



Stepping up:

A collection of projects and practices
helping migrant children transition into
adulthood



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Preface

Thousands of migrant children across Europe turn 18 and enter adulthood each year. They blow out their 18 candles everywhere – in villages, capitals and under bridges. Turning 18 is a tipping point for many of them. From then on, they must navigate the world around them as adults, usually without the knowledge and support their peers have. For many, it means leaving the place where they live. It means losing the support of specialised professionals and any protection they may have had as children from the full force of migration enforcement.¹

But in those same small towns and cities where these children and young people blow out their 18 candles, people have stepped up. They have looked, and found, myriad ways to support the migrant children and young people in their communities transitioning into adulthood. In Athens, Greece, Babel Day Center attends to their mental health needs, while Velos Youth manages a drop-in center. In Sweden, undocumented young people can find community in the drop-in center at Stockholms Stadsmission and within RFSL Ungdom's network of LGBTQI+ young people with a migrant background. In France, Utopia 56 identifies, feeds and shelters homeless unaccompanied children and young people. In Spain, the Catalan government developed a dedicated strategy.

Despite the impressive work that is being done on the ground, more needs to happen. First, it has become clear to us that many of these projects go unnoticed, even though professionals and policy makers alike are looking for inspiration and lessons learned. That is where this collection of past and present policies, practices and projects supporting migrant children and young people transitioning into adulthood comes in. We hope it will help highlight the variety of practices that exist and address different aspects: mental health, peer support, mentoring, formal care and aftercare, legal aid, 'figuring things out', regularising one's stay, cross-border exchanges, etc.

Second, migrant children and young people are best served through a needs-based, person-centered approach. Not one based on their residence status or whether they are unaccompanied or not. Because a key challenge for many children and young people lies in accessing a secure residence permit,² we favoured projects that either supported children and young people regardless of their residence status or prioritised undocumented children and young people specifically. We also included practices that support children or young people in families, too.

1 For more on this, see PICUM, 2022, [Turning 18 and undocumented: supporting children in their transition into adulthood](#); Oxfam and Greek Council for Refugees, 2021, [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](#); ISMU Foundation, UNICEF, UNHCR and IOM, 2019, [At a Crossroads. Unaccompanied and Separated Children in their Transition to Adulthood in Italy](#).

2 PICUM, 2022, [Turning 18 and undocumented: supporting children in their transition into adulthood](#); see also PICUM, 2024, [Guidance for policy makers and practitioners on regularisation mechanisms for people transitioning into adulthood](#).

Third, migrant children and young people transitioning into adulthood would be better served by policies and practices that actively bridge late childhood and young adulthood. Dedicated, yet harmonised policies on transition into adulthood should make sure that all the dots are connected, that support in adulthood builds on support in childhood and support in childhood continues into young adulthood while providing for the specific vulnerabilities of children in migration and of care leavers.

The practices in this collection, however small or big, are a step in the direction of a world where children and young people receive the support they need while taking their first steps into adulthood. We hope the collection inspires more people to step up and design and implement inclusive projects and policies that support migrant children and young people transitioning into adulthood based on their needs, not their residence status.

Many projects and practices supporting (undocumented) children and young people transition into adulthood safely exist and we look forward to hearing from you if you know of one. Do share your examples of good practices by emailing us on info@picum.org with the subject line 'transition into adulthood'.

Glossary

Ageing out refers to the loss of rights children experience when turning 18, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other child-specific provisions no longer apply to them.

Transition into adulthood can be understood as “the assumption of new roles and tasks related to the acquisition of autonomy and social integration, that culminates in the achievement of education, training, work, mature relationships, financial and housing independence.”³

A **care leaver** refers to a child or young person who was in care (outside of their parental home) during their childhood.⁴

A **child** is any person below the age of 18 years old.⁵

An **undocumented migrant** lives in a country where their residence is not officially recognized. Many have had residence permissions linked to employment, study, family, or international protection, but those permits were either temporary or precarious and their validity expired. Children who are born to undocumented parents inherit this precarious residence status.

Regularisation refers to any process or procedure through which someone can obtain a residence permit from a relevant government authority authorising – ‘regularising’ – their stay in the country they reside in. The person applies for these procedures from inside the country, in contrast to residence and work permits which must be applied for from another country.

3 López, M.L., Santos, I., Bravo, A. and del Valle, J.F., 2013, The process of transition to adulthood of young people fostered by the child welfare system. *An. Psicol.*, 29, 187–196; cited in Gullo, F., García-Alba, L., Bravo, A., del Valle, J.F., 2021, [Crossing Countries and Crossing Ages: The Difficult Transition to Adulthood of Unaccompanied Migrant Care Leavers](#), *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18, 6935; also cited in PICUM, 2022, [Turning 18 and undocumented: supporting children in their transition into adulthood](#).

4 OECD, 2022, [Assisting Care Leavers. Time for action](#).

5 United Nations General Assembly, [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), Article 1.



Housing and accommodation

Antwerp, Belgium: CURANT – Co-habitation and case management for unaccompanied young adult refugees in Antwerp

Region, city or country	Antwerp, Belgium
Format	Project
Involved partners	Stad Antwerpen; Solentra (Solidarity and Trauma) - unit of the psychiatric division of UZ Brussel; JES vzw - 'urban lab' for children and youngsters in Antwerp, Ghent and Brussels; Avansa regio Antwerpen ⁶ ; Atlas integratie & inburgering Antwerpen – NGO; University of Antwerpen
Target group	Former unaccompanied children with either refugee status or subsidiary protection, specifically: 18-to-25-year-olds.
Website	www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/antwerp www.uia-initiative.eu/en/operational-challenges/antwerp-curant

The CURANT project (2016-2019) aimed to provide cohabitation opportunities for young refugees and help young refugees integrate socially. The project was co-ordinated by the Social Welfare Department of the city of Antwerp, Belgium, and funded by the EU's European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) through the Urban Innovative Actions Initiative.

By 2019 CURANT provided affordable accommodation through 66 housing units which refugees and their flatmates, typically from Belgium, could share. Additionally, the project created a peer support network for refugees. The project also provided support and guidance to the young people in the areas of social networking and integration, education, independent living, language learning, leisure activities, psychological counselling, and careers.

The project consisted of two main components:

- Communal living as part of a co-housing system where a refugee and a (young) Dutch-speaking 'buddy' (local) would be introduced to each other to live together as flatmates. This intended to start a two-way relationship between them that would foster an informal learning process through spontaneous social interaction. This, then, would diversify the social networks of the refugees and the buddies and improve the refugees' Dutch. The project provided a mix of 63 accommodation units. In total 77 refugee-buddy duos cohabitated.
- Personalised, multi-disciplinary case management. The case management guaranteed intensive follow-up of the young refugees by their case managers and social workers who provided personal, centralized support and guidance. Through this component, the young refugees were offered intensive and varied training in areas such as job search, independent living and Dutch classes; leisure time activities and social

6 Then called 'Vormingplus vzw'.

integration; and orientation towards formal education and work, as well as professional individual psychological support. This centralized, multidisciplinary case management aimed to develop circular integrated individual trajectories for the 66 unaccompanied young adult refugees who were enrolled in the project.

The project partners found that “the continuation of intensive professional support, and the resulting tailored trajectories focusing on different needs

turned out to be beneficial and helped [the young refugees] gain more skills.”⁷ They also concluded that the CURANT trajectory, which was limited to a year, was too short for many of the unaccompanied young people.⁸

While the ERDF-funded project ended in 2019, the City of Antwerp started a follow-up in September 2021. At the time, they started seven new refugee-buddy flatmate duos.⁹

France: Support and accommodation for unaccompanied children refused by child protection services

Region, city or country	France, Paris and Île-de-France
Format	Programme/service
Involved partners	Utopia 56 in collaboration with several local partners
Target group	Unaccompanied children whose age has been contested and who do not receive help or accommodation as a result.
Website	www.utopia56.org/nos-maisons-daccueil/

See also ‘Paris, France: Reaching out to homeless, age-contested children and young people’ in the chapter on outreach work

Utopia 56¹⁰ is a citizen-led organisation, established in 2015 to help coordinate volunteers in the ‘Calais jungle’¹¹ in Pas-de-Calais, in the north of France. When the encampment was dismantled in 2016,

the organisation shifted its focus to help homeless migrants, regardless of their residence status. In 2017, Utopia56 established a first citizen-led accommodation initiative for children, located in

7 Mahieu, R., Van Raemdonck, L., and Prof. Clycq, N., 2019, [Co-housing and case management for unaccompanied young adult refugees in Antwerp \(CURANT\) Policy Recommendations](#), p. 2.

8 Ibid.

9 Sgaragli, F., 2020, [The CURANT project Journal n° 6](#), Urban Innovative Actions.

10 Utopia56, Notre Histoire, webpage [checked on 1 February 2024]; Utopia 56, Notre Organisation, webpage [checked on 1 February 2024].

11 The region has a long history of formal and informal encampments for and by migrants. The ‘Calais Jungle’, known officially at the time as ‘Camp de la Lande’, was an informal encampment that existed on a former landfill from January 2015 to October 2016. Despite its razing in late 2016, similar informal encampments still exist in the region. A brief chronology until 2016 can be found on BBC, 24 October 2016, [The history of the Calais ‘Jungle’ camp and how it’s changed since 1999](#) [checked on 10 July 2024]. For more info on the living conditions since then, see for instance Human Rights Watch, 2021, [Enforced misery. The degrading treatment of migrant children and adults in Northern France.](#)

Tours, Indre-de-Loire.¹² In the six years since then, more than 1,700 unaccompanied children and young people have been sheltered in Tours.¹³

2017 also saw the start of 'Let's Welcome',¹⁴ a collaboration between Utopia56 and Médecins sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders) in Paris, Île-de-France. The organisations provide crucial support to unaccompanied children rejected by child protection¹⁵ who find themselves homeless while they appeal the results of the age assessment.¹⁶ The vast majority of appeals Utopia 56 follows end up with the child being recognized as a child: more than 70% overall with 80% being recognized as children in some cities, like Lille.¹⁷ However, an appeal can take between 1 and 14 months,¹⁸ during which the children are neither considered children by child protection, nor adults by the general reception system, leaving them homeless and deprived of services and support.

Thanks to a vast network of volunteers and staff, Utopia 56 does outreach work and has been organising a daily meet-up and open-air dinner in the centre of Paris since 2017. There, they identify new and known children who find themselves in this situation, hand out food, clothing, hygiene supplies, and sleeping materials (e.g. bedding, sleeping bags, etc.), and try to find sleeping solutions for the night. Utopia56 answers the children's questions and

signposts them to Médecins sans Frontières' center in Pantin, a *banlieue* (suburb) of Paris, where they receive legal and medical aid, as necessary.

Some of the children are housed in communal houses run by Utopia 56 while they await the appeal's decision. Until December 2023, Utopia 56 had five such houses, each catering to specific needs. The 'Bobigny house', which Utopia 56 ran with Médecins du Monde, accommodated up to 10 unaccompanied girls, shielding them from human trafficking risks. Two houses in Sevran housed up to ten children with medical needs each.¹⁹ The 'Maison Grand Nord', located in northern France, supported children transiting through the region. This team provided legal information on the different options the children consider: regular migration routes into England, the risks of irregular passage, and ways to settle in France. Lastly, the house in Tours housed up to 14 young unaccompanied people.

