



IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF THE UNCRC AT THE CHILDREN'S SHELTER "HOME FOR HOPE"

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TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

UNCRC/ CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
GC6	General Comment No 6
OP9	Optional Protocol No 9 on the sale of children, Child prostitution and child pornography
GC12	General Comment No 12
HFC	"Hope For Children" UNCRC Policy Center
HFH	Home for Hope

Introduction

1) International Legal background about child protection: CRC, GC6, GC12 and OP9

There is a worldwide concern about children's rights and several instruments specialised in specific rights of the child. Our study is focused on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and on other relevant instruments addressing issues concerning children on the move.

- Convention for the Rights of the Child of the 20th of November 1989:

This is the first international body obliging the State parties to respect and implement the children's rights in their national territory. It contains general provisions about child rights in order to promote the development of their full potential.

- The General Comment no 6:

This international instrument deals directly with the issue of unaccompanied and separated minors outside their country of origin. The objectives of the GC are to share guidelines and good practices to provide the State parties of the CRC with core guidelines about the protection and care of unaccompanied and separated minors. The General Comment no 6 gives practical examples for the implementation of the principles of the CRC in the area of children on the move.

- Optional Protocol no 9 to the Convention of the Right of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

This protocol aims to provide guidelines and core standards to the States Parties regarding the prohibition of sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. In unaccompanied and separated minors' cases, the protocol is relevant where there are potential victims of child trafficking.

- The General Comment no 12: the right of the child to be heard

According to the article 12 of the Convention for the Rights of the Child, every child has the right to 'express his or her views 'in all matters affecting him or her'. The right to express their views must be given due weight, according to the child's age and maturity. This right, being part of the CRC, obliges the State parties to recognise this right and ensure its implementation in their particular judicial system by listening to the views of the child. Children also have the right not to express their opinion; the GC12 argues in para.16 that 'expressing his views is a right not an obligation'. Paragraph 2 of the article 12 is relevant to the unaccompanied and separated minors 'in judicial and administrative proceedings' related to various situations¹. A child friendly framework in which the child's views can

¹ 'The separation of parents, custody, care and adoption, children in conflict with the law, child victims of physical or psychological violence, sexual abuse or other crimes, health care, social security, unaccompanied children, asylum-seeking and refugee children, and victims of armed conflict and other emergencies', General Comment no 12, para.47

be heard is also really important: as highlighted in the General Comment, an intimidating environment, hostile and insensitive will not make the child feel comfortable enough in order to speak freely. The judicial and administrative proceedings must be handled in a child appropriate framework.

2) General data about immigration in Cyprus and national legal background about protection of child's rights.

Since the late 1990s the phenomenon of minors travelling or arriving alone in European countries is constantly increasing. According to the EU figures, around 12 225 unaccompanied or separated minors applied for asylum in 2011 and 12 685 applications in 2013.

In Cyprus, the number of unaccompanied or separated minors placed under the Welfare Services is also increasing. Between 2010 and 2012, 33 unaccompanied minors are recorded as asylum seekers in Cyprus, and in 2011 this number decreased to 13 separated minor asylum seekers but rose again in 2012 to reach then the number of 27 children².

- Child rights framework:

Children's law of 1956: is a law that remains from the colonial period and does not fully comply with the provisions of the Convention for the Rights of Children and other internationally ratified treaties attesting a more appropriate child rights institutional framework. A new bill is actually on its way to be vetted which will amend the current statute in accordance to the international provisions to protect children's rights and reaffirm unaccompanied minors' rights in Cyprus. The amendment of the Children Law Cap 352 will achieve a better harmonization with the Convention for the Rights of the Child and the General Comment no 6, focusing on the unaccompanied minors' situation. Composed by two bills (The welfare, care, protection of children and The supervision of programme for child care and protection) and four regulations (Day-Care Programmes for Preschool Children, Day-Care Programmes for School-age Children, Child Home-Carers, Child Residential Care)³.

- The Refugee Law of 2000 is the incorporation of the provisions lying in the Refugees Convention in the national legal framework.

