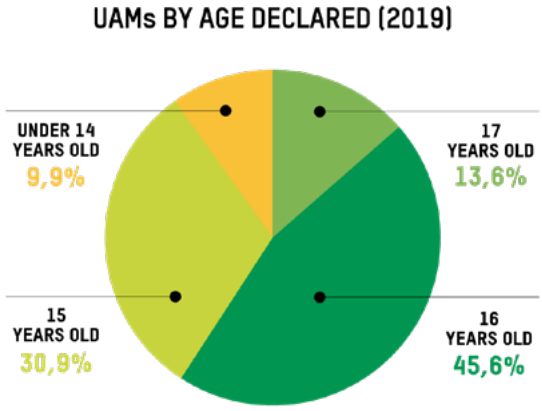
2.1 FRANCE

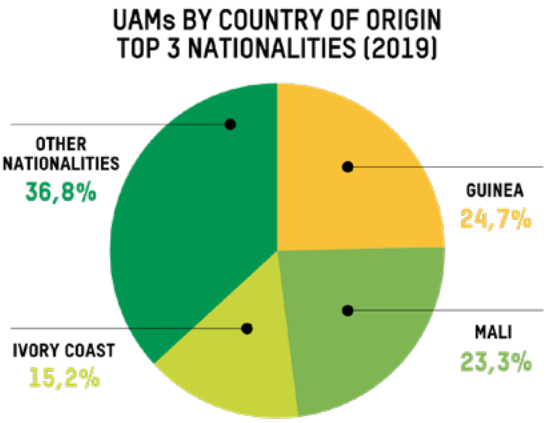
UAMs are subject to the ordinary law on child protection and are therefore under the responsibility of department councils. The reception system is applied regardless of nationality and regularity of residency, in accordance with France's commitments under the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (ICRC).

In France, minors who find themselves in danger because of their isolation must be looked after by the Child Protection Service (ASE- *Aide sociale à l'enfance*), which is also under the regional departments' responsibility. In 2019, 16,760 people arrived in France who declared themselves to the authorities as UAMs:[1] of these, 95.5% are male and 4.5% female.

The majority of UAMs are between 15 (30.89%) and 16 (45.63%) years old; 13.56% are 17 years old and the remaining 9.93% are under 14 years old.







The majority of UAMs come from sub-Saharan African countries, including Guinea (24.67%), Mali (23.29%), and Ivory Coast (13.16%). Another 10.88% came from Bangladesh (4.83%), Pakistan (3.32%) and Afghanistan (2.73%). Just over 10% (10.57%) came from northern African countries: Algeria (4.11%), Morocco (3.27%), and Tunisia (3.19%). Of those remaining, 2.58% came from Albania and 2.39% came from Senegal. Data on UAMs indicate that the greatest numbers are concentrated in border departments (Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region), those with ports area (Occitanie Region) and in Île-de-France.[2]

As of 31 December 2019 there were 31,009 UAMs under the protection of department councils; this includes UAMs entrusted in previous years and still under protection as minors.[3] When the department council recognizes a young person as a minor and isolated, and this decision is confirmed by the Public Prosecutor's Office or the Juvenile Judge, the National Guidance and Decision Support Unit of the Ministry of Justice issues a proposal to send him or her to a specific department, according to an allocation established annually on the basis of demographic data and the number of UAMs in care as of 31 December of the previous year.

Partial data are available for 2020 on UAMs with judicial decisions from 1 January to 27 August, divided by department.[4] These indicate that as of August, 5,952 new intakes have been made. The following departments have taken on a significant number of UAMs: Nord (203), Metropolitan City of Lyon (326), Paris (210), Seine-Saint-Denis (285). Although the 2020 figures are partial, it is possible to see a reduction of about one third in new arrivals in 2020 (5,952) compared with 2019 (16,760). This is in line with a general reduction in arrivals of migrants and asylum seekers to the EU following the escalation of the health emergency caused by the COIVD-19 pandemic and the resulting global travel restrictions. The emergency situation has come on top of systemic problems in France, as in other European countries, namely the difficulty UAMs have in having their age assessed and the lack of adequate reception provided by some departments.[5] As highlighted above, the child protection system is a safeguard for children. For this reason, the modalities, duration and outcome of the age assessment process are essential for children's lives, as a prerequisite for accessing a dedicated protection system.

During this evaluation phase, which should take five days (renewable twice), young people can receive temporary emergency assistance. Their personal data and migration history are checked. Bone tests can be used for the age assessment, but should not be the only criterion. These examinations provide a very rough age estimate, with a margin of error of 18

months, preventing, for example, a clear distinction between 16 and 18 years of age, which is the most represented age group.

When recognized as minors, they are taken into care by the child welfare service (ASE) and are assigned to different departments throughout the country. They are safeguarded until the age of 18, which can be extended by law to 21. If a young person is not recognized as a minor, the decision can be appealed. However, during the appeal process – which could last for months – there is no provision for taking the young person into care, and they often end up on the street, facing the risk of human trafficking and exploitation.

Accommodation arrangements vary according to age and what places are available in the department. Unaccompanied minors can be accommodated in different facilities: shelter for minors (departmental or provided by NGOs), host families, social hotels, specialized facilities (e.g. children's homes) or semi-autonomous facilities for older minors.

However, when the minor reaches the age of majority, he or she ceases to be safeguarded under the child protection law. Thus, in the year following their eighteenth birthday, he or she must take steps to regularize their administrative situation. In particular, they need to obtain a passport, unless the person wishes to apply for asylum.

In order to apply for a residence permit, the applicant must submit a dossier containing the required documentation to the department's prefecture in which he or she resides. The young person must be physically present when the dossier is submitted. If the dossier is complete, a receipt is issued. This receipt does not give a right to work.

Photo Credit / Kapesh Lathigra

The residence permit that can be obtained depends on the age at which the child was entrusted to the ASE:

- Those who have been entrusted to the ASE before the age of 15 may apply for French nationality with a simple declaration to the court of the department closest to his/her place of residence before the age of 18.

– Those who have been entrusted to the ASE before the age of 16 may apply for a 'private and family life' residence permit, outlining his/her bonds with France and their integration process. The permit is valid for one year and may be renewed.

- Those who have been entrusted to the ASE after the age of 16 may apply for a resident permit, but the outcome of this application is less certain. It is possible to apply for a private and family life residence permit by highlighting links with France. If the minor has been training for six months to obtain a professional qualification, he\she can apply for a residence permit as an employee or as a temporary worker. Finally, if they are pursuing higher education, the minor may apply for a resident permit as a student.

For asylum applications, an UAM follows the same procedure as an adult: presentation to the *Plateforme d'accueil pour demandeurs d'asile*, registration of the asylum application at the Prefecture, account of his or her life story, and interview and assessment by the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (Ofpra – *Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides*). The only thing that changes is that, in view of their limited legal capacity, minors without a legal guardian must be assisted by an *Administrateur ad Hoc*. This figure cannot be assimilated to a voluntary guardian as a flat-rate reimbursement is granted for the days of assistance.

If Ofpra provide a positive decision, young people just over the age of majority are granted refugee status or subsidiary protection. Refugee status entitles the holder to a residence card valid for 10 years. Subsidiary protection entitles the holder to a private and family life residence permit, valid for one year. If the decision by Ofpra is negative, within one month from the rejection notification, an appeal can be made to the National Court on the Right of Asylum (CNDA – *Cour Nationale du Droit d'Asile*).

2.2 GREECE

Amid an overall decrease in the number of sea and land arrivals, a significant number of UAMs continued to arrive in Greece in 2020, in search of safety and a better life. Between January and June, 391 UAMs were estimated to have arrived by land and sea,[6] and another 210 between July and September.[7] As of June 2020, the majority of new UAMs were from Syria,

Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Iraq, four of the ten countries with the most acute situations of forced displacement worldwide, as well as from Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), which accounts for more than 5.6 million refugees registered with UNRWA.[8]

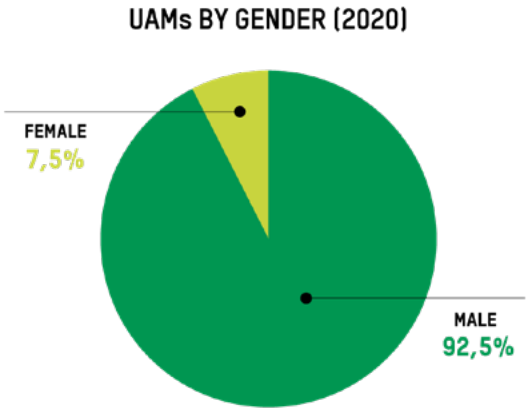
Compared with 2019, when more than 3,800 UAMs from the same main countries (with the exception of Palestine) were estimated to have reached Greece,[9] this represents a significant decrease and marks the lowest proportion of UAMs among the total number of refugees and migrants reaching Greece since 2016.[10] This decrease seems to mirror the overall reduction in the number of arrivals observed since March 2020, when Europe became the 'epicentre' of the global COVID-19 pandemic.[11] It also seems to coincide with a recorded exponential increase in the number of alleged 'pushback' incidents from Greece (sea and land) to Turkey,[12] some of which also reportedly involved unaccompanied children.[13]

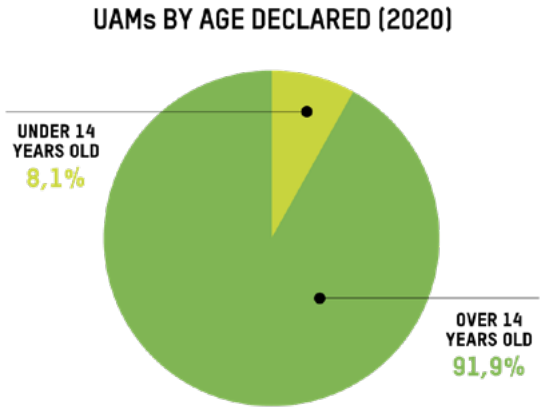
The vast majority of UAMs in Greece are asylum seekers, with the recorded number of asylum applications submitted by UAMs in the first two months of 2020 (1,019 applications)[14] amounting to slightly more than 30% of the total number of asylum applications submitted by UAMs throughout the whole of 2019 (3,330),[15] and close to 40% of the total submitted in 2018 (2,640)[16] and 2017 (2,455).[17] Data on the number of asylum applications submitted by UAMs since March 2020, when the asylum statistics issued by the Greek Asylum Service (GAS) were replaced by briefings published by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, were unavailable at the time of writing. Likewise, the number of UAMs who have been recognized as beneficiaries of international protection after March is not currently available, although 60 received international protection in January and February.[18]

Out of the 4,028 UAMs estimated to be in Greece as of 15 January 2021, slightly more than two out of five (1,715) have access to long-term accommodation shelters for minors.[19] An additional 1,094 UAMs are living in short-term, transit or emergency accommodation. This represents a significant improvement compared with the same period in 2020, when three out of five UAMs were accommodated in overcrowded reception and identification centres (RICs or 'hotspots').[20] This improvement should continue, in order to ensure that the 930 UAMs currently estimated to still be living on the streets or in precarious accommodation can similarly have access to appropriate accommodation.

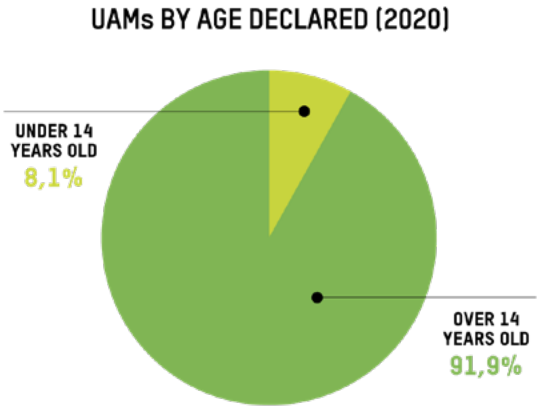
At the same time, following the Greek government's positive decision to legislatively abolish the 'protective custody' of UAMs in December 2020,[21] of the 35 UAMs who remained in detention as of 15 January 2021 (80% fewer than the same month in 2020), 34 were waiting to be transferred to a suitable environment.[22]

The vast majority of UAMs in Greece are boys (92.5%), while girls constitute 7.5%.





The total population consists primarily of minors from Afghanistan (38%), Pakistan (22%) and Syria (13%).[23] Around 326 UAMs (8.1%) are less than 14 years old, with most between the ages of 16 and 17. This means that most would benefit from an extended framework of support to assist them in achieving their potential and preparing them for their transition into adult life. Yet as Greece still lacks a framework to support youth in transition, they are instead at risk of once more falling through the cracks, being returned to unsuitable living conditions in camps, and left with few choices to support themselves upon reaching legal adulthood.



This is the only breakdown available according to offical data, see www.ekka.org.gr/index.php/el/

UAMs arriving or residing in Greece are subject to the provisions on asylum and reception of relevant EU Directives, and are entitled to special reception conditions. These, however, cannot always be applied in practice due to the chronic shortcomings of Greece's reception system and a lack of sufficient alternatives (e.g. relocation). Though a law regulating guardianship for UAMs was introduced in 2018 (L. 4540/2018) it remained non-operational by March 2021, pending the issuance of a joint ministerial decision and the recruitment of guardians by the competent state service (EKKA – the National Center for Social Solidarity), as highlighted in the 2021 annual action plan of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.[24]

Furthermore, following the re-transposition of Directive 2013/32/EU into Greek law in late 2019 (Article 90 L. 4636/2019, also known as 'IPA'), under certain conditions (e.g. safe country of origin) unaccompanied minors can undergo expedited asylum procedures, including at borders,[25] which are subject to diminished safeguards and contravene their best interests.[26] An amendment of the IPA in early May 2020 (Article 61 (e) L.4686/2020) removed the possibility to refer asylum seekers to a process for acquiring a humanitarian residence permit, in cases where they don't fulfil the grounds for being granted international protection, yet cannot be returned from Greece due to *inter alia* the principle of non-refoulement and/or the child's best interest. Where a return decision cannot be enforced because of the principle of non-refoulement, the law provides for a compulsory decision postponing the removal for six months, which grants a right of temporary stay and can be renewed, subject to a new decision re-affirming the ongoing impossibility of return (Articles 68 (3) and 104 (4) L. 4636/2019, in conjunction with Article 24 L.3907/2011).

Yet this decision does not amount to nor grants the rights of a residence permit, and provides very limited access to the labour market (only to the agricultural, animal husbandry, domestic work and clothing sectors), subject to geographical restrictions and necessitating first acquiring a work permit, which can be issued by regional authorities (Article 3 of JMD 53619/735/25.11.2015). This leaves UAMs with scarce alternatives to regularize their status outside the scope of the asylum process. Their status, however, can frequently remain unresolved at the time when they reach legal adulthood.[27] UAMs still going through the asylum procedure upon turning 18, aside from being thereafter treated as adults for the purposes of the procedure, also have scarce alternatives other than to return to camp-based accommodation, which depends on the capacity of the sole large-scale programme of alternative accommodation (ESTIA) or smaller-scale projects run by NGOs to provide them with uninterrupted housing in more suitable conditions.

Finally, UAMs granted international protection are, with a few temporary exceptions, required to leave any accommodation they may have been provided with in the context of reception and lose relevant material support within a month of reaching adulthood.[28] The gaps in both law and practice can increase the risk of homelessness for unaccompanied youth, while hindering any progress made in the context of their previous residence in age-specific accommodation.

2.3 IRELAND

Ireland saw a large increase in international protection applications in the early 2000s after formalising a refugee resettlement scheme with the UNHCR.[29] Following the recession beginning in 2008, the number of people seeking protection in Ireland decreased.[30] Though the number has since increased, the proportion of those seeking international protection who are UAMs has remained low. In 2019, Ireland had 4,781 applicants for international protection, with the majority of applicants coming from Albania, Georgia, Zimbabwe, Nigeria and South Africa.[31] Of the 4,781 applicants for international protection in 2019, 50 were UAMs – or separated children, as they are more commonly known in Ireland.[32] The most recent numbers, as of July 2020, showed that there are 59 UAMs in the care of Tusla, the Irish Child and Family agency.[33] A study published in 2018 cited Afghanistan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Syria as the main countries of origin for UAMs in the care of Tusla.[34] These UAMs ranged in age from 13 to 17, with the majority being between 16 and 17.[35] All but one were male.

Separated children seeking asylum are defined by the Irish Child and Family Agency as 'children under eighteen years of age who are outside their country of origin, who have applied for asylum and are separated from their parents or their legal/customary care giver'.[36] The majority of UAMs arrive in Ireland via Dublin airport or through state resettlement schemes. Forty-one unaccompanied minors who were previously resident in the migrant camp at Calais in France arrived in Ireland in a programme which ended in 2018.[37] In 2020 the Irish government joined a 'coalition of the willing' of EU member states and committed to relocate 36 UAMs from the Aegean Islands.[38] At the time of this research only eight of the 36 UAMs Ireland committed to relocate have been relocated. The new Minister for Children, Roderic O'Gorman, cited an increase in the 2021 budget as having 'secured additional funding to fulfil our obligations to these children on an accelerated timescale.'[39]

Photo Credit / **Pablo Tosco**

When a child is referred to Tusla's separated children's department they are first placed in residential care and then subsequently move to foster care or supported lodgings following the creation of a care plan. This is the standard care plan used for a child in care and addresses 'the reason for admission to care, the aims and objectives of the placement, the views of the child, the plan for the child in relation to health and education, the general needs of the child, and contact with family and possible family reunification.'[40] These care plans are updated and revised as needed to keep up with the UAM's needs. Tusla uses residential care, foster care and supported lodgings for the care of UAMs.[41] Supported lodgings are similar to foster care placements but the support is less hands on and focuses on teaching autonomy and preparing young people to live on their own.[42]

Unaccompanied minors have no specific legal protections under international law.[43] If a UAM has not applied for international protection, does not hold refugee or subsidiary protection, and is not a victim of trafficking, they remain in Ireland at the discretion of the Minister for Justice.[44] The Child Care Act 1991 provides for the appointment of a legal representative for unaccompanied minors, but the sections of the Act are not invoked in practice.[45] The sections of the Care Act that UAMs are taken under do not provide for a legal guardian. Instead, when a child is referred to Tusla they are assigned a social worker, who must decide whether or not an UAM should make an international protection application.[46] Because of this, there are instances when UAMs are referred into care with Tusla but an asylum claim is not made until the next year.[47] There are concerns that social workers are not best placed to make this decision on behalf of the UAMs and that the young people should be afforded the opportunity to meet with legal professionals in their own right.[48] In practice, this system means that often UAMs' applications for refugee status are only processed when they are nearing the age of adulthood, where they are often removed from the care system and transition to adult reception for asylum seekers, which is known in Ireland as 'Direct Provision'.[49] Direct Provision is widely recognized as a flawed system and is criticized for having 'no legal basis, that it infringes on people's rights, negatively impacts on physical and mental health and has a detrimental impact on childhood, parenting and family life'.[50] The policy is that an UAM who turns 18 without having received a decision on their asylum application is moved to Direct Provision.[51] There is some room for discretion around moving the young person if they are in their final year of school and taking their leaving certificate.

Due to very small absolute numbers, we have not given a graphic representation of the data.