Because of the large number of homeless unaccompanied children awaiting an appeal procedure and their acute vulnerability, Utopia 56 volunteers have on occasion occupied empty schools and other types of buildings to house large groups.²⁰

12 Utopia 56, [Nos Maisons, Tours, webpage](#) [checked on 1 February 2024].

13 Email exchange with Utopia 56, 25 June 2024.

14 Utopia 56, [Nos Maisons, webpage](#) [checked on 1 February 2024]; Utopia 56, 1 October 2023, [Jeunes à la rue: 40 mineurs survivent dans la rue à Lille](#) [checked on 1 February].

15 Aide sociale à l'enfance, ASE.

16 Young, unaccompanied people who declare themselves to be underage often have their age contested and undergo an age assessment. The methods used are also questionable. And, while the person can appeal the decision before the children's judge (administrative appeal), the appeal is not suspensive. Because of this, the child finds themselves homeless. See for example, Press release by 13 organisations, UNICEF, 13 June 2023, « [La procédure de détermination de l'âge des mineurs isolés étrangers doit être en conformité avec la Convention internationale des droits de l'enfant](#) » [checked on 1 February 2024].

17 Email exchange with Utopia 56, 25 June 2024; see also Utopia 56, 1 October 2023, [Jeunes à la rue: 40 mineurs survivent dans la rue à Lille](#) [checked on 1 February 2024].

18 Email exchange with Utopia 56, 25 June 2024.

19 The houses in Bobigny and Sevran are located close to Paris.

20 FranceInfo, 5 April 2023, [Des mineurs isolés occupent une école désaffectée du XVI^e arrondissement de Paris pour «faire respecter leurs droits»](#) [checked on 6 June 2024].

Utopia 56 teams also support unaccompanied children in a broader way, helping them to enrol in schools and organizing outings.

Utopia 56 also arranges emergency accommodation in private housing, working with a network of citizens who open their house on a voluntary basis.²¹

Italy: Alternative forms of reception for unaccompanied children and former unaccompanied young people

Region, city or country	Italy
Format	Programme/service
Involved partners	CIDIS
Target group	Unaccompanied children and former unaccompanied children.
Website	www.cidisonlus.org/lavoroper/giovani-migranti-soli/

Cidis Impresa Sociale ETS²², a non-profit established in 1987, operates in Italy and across Europe with the goal of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for migrants. With this aim, CIDIS carries out activities in four Italian regions: Campania, Calabria, Lazio and Umbria. One of CIDIS' programmes, 'giovani migrant soli'²³ ('lone young migrants'), is dedicated to the welfare of unaccompanied children and former unaccompanied children.²⁴

To address the needs of unaccompanied children, CIDIS offers various forms of housing. For example, CIDIS arranges semi-independent accommodation services for unaccompanied children as they approach 18, enabling them to practice independence while still receiving the necessary support. CIDIS manages five small, accredited apartments and administers the reception (SAI²⁵) for unaccompanied children in Caserta, Campania.²⁶ The project provides not only food and accommodation but also a series of services aimed at helping them integrate into society and the economy.²⁷ Through individualized guidance and assistance, CIDIS supports 35 unaccompanied children living in the five apartments.

21 In Paris, this emergency accommodation is most often arranged for undocumented, homeless families with young children and pregnant women.

22 CIDIS, [Chi Siamo](#), webpage, webpage [checked on 1 February 2024]

23 CIDIS, [Giovani Migranti Soli](#), webpage [checked on 1 February 2024]

24 CIDIS also focuses on providing essential support, including legal guidance, education, professional training, and job placement, aiming at empowering young people. Their approach also emphasises active citizenship, encouraging participation in voluntary, sporting, artistic, and recreational-educational activities.

25 'Sistema di Accoglienza e Integrazione' (SAI), the Italian 'Reception and Integration System'.

26 CIDIS, [SAI per Minori Stranieri Non Accompagnati del Comune di Caserta](#) webpage [checked on 1 February 2024]

27 These 'socio-economic inclusion pathways' include labour market orientation and support for job placement, training and social inclusion support.

As these young people transition into adulthood, CIDIS provides orientation and support in finding a job and housing, psycho-social health protection, and ensures a safety net as the young people age out of accommodation.

CIDIS also organizes family foster care for unaccompanied children. They select, train and match families with the children. CIDIS prioritizes foster care over other reception methods, because they believe it offers more practical and emotional support to the children in question. The organization also trains and supports volunteer guardians.

Through these initiatives, CIDIS strives to create a supportive environment, ensuring a secure future for unaccompanied children as they transition into adulthood.



Psycho-social
support, peer support
and aid

Vienna, Austria: the 'connecting people' project connects buddies, unaccompanied children and young adult refugees

Region, city or country	Austria (head office in Vienna)
Format	Project
Involved partners	asylkoordination österreich & connecting people
Target group	Unaccompanied children and young adult refugees
Website	www.connectingpeople.at

The 'connecting people' project aims to fill several voids felt by unaccompanied children living in Austria: the need for emotional support, social contacts and help in daily life. The project does this by connecting 'pat:innen' (buddies) to unaccompanied children.²⁸ The (adult) buddies help the children in a range of ways: dedicating personal attention and time, providing educational support, doing leisure activities together or assisting them with their administration. They also accompany the child / young person when dealing with government instances. For example, during interviews with the asylum authorities, by keeping in contact with the school administration and/or staff in the reception facility. Group activities for the children, young people and their buddies, like sports activities, picnics and visits to music festivals, are also organized.

The focus for the sponsors lies on building a long-term, stable relationship with the child so the child feels more accepted and welcome in Austria. And, while the support isn't specifically designed with transition into adulthood in mind, it can start before or after the 18th birthday and lasts into adulthood

and helps the child/young person find their bearings and build their future.

The 'connecting people' project recruits, trains and supports the buddies and connects them with the unaccompanied child(ren).²⁹ Since 2001 the organization has arranged sponsorships in groups of maximum 30 buddies.³⁰ First, information sessions are organized for interested parties. During these discussions the expectations and motivations regarding the sponsorship are clarified. After being accepted into the project, the sponsors go through 12 hours of training. The course covers topics like asylum law, the general situation of unaccompanied children and reception and accommodation.

Buddies are more intensively supported during their first year: regular meetings between buddies to share experiences and help each other, and thematic evenings for all buddy groups are organised. They can also ask experts for legal and social advice and make use of supervision.³¹

28 Connecting people, [Projekt](#), webpage [checked on 1 February 2024].

29 Connecting people, [Inhalt and Ziele](#), webpage [checked on 1 February 2024].

30 Connecting people, [Projektgruppen](#), webpage [checked on 1 February 2024].

31 Connecting people, [Projektstruktur](#), webpage [checked on 1 February 2024].

The selection of children and buddies is done in cooperation with the accommodation and care facilities.³² The children in the facilities get an explanation of what the sponsorship entails and can choose whether they want to participate. The wishes, resources and backgrounds of the children and the potential buddies are taken into account

when connecting duos. Having similar interests can be a good starting point for creating connections.

The project is financed by the Vienna Social Fund and the Ministry of Social Affairs and one third of the funds are raised through donations.³³

Athens, Greece: Mental health care for migrants regardless of residence status in the Babel Day Centre

Region, city or country	Athens, Greece
Format	Programme/service
Involved partners	Babel Day Centre
Target group	Child and adult migrants regardless of residence status, and professionals working with migrants.
Website	www.babeldc.gr

Established in 2007, Babel (Βαβέλ)³⁴ is committed to providing mental health care to migrants, (children, adolescents and adults), regardless of their residence status. The centre focuses on mental health services, including needs assessments, diagnosis, counselling, and psychotherapy. The team³⁵ has psychiatrists, psychologists and therapists specialized in supporting individuals across different age groups. The centre adopts an individual care plan, based on negotiation between the context and the person seeking assistance. Priority is given to those facing

challenges accessing regular mental health services, particularly undocumented people and people who do not speak Greek well yet. To do this, Babel offers simultaneous interpretation to French, Lingala, Kurdish (Kirmangi), Farsi, Ukrainian and Russian and has clinicians who speak Italian, Spanish, Serbian, French and/or English as well as Greek.

32 Either, accommodation and care facilities for unaccompanied minor refugees, or reception facilities which house young adult refugees.

33 Connecting people, [Finanzierung](#), webpage [checked on 1 February 2024].

34 Babel, 2022, [Our work: Mental Health Care](#), webpage [checked on 1 February 2024].

35 Babel, 2023, [The Team](#), webpage [checked on 1 February 2024].

The centre is tailored to cater to the unique needs of unaccompanied children and teenagers. The focus revolves around crucial aspects: identity formation, independence, autonomy, cultivating a positive self-image, and establishing realistic personal (including healthy romantic relationships) and professional goals. The center addresses the complex mourning process experienced by unaccompanied children, which may include various losses: the loss of childhood, the loss of one's home country, separation from family, traumatic experiences, etc. Babel's goal is to support children and adolescents through their intricate journey of coping with these losses and navigating the path towards a positive and resilient future.

In addition to providing services to migrants, Babel delivers training³⁶ to a wide range of professionals working with migrants, including mental health professionals, interpreters, cultural mediators, health professionals, teachers and lawyers. Babel organizes training seminars, workshops, and specialized on-the-job training, covering topics such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in migrants, loss and grief, 'adolescents and aggression', 'working with torture survivors' and 'the refugee condition between resilience and vulnerability'.

Athens, Greece: A specialised day center providing holistic support

Region, city or country	Athens, Greece
Format	Project/service
Involved partners	Velos Youth
Target group	16-to-25-year-olds
Website	www.velosyouth.org

Velos Youth runs a drop in center, a safe space in Athens, Greece, where 16-to-25-year-old migrants can spend time, feel supported and (re)build their lives. The day centre offers a range of services including English classes, hot meals, shower and laundry facilities, support with residence

applications³⁷ and navigating the Greek administration, and support in finding a job.³⁸ In addition, Velos Youth provides individual one-to-one casework. This involves conducting initial registrations, accommodation applications, and making internal and external referrals to the support and services. The

36 Babel, 2023, [Support for professionals](#), webpage [checked on 1 February 2024].

37 This includes legal assistance / support to file residence (asylum) applications, appealing age assessments, renewing identity and travel documents, filing for family reunification.

38 Velos Youth, [Services](#), webpage [checked on 1 February 2024].

organisation also provides various types of legal assistance and support to young people, including the preparation for asylum interviews, appealing age assessment results, filing family reunification applications, facilitating the renewal of identity and travel documents and assisting with labour disputes.

From September 2019 to December 2021, Velos Youth ran a project in collaboration with Babel Day Center and HumanRights360, two other Greek organisations. They developed and implemented a more comprehensive set of services designed specifically for young people transitioning into adulthood. The project focussed on employability support and psychosocial care, “two critical elements that play a vital role in supporting young people to become more self-sufficient.”³⁹

A total of 129 young people were assisted during the project: 32 people received specialized psychosocial support and improved their wellbeing, 82 people received job seeker support and 14 were regularised.^{40 41}

A practitioner’s guide, [Transitioning to Adulthood. A Pathway to Autonomy & Self-reliance](#), was also developed as part of the project.⁴² In a follow-up, [The Power of Peer Support: A Guide to Promoting Peer-to-Peer Support Networks](#), was published. It aims to offer a better understanding of how these networks develop, and what organisations can do to support them.⁴³

39 Velos Youth, [Transitioning to adulthood](#), webpage [checked on 1 February 2024].

40 Through asylum applications.

41 Velos Youth, [Transitioning to adulthood](#), webpage [checked on 1 February 2024].

42 Velos Youth, Babel Day Center and HumanRights360, 2021, [Transitioning to Adulthood A Pathway to Autonomy & Self-reliance. Practitioners guide](#).