This national law aims to implement the Convention of Geneva regarding the status of refugees. The Refugee law of 2000 have been amended by Art.9(1)(a) of Law 9(I)/2003. This version says that asylum seekers as long as they have that status and stay or reside in the Republic they have the "right of free movement within the Republic's government-controlled areas".

² Closing a Protection gap: Implementing the core standards for guardians of separated children in Europe, p.13.

³ Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance of the Republic of Cyprus: Cyprus national social report 2014, April 2014, p.11.

3) Unaccompanied minors in Cyprus

3.1 Definition

Section 2 of The Refugee Law of 2000 interprets an 'unaccompanied minor' as "a person below the age of 18 who arrives in the Republic unaccompanied by an adult responsible for him whether by law or custom and for as long as he is not effectively taken into the care of such an adult person and includes a minor left unaccompanied after his entry unto the territory of the Republic".

Section 2 of The Combating of Trafficking and Exploitation of Human Beings and the Protection of Victims Law of 2007 agrees to a similar interpretation stating that an "unaccompanied minor means a child being a third country national or a stateless person who arrives on the territory being under the control of the Republic, unaccompanied by an adult responsible for him, whether by law or custom and for as long as he is not effectively taken into care of such a person and includes a child who is left unaccompanied after he had entered the territory being under the control of the Government of the Republic". The same definition can be found in the Aliens and Immigration Law, S.18KΘ after being amended by Aliens and Immigration Law, N.8(I)/2007.

3.2 Main legal provisions in relation to unaccompanied minors

The Combating of Trafficking and Exploitation of Human Beings and the Protection of Victims Law of 2007 states in Section 37(1) that "The provisions of this section as well as of sections 28, 29, 30(1), 34 and 35 of this Law, shall apply to all unaccompanied minors subject to the provisions"

4) Background of the project

The establishment of a private children's shelter for the protection and care of unaccompanied minors is run by "Hope For Children" UNCRC Policy Center, is a project that It has been developed in a manner so as to implement good practices in the care of unaccompanied minors in the Cypriot context. The aim of the center is to provide a comprehensive care setting for unaccompanied boys in Nicosia for several reasons: Firstly, the necessity for such a setting due to the increase of arrivals of unaccompanied minors in Cyprus; secondly the fulfilment of obligations due to the Republic of Cyprus' commitment to the European Union.

As reminded by the General Comment n6, 'Mechanisms established under national law in order to ensure alternative care for such children in accordance with article 22 of the Convention, shall also cover unaccompanied or separated children outside their country of origin'. The main objective of the shelter is to fully implement the provisions of the CRC and other relevant treaties in the Cypriot framework.

The framework of the project is partially based on the application of the Article 3 of the CRC dealing with the duty of protection from the State parties to the CRC:

"2. States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her

well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her.

3. States Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform to the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision."

The structure of the report is based on both a theoretical and a practical level, attempting to reflect reality accurately at both levels. At the beginning of each section, the international background on the protection of the rights of the child is recalled by referring to the relevant articles of the CRC and explanations from the General Comments no 6 and no 12. The local implementation by facilities and services at "Home for Hope" is explained in each section. And finally, in order to express their point of view about the organisation of the shelter, some minors at the shelter and officers of the shelter gave their feedback and comments.

4.1. Ground of cooperation

Article 4, CRC states that "States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international co-operation."

"Hope For Children" intends to improve the protection and care system for unaccompanied and separated minors by sharing good experiences with other European countries. Bilateral cooperation is undertaken with NGOs focusing on child rights implementation in the Netherlands (NIDOS foundation) and good practices are shared at the European level by the participation in different projects such as the 'Closing a Protection Gap 2.0' which looks at the Core Standards for guardians of unaccompanied minors and the Terre des Hommes Campaign 'Destination Unknown', and in international networks, such as the Separated Children in Europe Programme, the Observatory for Returned Children, Missing Children Europe, European Network of Guardian Institutions and others.