2.4 ITALY

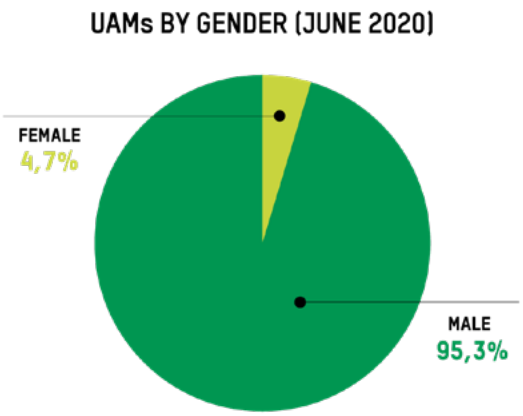
In the three-year period from 2018 to 2020, the absolute number of UAMs in Italy has progressively decreased, in line with the decline in migration flows from the central Mediterranean

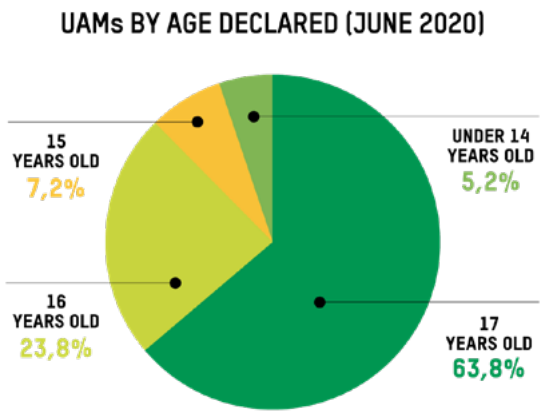
corridor and the Balkan route. According to a report by the General Directorate of Immigration and Integration Policies, as of 30 June 2020 the number of unaccompanied minors was 5,016, a decrease of 31% compared with 30 June 2019 (7,272 minors) and of 61.9% compared with 30 June 2018 (13,151).[52]

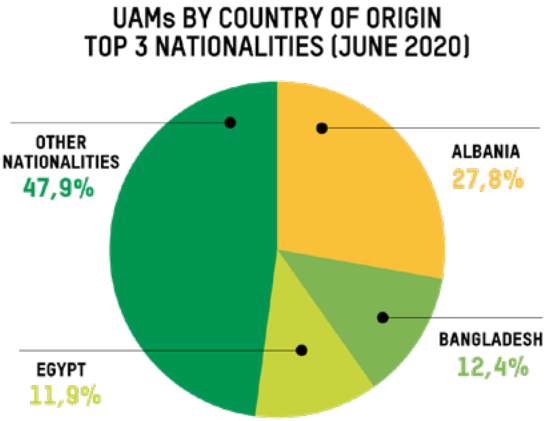
UAM immigration mainly involves adolescent males, with the percentage of girls very low. Young males have consistently accounted for over 90% of the total number from 2017 onwards, reaching 95.3% in June 2020.

UAMs usually arrive in Italy when they are close to coming of age. According to the data for June 2020, 63.8% of male UAMs in Italy are 17 years old and 23.8% are 16, while over 63% of girls are aged between 16 and 17.

The substantial closure of the sub-Saharan migration route has affected the areas of origin of migrant minors. Gambians, Guineans and Ivoirians totalled 27.3% of UAMs in 2018, yet currently make up 10.2%. As of June 2020, the most represented nationalities in Italy were Albanians (27.8%), Bangladeshis (up to 12.4% in 2020 from 2.8% in 2018), Egyptians (11.9%), Pakistanis (6.7%) and Tunisians (4.9%). A large number of girls are from Nigeria: they made up 40.2% of the total at the end of 2017 and 16.8% in June 2020.







UAMs are hosted in a wide range of facilities, and a distinction must be drawn between what is prescribed by law and what tends to happen in practice. For first aid and identification requirements, the law[53] establishes that minors are accommodated in dedicated centres specifically designed for them, such as those financed by the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (FAMI) and managed by the Ministry of the Interior, for a period of no longer than 30 days. In practice, it is unfortunately common for UAMs to be accommodated in unsuitable contexts such as the so-called hotspot centres, in potentially risky situations with adults. Especially in the past, UAMs could spend several months in such places before being transferred to a dedicated centre.

The so-called second-level reception facilities are based on the SIPROIMI (Protection System for Beneficiaries of International Protection and Unaccompanied Foreign Minors) network structures,[54] where 83.7% of UAMs were staying in June 2020. If there are insufficient places in these facilities, minors are accommodated in dedicated communities which are directly managed by the municipalities.

In addition, the controversial extraordinary reception centres (CAS) for minors need to be taken into consideration. These are managed by the prefectures and were originally created to cope with 'significant and frequent' arrivals. Although the legislation concerning UAMs does not provide for the reception of minors in these centres, and in spite of the fact that, technically, they are configured as first-level reception facilities, minors (as well as adults) often spend a lot of time there and some even complete their asylum process without ever having been transferred elsewhere.

The number of unaccompanied minors who live with foster families, at 5.7%, is relatively low, but very important in symbolic and cultural terms.

Accommodation facilities are not evenly spread across Italy. Support projects dedicated to UAMs are concentrated in central and northern Italy, as is the distribution of UAMs: with 894 UAMs in Sicily (17.8%), 673 in Lombardy (13.4%), 486 in Emilia Romagna (9.7%), 484 in Friuli-Venezia Giulia (9.6%) and 339 in Tuscany (6.8%).

The key legislation concerning UAMs and their transition into adulthood is Law no. 47/2017, the so-called 'Zampa Law', named after its first signatory, the Hon. Sandra Zampa. This law has reformed the issue organically, establishing the central role of the protection of children's rights and their equality before the law, regardless of their legal status. It has introduced important innovations and systematized previous norms. The law establishes that minors must always be accommodated in dedicated facilities and that their stay in first reception centres may not exceed 30 days. Law 47/2017 also regulates identification and age assessment procedures; the role of voluntary guardians; the formal possibility of administrative continuity; and the creation of the Information System for Minors (SIM) to support dialogue among various institutions involved in taking care of UAMs.

Photo Credit / **Pablo Tosco**

The progress achieved by the Zampa Law has been partially undermined by Law 132/2018 (the so-called Security Decree 1), which contained a limited number of provisions explicitly detrimental to children's rights[55] but abolished humanitarian protection, thus putting at risk hundreds of young migrants every year.

On 22 October 2020, the new Immigration Decree was finally published in the Official Gazette. Pending it being enacted into law, the Decree marks some positive steps forward. UAMs have three options for obtaining a residence permit: an application for international protection; an application for a minor's permit pursuant to Article 32 of Legislative Decree 286/1998; or an application for a family permit or for foster care.

UAMs are granted a different permit, depending on the legal procedure they choose. An asylum application may lead to a form of international protection (refugee status or subsidiary protection) or a 'special case' permit, while the procedures for minor age and family reasons may later result in a permit for study, work or pending employment after the age of 18. However, there are a number of requirements in order to obtain the conversion of a residence permit for minors. These are: possessing a passport or a certificate of nationality; attending study courses, or performing a paid employment activity, or having a work contract (including if the work has not yet started); receiving a positive decision on the conversion from the General Directorate of Immigration of the Ministry of Labour and Welfare.[56] The application for the General Directorate's approval cannot be submitted by:

- UAMs who have been staying in Italy for at least three years and have participated in social and civil integration programmes for not less than two years.

- UAMs entrusted to relatives up to the fourth degree, even if in possession of a residence permit for minors.

- UAMs for whom the Juvenile Court has ordered the 'administrative continuity' of protection and assistance measures beyond the age of 18.

- UAMs who are in possession of a residence permit for asylum, subsidiary protection or humanitarian reasons on the date of their eighteenth birthday.

Despite these limitations, the Directorate-General for Immigration issues about 2,000 decisions per year.

Among minors exempted from the requirement to apply for the Directorate's decision on the conversion are those subject to 'administrative continuity'. This is an extension of the foster care granted by social services which is requested by the Juvenile Court if the UAMs 'upon reaching the age of majority, even though he/she has undertaken a social integration programme, needs prolonged support aimed at the success of his/her progress towards autonomy'.[57] However, administrative continuity cannot extend beyond 21 years of age, and the law does not clearly specify whether, in addition to social services custody, the reception scheme continues to apply as well.

UAMs who are not subject to administrative continuity and who were not admitted to a SIPROIMI second-level reception facility when they were minors, can only stay in accommodation centres for minors until their eighteenth birthday. After this date, options vary according to their legal status:

- Asylum seekers can be admitted to a CAS facility for adults, pending the Territorial Commission's decision.
- Holders of refugee status or subsidiary protection can be admitted to a SIPROIMI adult programme for six months.
- Beneficiaries of humanitarian protection are not entitled to any kind of reception.
- Those who are awaiting the conversion of their permit into a residency permit for study, work or pending employment reasons, or who hold a custody permit, are not entitled to any kind of reception.
- Holders of a medical care permit or a special cases permit can be admitted to a SIPROIMI adult programme.

Those who are not subject to administrative continuity and who were admitted to a SIPROIMI facility when they were minors can stay there up to the age of 18 years and six months. Beyond this, options vary according to their legal status:

- Asylum seekers can be admitted to a SIPROIMI adult programme pending the Territorial Commission for the Recognition of International Protection's decision.[58]

- Holders of refugee status or subsidiary protection can be admitted to a SIPROIMI adult programme for six months.
- Beneficiaries of humanitarian protection are not entitled to any kind of reception.
- Those who are awaiting the conversion of their permit into a residency permit for study, work or pending employment reasons, or who hold a custody permit, are not entitled to any kind of reception.
- Holders of a medical care permit or a special cases permit can be admitted to a SIPROIMI adult programme.

Beneficiaries of administrative continuity can stay within the SIPROIMI programme until the end of the period established by the Juvenile Court, provided that the relevant request has been clearly formulated in the court provision and communicated to the SIPROIMI Central Service while the former UAM was a minor. It is not clear whether the inclusion in the SIPROIMI network is also envisaged for those who have not been accepted in one of the system-related facilities when they were minors, although a constitutionally oriented interpretation would say so.

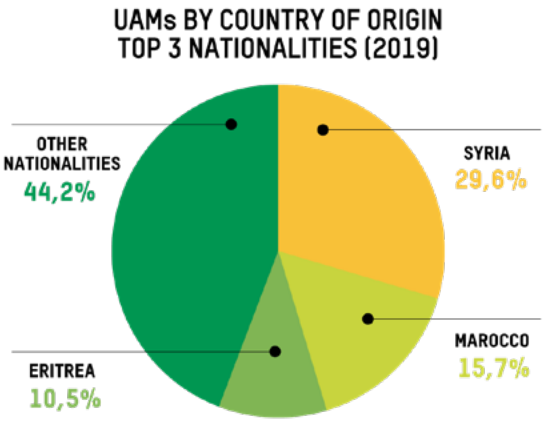
An important innovation introduced by the Zampa Law is the institution of voluntary guardians to support unaccompanied minors. Children lacking their parents' legal authority are entrusted by law to the social services of the municipality in which they are located. After their identification in the territory, the Public Prosecutor's Office at the Juvenile Court must be promptly informed, which appoints a guardian who can legally represent the minors. Until the promulgation of the Zampa Law, guardians were usually lawyers or social workers who often had dozens of minors in custody at the same time, and were therefore unable to adequately support these children in their integration process. Today, citizens willing to act as voluntary guardians can, after a specific training period, be enrolled in the lists of voluntary guardians established at the juvenile courts. As of 30 June 2019 (the latest data currently available) there were 2,965 voluntary guardians, an increase of over 7% compared with the previous year. The Childhood and Adolescence Authority, which operates through Regional Guarantors, is responsible for the organization of training courses and supports guardians through 29 regional units that provide information, advice and assistance.

2.5 THE NETHERLANDS

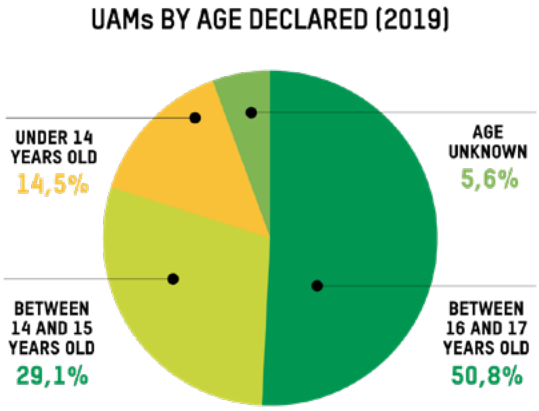
Data on UAMs arriving in the Netherlands are collected by Statistics Netherlands (CBS). CBS state that: 'If an unaccompanied foreign minor needs protection, then he or she is eligible for an asylum permit. If protection is not necessary, then the unaccompanied foreign minor must

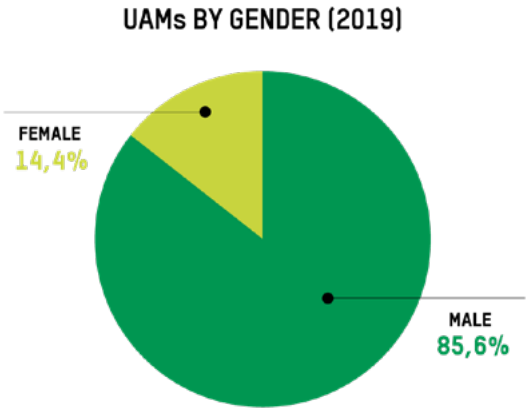
return to the country of origin. This is only possible if the unaccompanied foreign minor can be safely housed in the country of origin, for example with relatives or in a shelter. Unaccompanied foreign minors younger than 15 years who cannot return to the country of origin, can under specific conditions obtain a 'no-blame' permit'.[59] A recent judgement by the European Court of Justice implies that the Dutch policy for UAMs should be overhauled, as the distinction between below and above 15 years old is not justified, and UAMs over 15 who have no adequate reception facilities in the country of origin should no longer be issued a 'return-decision' and should be able to qualify for a no-blame permit as well.[60]

Data on UAMs are available from 2008 onwards. The arrival of UAMs in the Netherlands peaked in 2015 at 3,860 UAMs, since which the number of UAMs has steadily been decreasing. In recent years most UAMs have come from Syria, Eritrea and Afghanistan, and applied for asylum.[61]



Most UAMs are between 16–18 years old. In 2019, 305 UAMs were between 14–16 years old and 180 are younger than 14.[62] According to interviews with professionals working in the sector, the age registered with the authorities is not always the minor's actual age. In reality, minors may be older or younger than stated, and at times they do not have documentation to prove their age.





A report from the European migration network concluded that the Netherlands, compared to other EU member states, has a more extensive and more specific set of policies for the reception of UAMs.[63] While in other EU member states the responsibility for UAMs mostly seems to fall under general youth institutions, in the Netherlands there is a specialist organization, Nidos, which in the absence of parents is responsible for the legal guardianship of UAMs. Nidos is the Dutch guardianship institution for minor refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants, as laid down in the Dutch Civil Code (BW).[64] The court is responsible for appointing a guardian (Nidos) when a child is not under parental authority, on the basis of Article 1: 253r BW.[65] Nidos guardians work from regional offices throughout the Netherlands, with each regional office having a regional manager and approximately 15 guardians. Each guardian guides an average of 20 to 25 UAMs. Nidos is funded by the Ministry of Justice and Security but is not the direct responsibility of the government. Since 2014 Nidos has been a certified institution for youth care. The Healthcare and Youth Inspectorate (IGJ) is responsible for the supervision of guardians and Nidos.[66]

Nidos supervises and cares for the young person until he or she reaches the age of 18. The actual legal guidance is provided by a lawyer. Guardianship stops if the young person returns to the country of origin before their eighteenth birthday or when a parent arrives in the Netherlands and takes up custody. Nidos accommodates UAMs who are under 15 years old in foster homes and families. Those who are between 15 and 18 are accommodated in special centres for UAMs for at least in the first couple of months that they are with Nidos. After that they may either move to a foster family, or live in smaller groups with a number of other UAMs.

Once UAMs turn 18, they have to leave this guardianship and reception system and become independent. Depending on their status the key responsible actor then becomes the municipality where the young migrant is (going to be) located, in case of a regular residence permit. If they are undocumented, they largely have to take care of themselves, though there are various support structures and initiatives at the local level. If they are still going through the asylum procedure, youngsters are transferred to a reception centre for asylum seekers (run by COA, the Central Agency for Reception in the Netherlands).

At the national level, two ministries are primarily responsible and involved with policies and procedures affecting the lives of UAMs: the Ministry of Justice and Security and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. The Ministry of Justice and Security is responsible for legal procedures affecting UAMs regarding arrival, asylum and return procedures. The Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND), which is part of the Ministry as an implementing agency, oversees and executes the procedures. When UAMs turn 18, IND and the Ministry remain responsible for these procedures. In relation to social and economic rights, participation and integration of UAMs, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment is involved together with the municipalities where the UAM lives.

In general, UAMs have equal access to services such as guardianship and education, irrespective of their residence status (minor refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants). However, access to healthcare services for undocumented minors who have no legal residence status can be more restricted than for Dutch youth in the youth care system. For example, the assessment of the need of psychosocial care has to be renewed every six months, instead of the regular 12 months for Dutch children (Youth Act Decree [Besluit Jeugdwet], Article 2.1, Section 2 and 3). Once UAMs turn 18, and if they are undocumented, they are no longer entitled to social services and education, and only have access to basic medical care. In some situations, they are entitled to access basic shelter facilities.

3. CRITICAL ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH THE TRANSITION INTO ADULTHOOD

3. CRITICAL ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH THE TRANSITION INTO ADULTHOOD

In each of the five countries there are legislative instruments that guarantee assistance to unaccompanied foreign minors. But what happens when these young migrants turn 18? The transition to adulthood is frequently a problematic phase as it leads to a loss of rights acquired as minors, rather than the achievement of the desired autonomy. This section highlights the critical issues and risks related to the transition into adulthood in the different national contexts.

3.1 FRANCE

Information, guidance and preparation for the transition to adulthood is the responsibility of the departments, and provided through support for residence permit applications, access to social services for housing and monitoring social rights, and professional integration services.

Currently, UAMs' access to a residence permit upon reaching the age of majority depends on the age at which he or she was taken into care by the Child Protection Service (ASE – *Aide sociale à l'enfance*). Given that most young people are taken into care by ASE after the age of 16, it is clear that there are frequently prolonged periods in which young migrants rights are not granted.

An effective and standardized procedure for assessing minority age could be a first step in ensuring the enjoyment of rights during the transition to majority. The États Généraux des Migrations (EGM) network,[67] during a study day dedicated to UAMs, highlighted how the law is highly unevenly applied and how unaccompanied minors are not considered welcome by the departments. EGM is critical of the failure of some services to respect their obligations in terms of the conditions for assessing minority age, the lack of systematic temporary emergency accommodation, and the absence of educational support and psychophysical health assessments.