43 Velos Youth, 2024, [The power of peer support. A guide to promoting peer-to-peer support networks](#).

Cork, Ireland: Free support for recently arrived families and children

Region, city or country	Cork, Ireland
Format	Programme/service
Involved partners	Nasc, the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre
Target group	Children and families who are leaving reception centers and children reuniting with their families in Ireland through family reunification programmes
Contact details	www.nascireland.org/current-projects/new-beginnings-children-families-project

See also 'Cork, Ireland: Free legal assistance and support for migrants in care and aged out unaccompanied children' in the chapter on durable solutions and legal aid

Nasc⁴⁴ opened its doors in Cork City, Ireland, in 2000 due to a dearth of state-provided services that identified or addressed the basic and essential needs of the growing migrant community there. Nasc serves as a space for migrants seeking independent advice, with its core activity being the provision of free legal services to empower people in realizing their rights. Presently, the organization supports around 1,300 migrants per year.⁴⁵

Through Nasc's frontline work with migrant, asylum seeking and refugee communities over the last 24 years, a number of social work-led programmes have developed. The 'new beginnings' project is one.

Independent research commissioned by Nasc, [Invisible People: The Integration Support Needs of Refugee Families Reunified in Ireland](#), highlighted the need for post-arrival orientation and integration supports for migrant and refugee families. As a result, Nasc developed the 'New Beginnings' project, which aims to alleviate and prevent poverty

and deprivation by ensuring that the basic and essential needs of certain groups of families are met. In particular, the project targets families and children who arrived in Ireland through family reunification and children of families transitioning out of 'Direct Provision' (reception centers) into new homes, lives and communities. The project is social work led, holistic in nature, working in partnership and with the empowerment of young people and families at its core.

The front-line work is predominantly around access to housing, social welfare, healthcare, education, moving costs, the prevention of poverty and deprivation through meeting children, young people and family's basic needs as well as the provision of English language support, orientation, resettlement and integration supports. Since its piloting in 2021, New Beginnings has supported 32 families from 18 different countries of origin.⁴⁶

44 Nasc, 2020, [Our History](#), webpage [checked on 1 February 2024].

45 Email exchange with Nasc, 27 June 2024.

46 Email exchange with Nasc, 27 June 2024.

Stockholm, Sweden: A drop-in center and safe space for children and young people

Region, city or country	Stockholm, Sweden
Format	Programme/service
Involved partners	Stockholms Stadsmission
Target group	Lone young people up to 25 years old, both undocumented and young people with a temporary residence permit
Website	www.stadsmissionen.se/motesplats-city

Stockholms Stadsmission runs several drop-in centers for people facing social exclusion in Stockholm, Sweden. Over the years, they developed specific support for both undocumented people⁴⁷ and for children/young people transitioning into adulthood who are or who face homelessness.

One drop-in center welcomes only migrant children and young people, regardless of gender, on specific days (two afternoons per week). On those days, the children and young people can access the center's services, including those meeting daily needs (showers, laundry services, clothing and food), a computer and free wifi. Crucially, the center is also a safe space for young people to meet peers, hang out and talk to professionals (social workers and lawyers). The team also organises leisure activities during school breaks. When someone new drops in, the team works with them to create a plan for their immediate future, going over options that the young person has. To do this, Stockholms Stadsmission's lawyer helps the young people consider and assess potential grounds for stay and submit new residence

applications, if appropriate. The team does their best to make the young person feel heard and ensure that they know their options and can make an informed decision.

While Stockholms Stadsmission initially limited this tailored support to those younger than 21, they quickly noticed that people's need for it persisted into their 20s. The age limit was subsequently increased to 25.⁴⁸

Over 1,000 children and young adults were assisted since the center's establishment in 2016, with 301 young people assisted in 2023 alone.⁴⁹

47 Stockholms Stadsmission runs a specific project, called "Who am I tomorrow?", to help undocumented people reflect on their past, present and future. For more on this project, contact Stockholms Stadsmission.

48 This profile is based on an interview with staff of Stockholms Stadsmission on 5 February 2024.

49 Email exchange with Stockholms Stadsmission, on 23 June 2024.

Sweden: Supporting young LGBTQIA people regardless of residence status

Region, city or country	Sweden
Format	Project
Involved partners	RFSL Ungdom
Target group	Young queers between the ages of 15 and 30 with experience of migration, either personally or by previous generations, including undocumented people, asylum seekers, students, EU citizens, people with a work permit, etc.
Website	www.newcomersyouth.se www.rfslungdom.se

RFSL Ungdom⁵⁰ (Queer Youth Sweden) is a Swedish youth federation dedicated to advocating for LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual) people's rights. Their story began in 1999 when four young people met at the RFSL library in Stockholm, driven by the shared vision to create a place by and for young LGBTQIA people.⁵¹

RFSL Ungdom is actively engaged in advocacy efforts concerning LGBTQIA migrants within asylum and migration law. Initiatives as "Attention Detention"⁵² and "Not alone in Europe"⁵³ raise(d) awareness through publications, shedding light on the experiences of young migrant LGBTQIA individuals in detention and within broader European society, respectively. In 2016, RFSL initiated the Newcomers Youth (NCY) project⁵⁴ to enhance the mental well-being of LGBTQI migrants, irrespective of their residence status. This member-led network served as a confidential meeting place where LGBTQI youth with an experience of migration, whether personal or through previous generations, could connect with

peers, group leaders and legal representatives. The project facilitated peer-to-peer support and offers a platform for leisure activities, discussions, creative workshops, and games tailored to the members' preferences. In addition to fostering community, the project provided essential information on asylum procedures, the rights of asylum seekers (including healthcare, education, and accommodation) and mental health support.

Although the NCY project has ended, it continues to operate as a network. Many services such as meeting places, legal advice, and mental health support remain available thanks to a ongoing collaboration with RFSL and the sibling network Newcomers. The difference is that these services are now open to all ages and do not specifically target young people.

50 RFSL Ungdom, [Vår Historia](#), webpage [checked on 21 August 2023].

51 RFSL Ungdom is a "democratic membership movement," which means members have the right to participate, submit proposals, take part in decisions at the local associations' annual meeting and nominate themselves for positions of trust. Anyone up to 30 years old who supports the purpose of the organisation can become a member. The members are connected to one of the ten local associations. Source: RFSL Ungdom, [Organisation](#), webpage [checked on 31 August 2023].

52 Newcomers Youth, [Attention Detention](#), webpage [checked on 1 February 2024].

53 Newcomers Youth, [Not alone in Europe](#), webpage [checked on 1 February 2024].

54 Newcomers Youth, [Home page](#), webpage [checked on 1 February 2024].



Care and aftercare

Flanders, Belgium: extended housing, care and support for unaccompanied care leavers irrespective of residence status

Region, city or country	Flanders, Belgium
Format	Programme/service
Involved partners	Minor-Ndako and others
Target group	17-to-25-year-olds who, as unaccompanied children, were placed in care
website	www.minor-ndako.be

See also “Flanders, Belgium: supporting unaccompanied children and young people transitioning into adulthood holistically” in the chapter on figuring things out and shaping the future

Minor-Ndako vzw is a youth care organization recognized and subsidized by the Youth Care Agency of the Flemish Community (Opgroeien). The organisation was founded in 2000 for the care and guidance of unaccompanied children.⁵⁵ It has since grown to support unaccompanied children, former unaccompanied children (care leavers) and socio-economically disadvantaged Belgian children and their families. In line with child protection policies and principles, the organisation offers residential and ambulatory (outpatient⁵⁶) care regardless of the child's or young person's residence status.⁵⁷

Flemish regional care and aftercare policies foresee extended care for young people who are at the end of their time period in child/youth care. This support used to end on a person's 21st birthday.

Following the death by hardship of a young care leaver in 2016,⁵⁸ Flanders broadened the possibilities to extend care for four more years (until the individual's 25th birthday).⁵⁹ A mandatory part of the care and aftercare is the development of a growth- or support plan,⁶⁰ either during the child/young person's stay in care or as part of the ambulatory care they receive. Preventing homelessness is an essential part of this plan, regardless of the young person's residence status.

Young people who live independently or want to take the step towards independent living, who have an ongoing residence application procedure or have received a refusal, who do not have a paid internship or job to meet their own needs, and whom who do not yet have a clear, sustainable plan for the future, can apply for financial support.

55 Minor-Ndako, [Wie zijn wij?](#), webpage [checked on 26 June 2024].

56 Please note the children and young people are not patients; 'outpatient' is added to clarify by drawing a parallel.

57 Minor-Ndako, [Wat we doen](#), webpage [checked on 26 June 2024].

58 De Standaard, 2 September 2016, [Het tragische levenseinde van instellingenkind Jordy](#), [checked on 24 November 2021].

59 It used to end on the 21st birthday. Sources: Jeugdhulp, 2017, [Actieplan jongvolwassenen: Jeugdhulp](#), webpage [checked on 24 November 2021]; Jeugdhulp, 3 April 2019, [Het actieplan jongvolwassenen: een stand van zaken](#); email correspondence with Minor Ndako on 20 June 2024.

60 'Groe- en ondersteuningsplan.'

This financial support amounts to approximately 1,238 euros per month.⁶¹ Minor-Ndako helps the young person manage this financial support in line with their individual plan: to acquire housing, schooling, food, clothing and transportation, to apply for a residence permit, to meet health and mental health needs, to engage in leisure activities, etc.⁶²

Minor-Ndako supports about 200 unaccompanied children per year. About ninety receive ambulatory youth care and live in small houses rented on the private rental market, in Flanders and Brussels, Belgium regardless of their residence status. Fifty four of these are reserved for unaccompanied young people with a residence status, care leavers and young people who lived in reception centers or foster care before turning 18. The other 36 spaces are reserved for former unaccompanied children who had been placed in care (child protection) before turning 18, irrespective of residence status.⁶³ Minor-Ndako also has three 'Kleine Wooneenheden'⁶⁴ as part of this array of ambulatory care for care leavers: small-scale housing units where former unaccompanied children live together. One of them, Future Proof, which Minor-Ndako manages together

with Oranjehuis vzw,⁶⁵ houses undocumented young people and young people who received (a) negative decision(s) on a residence permit application.⁶⁶

Minor-Ndako's goal is to make the children and young people in their care self-reliant and conscious of their options and choices. Their support to undocumented young people is based on several pedagogical principles, which they've laid out in an overarching framework: avoiding dependency while providing outreach care as long as necessary; nurturing self-sufficiency and self-determination by focusing on supporting the young person in achieving the goals they have set for themselves; fulfilling their right to transparent information regarding all life domains; and helping the young people prepare for their life after leaving Minor-Ndako's care.⁶⁷

61 This financial support, called 'verblijfssubsidie', is a daily allowance equal to the living wage ('leefloon') and equals about 40,71 euro per day as of 1 July 2023 (~1238 euro/month). (Source: Opgroeien, 23 September 2023, [Omzendbrief Aanpassing van het leefloon m.i.v. 1 Juli 2023](#)). It is given to children in care and care leavers who request it before their 18th birthday, who receive ambulatory care and who cannot access financial support from the OCMW, either because of their age or their residence status. (Source: email exchange with Minor-Ndako, on 20 June 2024).