5. Description of the shelter "Home for Hope": Care and protection of unaccompanied minors, and building integration

5.1 Specific objectives of the programme:

- Effective protection of the safety of minors
- Ongoing psychological support and counselling
- Establishment of mechanisms of durable solutions for family tracing assessment and reunification.
- Smooth integration into the reception or host country, reintegration in the country of origin or a third

country.

- Provision of assistance in the transition period from adolescence to childhood.
- Coordinated and comprehensive assessment of the background and social history of each adolescent in order to collect all necessary data.

5.2 The shelter's officers

In the everyday life the boys of the shelter are under the care of a staff team composed by eleven male and female officers. The various backgrounds of the officers (social workers, clinical psychologists, school teachers and a lawyer) built a diverse team in order to answer to all the needs of the children. All the officers have strong psychological training and each of them has two boys under their care. The organisation of the officers team intends to build a strong cooperation between them: 'Sometimes one child feels that he has stronger links with an officer who is not his own, he can feel more comfortable; in such cases officers are cooperating together to share the information about one child to be sure his needs are taken into account'.

5.3 Facilities:

The center is made up of three connected buildings, creating a U shape, of approximately 4355 square meters. One of the buildings is made out of sandstone yellow bricks with big arches preserving a traditional look; the other two buildings are all white and have a basic design. In the center of the buildings there is an open space with an orchard. The building has approximately 23 rooms of all different sizes, 6 bathrooms and large indoor common areas, including a theatre/assembly hall with a stage and an athletic performance room. It is a two-storey building with wide halls. At the moment of writing this report, only the ground floor of the building is used, with 8 bedrooms accommodating 3 minors in each one. There is a parking lot for about 10 cars and a main gate to enter and leave the premise. There is also a basketball court.

5.4 Services

1) Rehabilitation services

- Intake of social history
- Age assessment
- Legal and social counselling services
- Psychotherapy, if deemed necessary
- Psychological support

2) Integration services

- Legal and social counselling services
- Psychological support

- Mentorship system
- Greek and other language classes
- Seeking appropriate school for each child

3) Durable solution services

- Family tracing and assessment, possibility of voluntary return within the framework of family reunification and/or of return to the country of origin
- Investigation of possibility for placement in foster care
- Legal and social counselling services
- Psychological support
- Programme of key skills 'Autonomy'

Part I: Home to secure and assist

1. Non discrimination of the child

Article 2, CRC: (1) "States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members."

1.1 Home for Hope implementation:

The principle of non discrimination is in the code of conduct of the personnel of the shelter. Furthermore, this right is included in the information booklet explaining the minors' rights and duties in the shelter.

2. Protecting the best interests of the child

Article 3, CRC: "In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration."

2.1 Home for Hope implementation

In Cyprus the director of the Social Welfare Services is the official appointed guardian for all the minors under custody. However, in practice every minor is linked with a social worker from the Social Welfare Services (SWS) who is said to have the closer responsibility of the minor. These officers visit the boys at the shelter providing informed guidance.

3. Guardianship and guidance:

Article 5, CRC: "States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, [...] the members of the extended family or community [...] legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the present Convention.

Article 18, CRC: "Parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The best interests of the child will be their basic concern"

General Comment no 12 explaining Articles 5 and 12 of the CRC: "The child has a right to direction and guidance, which have to compensate for the lack of knowledge, experience and

understanding of the child and are restricted by his or her evolving capacities".

3.1 Home for Hope implementation:

In order to improve the level of protection provided to the children, "Hope For Children" participated in the European project, "Closing a Protection Gap 2.0: Implementing the Core Standards for Guardians of Separated Children in Europe in practice, policy and legislation" in cooperation with other European NGOs. The aim of this project was to provide guidelines to social workers and any practitioner dealing with unaccompanied minors owing to a list of 10 Core Standards for the care of unaccompanied minors. The 'unofficial guardians' (the social workers from the SWS) of the unaccompanied minors, as well as the shelter's staff, received training about the 10 Core Standards and implement them in their everyday work with the children.