Another key aspect to successfully receiving a residence permit is attending professional training around the coming of age. However, there is limited time to ensure that each young person can be empowered, allowing them to learn French, receive training and find a job. Obtaining the *Contrat jeune majeu*r (CJM) is essential to enable UAMs to successfully integrate, yet UAMs find it increasingly difficult to obtain, despite the fact that they meet the criteria.[68] One reason for this is that in some departments' support for UAMs' autonomy is not always provided by ASE. Moreover, recent legislation around the autonomy of UAMs tightens up the

criteria to obtain the CJM; this may lead to further unequal treatment of French and foreign young people. For example, the minor should have had a minimum of 18 months of assistance from the ASE. Hence, in order to have access to a CJM that may lead to autonomy, the young person should have been taken into care by the social services before they were 16 and a half years old. This immediately excludes more than half of UAMs, as 60% of young people taken into care by the social services are over 16 years old.

Another condition for the issue of a CJM is possessing a residence permit. In response to the risk of UAMs entrusted to ASE who by reaching the age of majority lose their rights, the Minister of Interior sent Prefects a circular, dated 21 September 2020, aimed at standardizing the early consideration of applications for residence permits filed by minors when they are engaged in professional training. The circular states that this early consideration must be proposed and not imposed, since the person concerned is a minor and is not required to have a residence permit. Moreover, the work permit will be issued in any case on condition that he or she submits an apprenticeship or professionalization contract accompanied by the required documents. At the end of this phase, the Prefect informs the Departmental council in writing of their conclusions on the unaccompanied minor's right of residence. In the absence of the right of residence, as long as the person remains a minor, there will be no refusal of residence, whether or not accompanied by an OQTF (*Obligation de quitter la France* – obligation to leave French territory). For asylum applications, the main difficulty relates to shortcomings in appointing a legal representative (*Administrateur ad hoc)*, without whom the minor cannot submit the application. The appointment of this representative may take several weeks or even months, and may be refused altogether. UAMs' difficult access to asylum applications is also explained by the fact that ASE professionals have limited knowledge of the asylum system, which limits young people's knowledge of their rights.

3.2 GREECE

In the absence of a dedicated framework governing UAMs' transition towards adulthood, there are factors that may facilitate or further inhibit the preparation of UAMs for this transition, which begins well before the age of legal adulthood. Notwithstanding progress made, there are a number of key challenges that need to be highlighted.

First, age assessment methods are inconsistent. Though a procedure favouring a step-by-step assessment of a minor's age is regulated by law in the context of asylum and reception,[69] this is unevenly applied throughout Greece, not least due to a lack of specialized staff. Experience suggests that, when a minor's age is in doubt, which can also be as a result of their initial registration as an adult, they may be automatically referred to a hospital for left-hand x-ray, panoramic dental x-ray and dental examinations. This is particularly likely where UAMs

find themselves under the responsibility of the police, since a step-by-step age assessment framework does not exist in cases of (administrative) detention.

Furthermore, as has often been highlighted,[70] these examinations have a significant margin of error (+/- 2 years), which can result in an inaccurate assessment of the minor's age. Such assessments sometimes take place even when the minor has images or copies of original documents that prove his/her age. Lastly, pending their age assessment, UAMs frequently lack access to their rights as minors (e.g. special reception conditions), in further violation of the child's best interests.[71] In either case, the results can be particularly detrimental for the minor's prospects and well-being, and are difficult to overturn without support (e.g. from NGOs). This inadvertently also comes at the expense of their safe transition towards adulthood and can even lead to their detention alongside unknown adults.[72]

Second, the chronic lack of sufficient shelters for UAMs has meant that children have for years been frequently and systematically detained under the pretext of 'protective custody' in substandard and unsuitable conditions, for example in police precincts, that, as also pointed out by police officer unions,[73] lack 'rudimentary standards of dignified living' . This onerous trend continued into the first 10 months of 2020, which saw an average of 225 UAMs being administratively detained per month, peaking in March (with 331 UAMs in detention),[74] when the Greek government decided to suspend newcomers' access to asylum for a month on the grounds of public order.[75] This deprivation of liberty has previously often lasted for months at a time, until a place in an age-appropriate shelter could be found. During this period, UAMs have frequently lacked access to information on their rights, on the reasons or duration of their detention, and to essential support (e.g. legal, psychosocial).[76]

Photo Credit / **Giorgos Moutafis**

However, following the concerning findings of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) with respect to the detention of UAMs in Greece in early November,[77] the Greek government abolished protective custody in December 2020. Since then, notwithstanding the decrease in the number of UAMs in administrative detention/protective custody in police facilities, GCR has seen a notable and highly welcome decrease in its duration, at least in Athens.[78] Though implementation needs to be further monitored to increase the likelihood of success,[79] this may indicate a gradual move towards a new reception system for UAMs arriving in Greece.

Long delays have been seen in the operationalization of the guardianship scheme: although a regulatory framework for the guardianship of UAMs was introduced for the first time in Greece in 2018 (L. 4554/2018), this remained non-operational at the end of 2020. In its absence, in addition to their other responsibilities, public prosecutors continued being appointed as legal guardians for large numbers of UAMs, over whose daily needs and best interests they cannot objectively exercise full oversight. In turn, they have delegated temporary responsibility for the minor's care to professionals from NGOs (e.g. temporary representatives, lawyers, social workers), whose uninterrupted representation of the minor cannot be guaranteed, due to funding constraints. As a result of this fragmented system, UAMs arriving or residing in Greece have lacked effective representation by a single reference person that could ensure their daily needs and best interests are met, rights respected and views taken into consideration, while supporting them throughout the asylum procedure and during the transition towards adulthood.[80] Alongside the impact on the child's rights and well-being,[81] this has served to perpetuate UAMs' exposure to a 'continuum of exclusion'; a system which instead of fostering, has contributed to further destabilising UAMs' lives, while inhibiting the prospects of those granted legal residence in the host society integrating into it. On 24 December 2020,[82] a formal agreement was announced between EKKA and the NGO METAdrasi for a programme to appoint 40 UAM representatives/temporary guardians, which is aimed to function as a bridge, until the state is able to operationalize the guardianship scheme for UAMs. However, the programme does not cover all locations in Greece, and where it doesn't operate, UAMs are unable to benefit from access to voluntary relocation schemes, for which an authorized representative is required,[83] and thus cannot benefit from more durable solutions, both for their present life and their future.

During UAMs' transition towards adulthood, such factors serve as further obstacles to overcome – on top of their lack of knowledge of the language and their rights, and their precarious legal status, which in turn hinder access to their rights (e.g. education and employment), invariably also restricting the choices they have available for their future. As they transition to adulthood, UAMs thus need additional support (e.g. psychosocial, legal),[84] to be able to overcome past trauma, develop their skills and personalities, and be integrated into their host society, so as to achieve their full potential as adults; something that benefits both themselves and the host society,[85] since facilitating the process of autonomy and integration[86] also fosters social cohesion.

Photo Credit / **Giorgos Moutafis**

Conversely, the lack of a framework to support UAMs before and as they transition towards adulthood, as in Greece, exacerbates refugee and migrant youth's already increased risks of exposure to homelessness, violence, and exploitation (labour or otherwise).

The loss of age-specific rights means that, upon turning 18, refugee and migrant youth must move out of their accommodation. With very few exceptions,[87] depending on their legal status and vulnerability, they are left to secure accommodation on their own (if beneficiaries of international protection). They can be deprived of their liberty for the purposes of return (if they have received a negative asylum decision) or transferred to unsuitable camps and centres alongside adult populations until their legal status is resolved. The uncertainty that comes with an unresolved legal status and accommodation in large camplike settings have been highlighted as major push factors towards criminality.[88]

This change may also occur alongside refugee and migrant youth losing their support network (e.g. social worker, temporary guardian – if they had one), as well as their network of established relations (e.g. peers), where this transition also leads to a change of geographical location. It disrupts access to specialized care, such as mental health support – if this was previously available – at a time when it is most needed to deal with the consequences of this transition, which can have a significant negative impact on the youth's mental health and increase the risk of self-harm.[89] Similarly, it can hinder their access to services and education, and, therefore their future prospects of employment, leaving them with few (if any)

alternatives for survival than to resort to unpaid, undocumented or illicit work, or once more resort and fall victim to smuggling and trafficking networks.

All of this is multiplied for UAMs who find themselves homeless, for whom turning 18, instead of a day to commemorate, can mark the consolidation of a life in obscurity and stigmatisation.

3.3 IRELAND

The care supports, the child care system where UAM are put in along with native children, in Ireland are robust. It offers wrap-around care, with many UAMs being supported by a social worker, a foster carer/carer, an aftercare worker, someone from the Education and Training Board, and often members of civil society in an informal capacity.[90] That support is cut drastically when a child turns 18 and ages out of the system.

Prior to turning 18, an aftercare social worker[91] is assigned to the child. The worker assists in all aspects of the young person's life until the age of 21 or, if the young person is in full-time education, the age of 23.[92] The aftercare worker's role includes assessment of needs, aftercare planning, psychosocial support, support with education or employment access, and support with family reunification.[93] UAMs with a positive asylum decision have several options for accommodation once they reach the age of 18. They can choose to access the private rental market with their aftercare allowance and some may be able to remain in their foster arrangement.[94]

Before the age of 18, UAMs with positive asylum applications and those whose claims have not been finalized are treated the same. When they 'age out' of the system, the differences become apparent. Civil society actors stress that the differences between the two groups are stark. The policy is that UAMs whose application for international protection is still being processed when they turn 18, are relocated to adult reception centres via Direct Provision.[95] While there is some aftercare support within the Direct Provision contexts, this tends to be limited because of geography – many aftercare workers are located in Dublin and Direct Provision centres are often in rural communities across Ireland – as well the young persons as lack of permission or work or attends school.[96] 'It has been argued that when young people turn 18 their status as asylum seekers overrides their status as care leavers, as evidenced by the fact that they are accommodated in the adult Direct Provision system.'[97]

How an UAM and how a recently turned 18 year old are cared for can be vastly different. Civil society actors describe the change from the wrap-around care a UAM receives to the hands-off approach of Direct Provision as being very jarring and anxiety producing for young people undergoing the transition to adulthood. This drastic difference in services and care brings

many new risks to young migrants.

The risks to UAMs with status who age out of the system are fewer than those still waiting for their status to be defined, but are still significant. These young people face an accommodation crisis in Dublin, with extreme rental competition and a high cost of living. Even if they can find affordable accommodation, they can face racism and discrimination in the rental market. A study by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission found that migrants from outside the EU are nearly 4 times more likely than Irish people to live in overcrowded homes.[98] Additionally, black renters are three and a half times more likely that white people to experience discrimination.[99]

Though former UAMs who turn 18 with a status are entitled to access free tertiary education, they must meet a residency requirement to access maintenance grants to support their day-to-day living costs.[100] These grants can only be accessed if the applicant has been a legal resident of Ireland for at least three years.[101] As most UAMS arrive in Ireland in their late teens and many do not have a resolution to their immigration status until after 18, this can effectively preclude a UAM from accessing this education.

The risks for UAMs still waiting for a status are numerous. The relocation from foster care to Direct Provision can cause anxiety and stress for a young person. Young people stated that they felt deep anxiety and experienced 'the darkest time of their life' while they were waiting to hear when and where they would be relocated. Many said they were just getting used to their lives and families in foster care and were being uprooted from the communities that had supported them since they arrived in Ireland. For some young people who are behind their peers in school, they had to complete their final year of school and take their leaving certificate (Irish university matriculation examination) while in Direct Provision. Many young people cite the uncertainty of the move out of care as the worst part of their transition into adulthood.

Another risk to UAMs who turn 18 without status is that they may be relocated to a different part of the country, thus losing the support of their networks. Direct Provision centres are usually out of commission hotels or B&Bs and are often located in rural Ireland – with few in the Dublin area.[102]

3.4 ITALY

The issue of unaccompanied foreign minors is a delicate and complex one. The first aspect, delicacy, is due to the need to protect minors who have faced long and dangerous journeys and are in completely new contexts without the support of adults. The second aspect, complexity, is due to two components: legislative ambivalence (i.e. whether juvenile law or immi-

gration law is applied to the situation) and, above all, the plurality of actors involved in the management of minors' integration in Italy. The governance system includes the Ministries of the Interior, Labour and Welfare, and Education and Health, as well as the Child and Adolescent Protection Authority, juvenile courts, municipalities and regions. All these actors are involved in the definition of minors' status and opportunities, and each is responsible for its area of competence. Inter-institutional coordination is fundamental, as is coordination between public and private social institutions; however, both are difficult.

The situation becomes more complicated when UAMs turn 18. While minors are relatively protected (although there is considerable room for improvement, especially with regard to the effective application of rules and the promulgation of implementing decrees), those who become of age suddenly lose all their previously guaranteed material provisions. According to data from the Ministry of Labour and Welfare, about 8,000 UAMs reached the age of majority in 2019.

The most serious difficulties relate to the renewal of residence permits and the continuity of reception. Minors who have applied for asylum and turn 18 while awaiting the decision of the Territorial Commission, may find themselves in great difficulty if their cases are denied, as their status suddenly changes from that of minors holding a residence permit (who cannot be expelled) to that of irregular adults and therefore subject to expulsion. For this reason, the opportunity to submit an application for international protection must always be carefully evaluated in the best interests of the child. If the minor's asylum application is rejected, after the minor reaches the age of 18, it is not possible to ask the General Directorate of Immigration of the Ministry of Labour and Welfare for a decision pursuant to Article 32 of Legislative

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Decree 286/98 (i.e. to issue a permit for study, work or expected employment which replaces a minor's permit).[103]

On the other hand, when holders of a residency permit for minors reach the age of 18, they must prove to the General Directorate of Immigration of the Ministry of Labour and Welfare that they possess the prerequisites that are required to convert this permit pursuant to Article 32 of Legislative Decree 286/98.

First, they must present a valid passport or another equivalent document. Many minors do not have the necessary birth certificate to obtain a passport, and are unable to have it sent to them by family members in their countries of origin.[104] They must also demonstrate 'the attendance of courses of study, or paid working activity in the forms and manner established by Italian law, or the possession of an employment contract including if the working activity has not yet started'.[105] As the vast majority of UAMs arrive in Italy shortly before the age of 18, the time available to them to fulfil these requirements is very short.

There is also a structural lack of training and professionalizing opportunities to respond to the needs of these young people, who must focus on learning Italian as a priority and, in most cases, on obtaining a middle school certificate. Courses that are free of charge for participants usually last three years. For minors aged 17, this requires administrative continuity and often causes tensions between educators in reception facilities and social services staff, who are worried about being overloaded and complain about a lack of resources. In some regions, such as Lazio, it is not possible to run extracurricular internships for minors. This may not be a problem for Italian youths, but is a huge obstacle for foreign minors who have to prove they are engaged in training or professionalizing activities.

The length of administrative procedures to issue residence permits and to obtain the necessary documentation is another significant obstacle which undermines new adults' enrolment in courses and internships. Many services and companies do not accept the receipt of the residence permit application issued by the police headquarters, and young migrants are thus left in a limbo that can last for months. Another unfortunately widespread practice is that residence applications are not submitted for minors in the communities where they live. When they turn 18, the lack of an official residence is a huge obstacle for accessing training or work opportunities.

Further obstacles which influence the participation in courses and internships are the lack of guidance for UAMs and new adults on existing opportunities and the complex bureaucratic process, including the need to fill in a 'Declaration of immediate availability for work' (DID – *Dichiarazione di immediata disponibilità al lavoro*). Guidelines issued by the State-Regions Conference in January 2015outlined the possibility of establishing orientation, training and start-up/reintegration internships aimed at social inclusion and also intended for UAMs.[106] However, the rules governing internships are quite complex and in many cases training opportunities always cover the same sectors (e.g. food services), or internships are too short to be really effective.

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All these challenges mean that the caregivers and educators who take care of minors in reception facilities play a fundamental role. The higher the quality of the facilities and services offered, and the more personalized the accompaniment and support to minors is, the more likely it is that minors will be able to convert of their residence permits, achieve administrative continuity if necessary, and integrate positively once they reach the age of 18. However, this leaves room for a high level of subjectivity because the services offered both by the reception facilities and in the territories are highly uneven.

Another critical aspect is housing security. In Italy, UAMs without adults of reference benefit from an automatic right to housing, which they lose with the transition to majority. As noted, for some categories of new adults the law does not stipulate any right to reception. The risk of losing their accommodation, together with the network of relationships connected to it, is a real one and a great source of anxiety for young migrants. The most protective context is the SIPROIMI scheme, although the six-month reception period it guarantees after their eighteenth birthday is probably insufficient to find alternative housing. It is difficult for young migrants to quickly obtain stable economic resources, and the Italian property market is highly discriminatory. Those most at risk are minors hosted in centres that are directly managed by the municipalities, as the Ministry of the Interior no longer pays the daily fees to these facilities after their eighteenth birthday.

Further confusion arises from the fact that, in cases of administrative continuity, the law does not indicate what kind of tariff should be applied to the hosting facilities (whether for minors or adults), and the situation changes from one municipality to another. An additional aspect that is not regulated and is left to the discretion of territorial institutions is the type

of structure in which young migrants should be accommodated once they have turned 18: whether they should be transferred to an adult structure or if they can remain in the minors' accommodation where they live.

Among the young people leaving reception centres, the most fortunate can count on the informal and voluntary support of the educators and/or guardians who assisted them when they were minors, or on networks of compatriots who can offer a shared housing solution (though these often represent non-regular forms of rent). These non-systemic or even completely improvised solutions coexist with semi-autonomous situations such as shared flats managed by third sector entities and occasionally assisted by a peer educator.

3.5 THE NETHERLANDS

There is no specific set of national policies that govern the transition of UAMs into adulthood, when they lose the legal guardianship of and guidance by Nidos (the Dutch guardianship institution for minor refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants) and, where they are undocumented, they also lose their right to shelter. One main problem is the lack of coordination and clear division of responsibilities between all the actors that are involved before the minors turn 18. Furthermore, there are large differences from one municipality to the other in terms of the types of assistance UAMs receive, and sometimes this assistance is completely absent.

Professionals working with UAMs emphasise the importance of having a system in place to guide them into adulthood, given their specific situations. This system should take into account that UAMs often do not have a network or family around them, have been living in survival mode for a long time, that many face psychological issues, and that the process of family reunification can be extremely stressful and lengthy. It should also acknowledge that, given the complexity of the Dutch administrative system, and the fact that UAMs may not have been in the Netherlands for a long time, or are not self-reliant enough to navigate the system, many face housing and financial challenges. For those with legal status, the money they receive from social welfare barely covers their basic needs, and it is therefore hard for them to become self-sufficient. Due to this many UAMs develop debts, and may consequently be evicted from their accommodation.[107]

For UAMs without legal status, access to legal guidance and advice is often absent, which can hinder their chances of being granted a residence status.[108] A number of former undocumented UAMs disappear out of sight and, due to their undocumented status and young age,

are at a higher risk of exploitation, human trafficking and marginalization.[109]

Another challenge for UAMs is that their registered age does not always match their actual age. Some who came to the Netherlands via Italy registered there as being older than 18 years old, as they were told to do so by their human smugglers. Therefore, when they arrive in the Netherlands they are considered as adults and get a 'Dublin' claim to be sent back to Italy.[110] They should not get this claim because they are underage, but because of the 'principle of trust' among EU member states, it is very hard to change their age that was registered upon entry into Europe.[111]

An integrated approach is needed, in which the various stakeholders at the governmental and NGO levels work together, in order to guide former UAMs into adulthood, until they are able to stand on their own feet and live independently. It is also very important that all UAMs are provided with legal support and information concerning their asylum procedure while they are still underaged, and once they turn 18.