62 Email exchange with Minor-Ndako on 20 June 2024; Presentation "Minor-Ndako: niet-begeleide minderjarige vreemdelingen die meerderjarig worden" on 26 October 2021, as part of CESSMIR lecture series "[Toekomstgericht werken met en voor mensen zonder wettig verblijf.](#)"

63 At the time of writing, about 96 were living in a 'KWE' ('Kleine WoonEenheid'; see next footnote) or in a 'CBAW' system ('Contextbegeleiding i.f.v. Autonom Wonen' / young people live in a private housing unit on their own, while getting support from Minor-Ndako). The remaining children and young people live in residential care run by Minor-Ndako and partners. Source: email exchange on 20 June 2024 and on 26 June 2024.

64 In 2019, the Flemish Youth Care Agency Opgroeien created 87 places within small-scale housing units, called 'Kleine Wooneenheden (KWE)'; for young people with little or no supportive context. Four to six young people aged 16 to 25 live together in them while receiving ambulatory support. Source: Opgroeien, [Jongvolwassenen](#) [checked on 16 July 2024].

65 Oranjehuis vzw, [Team Jongvolwassenen](#), webpage [checked on 1 February 2024].

66 See the practice 'Flanders, Belgium: supporting unaccompanied children and young people transitioning into adulthood holistically' in the chapter on figuring things out and shaping the future.

67 Minor Ndako, 1 April 2021, *Pedagogisch handboek: Begeleiding van jongeren in precair verblijf*; email exchange with Minor-Ndako, on 26 June 2024; see also the profile 'Flanders, Belgium: supporting unaccompanied children and young people transitioning into adulthood holistically' in the chapter on figuring things out and shaping the future.

Ireland: child-centered care and aftercare for all

Region, city or country	Ireland
Format	Government service
Involved partners	Tusla Child and Family Agency's Team for Separated Children Seeking International Protection
Target group	Children in care, young people leaving care and young adults who left care.
Website	www.tusla.ie/services/alternative-care/after-care/what-are-aftercare-services/

Unaccompanied children are usually placed in Ireland's mainstream child protection system, Tusla Child and Family Agency ('Tusla'), which has a specialized department for unaccompanied children.⁶⁸ Ireland fundamentally reviewed its care and after care policies in 2015, instating a comprehensive care and after care practice across the board.⁶⁹

Once taken into care by Tusla, an unaccompanied child⁷⁰ is assigned a social worker, who develops a care plan in line with the child's needs. The Tusla social worker also oversees steps towards regularizing the child's residence status, determining if they have access to international protection or other grounds for stay.⁷¹

By the time the child turns 16.5 years old (or immediately if the child is older when they enter care), the child gets connected to an aftercare worker who will gradually prepare the child's transition into adulthood together with their social worker. The aftercare worker assists the child until they turn 21 or, if they remain in full-time education, training or apprenticeship, until they turn 23.

The aftercare worker is assigned regardless of the child's residence status,⁷² plans their aftercare and assesses the child's/young person's needs, necessary psychosocial, education and employment support, and helps with family reunification.⁷³

68 Team for Separated Children Seeking International Protection.

69 With the introduction of the Child Care Amendment Act of 2015, after which Tusla published their [National Aftercare Policy for alternative care](#) (2017). The policy and its accompanying documents can be found on Tusla, [National Aftercare Policy for Alternative Care](#) (webpage).

70 Note that children of undocumented parents or parent with an insecure status can also be placed in care if a judge requires it.

71 The child's social worker is responsible for regularising the child's residence status (including applying for international protection if appropriate), which may lead to delays if they are not well-informed of the options. Tusla personnel have testified that they expect all unaccompanied children in care to be recognized as refugees, although this does not always happen before they turn 18. Children's Rights Alliance, 2019, [Safe haven. The Needs of Refugee Children Arriving in Ireland through the Irish Refugee Protection Programme: An Exploratory Study](#); Oxfam and Greek Council for Refugees, 2021, [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](#).

72 Oxfam International and Greek Council for Refugees, 2021, [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](#).

73 Children's Rights Alliance, September 2019, [Safe haven. The Needs of Refugee Children Arriving in Ireland through the Irish Refugee Protection Programme: An Exploratory Study](#).

The aftercare worker also monitors the child's / young person's education (attending parent-teacher nights, for instance), teaches them independent living skills (like opening a bank account, managing pocket money) and helps find part time work if wished (which in turns, helps with their independence).⁷⁴ Once turned 18, the young person needs to give explicit, written consent to their aftercare worker for accessing services on the young person's behalf.⁷⁵

While every child placed in care will receive some degree of aftercare, the extent of it depends on their residence status and how long they were in care before turning 18. Children who spent more than 12 months in care before then are allocated an aftercare worker.⁷⁶

Care leavers with a residence permit⁷⁷ will receive financial support⁷⁸ as well as guidance, while undocumented care leavers do not (cannot) receive financial support from the government.⁷⁹ Care leavers whose application is still pending are transferred to standard reception facilities (Direct Provision) for the remainder of the residence procedure.⁸⁰

Young people who do not meet the eligibility criterium for aftercare⁸¹ can access the 'aftercare drop-in service.' This drop-in service currently runs three times a week: Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10:00 to 16:00, with a designated aftercare worker on duty.⁸² The aftercare worker on duty will answer their questions, give guidance, supports their applications and signposts the young people to other local services. In fact, any person with a care history can go to the aftercare drop-in service for advice or guidance, regardless of how old they are.⁸³ Former unaccompanied children have testified that the aftercare social worker is an important figure, who often keeps in touch even after they have fully aged out.⁸⁴ The number of unaccompanied children

74 Conversation with Tusla aftercare social worker, 21 June 2024.

75 Email exchange with Tusla aftercare worker, 28 June 2024.

76 In effect: twelve months between their 13th and 18th birthday. Government of Ireland, 2015, [Child Care Amendment Act 2015](#); Tusla, 2017, [National Aftercare Policy for alternative care](#).

77 E.g., as a refugee, asylum applicant.

78 For instance, access to student grants or housing assistance payments (both a one-time financial grant at the start and monthly payments). What assistance young people are entitled to depends on their residence status (e.g., pending application, etc). Source: Tusla Child and Family Agency, [What are aftercare services?](#) [checked on 25 June 2024].

79 Conversation with Tusla aftercare social worker, 21 June 2024.

80 Note that this transfer can also happen at the end of the ongoing school year to ensure the child/young person remains in school. (Source: Tusla, 2019, [Complex Needs in Aftercare](#) (guidance)). The transition from the 'wrap-around' approach of childcare to the 'hands-off' approach of Direct Provision is reported to produce anxiety. Source: Oxfam and Greek Council for Refugees, 2021, [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](#).

81 12 months in care between the ages of 12 and 18. Government of Ireland, 2015, [Child Care Amendment Act 2015](#); Tusla, 2017, [National Aftercare Policy for alternative care](#).

82 Email exchange with Tusla aftercare worker, 28 June 2024.

83 Tusla, 2019, [Drop in services clinic](#).

84 Oxfam and Greek Council for Refugees, 2021, [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](#).

followed by Tusla has grown exponentially in a couple of years: from 59 in July 2020⁸⁵ to about 200 today.⁸⁶ The increase is mostly due to the influx of unaccompanied children fleeing the war in Ukraine and has strained the system's capacity.

85 In July 2020, 59 asylum seeking unaccompanied children were in the care of Tusla. Source: Houses of the Oireachtas, 2020, [Seanad Éireann Debate – Thursday, 24 September 2020: Unaccompanied Minors and Separated Children](#) [checked on 2 November 2021].

86 At the time of writing, based on exchange with Tusla aftercare worker on 21 June 2024.



'Figuring things out'
and shaping the
future

Belgium: Developing a 'future orientation model'

Region, city or country	Belgium
Format	Methodology
Involved partners	Kruispunt Migratie & Integratie, Antwerps integratiecentrum de8, Intercultureel Netwerk Gent vzw, Centrum voor Algemeen Welzijnswerk Oost-Vlaanderen, Samenlevingsopbouw Brussel project Meeting, Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer Brussel vzw. ⁸⁷
Target group	Undocumented people
Website	Future orientation: Working on meaningful prospects for those with a precarious residence status. Introduction brochure for counsellors

In the late 2000s, organisations from the Belgian welfare, integration and community development sectors developed a methodology/practice to empower and effectively engage undocumented people in migration policies, with the aim to find a durable solution. This '[future orientation model](#)' ('toekomstoriëntering') was developed in an effort to provide more durable assistance to undocumented migrants and look beyond urgent issues such as medical needs, housing or legal queries.⁸⁸

At the time, the methodology consisted of a 3- or 4-day course taken by an undocumented person to reflect and reconsider their future life plans.⁸⁹ The course aimed to provide participants with accurate information about their rights, access to services and migration law. However, the main purpose of the course was to shift people's mindset from survival-mode to more long-term thinking. To enable this shift, the course focused on three aspects: the reason for migrating, the situation one is currently in and one's (possible) future(s).⁹⁰

During the course, people were asked to reflect on these, including their wishes for the future and ambitions for life. The role of the counsellor was to facilitate this reflection process, providing feedback on the feasibility of participants' ideas and possibilities. The aim was to help people look beyond 'residence papers.'

The 'future orientation model' is not just a course but rather a 'holistic perspective on human beings.' It focusses on the ambition and motivation of participants to pursue a better life and builds on this energy to take steps towards that future.⁹¹ The participants must therefore consider all their options – whether that is return, re-migration, regularization or remaining irregular – without being judged.⁹²

⁸⁷ Some of these organisations have since changed names or merged with other organisations.

⁸⁸ Kruispunt Migratie & Integratie, 2014, [Toekomstoriëntering; met preciaire verblijvers werken aan een zinvol toekomstperspectief](#).

⁸⁹ PICUM interview with De8 (ATLAS), 17 July 2019.

⁹⁰ Kruispunt Migratie & Integratie, 2014, [Toekomstoriëntering; met preciaire verblijvers werken aan een zinvol toekomstperspectief](#).

⁹¹ PICUM interview with Meeting (Samenlevingsopbouw), 16 July 2019.

⁹² Antwerps Integratiecentrum De8, n.d., [Toekomstoriëntering aan Mensen Zonder Wettig Verblijf: Een traject voor groepswork en individuele begeleiding](#); De8, n.d., [Toekomstoriëntering met preciaire verblijvers: Een werkboek voor groepswork en individuele begeleiding](#).

Since its inception, the 'future orientation model' and different iterations of it have spread to other organisations, regions and countries. In Amsterdam, Eindhoven and Rotterdam, the Netherlands, for instance, undocumented people can enter a

six-month long future orientation course.⁹³ And, while the methodology was not developed with children and young people in mind, it has impacted organisations and projects working with them in Belgium and beyond.