3.2 Home for Hope Officers' Point of view:

- *'We follow them from the morning when they wake up until they go to bed'.*
- *'We deal about care most of all, for example the rules of the shelter the time they leave to visit their friends, the daily life of the shelter. We try to create for them a home and make them feel part of a family. But apart from that it's also about guidance and counselling'.*
- *'Because they are children and because they live here every day it's unavoidable to develop a kind of friendly relationship. They all have their own character.'*

4. Core Standards for Guardians of Separated Children in Europe⁴:

Standard 1 The guardian advocates for all decisions to be taken in the best interests of the child, aimed at the protection and development of the child.

The guardian is able to advocate, assess and adjust the best interest of the child on a regular basis, involves all relevant actors and ensures that the assessment of the best interest of the child is based on the views of the child and the individual circumstances.

Standard 2 The guardian ensures the child's participation in every decision which affects the child.

The guardian provides information in a child friendly way and checks if the child understands and recalls the information, listens carefully to the child and ensures plans are based on the views of the child and shared with the child, is open to feedback and manages expectations.

Standard 3 The guardian protects the safety of the child.

The guardian gives the highest possible priority to the child's safety, knows the signals of child abuse and trafficking, acts and reports upon signals of any harm or danger, ensures the child knows he is welcome to voice anything concerning his/her safety, only breaks the confidentiality norm when a child is at risk, ensures victims get appropriate treatment and is open to being monitored on own behaviour.

Standard 4 The guardian acts as an advocate for the rights of the child.

⁴ Implementing the Core Standards for guardians of separated children in Europe, Country assessment Cyprus: Summary Core Standards for Guardians, pages 11-12.

The guardian is an assertive, committed watchdog, dedicated to defending the rights of the child, shows emotional strength, opposes decisions which are not taken in the best interests of the child and pursues fair procedures concerning the child.

Standard 5 The guardian is a bridge between and focal point for the child and other actors involved.

The guardian keeps in contact with all relevant actors, ensures to be informed about all decisions which have an impact on the child and is where necessary present at meetings, assists in establishing links with the child's community and developing relationships that gives the child a sense of belonging to a family or group.

Standard 6 The guardian ensures the timely identification and implementation of a durable solution.

The guardian ensures the identification of a durable and safe solution and challenges others to prove that their proposed solutions take the best interest of the child as a primary consideration, supports the reunification of the child with his/her family and supports the integration of the child in the host country when this is in the best interest of the child, defends safety guarantees when a child is returned and prepares the child for all predictable changes which will occur after turning eighteen.

Standard 7 The guardian treats the child with respect and dignity.

The guardian demonstrates appropriate behaviour, treats the child unprejudiced with respect to the child's identity, privacy and cultural differences, supports the child in developing peer relationships and shows a flexible approach tailored to the individual needs of the child.

Standard 8 The guardian forms a relationship with the child built on mutual trust, openness & confidentiality.

The guardian is always honest with the child, keeps his/her promises and keeps all information confidential unless it is necessary to break confidentiality to keep a child safe, pays attention to verbal and nonverbal communication, is empathic towards the child and gives moral support and makes clear to the child that a child who disappears is always welcome to return.

Standard 9 The guardian is accessible.

The guardian can be reached easily, lives near enough of the child to be able to respond quickly to difficulties, sees the child as soon as possible after his/her appointment and pays visits to the child on a frequent basis and communicates in a way which fits the age and development of the child, making use of interpreters whenever necessary and contacts the child to keep in touch also when there is no specific need to do so.

Standard 10 The guardian is equipped with relevant professional knowledge and competences.

The guardian is proactive in identifying learning and development needs, manages his/her caseload and available resources, is accountable, works according to a set methodology, knows personal and professional limits, seeks support and counselling whenever necessary and is open to supervision and monitoring.

5. Medical care

Article 6, CRC: "States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life. States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child." The inherent right to life is one of the core rights of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Article 24, CRC: About the necessary medical assistance and health care to all children: "States Parties shall recognize for every child the right to benefit from social security, including social insurance, and shall take the necessary measures to achieve the full realization of this right in accordance with their national law (right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health)"

Article 26 (1), CRC: "States Parties shall recognize for every child the right to benefit from social security, including social insurance, and shall take the necessary measures to achieve the full realization of this right in accordance with their national law. [...]"