4. GOOD PRACTICES IDENTIFIED

4. GOOD PRACTICES IDENTIFIED

In complex contexts such as those described above, where regulatory uncertainties go hand-in-hand with uneven application or with differences at a regional level, it is important to investigate successful practices and to identify their strengths and their possible scalability. The following section outlines good practices selected by RISE Up partners to facilitate the transition of UAMs into adult life.[112] The initiatives and experiences identified focus on the themes of housing, training and work integration, financial assistance, social integration and guardianship.

4.1 FRANCE

HOUSING SOLUTIONS

One example of a good tool to overcome issues around housing for UAMs is the *foyer de jeunes travailleurs* (FJT). This is a residence complex that hosts young people with temporary jobs between the ages of 16 and 25 (and sometimes up to30 years old). The resident signs a contract with the housing manager. Residents can stay for from a few months up to a maximum of two years.

STAFF TRAINING AND NETWORKING

Providing training to staff working with UAMs is a good practice that helps improve the quality of care provided to UAMs who have recently transitioned into adulthood. Research has shown that university and public education are not always enough.

For example, the IRFASE institute,[113] as part of its three-year training programme for educators of UAMs, envisages the involvement of associations that can bring a different point of view. The aim is to increase awareness among students, who will become the next generation of social workers, by creating a link between knowledge of the legislation and practical or social aspects.

Networking with professionals in the fields of health, education, social work and related organizations is essential, especially on legal matters and child protection.

An example of multidisciplinary teamwork is the ADAPP13 Association (Marseille) that uses different approaches to carry out minors' assessment procedures, such as consular activities, legal applications for residence permits and asylum procedures.

Taking care of these teenagers has to include a multicultural approach to allow an understanding of the reasons behind their migration path. The Passer'Aile project created in 2018 by the French-Senegalese association Futur au Present is a good example based on this interchange. It is an innovative, horizontal, and transversal South/North cooperation project, that aims to foster an international network that allows the exchange of information about different practices.

Collaboration with associations that are not necessarily specialized in taking care of UAMs, but deal with broader issues such as the environment and citizen participation, is an excellent opportunity for these young people to go beyond the UAM label and be able to experience themselves as young adults and citizens.

Photo Credit / **Kalpesh Lathigra**

In order to improve access to the right to asylum, one example of good practice regarding collaboration with institutions is the national training course entitled 'Accompaniment of unaccompanied foreign minors seeking asylum by AAH' (*Administrateur ad Hoc*) organized by Themis (Strasbourg) at the request of the Home Office. The Home Office wished to harmonize the training of professionals and AAH training. Its request was prompted by the fact that there are fewer asylum applications than the number of minors arriving in France, the very limited number of AAH, and the lack of knowledge among professional staff about the possibility of UAMs applying for asylum. Following this training, participants should have the basic knowledge to complete an asylum application or at least to know who to contact for information on this.

TRAINING AND WORK INTEGRATION

The CJM is a tool to support the independent implementation of a training project, an ASE programme that provides assistance to youth over 18 years old. It is provided by the Code of Social Action and Families (CASF) for young people who have difficultly integrating socially due to a lack of resources or insufficient family support (Article L222-5 CASF). As CJM is an elective programme under the departmental councils' jurisdiction, there may be significant disparities between departments. The contract is between the young person and their representative on the departmental council and provides the beneficiary with financial and educational support. The applicant must have a professional project and, if he or she is a

foreigner, must have taken steps to regularize their status. The professional project is a key element in obtaining this type of contract, which is why it is vital to systematically integrate contact with the business community into the process. During a workshop organized by EGM was evoked the good practice of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) of Grenoble, which enabled the creation of a professional diploma (CAP) without borders to meet the need for a larger workforce.

4.2 GREECE

HOUSING SOLUTIONS

Supported semi-independent living (SIL): SILs constitute a generally accepted positive model for preparing for of UAMs' gradual transition towards adulthood. Although similar to other reception-based accommodation designated for UAMs, accommodation in SIL is restricted up to the age of 18. The SIL programme, which was launched in 2018 as a pilot project by UNHCR and UNICEF, is aimed at UAMs aged between 16 and 18 and provides supervised accommodation in private housing, facilitating interaction with the host community and thus also fostering conditions for social inclusion.[114] In the SILs, up to four UAMs are provided with supervised accommodation in apartments, and linked with education, health and other necessary services, with an interdisciplinary team of professionals supporting their development and gradual autonomy and self-sufficiency.[115] Project beneficiaries are provided with a small subsidy of €150, which for the first two to three months is provided in two instalments, so as to ensure they have sufficient time to first learn how to spend it on their daily needs (paying bills, buying groceries, etc.), with the support of a social worker.[116]

Social apartments for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection: This social housing scheme run by ARSIS (Association for the Social Support of Youth) under the ESTIA programme aims at facilitating the transition of UAMs to adulthood, by offering accommodation to youth aged between 18-25.[117] It provides a link for UAMs previously accommodated in shelters, ensuring their uninterrupted access to housing. The scheme has 38 places across seven apartments (four in Thessaloniki and three in Volos). It supports UAMs as they progress to adulthood, with the aim of helping them achieve emancipation and self-sufficiency.

The viability and replicability of these practices is influenced by the availability of uninterrupted funding and resources. In their absence, it is challenging and frequently impossible to develop a long-term and durable approach to best practices and move away from a model of ad hoc and time-bound interventions that can only temporarily close gaps. This is irrespective of whether such practices have mainstream implementation or are initiated at a pilot

level. In Greece, the more than a decade-long financial crisis, coupled with the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, provide further challenges to this aim.[118]

Furthermore, since the key prerequisite for achieving durable solutions is the adoption of best practices by state authorities and their ultimate incorporation in centralized planning, a further challenge that needs to be addressed in the area of child protection is that of ensuring consistent cooperation between a wide set of ministries, services and actors, not least due to understaffing. Nevertheless, the SILs scheme provides a good example of what can be accomplished when such factors are aligned, even if there is more that can be done to further build upon this reception model. Since 2018, when SILs were first implemented as a pilot project with a total of four apartments, through initiatives and collaboration between public authorities and services (ministries, prosecutors, etc.), international NGOs and NGOs, they have come to be included in national legislation, national branch of AMIF funding, and there are currently 35 houses, with a capacity of 140 places as of 15 January 2021.[119] Much like the abolition of protective custody in December 2020, this highlights in perhaps the most unequivocal manner that where there is will, significant steps can be made.

GUARDIANSHIP SCHEMES

In the absence of a state-led guardianship scheme, since 2015, METAdrasi has been operating a guardianship network for UAMs,[120] with the aim of ensuring UAMs are represented and

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that their basic needs, rights and protection are met. The network's members, professionals experienced in the field of child protection (e.g. psychologists, lawyers), operate in close cooperation with the competent prosecutors (i.e. legal guardians), upon whose written authorization they advocate on behalf of minors on issues regarding their asylum and family reunification cases, education and healthcare, while helping develop their interests and knowledge and serving as stable reference persons to whom the minors can turn to at any time. The network's capacity has fluctuated throughout the years, scaling down in 2018, in anticipation of the operationalization of the state-led guardianship scheme, which however remains non-operational. Since 2015, more than 6,500 UAMs have benefited from the network's services.[121]

NETWORKING PROMOTION

The Buddy System was a programme run by PRAKSIS NGO in 2016, aimed at assisting UAMs in re-establishing trust and regaining their long-lost childhood, while facilitating their transition towards adulthood. Based on strict criteria and continuous oversight, UAMs were brought in contact with adult volunteers from the Greek community, who would undertake the role of a stable reference point or mentor, subject to the agreement of both the minor and the mentor. The project had positive results in providing UAMs the necessary space to engage in extra-curricular activities, such as reading, visiting museums or simply having someone to discuss their dreams at lunchtime.

The Prosvasis project is being implemented under the Active Citizens Fund in Greece by the Network for Children's Rights and its partners International Rescue Committee Hellas (IRC) Hellas and the theatrical group Manufacture of Laughter (Syntechia tou Geliou).[122] It aims to empower unaccompanied teens, young refugees and migrants aged 16-24, to orientate them towards an energetic and active attitude towards life and their future, and help their smooth transition to adulthood, autonomy and independence. The project provides a well-rounded package of services that include psychosocial and legal support, job counselling, access to education, and educational and non-formal training opportunities.

4.3 IRELAND

GUARDIANSHIP SCHEMES

A fundamental good practice seen in Ireland is that UAMs, regardless of status, are assigned aftercare workers who implement an aftercare plan with them.[123] This is done before a young person is 18 and addresses education, health, and other needs.[124] This system works to build

good communication and transparency between the UAMs and their aftercare workers, and attempts to reduce the anxiety these young people might feel by laying out their options. Another positive aspect of this aftercare is that young people can opt out of this programme, allowing them autonomy should they want total independence.

Former UAMs, civil society actors, and academics commended aftercare workers with Tusla for often going above and beyond for UAMs in transition with linking with NGOs, supporting family reunification and keeping on top of deadlines. Former UAMs in the focus group noted that their aftercare worker took on a maternal role, helped remind them of deadlines and continued to check in on their well-being. Many aftercare workers often take on the additional role of unofficial relocation adviser, supporting UAMs' families with relocating to Dublin after a successful family reunification attempt.

An additional good practice are the systems that emerged in civil society around supporting UAMs during this transition time. NGO and education organizations implemented buddy/mentorship programmes and afterschool programmes. Because of the small size of the UAM community in Ireland, civil society and Tusla have a good relationship that allows for informal communication which is to the benefit of the UAMs and former UAMs in care.

An NGO in Ireland, The Irish Council for Refugees, implemented the Youth Advocacy Project in 2016. This advocacy, mentorship and befriending programme promoted integration for young people in the asylum process in Ireland. UAMs participated, although it was not aimed exclusively at them. 'Young people were matched with a volunteer advocate who provides them with advice, information, support and friendship over the course of six months. Advocates also help to ensure the young person's views are heard, advocating for them or empowering them to advocate on their own behalf.'[125]

Photo Credit / **Pablo Tosco**

A final good practice is that the system in practice as often kinder and more flexible than in it appears in law. For example, aftercare workers can lobby the Department of Justice to keep UAMs in the communities they are accustomed to and not relocate them to a Direct Provision in another county. Similarly, the Department of Justice exercises some discretion around UAMs applying for family reunification slightly after they turn 18. Aftercare workers can also claim that specific former UAMs without status who are to be moved to Direct Provision, have particular vulnerabilities and should be in alternative accommodation.

4.4 ITALY

HOUSING SOLUTIONS

An important scheme in some regions are the so-called 'flats for autonomy'. These are for young people under the care of social services, aged between 16 and 21 (normally divided into 16-18 and 18-21 year olds), for whom individual educational projects are drawn up, ranging from vocational training to internships, that also promote social and relational autonomy. Educational staff are not permanently on site, in order to make the young people more responsible for their home management (shopping, cleaning) and their interpersonal relationships.

In Tuscany, this experiment started in 2015 and has significantly increased the number of places available for minors. A specific structure has been created for adolescents (both foreigners and Italians) who must acquire certain skills to start down their own autonomous path or move into adult facilities. One example is the Gulliver project,[126] funded by national AMIF.

In Lombardy there are several semi-autonomous programmes of this type, based on flats that host four to six people, where minors pay a moderate rent and learn to manage their income. Two examples are facilities managed by the social cooperatives La Cordata[127] and Comunità Progetto.[128]

Flats for autonomy are also widespread in the municipality of Naples as part of projects managed by social cooperatives in the region. These include the Ragazzi Sospesi project, managed by the Dedalus Cooperative and funded by Never Alone – For a possible tomorrow, an initiative promoted by several banking foundations including Fondazione Cariplo, Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, Fondazione con il Sud and Fondazione MPS.129

The Integration for the Future project, funded by Never Alone in Sicily, Lombardy and Tuscany and managed by Oxfam Italia Intercultura, aims to develop knowledge and direct contact

between new adults looking for independent accommodation, homeowners and real estate agencies in order to prevent misunderstandings, conflicts and prejudices. The involvement of third parties living in the same context (other tenants, co-residents, neighbours) provides very strong added value and is key to the success and replicability of these initiatives.

Housing security also includes good practices related to family foster care, which potentially have much stronger impact on children's life. Although fostering in a strictly legal sense is limited to minors, the role of a foster family does not stop with the coming of age. It represents an enormous added value, including – and especially – in the delicate phase of entering adulthood.

For several years, CIDIS Onlus has been supporting family foster care for UAMs and new adults in four Italian regions (Campania, Umbria, Lazio and Calabria). With the aim of promoting positive social relations and providing reference persons for minors, CIDIS also encourages 'networks of supporting families', families or individuals who wish to befriend minors in collaboration with reception facilities.[130]

UNICEF and CNCA (Coordinamento Nazionale delle Comunità di Accoglienza, National Coordination of Reception Communities) also promote family foster care for foreign minors through the Terreferme project, which assigns 50 minors staying in first-level reception facilities in Sicily to selected families in Veneto and Lombardy.131

GUARDIANSHIP SCHEMES

Voluntary guardians are a key part in the lives and transition to adulthood of UAMs, and many projects have now emerged to support them. This is an essential but delicate role and it is still in the running-in phase in many regions. The relationship between voluntary guardians and the reception structures is not always easy to manage, due to the uncertain boundaries of the guardian's role. According to educators working in reception centres, guardians often tend to behave like foster parents and interfere with their tasks. Initial training is provided, but after that, voluntary guardians are not supported in their relationships with minors and the institutions. As a result, many self-help associations of voluntary guardians at provincial and regional levels have spontaneously emerged.

Some support activities on specific aspects, such as the Pass4you – Technical support to voluntary guardians project promoted by ASGI and Intersos, aim to facilitate passport application procedures for non-asylum seeking UAMs, thus supporting voluntary guardians in their relationship with consulates and embassies.[132]

The activities of the so-called social guardians are becoming increasingly widespread, allowing new adults to be assisted (or to continue to be assisted) by an adult of reference who supports, guides and is often an effective reference for young migrants. One good example is the *Tutori sociali* project , financed by Never Alone in three regions (Piedmont, Tuscany, Sicily), which pro-

Photo Credit / **Pablo Tosco**

vides tutors with support tools to accompany young people who have reached adulthood: these include online training, support from more experienced tutors, and group discussions.

These good practice interventions have a number of common characteristics. The projects are based on flexible and personalized pathways which are necessary to respond to the different needs of young people and the different characteristics of the regions where they are implemented. They aim to give as much space as possible to support figures, even informal ones, who are able to accompany young people towards an autonomous life and a personal relationship network: peer educators operating in flats for autonomy, social guardians, or foster families. Finally, the projects outlined here provide models that can be replicated and adapted to individual contexts, so can quite easily serve as templates for more systemic interventions.

TRAINING AND WORK INTEGRATION

Work integration is the biggest challenge on all pathways towards autonomy, and the forms of support for integration that new adults can more frequently access are either work bursaries or internships that provide economic support and work placements in 'protected' circumstances. One example, the Pathways Project of the Ministry of Labour and Welfare, managed

in collaboration with ANPAL Servizi S.p.A. and now in its third edition,[133] has financed over 1,800 social and labour integration initiatives. These were designed for UAMs transiting to adulthood (from 16 years of age) and young migrants (up to 22) who arrived in Italy as UAMs and who are either unemployed or first-time jobseekers. The initiatives aim to enhance structured integrated programmes to support boys and girls on their path towards independence, especially in the delicate transition phase to adulthood. The tool used is an individual endowment: along with a monetary allocation (€500 per month for five months), an internship and support services for skills qualifications are guaranteed. In order to ensure the initiative's replicability, an additional objective involves strengthening the network of institutional actors (with a main focus on local authorities) and the main stakeholders involved in working with migrant minors and youth.

Some projects funded by Never Alone are based on similar principles. The Integration for the Future initiative, in addition to action on housing security, includes personalized support for work autonomy which, according to the specific needs of the young people involved, may include: skills assessment, training on rights and duties in the workplace in Italy, specialized Italian language courses and preparatory courses for work training, training packages designed specifically in the individual regions based on the needs or characteristics of the local market, and extra-curricular internship activities.

There are also other initiatives that address the issue from a different perspective, seeking to encourage companies to hire young refugees as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes. This is the case with the UNHCR project Welcome – Working for Refugee Integration, which enhances the value of companies that promote the labour integration of international protection holders through the annual awarding of a logo and the provision of communication materials. The Welcome logo has been awarded to both small cooperatives and large companies such as Barilla, Brembo, and Gucci.

4.5 THE NETHERLANDS

COUNSELLING AND GUIDANCE

The Municipality of Utrecht is strongly committed with human rights promotion, and has a dedicated policy to assist former UAMs in their city. One of the initiatives they are supporting and financing is a local 'ex-ama' team from the Dutch Council for Refugees to work with former UAMs who are transitioning into adulthood.134 This team was established back in 2003, primarily because many former UAMs ended up living on the streets in Utrecht after they turned 18, because they did not have a legal status, ran into financial problems, or did not

know where else to go. Many young women ended up working in prostitution and fell victim to human trafficking.

This initiative's main goal is to help UAMs to become self-sufficient, by providing a support network around them while transitioning into adulthood, regardless of whether they are asylum seekers, undocumented or holders of international protection status. The specialists involved in these activities offer intensive guidance to the UAMs, who often have been through a lot in their lives. The professionals understand that what they need first and foremost is some stability before they can start working on a sustainable future; so they first work on developing a trusting relationship.

The UAMs are guided by professionals who are social workers and/or professionals with a legal background. When the UAMs are 17 and a half years old the Nidos legal guardian starts sharing information with the ex-ama team so that they can begin preparing their guidance. This makes the transition easier for the UAMs. Professionals in the ex-ama team explained that the legal guidance and working on a sustainable future are intensive processes for the UAMs, which first require that they have a stable living environment, whether they are documented or undocumented. This implies working across different areas of life, such as education, financial stability and psychological well-being. There is no end date for the help and guidance the former UAMs can receive. They can make use of the guidance until they are completely self-sufficient. The ex-ama team works intensively with local partners and is very accessible; former UAMs can also come to the office to just watch TV and relax.

Photo Credit / **Kalpesh Lathigra**

A representative from the Municipality of Utrecht highlighted that the approach has proven to be very effective over the years. Many of the UAMs who benefitted from legal assistance obtained a regular status, and 75% of all the documented migrants who end the programme no longer needed social welfare, as they became self-sufficient and got a job or started educational training.

As a result of the success of this project in Utrecht, it was also piloted in 16 other municipalities in the Netherlands. Unfortunately, these pilots ended, because there was no political will at the national level and no financial assistance to sustain this. The project was replicated in Milan, but one challenge encountered was that the municipality could not identify an organization in Milan that could deliver the same range of services as the Dutch Council for Refugees does in Utrecht.