Flanders, Belgium: supporting unaccompanied children and young people transitioning into adulthood holistically

Region, city or country	Flanders, Belgium
Format	Programme/service
Involved partners	Minor-Ndako and others, including Oranjehuis vzw
Target group	Unaccompanied children placed in care and undocumented young people who, as unaccompanied children, were placed in care
Website	www.minor-ndako.be www.oranjehuis.be

See also 'Flanders, Belgium: extended housing, care and support for unaccompanied care leavers irrespective of residence status' in the chapter on care and aftercare

Minor-Ndako supports about 200 unaccompanied children and former unaccompanied children with a variety of residence statuses per year. Most of them receive ambulant (outpatient) youth care and live in small housing units on the private rental market in Flanders and Brussels, Belgium.⁹⁴

Turning 18 brings a lot of uncertainty and less protection for those who are undocumented or have a precarious residence status (i.e., a temporary or a provisional residence permit). Therefore Minor-Ndako

has delved deeper into migration law, pedagogical principles and frameworks to offer these young people more tailored guidance on all life domains. The organisation developed a framework for caregivers, based on the experiences of their own social workers, exchanges with different partners and, most importantly, the input from young people themselves.⁹⁵ The framework is a living document and gets updated and revised.

93 Goedwerk Foundation, [Toekomstoriëntatie](#), webpage [checked on 4 July 2024].

94 See profile 'Flanders, Belgium: extended housing, care and support for unaccompanied care leavers irrespective of residence status' in the chapter on care and aftercare for more info.

95 Minor Ndako, 1 April 2021, *Pedagogisch handboek: Begeleiding van jongeren in precair verblijf*. However, this document is updated.

When accompanying a child/young person, Minor-Ndako starts discussing the future and all it entails with them well before their 18th birthday. As for all children placed in care in Flanders, a 'growth- and support plan' is developed with children 16 and above.⁹⁶ This plan looks at all facets of life, including resolving their residence status if needed, and is developed with the unaccompanied child, their guardian, and (if possible) the child's family. Then, six months before the 18th birthday, Minor-Ndako starts making the upcoming transition more palpable for the child. They discuss where they will sleep and how much that would cost, whether the support the child receives needs to be extended or whether they can stand on their own two feet, etc. They use different methods, including the 'future orientation' methodology which analysis all options available to them: (re)integration in the country of origin, (re) integration in another country, grounds for stay in Belgium and undocumented stay in Belgium.⁹⁷

Minor-Ndako's goal is to make the children and young people in their care self-reliant and conscious of their options and choices. Their support to undocumented young people is based on several pedagogical principles: avoiding dependency while providing outreach care as long as necessary; nurturing self-sufficiency and self-determination by focusing on supporting the young person in achieving the goals they have set for themselves; fulfilling their right to transparent information regarding all life domains; and helping the young people prepare for their life after leaving Minor-Ndako's care.⁹⁸

Located in the city of Kortrijk, Belgium, Future Proof⁹⁹ is a collaboration between Oranjehuis vzw and Minor-Ndako. Geared towards 17-to-25-year-olds, Future Proof offers a comprehensive one-year program providing support, guidance and resources to assist them in future orientation towards sustainable independence and stability. As they explain themselves, "We dwell on the legal possibilities for a durable solution, but also give space to consider the three other possible future perspectives: transit, voluntary return and undocumented stay."¹⁰⁰ They use both group and individual discussions to analyse avenues and develop plans. If the young person is regularised and secures a residence permit, they flow into 'Future Proof +' (FP+).¹⁰¹ There, the new questions that come with that residence status are addressed: "Where can I live? Where do I want to live? What is possible around and what are the consequences of family reunification?"¹⁰²

96 'Groeï- en ondersteuningsplan' in line with the overarching government policy: Opgroeien, [Jongvolwassenen in precair verblijf: Enkele kapstokken in visie](#). See also Opgroeien, [Jongvolwassenen](#), webpage [checked on 16 July 2024].

97 Email exchange with Minor-Ndako, on 25 June 2024. Consult the profile 'Belgium: Developing a 'future orientation model' in the chapter on figuring things out and shaping the future in this collection for more on this methodology.

98 See also Minor Ndako, 1 April 2021, *Pedagogisch handboek: Begeleiding van jongeren in precair verblijf*.

99 Minor-Ndako, [Future Proof](#), webpage [checked on 1 February 2024]; Oranjehuis vzw, [Team Jongvolwassenen](#), webpage [checked on 1 February 2024].

100 Quote taken from Oranjehuis vzw, [Team Jongvolwassenen](#), webpage [checked on 6 June 2024]. Own translation.

101 Run by Oranjehuis vzw.

102 Oranjehuis vzw, [Team Jongvolwassenen](#), webpage [checked on 1 June 2024].

Eindhoven, The Netherlands: Providing future orientation for aged out unaccompanied children

Region, city or country	Eindhoven, the Netherlands
Format	Programme/service
Involved partners	Vluchteling in de Knel (VidK) and Eindhoven municipality
Target group	Undocumented people whose asylum application was rejected, including aged out unaccompanied children
Website	www.vidk.nl

The organisation Vluchteling in de Knel (VidK)¹⁰³ supports, with the help from the municipality of Eindhoven, people whose asylum application was rejected and other undocumented migrants, including adolescents. VidK believes that every person has the right to a humane, dignified life. Social and legal assistance is offered, as well as mediation towards healthcare services.

A specific project for aged out unaccompanied children called 'Future Perspective' ran from 2006 to 2015 and supported 128 young migrants.¹⁰⁴ Since then, the youth-specific programme was absorbed in the organization's wider functioning, partly to allow young undocumented migrants who arrived after their 18th birthday and those who grew up in The Netherlands with their family to participate.¹⁰⁵ VidK believes that these young people share many doubts, questions and challenges because of their stage of adolescence and their residence status.

Therefore, VidK offers a year-long¹⁰⁶ intensive counselling to work towards a durable solution and sustainable future. In line with the principles of future orientation,¹⁰⁷ this could include: remaining in the Netherlands, returning to their country of origin or integrating in/returning to a safe third country.¹⁰⁸ VidK also discusses the option of remaining undocumented in the Netherlands and the consequences of that decision. VidK stresses that all options are explored.

The first months of VidK's counselling are focused on gaining trust, creating safety and stability, and snapping the young person out of survival mode: "How will I eat today? Where will I sleep tonight?" If the young person does not have a safe place to stay, VidK can offer shelter temporarily. This is based on the 'housing first principle' that assumes that a safe place, security and tranquility are needed to focus and work on one's future. If medical care is needed, this may be arranged as well.

103 Vluchtelingen in de Knel, [Over VidK, webpage](#) [checked on 10 October 2023].

104 Email correspondence with VidK, 16 July 2024.

105 See also PICUM, 2022, [Turning 18 and undocumented: supporting children in their transition into adulthood](#), pp. 32-33.

106 VidK usually supports people for approximately one year.

107 See the profile 'Belgium: Developing a 'future orientation model'' in this chapter for more information.

108 Where the person has a pre-existing residence permit or a right to reside.

In the second phase of the counselling, the young persons' talents, skills, aspirations, and goals are specified and assessed together with them. The options for future orientation, as mentioned above, are discussed individually and/or in a group setting. Being able to exchange their experiences and ideas with people in comparable situations, can help the adolescent/young person make more informed decisions about their future. A plan with personal goals, and how to achieve them, can be made, based on trust and shared control. VidK also supports the young people in achieving their goals and developing their skills by: learning to deal with emotions, gaining self-confidence, being held accountable, building a network, informing them about their rights, etc. Options for education or other forms of daytime activities are included.

When there are reasonable grounds for obtaining a residence permit in the Netherlands or another (third) country, VidK offers legal aid, directs the young person towards and helps with applying for the right procedure. If the adolescent wishes to return to their country of origin, assistance is offered through VidK's Back Home Project so that voluntary return is well prepared and executed. VidK stays in contact with the young person and offers them (limited) support in the first six months after return. This can help to give the adolescent the trust of taking this challenging step together with VidK, without feeling abandoned.

The last phase of the counselling focuses on becoming increasingly independent, within the "future orientation" option that is chosen. If, after counselling, the young migrant is not self-reliant enough and is still undocumented, the migrant integrates into the local Bed, Bath, Bread+ facility for undocumented adult migrants.¹⁰⁹

109 Several villages and cities of the Netherlands have BBB+ facilities ('bed-bath-bread (+assistance)') where undocumented people receive basic accommodation and support in regularising their residence status. These facilities were set up following a 2014 judgement by the Centrale Raad van Beroep (14-5507 WMO-VV). For more on BBB+ and a social-work approach to case management, see PICUM, IDC and European Alternatives to Detention Network, 2020, [Implementing Case Management based Alternatives to Detention in Europe](#).



Outreach
work

Paris, France: Reaching out to homeless, age-contested children and young people

Region, city or country	Paris and Île-de-France, France
Format	Programme/service
Involved partners	Utopia 56
Target group	Unaccompanied children whose age has been contested by the government and are homeless ¹¹⁰
Website	www.utopia56.org

See also 'France: Support and accommodation for unaccompanied children refused by child protection services' in the chapter on housing and accommodation

Utopia 56¹¹¹ is a citizen-led organisation, established in 2015 to help coordinate volunteers in the 'Calais jungle'¹¹² in Pas-de-Calais, in the north of France. When the encampment was dismantled in 2016, the organisation shifted its focus to helping exiled people and homeless migrants, regardless of residence status, through eight branches in France. Their two main activities are humanitarian aid and emergency sheltering. This includes visiting and assisting people who sleep rough, in squats, in camps and informal settlements. This work is done through outreach work, by going on the streets ('maraudes'), looking for people who live in squats and camps and distribute food, material and information. Utopia 56 does about 2,500 'maraudes' per year, and relies on its 3,000 volunteers across the nation.¹¹³

For example, Utopia 56 has a daily meeting point and time for homeless unaccompanied children¹¹⁴ and homeless, undocumented families with children in

the center of the capital, Paris. There, people receive food and basic supplies (blankets, hygiene products, clothing, etc), are registered within Utopia 56's system and – if possible – relayed to a solution for the night. Utopia 56 volunteers either bring the young person (or family) to a host family or accompany them to a building or public space to stay for the night, as there is more safety in numbers. Equally important, Utopia 56 volunteers answer questions the young people have, directing them towards lawyers and other organisations for health and mental health support and/or legal aid.

At the Franco-British border, Utopia 56 carries out outreach campaigns along the coastline to help people who are stranded after a failed attempt to cross the Channel.¹¹⁵

110 Utopia 56 also supports undocumented, homeless families with underage children through similar work.

111 Utopia 56, Notre Histoire, webpage [checked on 1 February 2024]; Utopia 56, Notre Organisation, webpage [checked on 1 February 2024].

112 The region has a long history of formal and informal encampments for and by migrants. The 'Calais Jungle', known officially at the time as 'Camp de la Lande', was an informal encampment that existed on a former landfill from January 2015 to October 2016. Despite its razing in late 2016, similar informal encampments still exist in the region. A brief chronology until 2016 can be found on BBC, 24 October 2016, [The history of the Calais 'Jungle' camp and how it's changed since 1999](#) [checked on 10 July 2024]. For more info on the living conditions since then, see for instance Human Rights Watch, 2021, [Enforced misery. The degrading treatment of migrant children and adults in Northern France.](#)

113 Utopia 56, [Utopia 56 – Agir pour un accueil digne et solidaire](#), video; Utopia 56, [Utopia 56 - Mobilisation citoyenne au côté des personnes en situation d'exil](#), video.