5.1 Home for Hope Implementation:

In the Cypriot health system the unaccompanied minors asylum seekers have access to the basic health (primary and secondary care for unaccompanied minors asylum seekers and emergency and specific services for children non asylum seekers) owing to the medical card A provided to vulnerable persons⁵. During the first four weeks of the shelter's operation twelve boys were accommodated at the shelter and the medical care was handled on a spontaneous basis by the officers, by bringing the boys to a doctor and/or to the hospital if needed.

5.2 Home for Hope Officers' Point of View:

"We really follow them in every steps: we take them to the doctor, sometimes we help them also to explain their pain to the doctor, we wait for them and then we bring them back to the shelter by car".

6. Legal and social assistance

Article 3, CRC: "States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures".

Article 13, CRC: The child has the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice."

General Comment no 6, para.21: "In cases where separated or unaccompanied children are referred to asylum procedures or other administrative or judicial proceedings, they should also be provided with a legal representative in addition to a guardian."

⁵ Report on Access to Healthcare and living conditions of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants in Cyprus, Malta, Poland and Romania by The Huma Network, March 2011 p27 Children in Cyprus.

6.1 Home for Hope Implementation:

The team which takes care of the children on a daily basis has a multidisciplinary nature, with individuals from different professional background, including a lawyer that deals with the judicial and administrative procedures. The lawyer is also available to explain at every moment the different steps of their procedures to the child. Officers have a crucial role in assessing the best interests of the child and counselling them about their rights and on the consequences of their possible choices regarding durable solutions. The officers and the lawyer are working as a team on the administrative procedures by sharing all relevant information and preparing the children for their asylum interviews.

6.2 Home for Hope Officers' point of view:

- *"For the 12 first boys who entered the shelter, we saw a difference in only one month. Before they were closed to themselves but they are now more open because they saw that we care about them: you bring them to the doctor or ask frequently if everything is fine, so they start to trust you".*
- *"As a lawyer I had to ask them questions about their stories and all other difficult details about their family and the situation in their countries. It seemed to be easier for them to speak about the facts but sometimes it is not easy not to fall into emotions".*

Part II: Home for development and flourishing

"Home for Hope" intends to be a place for children to settle and have the opportunity to develop their own personality, talents, cultural identity within the best attainable care conditions, accommodation arrangements, and have legal representation for the upbringing of the children.

1. Living conditions for child development:

Article 6, CRC: The right to life, survival and development.

"State Parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development."

1.1 Home for Hope implementation

The structure of the shelter attempts to secure the well-being of the children, to make them feel comfortable. The rooms are former classrooms and there are 3 boys in each room. All rooms have bathroom facilities, allowing for a certain degree of privacy.



A large fully-equipped kitchen provides daily a varied and healthy diet, trying to cater to the preferences, cultural and religious aspects.



1.2. Minor's point of view:

"I really appreciate the shelter's atmosphere; it is a real change for me after the places I passed through. I really feel safe here, for me it is perfect, I couldn't expect a better place"

1.3. Home for Hope Officers' point of view:

- *"When they arrived they were really negative about the fact that they left Larnaca [previous accommodation arrangement in another district], about the rules that were different but now*

they are used to that and accepted those rules and they feel probably more secure about them”

2. Psychological support

Article 39, CRC: Psychological recovery. “State Parties [they] shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts”.

The **General Comment no 12** gives more details about psychological support through the principle of the right of the child to be heard.

In **para.23**, the right to “express his views freely” means that “States parties must ensure conditions for expressing views that account for the child’s individual and social situation and an environment in which the child feels respected and secure when freely expressing her or his opinions.”