MENTORING

SAMAH is an NGO dedicated to guiding and helping UAMs and those transitioning into adulthood to strengthen their position within Dutch society in a number of municipalities. SAMAH operates a helpdesk that UAMs can use to ask practical or legal questions via phone call or text message, but can also reach out to when they want to talk to someone. Two days a week UAMs can also have video calls. SAMAH uses a peer-to-peer system, where former UAMs who were guided by SAMAH now help new UAMs, and also work on the helpdesk.

According to the professional working on the project, this approach seems to work really well as the peers can speak from their own experience, and the UAMs recognize themselves in them. What is important when providing mentoring and guidance to UAMs is to give them both the room and time to learn.

Another interesting initiative, in Brabant province, is Sterk Huis ('Strong House' in English). They work with different vulnerable groups to develop a sustainable and independent future. They have several projects providing housing and guidance for UAMs who are under the guardianship of Nidos. All UAMs receive a personal mentor from Sterk Huis. When the UAMs turn 18, they can still turn to these mentors for guidance. Because Sterk Huis works closely with Nidos and they are already involved when the young migrants are minors, the transition once they turn 18 in terms of contact goes smoothly as the former UAMs continue to have the same contact persons.[135]

Nieuwlander is a foundation that was set up in 2014 with the mission to support newcomers from Syria and Eritrea in building their future in the Netherlands. It runs a number of projects to support UAMs in different municipalities. One project that they are currently leading is in the city of Leeuwarden. The project aims to help former UAMs with daily issues such as school work and managing financial matters, as well as providing psychosocial support. The uniqueness of this project is that it combines mentoring activities with physical activities, from

Dutch lessons to doing sports together, keeping the youngsters active five days a week. By doing so, the mentors at Nieuwlander are able to build trust with the UAMs and since both the mentor and the young person have the same cultural background it makes it easier to speak about difficult topics, such as dealing with trauma or other psychological issues. The experts involved in this project explain that often the UAMs have psychological issues but either they won't talk about them or worse they don't even know that they have them. They usually describe what they have as physical complaints, such ase a headache. Thanks to the trusting relationship built within the project, the specialists are able to discuss the underlying issues with the UAMs.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The municipalities of Nijmegen and Wageningen offer extra financial assistance to UAMs who are transitioning into adulthood, as the monthly social welfare allowance is usually not enough to cover all daily living expenses, to help UAMs make a positive start towards becoming self-sufficient. The Municipality of Wageningen also provides extra support in the form of a rental allowance, a contribution to rental costs. Normally this is provided by the Dutch tax authorities and recipients are only eligible for it when they turn 21 years old.[136]

In 2018-2019 the Dutch Council for Refugees developed a dedicated approach for financial literacy training for young refugees, in order to prevent debt and help them handle income and expenditures. The approach of the so-called 'Euro-passion' course is a positive one:

Photo Credit / Kalpesh Lathigra

what are the dreams and ambitions of the participants and how do they ensure that they can achieve them? The course is aimed at young people from 17 to 23 years old, and deals specifically with the financial consequences of reaching the age of 18. The course has specifically been developed for low-literate people. It is now part of the Dutch Council for Refugees' toolkit and is offered to young refugees, including former UAMs, across the country.[137]

SOCIAL INCLUSION

One good example in the area of social inclusion is Open Embassy, a social enterprise in the Netherlands that works to 'build inclusive mixed communities of newcomers and Dutch residents, while offering individualised support rooted in experience and evidence-based action'.[138] In 2019 they implemented the Maker Sessions project 'to bring newcomers and local stakeholders together to learn from each other and use their own experience, to design answers to urgent social inclusion questions'. Open Embassy organized a conference in the city of Arnhem about migrant minors transitioning into adulthood, and in one session invited a number of youngsters to speak about their challenges directly with local policy makers from the region, putting them at the centre of the discussion.-The youngsters were literally placed at the centre – in the middle of the room – and the policy makers formed a circle around them to listen to their lived experiences. The conference resulted in a number of new initiatives to further support UAMs transitioning into adulthood in the Netherlands. One example is the creation and facilitation of a peer-to-peer network of 20 young people of mixed descent between 18 and 28 years old from three municipalities in the province of Gelderland.[139]

5. FINDINGS FROM FIELD-BASED RESEARCH

5. FINDINGS FROM FIELD-BASED RESEARCH

This section summarizes the results of the field-based research conducted in each country through focus groups with young migrants and interviews with the main stakeholders working with UAMs. The research aims to provide direct evidence of living conditions of young migrants once they turn 18, the difficulties and risks they face, the role of the legal guardians in this delicate phase of young migrants lives and, finally, the requests and suggestions they propose to the institutions in charge of the management of this issue.

5.1 YOUNG MIGRANT'S VIEWS

5.1.1 FRANCE[140]

In relation to the period in which a minor is still waiting for the age assessment and the period after having reached adulthood, minors and young adults reported several issues, such as a sense of disorientation, difficulties in understanding the language. and struggles with bureaucracy:

> *I was left in a reception centre. I did not know where I was. A person told me that I could stay overnight and that I would have to undergo an interview in order to determine my age. I met an evaluator to whom I presented my birth certificate, I told him about my story and the reasons for my departure from Guinea ... The day after, I will never forget it, the centre coordinator asked me to collect my things and he told me that the prosecutor had rejected my request and that I had to leave the centre. A birth certificate is not enough to justify my being underage; they did not consider me a minor, despite the existence of the only document that I had on me!*
>
> (A., aged 19, from Guinea)

The transition to adulthood is characterized by the fear of losing social assistance, changing accommodation, and the potential negative impact on education and future socio-professional integration. Obtaining the CJM proved to be a good transition tool, according to the young people:

> *My educators explained to me that I had to undergo training in order to be able to have documents and for this reason I had to live in a reception centre. When they told me this, I was afraid that in this new place they would not trust me and I was afraid for the after-*

math ... I am now 19 years old and I have a CJM and I have been living in T. for a month. I attend French lessons every day to be able to train as a driver next year.

(S., aged 19, from Morocco)

> *I turned 18 years a few months before finishing high school. A few weeks after turning 18, I obtained a resident permit for 'private and family life' and I was allowed to continue my studies. I obtained a contract with the department (CJM) in order to be entitled to accommodation. However, the first year was complicated. Once again, I found myself alone, but this time I was far from my points of references and from my contact person. Again, I had to build new social links and find new friends.*

(B., aged 21, from Cameroon)

These young people are often employed through apprenticeship contracts. Apprenticeship is based on the principle of alternating classroom teaching in a training centre with on-the-job training by the employer.

> *With the help of my educator, I quickly started training to become a window and door manufacturer, with a certificate of carpentry professional qualification. Attending class is not easy, I have to learn everything. During my internship, my employer congratulated me for my work and I have the impression that my embarrassment is fading a little bit. When he offered to hire me at the end of the apprenticeship, I felt that I could do fine.*

(K., aged 21, from Mali)

> *My educator also helped me find an apprenticeship contract. I immediately understood that this could be a real opportunity for me. Several restaurants were looking for apprentices, so I went to one of them with my CV. After two days, the owner of the restaurant called me and told me that I worked well, that I deserved an apprenticeship contract. I was really happy. Finally, I could see a clearer path. The lawyer helped me to obtain the documents necessary to sign the working contract.*

(R., aged 18, from Bangladesh)

These apprenticeship contracts represent a path that should not be overlooked when mentoring young people. Such contracts allow them to prove their integration in France and are an important element when applying for a residence permit. For this reason, it is important that real accompaniment and guidance are in place when young people choose their educational training path, which for many will not be linear.

Photo Credit / **Kalpesh Lathigra**

Having arrived during the school year, I spent a few months not going to school. After passing the tests at the information and orientation centre, I was able to get an assignment for the beginning of the school year. I enrolled in the professional plumbing and heating certification. After a few weeks of attendance, I saw that I was struggling, my level of French was not good enough. I enjoyed going to school but I felt like a failure. I struggled to finish school. Since I did not like being a plumber I asked my supervisor if I could change my training and I enrolled in the food and beverage course the following year.

(R., aged 18, from Bangladesh)

A choice had to be made about what to do after middle school. I immediately told N [the educator] that I wanted to go to high school and that I did not see myself in a vocational high school or a learning centre. I did not want to study in the hospitality industry or construction, I felt capable of succeeding and both my teachers and my educator supported my choice.

(B., aged 21, from Cameroon)

Social relations may be characterized by a lack of French contacts; however, there has not been lack of positive experiences:

> *Now I am 21 years old. I live in a small apartment. I still work in the same company, with the same boss who occasionally invites me to his and his wife's house for dinner. I spend time with my Malian and Guinean friends, but I have also met young French people.*
>
> (K., aged 21, from Mali)

Supportive organisations and volunteers emerged as indispensable links between institutions and civil society:

> *My educator's support will remain clear in my memory. She was more than a contact person, she became a role model, even more important for me today after I turned 18 years old. Even though I no longer live in the centre, she still helps and supports me. I tell her my successes and my failures, my joys and sorrows. I just turned 21, an age at which the CJM contract can no longer be renewed, but now I have a scholarship and a roof over my head, food to eat and I can continue my studies. This is enough for me.*
>
> (B., aged 21, from Cameroon)

> *I arrived in April and turned 18 years old in September and I had to leave the centre. Thus, my stay at the centre was useless. I also lost the chance to sign an apprenticeship contract that I had managed to find. I turned 18 so I had to start from scratch! Thanks to a family of volunteers, I was able to live with them and they helped me with the paperwork to try to get a bank account and a residence permit. I managed to finish middle school and now I am in a vocational school. I was not lucky enough to have the support of the ASE but I was very lucky to find people who welcomed me into their house and supported me every day. I feel at home with them.*
>
> (A., aged 19, from Guinea)

Giving voice to these stories makes it possible to become aware of the individuality of each experience while also highlighting common aspects such as fears, hopes and the dream of a different life.

5.1.2 GREECE

All the youth that took part in the research had been living for prolonged periods of time in a safe zone in a camp in mainland Greece. Upon reaching 18 they had been moved in with the camp's adult population, where they remained at the time of our focus group discussions.

> *After the safe zone there is nothing. We cannot find work; we still don't have an apartment; we continue to live in the camp. We haven't managed to secure what we need to live.*
>
> (A., aged 18, from Afghanistan)

Their biggest challenges and fears related to their development and prospects for the future. All remembered trying to find an internship or to be enrolled in school, at times for years, yet despite their persistence, drive, and dedication, in most cases, this was to no avail. Correspondingly, all but one, who had acquired legal residence and was waiting to receive his permit, quoted their asylum interview – which they had yet to undergo – as their biggest fear. By contrast, even though some were eager to find autonomous housing upon reaching legal adulthood, the camp still seemed to function as a place of safety and stability, where, even as minors, they could communicate and create relationships of trust with people in similar situations or with the professionals assisting them, while surrounded by an 'outside' insecure and chaotic environment, full of uncertainty and lacking prospects for the future. One youth even expressed his fear that his access to education would be interrupted if he moved elsewhere, perhaps further highlighting an attachment with the living conditions they had come to know in Greece.

Perhaps due to this, as well as their disappointment at finding barriers each and every time they tried to move forward with their lives, when asked what they thought would have been the best solution in terms of living arrangements for unaccompanied minors in Greece, all but one youth, who enthusiastically replied 'with a family!', seemed to concede that the main requirement was to not be given false hope for their future.

> *When you are with a family and you want to go to school, whatever you wish to cook, you wake up in the morning and cook. You have something cooked and ready to eat. When you have a family, you are happy no matter where you go!*
>
> (I., aged 19, from Afghanistan)

Reflecting this exogenous cautiousness on looking at life and life's prospects, for most,

reaching legal adulthood was accompanied by an accentuation of their feelings of anxiety, deep disappointment and frustration at what seemed like a stagnant situation which they felt worsened every year. As adults, they had continued searching for work to no avail, becoming convinced that their only option – if there was one – would be to find poorly paid agricultural work through friends, the vast majority of whom non-Greek speakers.

> *I cannot make a life for myself in this country. There are minors [here] with skills, but all that many of them do is sit and smoke, because there isn't anything to do; no means to [access] work. How can I buy what I need to survive? It's either work or illegality.*
>
> (M., aged 20, from Afghanistan)

By contrast, the one youth who, through school, had managed to engage in extracurricular activities (sports and drawing), create a network of relationships with his peers and teachers, and learn the language, felt his situation had improved, not least as he could freely travel throughout Greece and get to know the country. Yet despite being able to clearly communicate in both Greek and English, much like the rest of the youth, he quoted anxiety around language as a factor that held him back from both finding a job and being included in social life. This anxiety had exacerbated by the time of our discussion, as the camp had been placed under lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, making him feel he had to choose between complying with the measure at the expense of interrupting his education, or risking being apprehended and mistreated by the police.

> *The first time I came to the camp, I didn't understand the Greek language; I didn't understand the English language. But I go to school. I am learning. I need to be able to communicate with locals as part of daily life; even for simple instructions on how to get back to the camp if I get lost.*
>
> (I., aged 19, from Afghanistan)

Meanwhile, all the youth felt it would be very helpful to have a guardian even after turning 18, even though only one was relatively aware of a guardian's role, while another confused it with that of his social worker, since none had been appointed one while underage. A recurrent theme was the need to have someone to assist, support, supervise and guide them in enrolling onto courses, securing documents and regaining a semblance of normality in their lives, or as one youth pointed out: 'in making a proper programme, a schedule, a life plan'.

In the absence of such a person, whether their voices and opinions are heard in their daily

lives ends up depending on the will and efforts of the professionals around them (e.g. teachers, NGO staff), and of any close relationships they have been able to make. At the societal and political levels, this voice seems to be less than a whisper. Yet if decision makers and society were to try to listen closely, they would perhaps have heard a simple call 'to listen'; to show some interest in their lives; to stop forcing them to live in limbo and in segregated camps, and as another youth put it, 'stop repeating what is happening today, tomorrow'.

5.1.3 IRELAND

All of the youth interviewed expressed having a positive relationship with their assigned Tusla (the Irish Child and Family Agency) aftercare worker. One interviewee noted that their aftercare worker served as a sort of maternal figure and another stated that even though they were no longer in the aftercare programme (they had aged out of the system) their former aftercare worker would still check in and remind them of details they may have forgotten to do.

Most of the former UAMs interviewed were accommodated in foster care and all indicated that they enjoyed their time there and had good relationships with their foster carers.

> *I really enjoyed staying with my foster family, it made me feel like I was not so alone and that I had a second family here in Ireland.*
>
> (I., aged 20) [141]

The one former UAM who was in supportive housing indicated that they liked this system as it gave them more independence while still having a support system.

> *I liked [the care homes] fine. They encouraged our independence but still offered support.*
>
> (L., aged 25)

The most common complaint about the UAM transitioning to adulthood system in Ireland was the removal from foster or residential care at 18 and relocation to Direct Provision.

> *It's hard, because you are just learning how to live with your foster family, and then you have leave.*
>
> (R., aged 24)

All focus group attendees' main suggestion for this process was to give UAMs the option to remain with foster families after they turn 18. As noted above, unaccompanied minors who turn 18 with status are sometimes able to remain with their foster family, as laid out in their aftercare plan.

> *After I turned 18, I was … worried about living independently. I knew it was something that I wanted to do but I wanted to take the time to learn how to be independent. It was really nice that I was able to stay with my foster family until I felt like I was ready to live on my own.*
>
> (I., aged 20)

In contrast, almost all focus group participants were forced to leave their foster care or residential care homes on or shortly after their eighteenth birthday. One focus group participant received status before their eighteenth birthday and was allowed to remain in foster care after the age of 18.

A focus group attendee stated that being allowed to stay in foster care after 18 would be good for mental health and encourage UAMs to moving forward. They said that it was very stressful to leave their foster family as soon as they turned 18 and ***"It was a very dark time in their life until everything was sorted out"*** (M., aged 22).

Another attendee noted that most other 18 year olds still need support systems and that UAMs are no different.

> *You're not fully an adult at 18, most Irish kids are still living with their parents at 18.*
>
> (L., aged 25)

A further interviewee mentioned that they felt responsibility and guilt towards their foster family as the family were very upset when the UAM was forced to move out at 18.

> *It was hard on them [foster family], they cried the day I left.*
>
> (R., aged 24)

This interviewee noted that they were allowed some flexibility, as the young person was in the

middle of his leaving certificate tests when they turn 18, but they were removed afterwards.

When asked what they would change about the process, all the focus group interviewees noted that they would stop the relocation from foster and residential care to Direct Provision at 18. They called for a more flexible system which would take the individual needs of the young person into account. Several of the former UAMs in the focus group were engaged in mentoring younger former UAMs. Though this is informal, a formalised system of mentorship would be helpful in terms of integration. Additionally, all of those interviewed noted that there were large disparities in opportunities between UAMs based in Dublin and those based in smaller Irish towns. Those in Dublin had better access to their aftercare worker, NGOs, and education.

5.1.4 ITALY

When young migrants who were part of the focus group were asked about the time spent in reception facilities when they were underage, some recalled the difficulty in adapting to a community context and also to strict rules whose meaning they initially did not understand.

All the young migrants feared finding themselves stuck for a long period in a community without the possibility of working to achieve their goals. These goals were always the same: obtaining a residence permit and accessing the world of work. In other words, the longed-for autonomy that marks the completion of a difficult migration path which started months or years before.

> *At the beginning, life in the community was difficult … too many rules … I didn't know the language; I didn't know anyone. Now I'm better, I've realized that rules are necessary for obtaining a permit.*
>
> (K., aged 20, from Albania)

> *I didn't like attending school, I wanted to work. But then they explained to me that I wouldn't get any job without going to school. So, I went to school and then I started … an internship.*
>
> (M., aged 20, from Senegal)

Young migrants seemed to be aware of the important role played by staff in reception facilities, which guarantees them more opportunities. Given the short period of time most had before they turned 18, they had to move quickly to learn Italian and to obtain a training course certificate to legitimize their request for administrative continuity at the Juvenile Court.

Photo Credit / Kalpesh Lathigra

Despite the diversity of their experiences, the transition to adulthood was generally a matter of great concern. Young migrants were aware that what was previously automatically acquired up to that point, must now be achieved by demonstrating commitment and qualifications.

> *I worried about turning 18 because my residence permit would expire. I was participating in an internship, but we had to submit an application for a new permit to the police headquarters and before getting a reply I was afraid they would reject it, though my educator told me "don't worry".*
>
> (M., aged 20, from Senegal)

> *I liked the internship, I worked as a chef assistant in a restaurant … everyone was kind to me. But even so, I was afraid they would send me away, I thought that I wouldn't get the permit anyway.*
>
> (A., aged 22, from Pakistan)

As a fundamental prerequisite for acquiring documents, work tended to be the primary con-

cern for new adults. This is the reason why, after obtaining their middle school diploma, young migrants are immediately advised by staff to attend professional courses: their expectations are to quickly obtain a professional qualification in order to be able to support themselves, and if possible, to send money to family members who have often made a large investment in their future.