114 And undocumented, homeless families with underage children and single women.

115 Utopia 56, 2023, [Rapport d'activité 2022](#), p. 9.



Durable solutions
and legal aid

European Union: Guidance on best interests' procedures to identify a durable solution

Region, city or country	European Union
Format	Guidance
Involved partners	IOM, Unicef, UN Human Rights, Save the Children, Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM), the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) and Child Circle
Target group	Policy makers and technical experts designing migration procedures that affect children
Link	Guidance to respect children's rights in return policies and practices: Focus on the EU legal framework

In 2019, IOM, Unicef, UN Human Rights, Child Circle, ECRE, Save the Children and PICUM published [guidance on respecting children's rights in return policies and practices](#) and an accompanying, stand-alone [flowchart](#)¹¹⁶ The innovation of the guidance is the design of a best interests procedure that results in a durable solution: integration in the country of residence, in the country of (the parents') origin or in a third country where the child has a right to reside.

The guidance covers when the question of a possible return of children arises, how to develop a best interests procedure for the identification of a durable solution, and how to implement a return decision in the best interests of a child. It also included a chapter on what to do when the child ages out.

In parallel, members of the Initiative for Children in Migration¹¹⁷ published a [policy paper](#)¹¹⁸ reflecting the same procedure, while PICUM produced an [animation video](#) explaining the procedure.¹¹⁹

116 IOM, UNICEF, UN Human Rights, Child Circle, ECRE, Save the Children and PICUM, 2019, [Guidance to respect children's rights in return policies and practices: Focus on the EU legal framework](#).

117 The Initiative for Children in Migration is an informal network of human rights and child rights organisations working on EU and national level. For more, see www.childreninmigration.eu.

118 PICUM, Child Circle, Don Bosco International, European Network on Statelessness, Missing Children Europe, Danish Refugee Council, World Organisation for Early Childhood Education, Terre des Hommes International Federation, Destination Unknown and Save the Children, 2019, [Durable solutions and the Best interests of the child in the context of return processes](#).

119 PICUM, 2020, [Best interests procedures](#), animation video.

Greece: Case law handbooks dedicated to cases involving unaccompanied children

Region, city or country	Greece
Format	Report / compendium
Involved partners	ARSIS Association for the Social Support of Youth
Target group	Lawyers and legal aid providers
Website	www.arsis.gr

ARSIS – Association for the Social Support of Youth is a Greek NGO specialised in assisting young people in difficulty or danger in Greece. ARSIS advocates for their rights and has a dedicated team of lawyers. They operate in Alexandroupoli, Athens, Kozani, Thessaloniki and Volos thanks to the active involvement of members, volunteers and young people themselves.

To help lawyers that assist unaccompanied children and young people applying for residence permits in Greece, ARSIS has published three case law handbooks: a first covering [2019 to 2021](#),¹²⁰ a second covering the period from [2020 to 2022](#)¹²¹ and third from [2022 to 2023](#).¹²² English translations of important cases are included in the second and third editions.

120 ARSIS, 2021, [ΥΠΗΡΕΣΙΑ ΝΟΜΙΚΗΣ ΥΠΟΣΤΗΡΙΞΗΣ ΑΝΗΛΙΚΩΝ ΑΙΤΟΥΝΤΩΝ ΔΙΕΘΝΗ ΠΡΟΣΤΑΣΙΑ ΝΟΜΟΛΟΓΙΑ ΕΤΩΝ 2019 – 2021](#).

121 ARSIS, 2022, [Children Seeking International Protection: A Case Law Handbook 2020-2022](#).

122 ARSIS, 2023, [Seeking International Protection: A Case - Law Handbook 2022-2023](#).

Cork, Ireland: Free legal assistance and support for adolescents and young people

Region, city or country	Cork, Ireland
Format	Programme/Service
Involved partners	Nasc, the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre
Target group	Young people 14 to 23 years old who have difficulties accessing education, employment, a secure residence status and improving their mental health and wellbeing.
Website	www.nascireland.org/current-projects/connect-migrant-youth-project

See also 'Cork, Ireland: Free support for recently arrived families and children' in the chapter on psycho-social support, peer support and aid

Nasc¹²³ opened its doors in Cork City, Ireland, in 2000 due to the dearth of state-provided services that identified, addressed or attempted to meet the basic and essential needs of the growing migrant community. Nasc serves as a space for migrants seeking independent advice, with its core activity being the provision of free legal services to empower people in realizing their rights. Presently, the organization supports around 1,300 migrants each year.¹²⁴

Through Nasc's frontline work with migrant, asylum seeking and refugee communities over the last 24 years, a number of social work-led programmes have developed.

The Connect Migrant Youth Project¹²⁵ started in 2018 and targets young migrants aged 14 to 23 who may have heightened vulnerability due to adverse experiences, either in their country of origin or in transit. Upon arrival in Ireland, migrant youth experience difficulty in accessing education, employment, mental health care or a secure residence status. Nasc

provides support and assistance with residence permit applications. They also facilitate access to education, employment, accommodation, and health services. Beyond addressing immigration-related concerns, the project strives to alleviate social isolation by fostering connections within communities. Additionally, they provide support to people navigating instances of racism and discrimination. Nasc frequently helps young migrants in overcoming hardships such as homelessness, destitution, or abuse.

The project's services are available to children and young people in care and aftercare services,¹²⁶ those in 'direct provision',¹²⁷ unaccompanied children, aged-out or age-disputed young people. Since 2018, the Connect Migrant Youth Project has supported over 250 young migrants and their families from countries across the world.¹²⁸

123 Nasc, [Our History](#), webpage [checked on 10 July 2024].

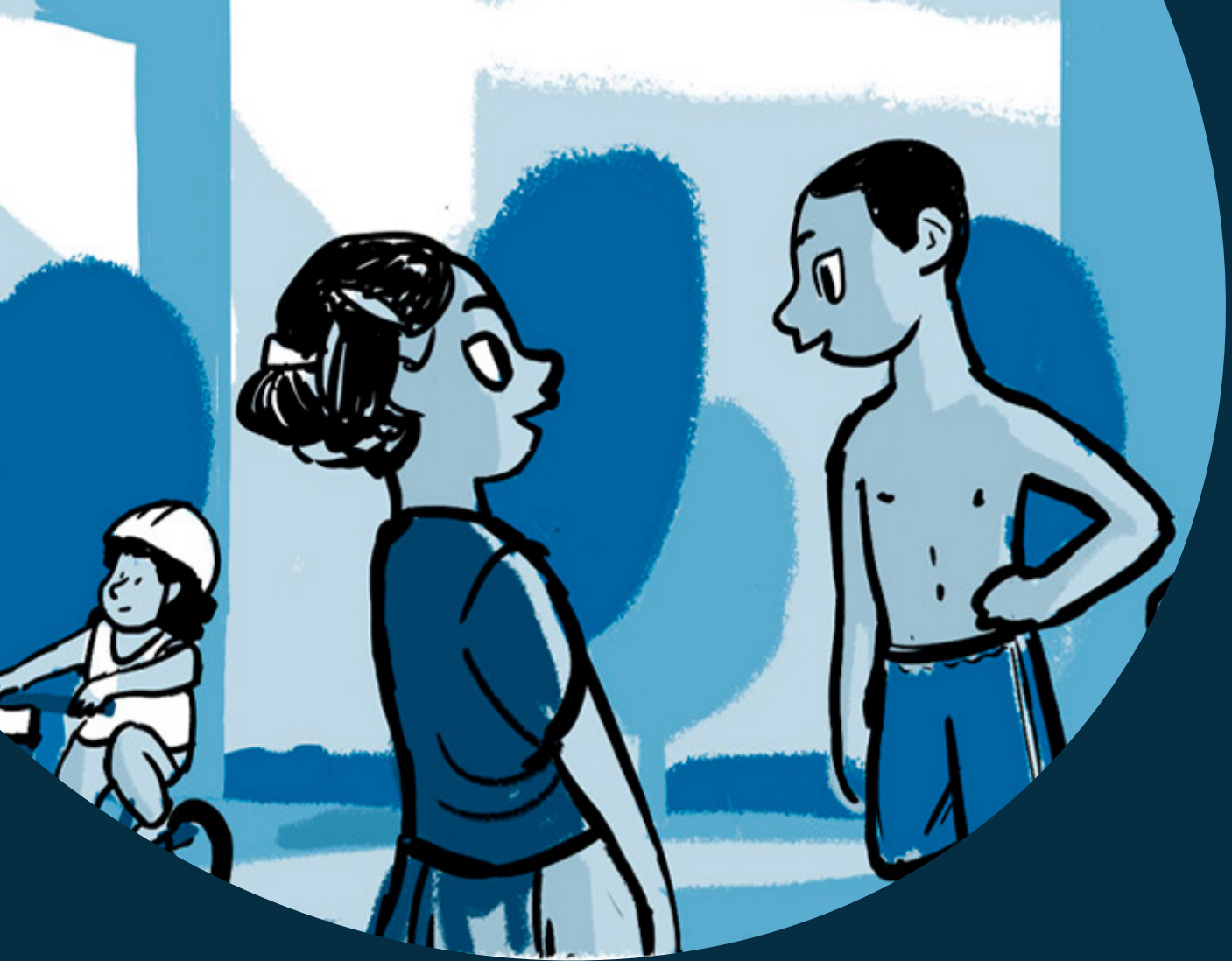
124 Email exchange with Nasc, 27 June 2024.

125 Nasc, [Connect Migrant Youth Project](#), webpage [checked on 10 July 2024].

126 For more on Ireland's policy of aftercare for aged-out unaccompanied children, see Oxfam and Greek Council for Refugees, 2021, [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](#) and PICUM, 2022, [Turning 18 and undocumented: supporting children in their transition into adulthood](#), pp. 30-31; and the 'care and aftercare' chapter in this collection.

127 Reception centres for asylum seekers.

128 Email exchange with Nasc, 27 June 2024.



Participation and emancipation

Graz, Austria: Giving a platform to young people to give trainings

Region, city or country	Graz Austria
Format	Programme
Involved partners	KAMA Graz
Target group	Asylum seekers during their asylum procedure
Website	www.facebook.com/KAMA.GRAZ/about_details

Asylum seekers often face significant barriers to employment in Austria. Because of this, KAMA Graz¹²⁹ embarked on a mission to provide meaningful work opportunities to asylum seekers. This initiative aims to bring structure into the daily lives of those navigating the waiting period and facilitate a smoother transition into the workforce after completing asylum procedures.

From 2015 to 2022, KAMA Graz empowered asylum seekers and migrants to organize and lead courses of their choice, accessible to all interested individuals, either free of charge or through voluntary donations. People were given a platform to offer courses and workshops on a diverse range of crafts, languages, and skills – those they wished to share or showcase. They had the autonomy to determine the content, form, and frequency of the classes, taking into account the demand and support from KAMA members.

KAMA Graz supported the planning, organization of locations, advertising, presentation of trainers/teachers/artists, and advised or assisted when needed. A dedicated multidisciplinary team of volunteers was involved, ensuring that donations went exclusively to the refugee/migrant course leaders.

Participating in these courses or training sessions allowed people to showcase their skills, gain insights into the work structure in Austria, engage in social life and improve their German. By teaching local communities about language, music, crafts, or cooking, the young people were strengthened and, importantly, not cast in the role of aid recipients. Instead, they contributed to the community as teachers and cultural mediators.