Also, the hearing process is clarified in **para.42**: “Effective inclusion of children in protective measures requires that children be informed about their right to be heard [...]”. “The person who will hear the views of the child can be an adult involved in the matters affecting the child (e.g. a teacher, social worker or caregiver), a decision maker in an institution (e.g. a director, administrator or judge), or a specialist (psychologist or physician)”.

2.1 Home for Hope implementation

All the officers of “Home for Hope” have received psychological training to be able to listen to and manage the minors’ expectations and understand their fears about the future.

2.2 Home for Hope Officers’ point of view:

- *“When they really trust you as a person here to guide them and help them in their procedures they are really expressing their views and sharing their stories with us. It was stunning to see how deeply they want to share their stories to tell it to someone.”*
- *“Because I am working at night shifts I feel really close to them so they come very spontaneously to speak to me when something is wrong”.*
- *“Sometimes we can try to do our best for them but the boys can be in their ‘bad days’ and during those period we see that all the care we could provide for them will never change the fact that they are separated from their families...they sometimes feel guilty of being here, they would like to be able to be helpful for their families. During such days they are really negative but we support them to go through all this.”*

3. Attention to the child’s desires for durable solutions

Article 12, CRC: “States parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child

being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.”

According to the General Comment n°6 “The ultimate aim in addressing the fate of unaccompanied or separated children is to identify a durable solution that addresses all their protection needs, takes into account the child’s view and, wherever possible, leads to overcoming the situation of a child being unaccompanied or separated.”

Family tracing and assessment, voluntary return and family reunification or placement in foster care are some of the durable solutions that social workers have to consider according to the best interests of the child.

According to the best interests of the child principle, the views of the child must be taken into account during the determination process of the best child interests in accordance with the age and the degree of maturity of the child. In every case child and guardian must be informed about the options and the situation of the country of origin in case of resettlement. Also, the child desires can be sometimes poles apart from the best child interests.

Example: family reunification with a father guilty of violence or abuse against his children or family reunification in a country where a threat to the physical and mental integrity of a child remains.

3.1 Home for Hope implementation:

Psychologists hold regular sessions with the minors in the shelter to identify the children’s long-term wishes, and ad hoc sessions if the need arises due to a problematic behaviour.

If deemed necessary, an interpreter can be present during the sessions between the psychologist and the minor.

3.2 Minor’s point of view:

- *“I have an uncle in France, and he said he would take care of me there, so with the social workers of the center we started a family reunification application. The staff of the shelter really follow the different steps of our administrative procedures.”*

4. Self-development: exploring activities, art, culture

Article 29(a), CRC: “Encourages the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential”.

Article 31, CRC: “The recognition of the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and art”.

This Article also promotes the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activities.

Creative and artistic activities as well as sport activities have positive outcomes on child development

and boost confidence. In the special framework of unaccompanied minors under custody it could be also a way for them to rebuild themselves. Some of them had to face really traumatising situations, like separation from their parents, some of them had to face smuggling arrangements or even sexual or economic trafficking. Artistic activities provide them with the opportunity not to focus so much on basic needs related to survival, but emphasize on personal development, that is on the development of their personality and their self confidence, their communication skills and social relationships.



4.1 Home for Hope implementation

“Home for Hope” is giving due weight to the provisions of article 29 of the CRC.

A weekly programme composed of sport activities (football, basketball, table tennis, and swimming pool during the summer months), art, Greek language classes twice per week and English classes once per week. Children are also introduced to some core skills such as communication, creative thinking, technology; they can attend computer classes and human rights trainings which are implemented in the shelter. Other cultural activities also take place, for example ‘cultural kitchen’ nights, gardening, Nicosia tours, and movie nights.

Children are also informed about their rights as minors and as asylum seekers with seminars and information sessions with relevant speakers and also in different thematics, mentioned further on in the report.

At all times, the common area (TV and play room) is equipped with board games, books, a piano, a table football and a central stage for theatre and plays.



5. Respect of the child's culture.

Art.20, CRC: "When considering solutions [during care], due regard shall be paid to desirability of continuity in a child's upbringing and to the child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background".

Article 30, CRC: "In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language."