> *I want to be independent … and help my parents. I try to send them money, I'm glad about this … everyone is waiting for me to send money home, that's why I came here …*
>
> (M., aged 20, from Senegal)

> *I've been here for three years, I've always worked but I've never had a steady job, and without a steady job you can't do anything … problem with documents, problem with finding a house.*
>
> (Y., aged 21, from Ivory Coast)

> *I only want to work … only that, I don't want anything else. I did everything fast: school, internship, I have the documents, now I have to work.*
>
> (K., aged 20, from Albania)

Some of the young migrants interviewed live in flats for autonomy. They were satisfied with the experience, and happy to be out of the reception centres. However, having to pay rent, even though it is a moderate amount, was a cause for concern.

> *At home it's ok, we are five, then the educator comes every now and then. Sometimes we quarrel but it's fine, it was the same in the community. But here you have to be careful with money … rent, expenses … it's a lot of money …!*
>
> (A., aged 22, from Pakistan)

Thanks to school and internships, young migrants have the opportunity to meet people outside reception centres, depending on their individual personalities. The first months are generally useful to adapt to their new socio-cultural environment. After this period, individual attitudes emerge: some take refuge in their diaspora communities, others rarely leave the reception facility, and there are those who know Italians and integrate into the host community.

> *Yes, I have Italian friends ... football friends. They treat me well.*
>
> (Y., aged 21, from Ivory Coast)

The integration process can be significantly influenced by the presence of a voluntary guardian. Some voluntary guardians continue to undertake this role even after UAMs reach the age of 18. Their relationships with minors vary considerably: some guardians often invite young migrants to Sunday lunch or do voluntary work together, while others turn up more rarely, are unfriendly, and only perform their institutional functions.

> *My guardian is important to me, she stayed in touch even after I turned 18 ... if I have a problem, I call her.*
>
> (M., aged 20, from Senegal)

Suggestions for improvements to the system mainly concerned obstacles linked to obtaining and renewing a residence permit:

> *When a boy turns 18, he should have a permit in order not to worry. Then if after one year or two I don't work, you take it back ...*
>
> (Y., aged 21, from Ivory Coast)

> *Why do I have to go to the police headquarters every year? If I commit a crime, OK, you send me away, but if I don't do anything, why do I have to apply for a new permit every year ...?*
>
> (L., aged 21, from Albania)

Unfortunately, there is no system to canvas the opinions of young migrants and report these to policy makers. However, there are many listening and research initiatives implemented by third sector actors, often with institutional support, from which it is important to draw inspiration in order to implement measures and design policies that are more efficient and truly respond to the needs of these young people.

5.1.5 THE NETHERLANDS

All of the former UAMs interviewed indicated that they did not feel prepared for what was coming when they turned 18. As minors they had a legal guardian and a mentor, who they could also turn to for help. As one interviewee put it:

> *It is important to teach us for what is coming. When we had a legal guardian and a mentor, we always had someone who arranged everything and who we could always ask for help. The transition into adulthood didn't feel like a transition for us. It felt like our whole support system fell away.*
>
> (A., aged 20, from Eritrea)

All the former UAMs said that the number of letters they started receiving from authorities when they turned 18 was really overwhelming. It was also not clear to them where to go to for which letter, and to distinguish between what was important, and what was less so.

> *When you turn 18 as an unaccompanied minor, there is so much you don't know. We suddenly had to register and pay for health insurance, request social welfare at the municipality or student grants or loans. There were a lot of obligations we had to meet and had no idea about.*
>
> (B., aged 19, from Eritrea)

All the former UAMs agreed that there should be much more information on what will change when they turn 18. They indicated that they would have liked to be better informed about what the guardian and mentor were arranging for them when they were still minors, so that they could have learned how to do things by themselves.

In particular, most of the UAMs said that they did not learn how to manage their finances when they were underage, and that when they turned 18 they were suddenly responsible for their own income and for paying all their bills. For example, when UAMs are underage, they receive a weekly allowance with no further financial obligations. When they turn 18, they need to arrange social welfare or a student grant by themselves. A few of the former UAMs failed to do this in time, and therefore did not have an income for months on end and developed debts. One interviewee mentioned he received social welfare in time, but as he did not know how to handle a monthly payment, he spent all of it in the first weeks, leaving him with no money by the end of the month.

> *It would be good to start courses on how to manage our finance when we are 17, so that we can learn how to manage our finances when we turn 18.*
>
> (A., aged 20, from Eritrea)

One of the main challenges faced by UAMs is getting proper housing. Most UAMs between 15 and 17 and a half years old live in a house or compound specifically designed for them, and provided by Nidos. When they turn 18, they need to find their own housing.

> *We got some help, but most of the time we had to search for housing by ourselves through the internet, even though we didn't know well how to search on the internet due to lack of computer skills. After a while we were asking people around us, if they knew how to get a room. A friend [put] me in contact with someone who could offer me a room, I accepted it but the room was in a very bad condition, it had mould everywhere and it was very dirty.*
>
> (T., aged 19, from Eritrea)

Because the former UAMs do not know what their rights are as tenants, they are easy prey for exploitation by unscrupulous landlords. For former UAMs who are undocumented the situation is often even more hazardous.

Photo Credit / **Pablo Tosco**

Sometimes hard living conditions cause psychological stress on UAMs and weaken them. One interviewee, who had fallen victim to human trafficking, outlined how she ended up living on the streets.

> *I did not have anywhere to go. It was one of the hardest periods in my live. I lived with a friend for a while, but could not stay there for long, so I started to roam the streets.*
>
> (J., aged 31, from Nigeria)

In the end, with the help of two NGOs, she was able to start a new asylum application, and obtain protection and a residence permit. She now has her own place to stay, and is in the process of recovering.

> *Since the day I left Nigeria, I did not have any rest … I was physically and mentally exhausted. I still suffer from amnesia, and I have nightmares and anxiety attacks. But fortunately, I am being treated for that.*
>
> (J., aged 31, from Nigeria)

Many interviewees felt that help with accessing mental healthcare is a pre-condition for many former UAMs to be able to stand on their own feet.

Education is the first step to being independent and to be able to get an internship that leads to a job. Some of the UAMs interviewed said that they and many youngsters they know had trouble accessing school when they turned 18. They did not know what steps they needed to take to register for school, or how their education could be financed. For some this led to significant delays, particularly in terms of language learning.

UAMs are obliged by law to go to school, and often attend an international transition class, a school designed for children under the age of 18 who just arrived in the Netherlands. At this school they focus on extra Dutch language classes. The school teaches UAMs as much as possible in a short timeframe so that they can easily transition into the Dutch school system. When UAMs turn 18, they do not automatically have access to education. If they are undocumented, they no longer have the right to go to school. If they have a regular status, or are still in the asylum process they are allowed to attend schools and colleges, but in practice there are financial and administrative barriers to access education. Many former UAMs are also still in the process of learning the language.

When they do go to school after turning 18, they can request a student grant. But the grant is not enough to cover monthly costs, and students are expected to also have a job (Dutch students often receive an extra allowance from their parents). Yet the former UAMs indicated that they have a hard time finding a job because their level of Dutch is not good enough and they lack a social network in the Netherlands. One interviewee said that: 'Policy makers should take our situation into account, so that we can at least receive an allowance that meets the minimum income standards' (F., aged 20, from Eritrea). They also mentioned that 'it is not only difficult to find jobs, but also to find an internship, which is often a requirement in our studies'.

Some interviewees could not transfer to another school, in most cases intermediate vocational training (MBO), because their level of Dutch was not sufficient. This meant that they then needed to start with a so-called 'integration course'.

> *We felt this was like taking a step back as we often have to start the course at a low level and these courses only have classes two days a week, whereas we were used to going to school every day.*
>
> (T., aged 20, from Eritrea)

Therefore they lost their weekly rhythm and stayed at home a lot, slowing down their language and educational development.

> *It would be better if we can be a student at the international transition class even after we turn 18, until our knowledge of Dutch is good enough to access the Dutch educational system.*
>
> (B., aged 19, from Eritrea)

Finally, some of the interviewees emphasized the importance of a support network, and the role that NGOs play in this. One explained how her life changed drastically with the help of an NGO, after having lived in fear for year.

> *I have a residence permit now, a house and I finally dare to go shopping alone. Thanks to the help of [an NGO], I am now enrolled in a training course for the hospitality industry.*
>
> (F., aged 25, from Somalia)

5.2 PROFESSIONAL'S AND GUARDIAN'S VIEWS

5.2.1 FRANCE

It was clear from the interviews that there are as many UAMs' management policies as departments in France. The lack of national support for policies and consistency in the interpretation of the legal texts encourages 'do-it-yourself solutions' in the different regions.

One of the main issues that emerged from the interviews concerns the bureaucratic process to obtain residence permits. Many interviewees highlighted the extreme difficulties UAMs encountered in transitioning to adulthood, with many young people unable to access institutional processes.

> *Currently, with the health crisis, the whole procedure to obtain residence permits is electronic. Everything is done via the internet and therefore the available appointments … are limited. It has become easier to find unlawful behaviours among people who are waiting for the conversion of their residence permit. In the absence of a scheduled appointment the status of the person involved will be considered illegal.*
>
> (C., UAM hub coordinator)

> *I accompanied a young man who had given up a fixed-term contract for a permanent one. At the Prefecture they refused this young man a residence permit because of the change of the contract. They said that since he was on a trial period in the CDI, he could not have the permit. In short, bureaucracy is very peculiar and difficult.*
>
> (C., UAM hub coordinator)

> *Even just delivering a residence permit becomes really difficult. In Marseille, young people have to show up the night before at 6pm and stand in line all night to be able to file the request the following morning.*
>
> (M., head of UAM emergency reception centre)

Training and planning for work are undoubtedly key factors in the transition to adulthood, and tailoring these processes to the needs of young people is a key element in the development of positive transitions. However, institutional support faces a number of difficulties:

> *ASE is a saturated system; there are a limited number [of] social workers for the number*

of youth in the system. Similarly, ASE's legal representative has too many individuals to manage. It would be better to increase the number of staff involved in this type of work, in order to share the work of the educators so that the young people can be accompanied by people who really listen to them and help them integrate.

(L., orientation counsellor for young people between 17-21 years old)

> *We are always pressed for time, because we have to adapt the wishes of the young person to their reality, which means having a residence permit that adapts to their current situation. We cannot offer very long training, because there is a risk of exceeding the timeframe of the residence permit application. Sometimes, some young people have different resources, perhaps the support of a community, and at that point the young person may choose a longer training format. Sometimes some volunteers accompany young people, supporting them ...*
>
> (L., orientation counsellor for young people between 17-21 years old)

The CJM is considered to be the best tool to enable UAMs to achieve autonomy, as it allows economic, housing and educational/professional security:

> *I think CJM should be systematic for young people. The CJM gives a form of security, as it ensures that the teenagers have the possibility to make it.*
>
> (C., UAM hub coordinator)

> *For those who have turned 18, we make a quick assessment, and the educational team works to allow the teen to reach the age of 18 in the best way possible: drafting the CJM, schooling and training path, which will have an impact on obtaining the permit to stay; but here, we focus primarily on the CJM.*
>
> (M., head of UAM emergency reception centre)

However, differences between departments around eligibility and duration can be a real obstacle for young people.

> *The CJM contract is difficult to obtain and is often only granted for two months. For example, I have a case of a young man who does not speak the language, has not been*

placed in a schooling system and by the time he turns 18 years old, it will be difficult to get the CJM. The main inconsistency [is] that the CJM is granted for only two months, without taking into account that teenagers may be on a one-year apprenticeship contract. How are they supposed to pay for housing, food, and a living?

(C., volunteer)

> *In this department, there is the possibility of completing a CJM from the age of 18. Each department guarantees a different take-over. If a 17-and-a-half-year-old person fails to obtain a CMJ, the taking charge is interrupted. If teens arrive at around 15 years of age, there's already a higher possibility of finding training, study, and internships opportunities and therefore it's easier to get a CJM. … a teen usually has an ASE contact person and several carers. Every year, or every six months, depending on the teen's path, they must validate their CJM. If ASE estimates that the teen is autonomous, because they earn enough money and "can get by", and therefore afford house accommodation, then ASE no longer provide support.*
>
> (L., orientation counsellor for young people between 17-21 years old)

The role of volunteers, who often form collectives and associations, is fundamental for the support process as they encourage autonomy and the UAMs to develop their social network.

> *The partner associations are an added value to the work of ASE, their role is very useful from the age of 17 to prepare the teens for their independent living.*
>
> (M., departmental delegate to child protection (ASE)

> *In the teen's lives, the reference contact person is supposed to tell them what to do but in practice hardly helps them. It is usually the volunteer who looks after the teens, does the paperwork, and helps them write the dossier. In general, the volunteers support the teens in … obtaining the CJM.*
>
> (C., volunteer)

> *Volunteer associations and advocates that are involved in helping young people can be a fundamental point of reference for them, not only concerning housing problems, but also later on, because teenagers stay in touch with them and develop strong relationships that go beyond the current project.*
>
> (M., head of UAM emergency reception centre)

5.2.2 GREECE

Discussions with professionals confirmed that, much like in the case of Greek children without carers, Greece still lacks a framework for supporting UAMs turning 18.

> *There is the care of children up to the age of 18 and then a gap. That is, suddenly, upon reaching 18 and one day, you are no longer [considered] vulnerable, you no longer have the same need for support, as if something has changed [from one day to another].*
>
> (D., UNHCR)

> *The issue needs to also be examined in relation to other national policies, such as social housing. When there is no official recognition of 'youth' [as a distinct age group] for anyone in Greece, regardless of their legal status, in essence, what is missing are the basic regulations that would allow us to effectively discuss the more specific protection of unaccompanied minors after they turn 18.*
>
> (K., ARSIS)

Meanwhile, overarching challenges, further compounded by the country's financial situation and the lack of sufficient responsibility-sharing throughout the EU[142], complete the picture of a fragmented system that has remained dependent on the finite capacity of NGOs to cover persistent gaps in state provision. As a result, many UAMs have remained without access to adequate protection and support, as significant aspects of their protection have been frequently determined by chance (e.g. availability of housing) or have simply been unavailable (e.g. guardians). In turn, this has hindered the prospects for their safe transition towards adulthood – in itself, according to most interviewees, a process that begins well before the age of legal majority.

All the research participants stressed the need for a systematic and personalized approach that would genuinely invest in UAMs and unaccompanied youths' development. There is a need for them to have choices and pathways for developing their knowledge (e.g. language), skills and talents, as key prerequisites for enabling UAMs and unaccompanied youth to actively pursue their dreams and aspirations, while offering safe avenues for employment.[143] Particular emphasis was placed on access to the formal education system, in a way that promotes inclusion and invests in each child's aptitudes and inclinations, based on an assessment of their individual needs. There is also a need for UAMs, particularly older ones, to have access to vocational training opportunities, to both enrich and apply their skills in practice. Ultimately, systematic investment in UAMs' development and mobilization was seen to be re-

quired, that would provide them with the necessary tools (e.g. knowledge of the language and of their rights) to pursue their goals, facilitating their transition towards independent living, while shielding them from the ever-present risk of exploitation (labour or otherwise).

> *In essence, what has been lacking is the framework that would invest in the knowledge, the skills and disposition of these children, so as to provide them the necessary tools to be able to try their luck in Greek society.*
>
> (M., L., M., Network for Children's Rights)

The main recurrent theme highlighted by participants was the undeniable need to first secure UAMs' basic needs, including proper representation and support. As previously pointed out,[144] many UAMs still reach legal adulthood while living in informal or precarious conditions, at which point their only choice is to survive on their own, without support. Others may have spent prolonged periods of time in camps or protective custody (in a police station), that have had a devastating impact on their psychology and mentality, which require time and support to overcome. Even for those that were in official accommodation, the return to unsuitable conditions in the camps that often comes with adulthood, and even the potential withdrawal of accommodation, interrupts any progress made in the youth's life up to that point, as the urge to develop is by necessity superseded by the need to secure the means to survive.

> *The issue is not just that UAM have not been assisted in becoming responsible adults that can take care of themselves. It is rather that they have been forced to learn from a very young age that they need to take care of themselves through any means.*
>
> (A., Greek Council for Refugees)

Participants stressed the need to promote the accommodation of UAMs in suitable conditions, where they can benefit from proper supervision and support, in accordance with their age and specific needs.

> *When you treat people as members of a society where equity prevails, they will behave accordingly. If you treat them as potential criminals and lock them down in closed centres, they will reply accordingly.*
>
> (D., PRAKSIS)

Participants also identified the need for small-scale units (e.g. of 10-12 places) that are embedded in the social fabric of the local community, to both avoid stigmatization and to lay the groundwork for a step-by-step process of transition towards adulthood, not least, through preparing UAMs for more autonomous living arrangements, such as SILs.[145] A personal guardian also needs to be genuinely present in the minor's life, and assisted by social workers and psychologists in establishing personalized education and life plans,[146] and overcoming past trauma in a process that involves regaining lost aspects of their childhood (e.g. dreams), while building their resilience for the future. Such support should remain in place for youth aged 18-25, both to safeguard the progress made for those that benefited from the support, and to provide viable alternatives to those that have not, such as homeless UAMs and those reaching 18 before they have accessed the necessary care).

Interviewees suggested that this could include establishing inclusive social housing schemes, that could take note of available best practices of NGOs, while ensuring the basic needs of those in need are met, not least through financial support. Such schemes should be aimed at incentivising and mobilizing youth to take proactive ownership of their life, rather than depending on institutionalized care. In turn, several interviewees further highlighted that all of this necessitates the implementation of an inclusive national action plan for UAMs and youth in transition, supervised by the currently absent state.

5.2.3 IRELAND

The fundamental suggestion noted by all those interviewed from the civil society and academic sectors was the creation of other transition systems to adulthood that do not include Direct Provision. They argued, as have many academics, that Direct Provision is unsuitable,[147] not only for former UAMs but for anyone. These experts all noted that the drastic shift from the supportive care of foster homes to the hands-off care in Direct Provision, is very hard on young people.

> *"The transition from child in home country to adult-like responsibility and dangers of fleeing to Ireland, then arrive in Ireland and [be] put into foster care and back into childhood, and then turn 18 and being an adult again.*
>
> (D., youth worker)

On this same note, barring the abolition of Direct Provision, the specific educational and social needs of the child should be considered when relocating a young person.

An additional suggestion from multiple interviewees was that the family reunification laws in Ireland are restrictive and have time restraints. Civil society actors gave several examples of young people whose family reunification was rejected because they waited too long after they received status or they applied slightly after they turned 18.

Though there is evidence that the Department of Justice can exercise some flexibility in these matters, the law itself is restrictive on UAMs applying to be reunited with their family. Additionally, if an UAM successfully gets reunited with their families now, there is no service to support this family in their relocation.

Aftercare workers often take on this burden themselves, but they are already juggling many other duties. If an UAM or former UAM's family relocates, they often have to take on the responsibility of finding housing, securing an income, translating for family members, and arranging appointments. This can represent a massive responsibility on the young person and can cause considerable anxiety.

> *We need support for family members who relocate – something equivalent to resettlement workers.*
>
> (N., academic)

The final suggestions raised by the civil society actors and academics were around social workers. Although they all appreciated their work, it was noted that there was a lack of training around immigration law.