The programme yielded teachers who began working independently. Over the years, the trainers offered cultural classes (workshop wood model making, Persian calligraphy), exhibitions (such as Re-stART), language classes, and various sports activities.¹³⁰ The courses attracted a diverse audience of both local residents and refugees, contributing to the social inclusion of young refugees. Post-project, the trained teachers went on to mentor the next group of young people, fostering a sustainable cycle of knowledge transfer.

129 KAMA Graz - Kurse von Asylsuchenden, MigrantInnen & Asylberechtigten, November 2022, [About KAMA Graz - Kurse von Asylsuchenden, MigrantInnen & Asylberechtigten](#) [Facebook], accessed on 12 December 2023.

130 KAMA Graz - Kurse von Asylsuchenden, MigrantInnen & Asylberechtigten, May 2021, [Begleitprogramm](#) [Facebook], accessed on 12 December 2023.

Tuscany and Emilia Romagna, Italy: Involving care leavers in advocacy on adequate housing

Region, city or country	National and local level, with more specific actions in Bologna and Florence
Format	Advocacy action
Involved partners	Oxfam Italy and Agevolando
Target group	Care leavers (unaccompanied children as well as other young adults)
Website	www.agevolando.org www.oxfamitalia.org

Agevolando is a care leaver-led organisation, established in Bologna in 2010 to promote the rights, participation and well-being of care leavers. The organisation, which works with and through care leavers, was established to find solutions to the difficulties young people experienced after leaving (foster) care facilities. Oxfam Italia focuses its policy and programmatic work on migration to fight inequalities which strongly affect migrant people. As part of this, they work with and for unaccompanied children and know the challenges that unaccompanied children transitioning into adulthood have to face.

Oxfam Italy and Agevolando developed a joint project *"In my place. Advocacy actions to support young migrants' access to adequate housing"* (2022-2024). The main objective of the project is to facilitate access to adequate housing for young migrants and Italian 18-to-21-year-old care leavers through advocacy. The governance of social housing is multilevel in Italy, which is why advocacy activities were carried out both at national and local level. However, the project focused most on two regions

(Tuscany and Emilia Romagna) and their capitals: Tuscany (Florence) and Emilia Romagna (Bologna), where both migrant and Italian care leavers face severe challenges in accessing adequate housing.

Specific objectives of the project are: a) influencing policies and funding mechanisms to improve the access to social housing for young migrants and care leavers; b) generating a public debate on discriminatory practices in the real estate and rental sectors; and c) enhancing the participation of affected young people in the advocacy.

London, UK: Brighter Futures empowers the voices of young migrants

Region, city or country	London, UK
Format	Programme
Involved partners	Praxis and Kazzum Arts
Target group	Young people with a migrant background between the age of 18 and 25 and irrespective of residence status
Website	www.brighterfutureslondon.co.uk

Brighter Futures¹³¹ is a peer support group dedicated to amplifying the voices of young people, aged 18 to 25, facing immigration issues. Every Wednesday, the group congregates at Praxis in Bethnal Green, London, providing a space for open discussions on pertinent issues, mutual support and the strategic planning of campaigns and events aimed at addressing challenges and instigating social change.¹³² The gatherings also allow for recreational activities, fostering camaraderie through games and shared meals. In the words of the young people themselves: “Brighter Futures is all about family, food and the feeling like no matter how long you’ve been away there’s always someone there that cares.”¹³³

In the UK, the government policy aiming to create a ‘hostile environment’ for migrants,¹³⁴ particularly undocumented people, has severely limited the choices and control young people have over various aspects of their lives. This, coupled with

narratives steeped in institutionalized racism, has often portrayed young migrants either as victims or as being ‘illegal’. Brighter Futures strives to restore agency and control to young people who find themselves disempowered and disenfranchised due to their circumstances. This is achieved through education on their rights and entitlements, and mutual support in navigating individual journeys to attain a secure residence permit/status. Additionally, the group collectively engages in campaigns advocating for systemic changes.

The group utilizes diverse platforms to disseminate their message. For instance, in 2018 and 2019, they produced a podcast called ‘Migrant Hot Topics’,¹³⁵ where they shared insights and reflections on the systems impacting their daily lives and the influence of migrant images on public perceptions. Their ongoing campaign, ‘Our Home, Our Rights,’ centers on migrant housing challenges, culminating in the

131 Brighter Futures, [About us](#), webpage [checked on 10 October 2023].

132 Brighter Futures, [How can we help?](#), webpage [checked on 1 February 2024].

133 Brighter Futures, [In our own words](#), webpage [checked on 1 February 2024].

134 For more on the UK’s hostile environment policy, see for instance University of Portsmouth, 6 January 2021, [What is the ‘hostile environment’? An introduction to immigration policy in Britain](#) [checked on 10 July 2024].

135 Brighter Futures, [Migrant Hot topics](#), webpage [checked on 5 August 2024].

creation of a poetry collection¹³⁶ and a housing manifesto.¹³⁷ Beyond this, they actively express their perspectives on topics impacting them through various channels, including the BBC, parliamentary meetings, and sessions with the United Nations. Notably, in 2023, Brighter Futures members spoke on BBC News¹³⁸ and BBC Radio 4¹³⁹ on the asylum backlog's impact, and in 2020, they were invited to speak with the All-Party Parliamentary Group¹⁴⁰ on

the No Recourse to Public Funds condition and met with UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Philip Alston, to discuss the poverty experienced by young migrants in the UK.¹⁴¹ Their latest work is the creation of a Zine¹⁴² addressing wellbeing by expressing positive emotions: *"In a world of division and fear, positivity is a radical act responding to a hostile environment which impacts our lives."*¹⁴³

136 Brighter Futures, 2023, [Our home, our rights, a poetry collection](#)

137 Brighter Futures, 2023, [Our home, our rights, housing manifesto](#).

138 Brighter Futures, 24 August 2023, 'I struggle not knowing what the future holds', webpage [checked on 10 July 2024]; BBC, 24 August 2023, 'I struggle not knowing what the future holds' - [Asylum backlog reaches record high](#)

139 Brighter Futures, 24 August 2023, [Interview on asylum backlog on BBC radio 4](#)

140 Brighter Futures, March 2020, [Speaking up in Parliament at the APPG on No Recourse to Public Funds](#), webpage [checked on 1 July 2024].

141 Brighter futures, March 2019, [Meeting with the United Nations](#), webpage [checked on 10 July 2024].

142 "Zine, a small circulation print or online publication that is produced through non-commercial means." Taken from Britannica, [Zine](#) (checked on 4 July 2024).

143 Email exchange with Praxis, 25 June 2024.



Cross-border
exchanges and
peer learning

UAC Futures: Exchanging good practices between Greece, Spain and the Netherlands

Region, city or country	Council of Europe member states with focus on Greece, the Netherlands and Spain
Format	Multilateral project
Involved partners	Council of Europe, European Commission, Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors under the Ministry of Migration and Asylum of Greece, Solidarity Now, Fundación Cepaim-Convive and Stichting Nidos
Target group	People and institutions working with children, especially unaccompanied children, and young people transitioning into adulthood
Website	www.coe.int/en/web/special-representative-secretary-general-migration-refugees/multilateral-project

The multilateral project “Building Futures, Sharing Good Practices: Migrant Children’s Transition to Adulthood – UACFutures”¹⁴⁴ sought to enhance support for unaccompanied children as they navigate the transition into adulthood. Active from January 2022 to June 2023, the project primarily targeted Greece, The Netherlands and Spain. It concentrated its efforts on four areas: psychological support, legal assistance, access to education and the labour market, and access to accommodation.

To foster advancements in these four areas, the project brought together various stakeholders, including from other Council of Europe member states, facilitating the exchange of promising practices and practical solutions in the field. Three study visits, several international workshops, national training sessions and two conferences¹⁴⁵

were organised, and several resources developed, including:

- A [roadmap](#) for a “smooth transition” into adulthood was created based on interviews with young people.¹⁴⁶
- A [Toolkit on the transition of unaccompanied migrant children to adulthood](#) intending to provide people working children and young people transitioning into adulthood with knowledge, concrete tips, tools and ideas to better support the transition. It covers systems strengthening, basic rights, legal support, psychological impact and support, access to education, training and the labour market and housing.¹⁴⁷

144 Council of Europe, 2022, [Building Futures, Sharing Good Practices: Migrants Children’s Transition to Adulthood](#).

145 Presidency of Iceland and Council of Europe, 2023, [Turning 18 with Confidence – Supporting Migrant and Refugee Children in Transition to Adulthood International Launching Event Report](#).

146 Aroni, G., 2023, [Roadmap to adulthood: Milestones towards a smooth transition into adulthood](#), Hellenic Republic, Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors.

147 Council of Europe, 2023, [Toolkit on the transition of unaccompanied migrant children to adulthood](#).

- A [compendium of good practices](#) showcasing good practices from Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands and Spain.¹⁴⁸
- A dedicated, free e-learning [HELP module](#) on transition into adulthood for legal and other professionals.¹⁴⁹
- Three awareness raising videos (available on YouTube): "[I woke up 18](#)", "[I woke up 18: Bubarak's story in his own words](#)" and "[Yesterday I dreamed of you](#)."¹⁵⁰

UAC Futures was coordinated by the Council of Europe, co-funded by the European Union Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Council of Europe, jointly implemented with the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors under the Ministry of Migration and Asylum of Greece, and three civil society organizations: Solidarity Now in Greece, Stichting Nidos in the Netherlands, and Fundación Cepaim-Convive in Spain.

U-CARE: A capacity building project for unaccompanied children in alternative care

Region, city or country	Belgium, Germany and Greece
Format	Multilateral Project
Involved partners	IOM Belgium, IOM Germany, IOM Greece, Pleegzorg Vlaanderen, ARSIS, Fedasil
Target group	Practitioners working with unaccompanied children
Website	https://belgium.iom.int/unaccompanied-children-alternative-residence-u-care

The Unaccompanied Children in Alternative Residence (U-CARE) project, overseen by IOM Belgium, strived to contribute to the development and improvement of alternative non-institutionalized care systems for unaccompanied children in Belgium, Germany, and Greece. To achieve this, IOM Belgium, IOM Greece and IOM Germany worked with a variety of stakeholders, including two local partners:

Pleegzorg Vlaanderen (Belgium) and ARSIS (Greece). The project was funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF 2014-2020) and operated from January 2021 to August 2022. Throughout the project, active efforts were made to include the perspectives of unaccompanied children themselves.

148 Council of Europe, 2023, [The transition of unaccompanied migration children to adulthood: a compendium of good practices](#).

149 Council of Europe, 2023, [The transition of migrant and refugee children to adulthood](#), HELP Online Module.

150 SolidarityNow, 2022, "[I woke up 18](#)", video; SolidarityNow, 2022, "[I Woke Up 18: Bubarak's story in his own words](#)", video; Fundación Cepaim, 2023, "[Yesterday I dreamed of you](#)", video.

The project centred on four main objectives. The first goal focused on mobilizing, recruiting, and training foster families in Belgium and Greece, with a specific emphasis on foster care providers with a migration background and training professionals within national child protection systems. The second aim was to craft a user guide detailing prototypes for alternative living arrangements tailored for older unaccompanied children. The third objective sought to expand the training manual developed under the Fostering Across Border Project for foster care professionals and those working with unaccompanied children. Lastly, the project aimed to raise awareness and encourage dialogue on alternative care for unaccompanied children through national stakeholder dialogues, thematic workshops, and awareness sessions.