GC6, para.42: "All unaccompanied and separated children have the right to maintain their cultural identity and values, including the maintenance and development of their native language".

5.1 Home for Hope implementation:

The culture and the religion of the child are respected and mainstreamed throughout the shelter's operation.

The location of the shelter is close to the Catholic Church and not far from the Mosque ensuring an easy access to the religious sites for children of both religions. The majority of the boys, at the moment of writing this report, are Muslims and when they entered the shelter, each of them received a Coran in order to practice their religion in the best conditions. A prayer room is also present in the shelter for Muslim boys to be able to pray whenever they want.

The availability of French and Arabic interpreters allows a good communication between the children

who don't speak English or Greek and gives the children the opportunity to practice their own language while they learn Greek and English.

The 'cultural kitchen' nights play an important part in promoting children's cultures and cuisines, as well as celebrations of religious holidays like the celebration of Eid Mubarak at the end of the Ramadan.

5.2 Home for Hope Officers' Point of view:

- *"Sometimes difficulties can be noticed with the language. The language can be a barrier between us and the children. We have some Arabic and French interpreters but in the case of some Somali boys it can be difficult because we don't have any Somali interpreter available generally in Cyprus. Also, when we need to bring them to the doctor it's sometimes difficult to explain the causes of their pain to the Greek doctors. So we try to find some solutions and we ask them if some of their friends would like to act as interpreters for them. It is an issue but we find alternative ways to handle it".*

5.3 Minors' point of view:

- *"For me the prayer room is perfect, because the organisational structure of the shelter doesn't allow us to be out every time for the prayer time. I think it's good because we are minors, and for safety we don't go out without the staff. With the prayer room we don't have to look for the mosque in the city we can stay here and go every time we want, day and night. For me it's the easiest way to practice our religion"*
- *"Now that the other 12 boys are in the shelter the prayer room is too small we can't stay all together inside but it is ok because the mosque is not too far so on Fridays we go all together for the prayer."*



III: Home for integration and autonomy

Most of the young people arriving in Cyprus are teenagers between 15 and 17 years old. Left alone, without any parents or relatives they will have to manage by themselves when their custody will end, after they turn 18. In order to prepare the children to face this new challenge, the shelter and the guardians intend to provide them basic skills they might need as adults in the new host country society.

1. Education

Article 28, CRC: "States Parties recognize the right of the child to education and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular: make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity [...] and make primary education compulsory and educational and vocational information and guidance available and free to all".

GC6, para.42: "The unaccompanied or separated child should be registered with appropriate school authorities as soon as possible and get assistance in maximizing learning opportunities".

1.1 Home for Hope implementation:

For this purpose, "Home for Hope" cooperates with the Multifunctional Center of the Nicosia Municipality, and specifically its multicultural center which runs languages courses, computer classes and thematic seminars to provide the children with cultural information about Cyprus (history, culture, religion, habits), information about children and migrant's rights in Cyprus and sexual education about sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy.

Minors come to Cyprus from countries with different cultures and religions, some of them come from Eastern African countries such as Somalia or Western African countries like, Cameroon and Cote d'Ivoire. To be able to learn more about the Cypriot culture and language is also a way for them to understand and to integrate more smoothly into the society of the host country. The full integration of these children in the Cypriot society is one of the biggest challenges they might have to deal with.

Non-formal education sessions, in key skills and human rights are conducted in the shelter. With regards to formal education, most unaccompanied minors go to technical schools. "Hope For Children", however, seeks to cooperate with different schools that can waive the tuition fee or reduce the price for unaccompanied minors.

1.2 Home for Hope Officers' Point of View:

- *"We intend to provide them some skills during their stay here, so it's really important for example that they learn languages like Greek and English in order to improve their chance of integration in the country when that is determined to be the durable solution for them"*

1.3 Minor's point of view:

- *"I really like the English lessons, I don't speak English and I really want to learn English so for all of us the English lessons will be a great opportunity"*
- *"I would like to be useful to my family, to provide for them but now I am here and I will try to learn some useful skills to be able to help them"*
- *"I like to learn Greek, it's not so difficult and I like to study; homework is ok for me"*

2. Mentorship and counselling.

Article 29(d), CRC: "The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin".