> *The separated children's team at Tusla is focused almost exclusively on international protection and there are a lack of legal aid options for UAMs to access advice in relation to alternative immigration permissions that may be more suitable.*
>
> (T., academic)

Since aftercare workers often make the decisions around what legal advice UAMs need and subsequently access, it is of paramount importance that they receive the proper training and support to make those decisions.

5.2.4 ITALY

In relation to the situation in which UAMs find themselves at the time of transition to the age of majority, all the interviewees highlighted the risk of having to abruptly interrupt ongoing educational and reception programmes, leaving young migrants without reference points or their hoped-for autonomy.

> *The timing of their life course often does not coincide with that of training courses and vocational training. For example, the region of Tuscany organizes two-year training courses. This year the courses have been delayed: participants were ready but the courses did not begin and, as time goes by, their eighteenth birthday is approaching. The available courses are fewer than [the number] required, there is an entry test, and access is sometimes impossible in spite of previous preparation.*
>
> (C., SIPROIMI staff)

> *Once young migrants leave the protected environment of their reception centres, they have no guarantees. A supportive mechanism for reaching autonomy is needed in order not to neutralize what reception communities have achieved since the minors arrived.*
>
> (G. and C., voluntary guardians)

This risk is often avoided thanks to administrative continuity, which is granted based on whether it is decided that the new adult needs continued support beyond their eighteenth birthday. However, the procedure is often unevenly applied across Italy (interviewees cited the Court of Minors of Florence as a good example). This adds to the difficulty of finding a stable job and accommodation outside the social services network. Some voluntary guardians highlighted UAMs' fragility after the legal recognition of their role ends when UAMs come of age. This abrupt interruption forces them to continue their relationships with young migrants on an informal basis. There is a strong awareness of the difficulties UAMs encounter in facing the delicate period of transitioning to adulthood while they are far away from their social and family networks.

> *Guardians and social workers do their best, but it is difficult to compensate for the lack of family, social and friendship networks that people can rely on in their place of origin. It is as if they were starting from a disadvantaged situation that is difficult to heal and that exposes them to the risk of abandoning the project, returning home and 'failing' their migratory project. It is something more than simply not finding a job.*
>
> (G., voluntary guardian)

Respondents provided numerous suggestions for improving the regulatory environment, good practices and protection measures for new adults. The multidisciplinary aspects promoted by the Zampa Law should be strengthened to establish a truly integrated approach between services and professional roles, in order to provide clear procedures and reduce uncertainties and risk. The recent introduction of the voluntary guardian role could act as a link between various services (e.g. courts, social services, schools) and administrative processes.

> *Institutions [should] create a more integrated approach and a better connection among various components such as education, training, job search, housing autonomy, etc. We need a 360-degree approach to the path that young migrants take in Italy, with a more structured involvement of schools, communities, courts, social workers … It is generally the guardians who act as a link between these aspects, even though they no longer have a legal role.*
>
> (C., voluntary guardian)

In addition, it is essential to streamline the bureaucracy and timeframe for issuing and converting residence permits, while at the same time strengthening the processes to acquire linguistic and professional skills to be used in the world of work.

> *It is necessary to reintroduce humanitarian protection for young migrants who arrived in Italy when they were minors, because humanitarian protection allowed them to stay … legally and to have more time to integrate, find a job and then convert the residence permit into a work permit. It would also be useful to intercede with embassies so that they could issue passports … faster …*
>
> (C., voluntary guardian)

Another critical aspect is residence certificates for minors:

> *UAMs who are in guardianship cannot have a residence [certificate] because they are domiciled at the UAMs office of the municipality. This means, for example, it is impossible to enrol on a football team, which is a very strong exclusion factor, and also significantly compromises the acquisition of a long-term permit since the years of residence are a prerequisite.*
>
> (E., SIPROIMI staff)

In relation to the uneven application of current legislation:

> *The problem is not so much the absence of legislative instruments, but the discretion in applying them. It is necessary to ensure that existing safeguard measures are applied. It is important that a young person who started a process as a minor does not risk being left without a residence permit when he/she reaches the age of 18. This would be easier if guardians were given the possibility to continue looking after them and if the SIPROIMI system for minors was strengthened.*
>
> (C., SIPROIMI staff)

Interviewees agreed that the role of voluntary guardians should also be legally formalized to cover the period after UAMs have reached the age of majority, in order to reduce the uncertainty resulting from a voluntary approach.

> *The triangular minor-guardian-reception facility must be precisely formalized, otherwise guardians risk living their role as if they were adoptive parents and coming into conflict with the reception community. Therefore, we need precise guidelines and institutional meetings between the various subjects, with periodic panel discussions.*
>
> (E., SIPROIMI staff)

5.2.5 THE NETHERLANDS

In the interviews, stakeholders mentioned several aspects that contribute to a smooth transition of UAMs into adulthood. First, all stakeholders agreed that good and close cooperation is essential, and should start well before UAMs turn 18. In particular, coordination between Nidos, the municipality where the minor is located, and relevant local organizations such as the Dutch Council for Refugees was mentioned. Furthermore, many of the professionals emphasized the importance of providing unrestricted counselling during the transition period.

> *In the Netherlands we use an "age calendar": when you are 18, you are an adult. But not everyone is ready to stand on their own two feet by then.*
>
> (E., project manager at YOIN)

On the one hand, these young people are very independent, because they also came here alone or semi-alone. But on the other hand, they are still very young and you shouldn't treat them like adults. They are very vulnerable at the same time.

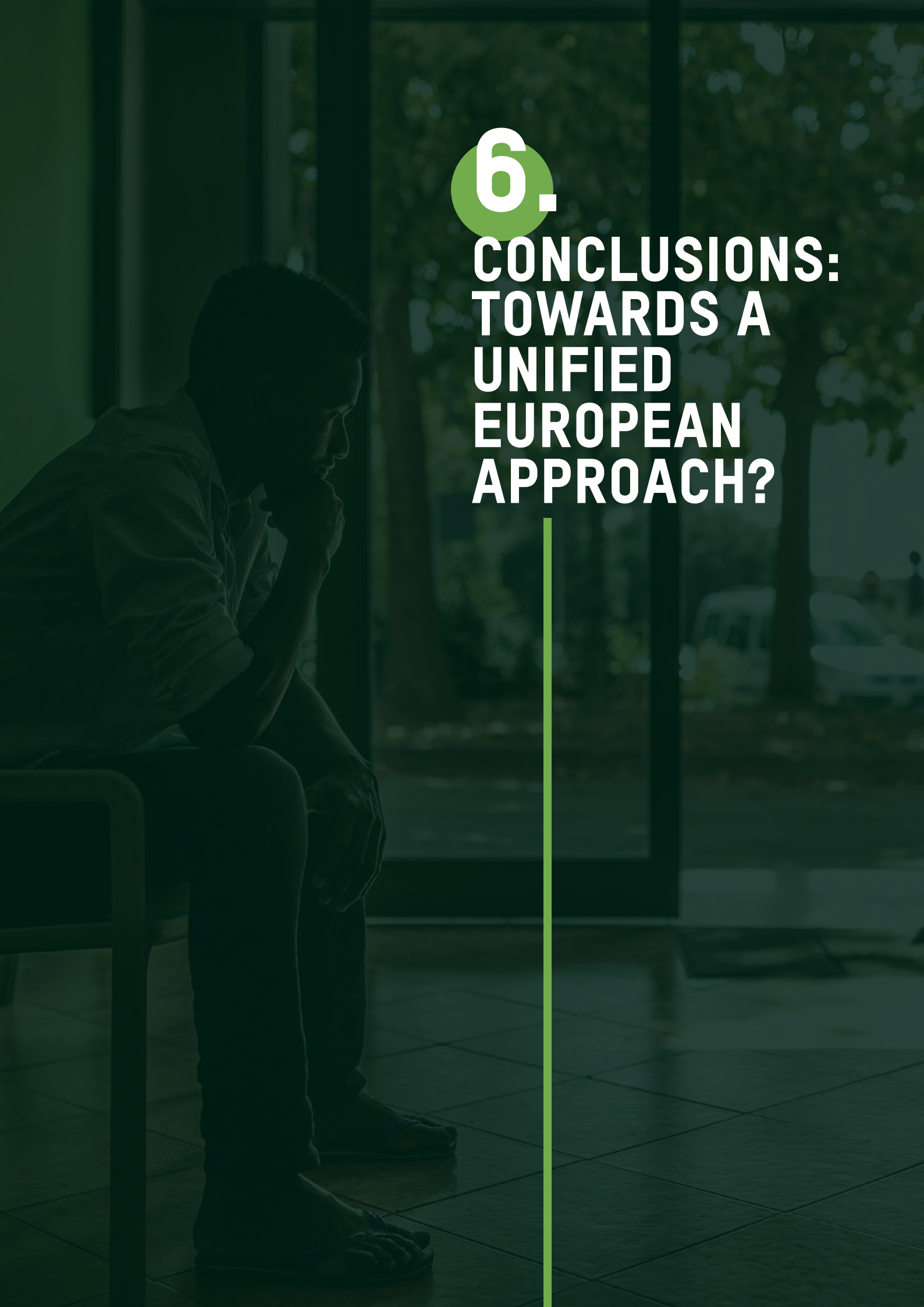
(M., head of reception, Nidos)[148]

Based on the challenges identified by stakeholders, one recommendation is to establish a national taskforce to coordinate the different parallel policy structures that currently influence the transition of UAMs into adulthood, for example in terms of housing, health, welfare, education and residence status. All stakeholders should work together on the transition process, with a clear division of tasks and responsibilities. Such a process should aim to achieve self-reliance for the youngsters and should start before they turn 18.

It is also important to ensure better legal support and information to UAMs when they are still underaged, and once they turn 18. The Dutch Council for Refugees could play an important role in this.

Other recommendations from the interviews were that there should be a single accessible place that all UAMs could go to with their queries and also have the space to learn about transitioning into adulthood. Investment should be made in finance management courses for UAMs before they turn 18. Another recommendation is to set up more buddy/peer-to-peer projects; connecting UAMs to others who used to be UAMs and have gone through the same process. At the same time, it also important to invest in building a social network beyond their peers; NGOs can play a bigger role in making these connections.

Lastly, some good practices were identified of tailor-made (financial) support for former UAMs to address their needs, and it is recommended that more municipalities provide such support, with the support of the national government. Some also recommended that private foundations play a role in creating special funding programmes to support former UAMs, including through debt relief programmes, budget coaching and educational support.



6. CONCLUSIONS: TOWARDS A UNIFIED EUROPEAN APPROACH?

6. CONCLUSIONS: TOWARDS A UNIFIED EUROPEAN APPROACH?

What conclusions can we draw from this review of five European countries? What are the common problems that require a coordinated, if not shared, response? What are the local strategies that should be replicated across EU member states and beyond their national borders?

The national contexts have similar challenges, despite their significant differences, as none of the member states analysed has a legal and procedural standard framework for the management of the transition to adulthood of unaccompanied foreign minors. There are no specific guidelines or systems at the national level to regulate this very delicate phase of transition.

At the age of 18, there is a generalized risk of substantial, and often abrupt and traumatic, interruption for the children involved, in terms of reception and shelter, as well as educational and social support structures, not to mention the very real risk of losing their residence permit. For these young migrants, reaching adulthood is characterized by widespread anxiety, frustration, isolation, and a lack of prospects.

Furthermore, the political and public administration sectors which are expected to guide minors towards autonomy (school, access to the world of work, social services, civil society organizations, juvenile courts, etc.) are not coordinated. Attempts to establish a coherent system are limited to local experiences, often implemented by local authorities, NGOs or other civil society actors, especially in Italy and Greece. Or, they are meritoriously carried out on a case-by-case basis, by voluntary guardians, outside of any codified procedure.

All of this leads to widespread discretion in the support strategies for the transition to adulthood and to a lack of consistency across member states, with severe consequences for the chances and opportunities that young people will have in their lives, which are very unequal from one country, or one municipality, to another.

The stakeholders involved in this research shared a number of substantive recommendations for improving UAMs' transitions into adulthood. Those most cited were:

- the need to improve individualized support for young migrants, especially the relationship with the public administration and the management of finances. Voluntary guardians could play a fundamental role in this, primarily if their role is formalized after UAMs turn 18, as a form of mentorship.
- simplification of administrative procedures related to the issuing, renewal and conversion of residence permits.
- the need for training and professionalizing opportunities consistent with the life path of young migrants, including the need for rapid language learning and the possibility to achieve

effective autonomy as quickly as possible.

- the need for social housing and interventions to support the creation and maintenance of peer networks.
- the creation of coordination mechanisms at local and national levels, so that the actors involved are able to communicate and interact effectively, and to develop integrated policies.
- the need to move to an active supportive approach, which puts young migrants at the centre of their path and recognizes that they are the driving force behind their social development.

The transition to adulthood of unaccompanied foreign minors is mainly the responsibility of the member states, especially the aspects that relate to educational and employment policies of people who are no longer in the midst of an asylum process.[149] Nonetheless, the specific concerns regarding the situation of unaccompanied children have been addressed by the European Commission in several recent policies and strategies.

The European Commission's Communication on the protection of children in migration identified the need to address the phase of transitioning into adulthood or leaving care, by facilitating exchanges of good practices and providing financial support to pilot integration projects, and by encouraging member states to facilitate access to education and training.[150] This approach was advanced further in the Commission's Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027, which highlighted the importance of providing unaccompanied children transitioning into adulthood with coaching and mentoring, and the need to include them in vocational education and training, and in the Youth Guarantee - a commitment by all member states to ensure that all young people under the age of 25 receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship. The Commission also recommended member states to "develop support programmes that are specific to unaccompanied minors who arrive past the age of compulsory schooling and programmes for unaccompanied minors on the transition to adulthood".[151]

In March 2021, the European Commission published the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, which further highlighted the need to address the specific situation of unaccompanied children within the broader context of social protection and investment. In this strategy, the Commission reiterated the commitment to provide financial support and incentives for reception of unaccompanied migrant children, and invited member states to strengthen guardianship systems for all unaccompanied children. It also encouraged member states to promote national strategies and programmes to speed up de-institutionalisation and the transition towards quality, family- and community-based care services including with an adequate focus on preparing children to leave care.[152]

Indeed, EU programming funding can play a crucial role in promoting and replicating good practices that have proven to be successful. These include the housing schemes in Greece and in Italy, based on the semi-autonomy of over-18 migrants, and the support mechanism for new adults, using dedicated professional teams, developed by the Municipality of Utrecht. Another good practice is the specialist organization that is legally responsible for the protection and guidance of all UAMs living in the Netherlands until they are 18, and which works together with juvenile courts, social services and civil society organizations. The French CJM, an individual contract between an UAM and the institutions that finance his/her training, based on a specific professional project, is another example that could be replicated, and indeed this intervention is similar to the Pathways Project of the Ministry of Labour and Welfare in Italy.

Yet research for best practices alone will not suffice. This research, similar to previous studies, demonstrates the need of a change of pace, and a more determined approach to improving the chances of unaccompanied children to transition successfully into independence. Therefore, we encourage the Commission to use the new programming of funds to specifically address the issues highlighted in this research as crucial to improving the transition process, by creating a child-centred support system that coordinates local and national competencies.

In particular, we encourage the Commission and national governments to promotes and coordinate data collection relating to the pathways of UAMs turning 18, at least until they are 21 so that their inclusion in the Youth Guarantee can be assessed and supported through targeted measures.

Finally, while welcoming the mainstreaming of issues concerning UAM into broader social policies, we urge the Commission to consider the issuance of guidance for member states on transitioning into adulthood, that would provide holistic advice on the needs, concerns and considerations involved in this complex process.

ENDNOTES

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23 Ibid.

24 The guardianship of UAMs is to become operational in 2021, pending a joint ministerial decision to allow EKKA to establish Units for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors for the purposes of implementing the guardianship framework, and the issuance of the new Organization of EKKA, which establishes the Directorate of Child Protection, which is planned to undertake responsibilities over the guardianship of UAMs. The action plan also stresses the need to first ensure the provision of interpretation, legal assistance and the ability to respond to emergencies that may arise and concern

unaccompanied minors within the guardianship framework; and for the process for recruiting professional guardians by EKKA to be concluded. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2021). *Annual Action Plan 2021,* 3 March 2021. Retrieved 12 March 2021, from https://bit.ly/3bqc9dy, point 5.2.

25 See Articles 83 and 90 of Law 4636/2019. Retrieved 12 March 2021, from https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/kat-allodapoi/prosphuges-politiko-asulo/nomos-4636-2019-phek-169a-1-11-2019.html

26 For instance, see HIAS et al. (2020). *Observations on the Implementation of L 4636/2019 'On International Protection and other provisions' in the Lesvos 'hotspot'*. Retrieved 12 March 2021, fromhttps://www.gcr.gr/el/news/press-releases-announcements/item/1459-enimerotiko-simeioma-8-organoseon-sxetika-me-tin-efarmogi-tou-nomou-peri-diethnoys-prostasias-sto-hotspot-tis-lesvou, pp.6-7; RSA. (2020).*RSA Comments on the Reform of the International Protection Act*. Retrieved 12 March 2021, from https://rsaegean.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/RSA_Comments_IPA_amendment-1.pdf, p.12; ActionAid et al. (2020, 7 May). *20 Organizations and Legal Experts Call for the [Greek Parliament] to Vote Against Provisions that Endanger Asylum seekers' basic rights*. Retrieved 12 March 2021, from https://www.gcr.gr/en/news/press-releases-announcements/item/1435-deltio-typou-20-organoseon-sxetika-me-to-nomosxedio-tropopoiisis-tou-asylou.

27 V. Papadopoulos. (2020, 27 April). *Residence Permit for Humanitarian Reasons (Discretion or Obligation of the State)*. Retrieved 12 March 2021, from https://www.gcr.gr/el/news/press-releases-announcements/item/1432-arthro-tou-proedrou-tou-esp-gia-tin-adeia-diamonis-gia-anthropistikoys-logous

28 Article 111 L. 4674/2020 in conjunction with Article 6 of JMD 13348/2020 and Article 21 of Ministerial Decision 23/13532/2020. The exception only applies to UAMs who upon reaching 18 are accommodated in reception centres or temporary accommodation places for UAMs, and only where their vulnerability or the necessity to not interrupt their studies mandates a continuation of reception-based support. Yet even in such cases, they are only entitled to three additional months in the ESTIA accommodation scheme, following which all relevant provisions are automatically terminated.