Results of the project include:

- Roll-out of a recruitment campaign specifically targeting foster families with a migration background, including a [recruitment video](#),¹⁵¹ social media content, info leaflets and the U-CARE [guidelines on recruiting foster families](#).¹⁵²
- A ['best practices' report](#) on recruiting foster care providers in migrant communities.¹⁵³
- Training manuals in various languages for Belgium, Greece, and Germany, offering guidance on caring for unaccompanied migrant children and providing culturally sensitive care.
- Leaflets containing information on the countries of origin of unaccompanied children and the reasons behind their migration.
- A [guiding document](#) for practitioners at the local, regional, or national level involved in alternative care for unaccompanied children, focusing on those transitioning into adulthood and independence.¹⁵⁴ It includes three care prototypes with a roadmap on how to use and apply the practices and recommendations.
- A [consolidation report](#) outlining existing alternative care options for unaccompanied children and former unaccompanied children.¹⁵⁵ It describes the current reception and care system in Germany, with a specific focus on promising practices for accommodation supporting care leavers, such as semi-independent living units and student/community homes.
- An [analysis report](#) on foster care consultations, based on focus group discussions and interviews with unaccompanied children residing in Belgian residential services, along with focus groups involving care workers, legal guardians, foster care families, and members of diaspora communities.¹⁵⁶

151 IOM Belgium and Luxemburg, 2022, [U-CARE: Foster Care for Unaccompanied Migrant Children - information video \(long\)](#).

152 IOM Belgium and Pleegzorg Vlaanderen, 2022, [Standard Operation Procedures: Recruiting foster care providers in migrant communities](#).

153 IOM, 2021, [Best Practice Report: Recruiting Foster Care Providers in migrant Communities](#).

154 IOM, 2021, [Prototypes Alternative Care: Transitioning to Adulthood](#).

155 IOM, 2021, [Consolidation Report, Alternative Care for unaccompanied migrant children, transition to adulthood](#).

156 IOM, 2022, [Analysis Report, consultations on Foster Care](#)



Government recommendations and strategies

Council of Europe: recommendation and guide to support children transitioning into adulthood

Region, city or country	Council of Europe member states ¹⁵⁷
Format	Policy
Involved partners	Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, Joint Council of Youth, Council of Europe Youth Department and other stakeholders
Target group	Unaccompanied children
Link	Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood

In 2019, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers adopted a [recommendation](#) to the governments of member states with guidelines aimed at ensuring that young refugees receive the necessary support in their transition into adulthood.¹⁵⁸ The recommendation is the only supranational guidance specifically focussing on migrant children's transition into adulthood and was originally proposed by the Joint Council of Youth with input from migrant and refugee-led youth organisations. It covers different aspects, going from access to social services, accommodation and welfare benefits to education and health care and 'life projects.' It also points out the role that youth work can play in this phase of life. The recommendation also influenced the Council of Europe's 2021-2025 action plan 'Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe'.¹⁵⁹

Although the recommendation is limited to recognized refugees, asylum seekers and those that can claim asylum, it must be underlined that Council of Europe's member states are obliged to protect all rights enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights of everyone under their jurisdiction. In other words, the recommendation and its [implementation guide](#)¹⁶⁰ can be understood to also cover undocumented children and young people. The guide includes hands-on guidance and examples of practices from across the Council of Europe region.

157 [List of member states of the Council of Europe](#) [checked on 26 June 2024].

158 Council of Europe, 2019, Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2019\)4](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood.

159 Council of Europe, 2021, [Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe \(2021-2025\)](#). It follows the [Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe \(2017-2019\)](#).

160 Council of Europe, 2023, [Turning 18 with confidence. A practical guide to the Council of Europe Recommendation on Supporting Young Refugees in Transition to Adulthood](#). Also available in [French](#).

Catalonia, Spain: Strategy for the reception and inclusion of young unaccompanied migrants

Region, city or country	Catalonia, Spain
Format	Policy
Involved partners	Co-governance with local municipalities, civil society organisations and other stakeholders
Target group	Unaccompanied children
Link	Estratègia catalana per a l'acollida i la inclusió dels infants i joves emigrats sols

In 2019, the Catalan government introduced its [Strategy for the Reception and Inclusion of Young Unaccompanied Migrants](#).^{161 162} The primary objective of the strategy is, according to the government, to welcome, include, and empower unaccompanied children, and give them a more significant role in shaping their lives and futures. The strategy's development involved professionals working with unaccompanied children, civil society organisations, unions and other stakeholders. In addition, 811 unaccompanied children replied to a survey, which helped the government gain a broader understanding of the different profiles of unaccompanied children in Catalonia.

One aim of the strategy is to involve unaccompanied children more in the decisions that affect their future. This is facilitated through the establishment of a personal file, an individual educational project and an emancipation plan.

Another aim focuses on the emancipation and care for those 18 and up. The strategy includes an expansion of housing options for 16-to-21-year-olds, linked with job placement programmes. In addition, existing programmes focused on training and education are/would be adapted to better address the unique needs of unaccompanied children transitioning into adulthood. Additionally, a mentoring project, which had its pilot phase in the cities Girona and Barcelona, will be extended to the entire Catalan Autonomous Community.

The strategy also aims to raise awareness and counter the stigmatization of unaccompanied children. This work involves a dialogue with the Catalan Association of Journalists, a collaboration which aims to ensure accurate and empathetic portrayals of unaccompanied children in the media.

¹⁶¹ Generalitat de Catalunya, Departament de Treball, Afers Socials i Famílies, 2019, [Estratègia catalana per a l'acollida i la inclusió dels infants i joves emigrats sols](#).

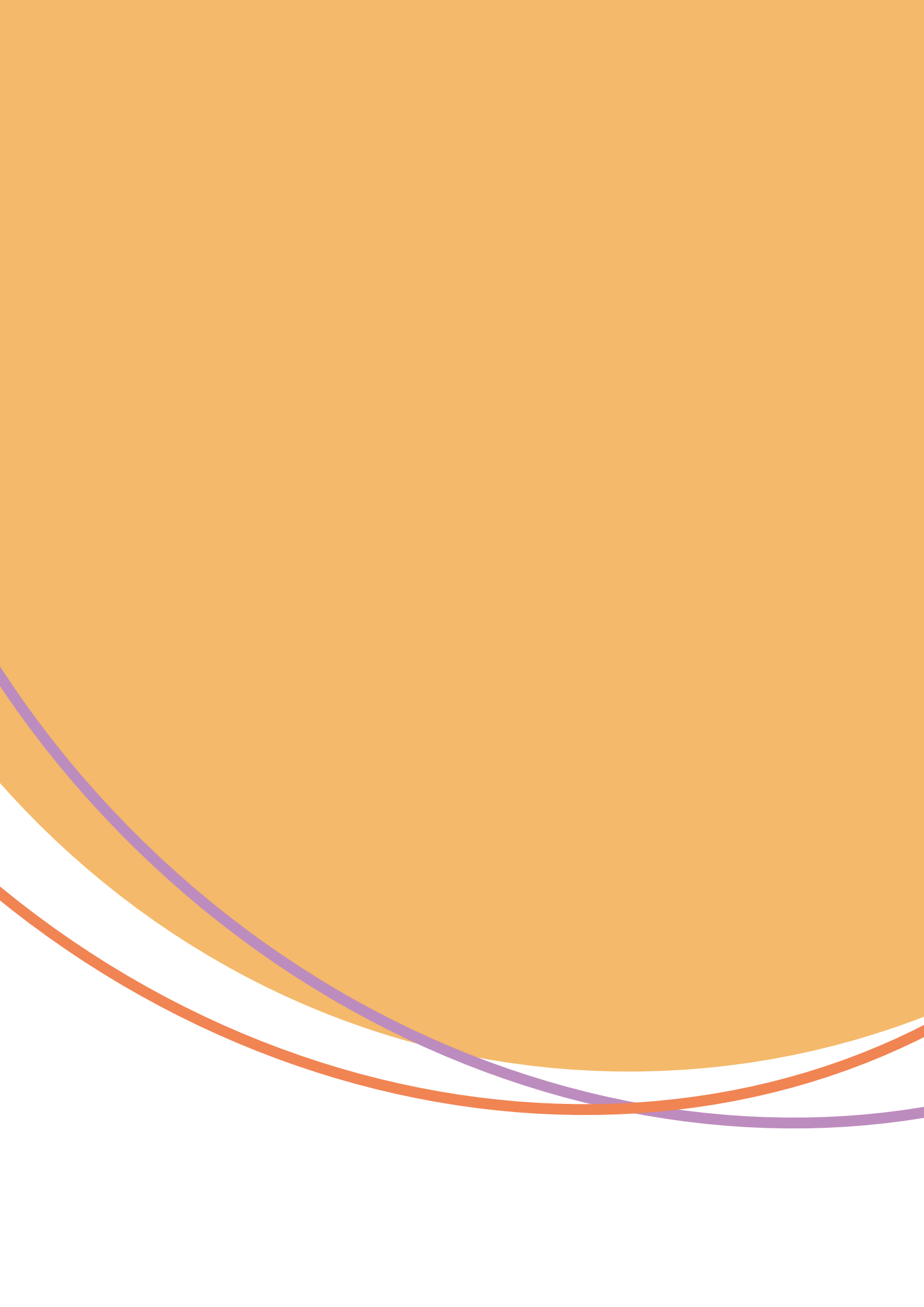
¹⁶² Generalitat de Catalunya, Departament de Drets Socials, 25 January 2019, [El Homrani: "El treball conjunt de Govern, entitats, col·legis, sindicats i món local culmina amb la 1a Estratègia catalana per a l'acollida i la inclusió dels joves emigrats sols"](#).

Annex: Additional resources

The following PICUM resources are relevant to migrant children's transition into adulthood or supporting undocumented children and young people:

- The report '[Turning 18 and undocumented: supporting children in their transition into adulthood](#)' looks into the main issues that cause a precarious transition into (undocumented) adulthood in Europe. It also includes in-depth descriptions of regularisation mechanisms (residence procedures) available to children and young people in Belgium, Germany, Greece, Spain and Sweden in the annex. The report and its executive summary are available in English, French and Spanish on PICUM's [publications page](#).
- The short animation video '[A step into the void: the transition to adulthood of migrant children](#)' can be used for awareness raising. It is available with [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#) subtitles.
- The publication '[Guidance for policy makers and practitioners on regularisation mechanisms for people transitioning into adulthood](#)' can inspire policy makers, advocates and legal practitioners in their work.
- The 2018 '[Manual on regularisations for children, young people and families](#)', its [executive summary](#) and the accompanying [talking points](#) include advocacy campaigns, regularisation mechanisms and programmes specifically targeting children or young people – sometimes specifically linked to their ageing out.
- The animation video '[Best interests procedures](#)' explains what a migration procedure to identify a durable solution in the best interests of the child should look like. It is based on the 2019 joint UN-civil society [Guidance to respect children's rights in return policies and practices: Focus on the EU legal framework](#).
- The toolkit '[Lessons learned in supporting undocumented young people advocating for change](#)' wants to inspire established, non-youth-led organisations to think through their support of (undocumented) young people advocating for change. It is based on discussions at a workshop PICUM organised in September 2022. The toolkit is available in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#).

For all PICUM resources, visit www.picum.org.





PICUM

For undocumented migrants,
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