2.1 Home for Hope implementation:

The mentorship project is based on sharing experience between mentors and boys. The mentors will be volunteers who would like to spend some time with the teenagers and potentially do some activities together. The aim of this idea is to give to the minor the opportunity to talk and share things with a person outside the shelter structure. The mentorship can be for example the involvement of young people committed in the European Voluntary Service who can offer a training or just participate into activities with the children to find some people to discuss freely with.

2.2 Home for Hope Officers' point of view:

"The EVS cooperation with Luca (French voluntary worker at the shelter during the summer) is a good opportunity for the boys because sometimes they can't understand that we don't have time to play with them. Unfortunately we have to work! Luca here is spending time with them he doesn't have like us the professional barrier that we have to keep with the children. He can have a clear friendly relation with them and also he can bring them something that we can't provide them like some language skills or artistic ones. Plus it is also a good thing for them to see the volunteers are ready to share skills and spend time with no salary basis, it's something quite new for those children knowing that one of their main goals is to get skills to provide for themselves and their families."

3. Professional and vocational training

Article 28(d), CRC: "Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education; make them available and accessible to every child".

Article 29 (a), CRC: "The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential".

GC6, para.42: "All adolescents should be allowed to enrol in vocational/professional training or education, and early learning programmes should be made available to young children. States should

ensure that unaccompanied or separated children are provided with school certificates or other documentation indicating their level of education, in particular in preparation of relocation, resettlement or return".

3.1 Home for Hope implementation:

Vocational training will be provided through a project of transferable skills focused on 10 skills' themes. The aim of this project is to provide some useful skills to the minors through workshops. The main objective is to directly give them evidence of these skills in order to enhance their future employability opportunities.

This cultural and creative transferable skills programme can benefit the minors by increasing their self esteem and confidence, keeping in mind that as migrant teenagers it can sometimes be hard to feel comfortable in a foreign society.



The vocational training programme focuses on various useful skills in order to increase the autonomy of the learners. The programme is split in 10 main themes: The toolkit is provided by the Euro Arco Project, a Lifelong Learning Programme⁶ in which "Hope For Children" participates as a partner.

1. communication
2. numeracy skills

⁶ The Euro Arco Project, a Lifelong Learning Programme, <http://euro-arco.org/>.

3. technology skills.
4. interpersonal skills
5. personal skills
6. information skills
7. creative thinking skills
8. organisational skills: planning
9. business skills
10. learning and improving skills

5.4 Minor's point of view:

- *"I want to learn a good job but now I don't have so many ideas because I don't now what each job means. I just want to learn a good job because it's important".*
- *"For me the most important is to be able to help my family, I would like to learn some skills to have a good job".*

Conclusion

In the European migration framework the needs of vulnerable persons like unaccompanied and separated minors are often violated because of State's migration control considerations. The new private shelter for unaccompanied and separated children "Home for Hope" fully intends to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child in order to provide minors with the best framework for their present and future.

The organisation succeeded in creating a child protective framework for the care and guidance of the boys. The building has been renovated to attend to their basic needs, including the setting up of the common area (with a library, games, TV etc.), a prayer room, a laundry room and even an orchard in the yard.

The officers of the shelter, psychologists, teachers, social workers and lawyer are present to offer the necessary guidance, legal and social assistance owing to a multi skilled team. The presence of a permanent lawyer within the staff team allows minors to have access to any procedural information whenever they need and to be updated anytime about their own judicial or administrative procedures. The team, with psychological training, creates an understanding environment where strong attention is dedicated to the viewpoints of the child.

The school programme and other activities set up, also with external local partners, are intended to provide transferrable skills to the children, useful tools for their future.

A positive change in the minors' behaviour can already be noticed as one officer stated: *"They are really willing to have our attention, to play with us and to have some answers to their questions; it's a relationship based on mutual trust"*.

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