29 Children's Rights Alliance. (2019). *Safe Haven: The Needs of Refugee Children Arriving in Ireland through the Irish*

Refugee Protection Programme: An Exploratory Study. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://www.childrensrights.ie/sites/default/files/Safe%20Haven%20Main%20Report.pdf

30 S. Arnold and M. Ní Raghallaigh. (2017). *Unaccompanied Minors in Ireland: Current Law, Policy and Practice, Social Work and Society, 15(1*). Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://ejournals.bib.uni-wuppertal.de/index.php/sws/article/view/496/1011

31 Asylum Information Database (2020, 30 November). *Statistics: Republic of Ireland*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/republic-ireland/statistics

32 Ibid.

33 Houses of the Oireachtas. (2020). *Seanad Éireann Debate – Thursday, 24 September 2020: Unaccompanied Minors and Separated Children*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/seanad/2020-09-24/3

34 Children's Rights Alliance. (2019). *Safe Haven*.

35 Ibid.

36 Tusla. (n.d.). *Separated Children Seeking Asylum*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://www.tusla.ie/services/alternative-care/separated-children

37 Houses of the Oireachtas. (2019). *Refugee Resettlement Programme: Dáil Éireann Debate, Tuesday - 12 March 2019*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2019-03-12/195

38 European Commission. (2020, 8 July). *Migration: Relocation of Unaccompanied Children from Greece to Portugal and Finland*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_1288

39 R. O'Gorman. (2020). *Twitter Update 13 October 2020*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://twitter.com/rodericogorman/status/1316025601942122502

40 S. Arnold and M. Ní Raghallaigh. (2017). *Unaccompanied Minors in Ireland*.

41 Children's Rights Alliance. (2019). *Safe Haven*. p.28.

42 Ibid.

43 E. Quinn, C. Joyce and E. Gusciute. (2014). *Policies and Practices on Unaccompanied Minors in Ireland*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from

http://emn.ie/files/p_20161116022145201 4%20UAMs%20in%20Ireland_final.pdf

44 Ibid.

45 Asylum Information Database. (2020). *Legal Representation of Unaccompanied Children: Republic of Ireland*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/republic-ireland/asylum-procedure/guarantees-vulnerable-groups/legal-representation

46 Ibid.

47 S. Arnold and M. Ní Raghallaigh. (2017). *Unaccompanied Minors in Ireland*.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 General Directorate of Immigration and Integration Policies. (2020). *I Minori Stranieri non Accompagnati (MSNA) in Italia; Monitoring Report as of June 30, 2020*. Rome: General Directorate of Immigration and Integration Policies.

53 Legislative Decree 142/2015, as amended by Law 47/2017.

54 Here, we use the definition 'SIPROIMI', which has now though been replaced by 'SAI' (*Sistema di Accoglienza e Integrazione* – Reception and Integration System) pursuant to Legislative Decree 130/2020.

55 Such as, for example, eliminating the criterion of silence and consent with regard to the decision of the Foreign Minors Committee on applications to convert residence permits.

56 The decision can be requested from 90 days before to 60 days after reaching the age of majority using the appropriate form. The request should preferably be submitted by the competent social

service, but can also be submitted by guardians or by minors once they have reached the age of majority.

57 Article 13, par. 2, Law 47/2017.

58 Territorial Commissions for the Recognition of International Protection are the bodies entitled to examine asylum claims.

59 CBS. (2020). *Unaccompanied Foreign Minor: Nationality, Sex and Age*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://opendata.cbs.nl/portal.html?_la=en&_catalog=CBS&tableId=82045ENG&_theme=1124

60 Court of Justice of the European Union. (2021, 14 January). *Judgment in Case C-441/19, TQ v Staatssecretaris van Justitie en Veiligheid*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2021-01/cp210005en.pdf

61 UNHCR. (2019). 'in de eerste plaats kind' report about UAM in the Netherlands, April 2019. https://www.unhcr.org/nl/wp-content/uploads/UNHCR-Children-First-2019-screen-1.pdf

62 Unaccompanied foreign minor Nationality, sex, age, May 2020, Statistics Netherlands, retrieved from https://opendata.cbs.nl/portal.html?_la=en&_catalog=CBS&tableId=82045ENG&_theme=1124

63 European Migration Network (EMN). (n.d.) *Unaccompanied Minors (2014–2017)* (in Dutch). Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://emnnetherlands.nl/sites/default/files/2019-02/EMN_benchmark_AMV_211218.pdf

64 Under Article 1:253r BW, the court appoints a guardian if: a) one or both parents, temporarily or otherwise, are unable to exercise authority; or b) the existence or residence of one or both parents is unknown.

65 A temporary guardian is assigned after the Child Care and Protection Board presents a certificate of no objection to the court. The application of this temporary guardianship is based on Articles 1: 241 (7) and 1: 302 (2) BW.

66 For more information, see https://www.nidos.nl/en

67 For more information, see https://eg-migrations.org

68 RESF92, a network of citizens belonging to local collectives denounced how, in the Hauts-de-Seine department (Paris region), during the summer of 2020, around 20 young people, just over 18 years old or about to become adults, learned that they would receive a youth contract (CJM) renewable for only two or three months at most. RESF92 stated that this was a direct consequence of the Darmanin circular of 21 September 2020.

69 Government Gazette. (2020). *Joint Ministerial Decision 9889/2020, Amending and Repealing Decision 1982/2016 and Amending Decision 92490/2013, Gov. Gazette 3390/B/13-8-2020*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/kat-allodapoi/prosphuges-politiko-asulo/koine-upourgike-apophase-9889-2020.html.

70 See MdM. (2016). *Assessment of Minority of Unaccompanied Foreign Minors: Thoughts and Concerns*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://mdmgreece.gr/app/uploads/2016/09/AGE-ASSESSMENT-POLICY-BRIEF_%CE%91.pdf

71 For instance, as of 28 January 2021, GCR is aware of cases of alleged unaccompanied minors in the RIC/'hotspot' on the island of Samos who have been waiting for seven months for their assessment due to the lack of specialised staff (e.g. doctors). In the meantime, they remain in unsuitable conditions, outside the official facility (so-called 'jungle'), which currently has more than five times (3,359 residents) its accommodation capacity (648 places). See General Secretariat for Information and Communication. (2021). *National Situational Picture Regarding the Islands at Eastern Aegean Sea (28/01/2021)*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://infocrisis.gov.gr/refugee-migration/?lang=en

72 For more, see Greek Ombudsman. (2020). *Annual Report 2019*, p.55. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://www.synigoros.gr/resources/ee2019-p00-plires-keimeno.pdf; Greek Ombudsman. (2019) *The Rights of Children on the Move in Greece: 2018 Report*, pp.152-158. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://www.synigoros.gr/resources/docs/ee2018-kdp-dikaiom-paid-pou-metakin.pdf; AIDA. (2020). *Country Report for Greece: 2019 Update*, pp.112-117 and 192-193. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece; ICJ and GCR. (2020) *Longer Note to the Joint Submission of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) and of the Greek Council for Refugees (GCR) to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants Report on Ending Immigration Detention of Children and Seeking Adequate Reception and Care for Them*, pp.3-4. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Joint-Submission-ICJ-GCR-SRMigrants-2020-ENG.pdf.

73 Athens Union of Police Officers. (2020). *Unaccompanied Minors in Police Services*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://easya.gr/2020/08/11/amesi-apemploki-tis-el-as-apo-toys-asynodeytoys-anilikoys

74 EKKA. (2021b). *Situation Update: Unaccompanied Children in Greece, 31 December 2020*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://www.ekka.org.gr/index.php/el/.

75 Government Gazette. (2020). *Emergency Legislative Decree on the Suspension of Submission of Applications for International Protection, 2 March 2020, Gov. Gazette 45/A/2020*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/kat-allodapoi/prosphuges-politiko-asulo/nomos-4681-2020-phek-74a-27-3-2020.html. See also AIDA. (2020). *Country Report for Greece: 2019 Update,* pp.41-42 and 45-46.

76 See AIDA. (2020). *Country Report for Greece: 2019 Update,* pp. 45, 146, 189-192, 194 and 202; Save the Children. (2020). *Protection Beyond reach: State of Play of Refugee and Migrant Children's rights in Europe*, p.14. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Report%20Protection%20Beyond%20Reach.pdf; Education Database of Asylum Law. (2019). *ECtHR, H.A. and others v. Greece, 19951/16, 28 February 2019*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://www.asylumlawdatabase.eu/en/content/ecthr-ha-and-others-v-greece-1995116-28-february-2019.

77 Council of Europe. (2020). *Report to the Greek Government on the Visit to Greece Carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 13 to 17 March 2020*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://rm.coe.int/1680a06a86.

78 As observed by GCR in the field, as of January 2021.

79 ARSIS. (2020, 21 December). *The Abolition of 'Protective Custody' Opens the Way to a New System of Reception for Unaccompanied Refugees*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from http://www.arsis.gr/deltio-typoy-katargisi-tis-prosta.

80 See AIDA. (2020). *Country Report for Greece: 2019 Update,* pp. 73, 122-124; E. Sarantou and A. Theodoropoulou. (2019). *Children Cast Adrift: The Exclusion and Exploitation of Unaccompanied Minors (UAMs) (National Report: Greece)*, pp.27-31 and 75-76. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://rosalux.gr/sites/default/files/publications/national_greece_en_final_1211web.pdf; European Commission. (2018). *Approaches to Unaccompanied Minors Following Status Determination in the EU plus Norway, p.27*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/00_eu_synthesis_report_unaccompanied_minors_2017_

en.pdf

81 E. Sarantou and A. Theodoropoulou (2019). *Children Cast Adrift*. p.7.

82 METAdrasi. (2020, 24 December). *An Important Step in the Protection of the Most Vulnerable Children: The Unaccompanied Ones!* Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://metadrasi.org/en/an-important-step-in-the-protection-of-the-most-vulnerable-children-the-unaccompanied-ones

83 Information provided by UNHCR in March 2021.

84 See FRA. (2019). *Integration of Young Refugees in the EU: Good Practices and Challenges*, p29. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-integration-young-refugees_en.pdf; Council of Europe. (2019). *Supporting Young Refugees in Transition to Adulthood, Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://rm.coe.int/recommendation-cm-2019-4-supporting-young-refugees-transition-adulthoo/168098e814.

85 For instance, UNHCR. (2014). *Unaccompanied and Separated Asylum-seeking and Refugee Children Turning Eighteen: What to Celebrate?*, p.41. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://www.refworld.org/docid/53281A864.html

86 Ibid. p.24.

87 Upon being granted international protection, UAMs are obliged to leave any reception-based accommodation within a month of majority, which can only be extended for up to three months, where their vulnerability or the requirement to continue their studies necessitates doing so. After this period has expired, all material provisions automatically end, as per Article 6 of JMD 13348/2020.

88 FRA. (2019) *Integration of Young Refugees in the EU*. p.124.

89 UNHCR. (2014). *Unaccompanied and Separated Asylum-seeking and Refugee Children Turning Eighteen: What to Celebrate?*, p.38. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://www.refworld.org/docid/53281A864.html.

90 S. Arnold and M. Ní Raghallaigh. (2017). *Unaccompanied Minors in Ireland*.

91 Even though the law provides for the appointment of a legal representative, as reported by ECRE, the sections of the Child Care Act that would need to be invoked are not in practice. Unaccompanied children are taken into care under Section 4 and 5 of the Child Care Act 1991, as amended. Neither section provides for a legal guardian. There are no provisions stating that a child must be appointed a solicitor, nor is there any legislative provision that a legal representative must be assigned within a certain period of time. See, Asylum Information Database. (2020). *Legal Representation of Unaccompanied Children: Republic of Ireland*.

92 Children's Rights Alliance. (2019). *Safe Haven*.

93 Ibid.

94 Ibid.

95 S. Arnold and M. Ní Raghallaigh. (2017). *Unaccompanied Minors in Ireland*.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.

98 Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. (2018). Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2018/06/Discrimination-and-Inequality-in-Housing-in-Ireland..pdf

99 Ibid.

100 S. Groarke and S. Arnold. (2018). *Approaches to Unaccompanied Minors Following Status Determination in Ireland*, p76. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RS83.pdf

101 Ibid.

102 Reception and Integration Agency. (2017) *Monthly Statistics Report: September 2017*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from http://www.ria.gov.ie/en/RIA/RIA%20Monthly%20Report%20September%202017.pdf/Files/RIA%20Monthly%20Report%20September%202017.pdf

103 According to some, however, this would create unreasonable unequal treatment of asylum-seeking and non-asylum-seeking minors. The situation remains unclear in the absence of the implementing decrees of the Zampa Law.

104 This also applies to minors or to new adults subject to humanitarian protection/special cases.

105 Article 32, par. 1-bis and ff. of Legislative Decree 286 dtd. 25 July 1998, as amended by Article 13 of Law. 47 dtd. 7 April 2017.

106 http://www301.regione.toscana.it/bancadati/atti/Contenuto.xml?id=5252805&nomeFile=Delibera_n.620_del_18-05-2020-Allegato-A

107 Interview with stakeholder.

108 Interview with stakeholder.

109 UNHCR. (2019). 'in de eerste plaats kind' report about UAM in the Netherlands, April 2019, pp.47-48 https://www.unhcr.org/nl/wp-content/uploads/UNHCR-Children-First-2019-screen-1.pdf

110 Under the Dublin Regulation (Regulation No. 604/2013) the country where the asylum seeker first entered Europe normally is responsible for examining an asylum application.

111 Interview with stakeholder.

112 The list of good practices in each country is indicative, not exhaustive.

113 IRFASE (*Institut de Recherche et de Formation à l'Action Sociale de l'Essonne*) is an Essonne Institute for Research and Education in Social Action (Paris Region).

114 FRA. (2019). *Integrated of Younge Refugees in the EU*. p.45.

115 See UN General Assembly. (2020). *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Felipe González Morales: Ending immigration detention of children and providing adequate care and reception for them*, p.14. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://ww3w.statewatch.org/media/1340/un-sr-migrants-rights-child-detention-report-9-20.pdf.

116 Information provided by UNHCR, during interview in October 2020.

117 See, ARSIS (n.d.) *Social Apartments for Asylum Seekers and Beneficiaries of International Protection aged 18-25 Years Old*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from http://www.arsis.gr/drasis-ke-ipiresies/kinonika-diamerismata-aitoyntwn-kai-dikaioyxwn-diethnoys-prostasias-18-25.

118 For instance, in the third quarter of 2020, Greece recorded the highest government debt to GDP (close to 200%) in the EU, and by August 2020 had the highest unemployment rate (16.7). See Eurostat. (2021a, 21 January). *Government Debt up to 97.3% of GDP in Euro Area: Up to 89.8% of GDP in EU,* January 2021, Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/portlet_file_entry/2995521/2-21012021-AP-EN.pdf/a3748b22-e96e-7f62-ba05-11c7192e32f3; Eurostat. (2021b). *Euro Area Unemployment at 8.3%: EU at 7.5%*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/portlet_file_entry/2995521/3-01022021-AP-EN.pdf/db860f10-65e3-a1a6-e526-9d4db80904b9.

119 EKKA. (2021). *Situation Update, 15 January 2021*.

120 METAdrasi. (n.d.) *Guardianship Network for Unaccompanied Minors*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://metadrasi.org/en/campaigns/guardianship-of-unaccompanied-minors

121 METAdrasi. (2020, 27 February). *Announcement of METAdrasi on the Guardianship of Unaccompanied Minors*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://metadrasi.org/ανακοίνωση-της-μεταδρασης-για-την-επι/

122 Network for Children's Rights. (2020). *Access – Programme for Social Inclusion and Empowerment of Unaccompanied Adolescents and Young Refugees*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://ddp.gr/en/prosvasi-programma-koinonikis-entaxis-kai-endynamosis-asynodeyton-efivon

123 Children's Rights Alliance. (2019). *Safe Haven.*

124 Ibid.

125 Irish Refugee Council. (n.d.) *Youth Advocacy Project (2016).* Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/youth-advocacy-project-2016

126 For more information, see https://www.minoritoscana.it/?q=node/911

127 For more information, see http://www.lacordata.it

128 For more information, see http://www.comunitaprogetto.org

129 For more information, see https://minoristranieri-neveralone.it

130 For more information, see https://cidisonlus.org/minori-arrivati-soli-in-italia-cosa-facciamo-noi-e-cosa-puoi-fare-tu

131 For more information, see https://www.cnca.it/terreferme

132 For more information, see https://www.intersos.org/pass4you-supporto-tecnico-ai-tutori-volontari

133 Information on the project *Percorsi per la formazione, il lavoro e l'integrazione dei giovani migranti* (Professional training, work and integration paths for young migrants) is available from the Ministry of Labour and Welfare: https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/immigrazione/focuson/politiche-di-integrazione-sociale/Pagine/Attivita-e-servizi.aspx#5; and the Migrant Integration portal; http://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it/

134 'Ex-ama' stands for former unaccompanied asylum seekers.

135 Interview with stakeholder.

136 Interview with stakeholder.

137 Dutch Council for Refugees. (n.d.) *Project Euro-Pointer 3*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/wat-wij-doen/onze-projecten/euro-wijzer

138 Open Embassy. (n.d.) *Our Mission*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://www.openembassy.nl/en/about-us-2

139 Open Embassy (2019). *Maaksessie #5 18 en Dan?,* retrieved 24 March 2021, https://www.openembassy.nl/magazine/9-maaksessie-18-en-dan/

140 Because of the restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, it has not been possible for the researchers to meet the minors as it was foreseen. For that reason, some testimonies have been taken from N.Pate, J.F. Roger, C.Roméo (2020) « Je voulais une chance de vivre. Récits de mineurs isolés étrangers ».

141 Given the small number of UMAs in Ireland, their nationalities have been omitted for privacy reasons.

142 For more, Oxfam & GCR. (2021). *Tipping the Scales: The role of responsibility- and solidarity-sharing in the situation on the Greek islands*. Retrieved 18 March from https://www.gcr.gr/en/news/press-releases-announcements/item/1621-tipping-the-scales-a-joint-oxfam-gcr-briefing-paper.

143 In a positive development, on 4 February 2021 a joint initiative was announced between UNICEF and the Greek Labour Employment Office (OAED), to design and implement projects aimed at fostering the social and labour integration of youth. See Social Policy. (2021, 4 February). *Collaboration Between OAED and UNICEF for the Promotion of Social and Labor Integration of Youth*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://bit.ly/3b8R5YR.

144 Interview with NCR in October 2020.

145 Preparation for life in SILs, through understanding and following routine habits and rules, was seen by some interviewees as a main prerequisite for the scheme's success, alongside the willingness of UAMs to transition to such types of living arrangements.

146 Second interview with EKKA in November 2020.

147 S. Arnold and M. Ní Raghallaigh. (2017). *Unaccompanied Minors in Ireland*.

148 Overheid van Nu. (2020). *'We Have Arranged a Lot, but We are in a Time Bomb'*. Retrieved 14 March 2021, from https://www.overheidvannu.nl/actueel/artikelen/2020/10/15/%E2%80%98we-hebben-veel-geregeld-maar-we-zitten-op-een-tijdbom%E2%80%99.

149 While the rights of asylum seekers are largely regulated by the EU asylum acquis (the body of common rights and obligations that is binding on all EU Member States, deriving from European treaties, legislation and instruments), the access of recognised refugees to social services is often equated to that of each member state's own nationals.

150 European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: The protection of children in migration (Brussels 12.4.2017, COM (2017) 211 final).

151 European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 (Brussels, 24.11.2020 COM(2020) 758 final), p.10

152 European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: EU strategy on the rights of the child (Brussels, 24.3.2021, COM(2021) 142 final), Pp. 12, 15 and 22.

OXFAM

GREEK COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES

TEACH US FOR WHAT IS COMING

The transition into adulthood of foreign unaccompanied minors in Europe: case studies from France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, and the Netherlands

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