



Civil Society for Social Inclusion of Unaccompanied Minors in Transition to Adulthood:
Learning Communities for Shaping Transition Interfaces • <http://cisotra.eu>



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WP 1 Initial Study

WP 2.2 National Report Germany:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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General Findings and Model of Transition System

Europe is currently faced with a surge in migration from third countries, which is considered by some as a migration “crisis”. This surge has brought to the surface differences in attitude and general political outlook, which are hard to reconcile. While it is obvious that the situation in the countries of origin of refugees like Afganistan, Irak, Syria, Eritrea, Mali and others is desperate, the legal systems in most European countries admits third country nationals only in cases of individual or collective prosecution.

All refugees, except the few which are admitted along this legal framework, are in a situation of limbo, facing long periods of insecurity of status of residence, having only limited access to the educational system and labour market.

Among the group of refugees are young refugees, in fact the by far largest group, as young healthy and dynamic males, due to the current mostly illegal ways of getting to Europe, have the best chance of arriving. These youth carry the hopes of friends and family, on the one hand to be safe from the immediate effects of war and conflict, as this group is the one drafted to the military and often cruel and illegal militia. On the other hand they carry the hope that a relative who makes it to and in Europe may be able to support its family from there.

Unaccompanied minors are a significant group among these young refugees and although most of them are close to adult age, these young refugees enter the distinct systems of youth protection which exist in all of Europe’s countries.

The paper at hand is the EXECUTIVE SUMMARY of the literature study implemented in Germany in 2018. The purpose of the project CiSoTRA “Civil Society for social inclusion of unaccompanied minors in transition to adulthood – learning communities for shaping transition interfaces “is to contribute to the knowledge about practices which currently shape the policy field in the partner countries, thereby expanding the knowledge about policy options, identify training needs of professionals and youth and to suggest an overall model of fostering a smooth transition of youth from the status of protected minor to adulthood. A special focus is the contribution the civil society is making to these transitioning practices.

The partner countries face a number of specific challenges as well as some common ones.

Greece and Italy are considered by most refugees as countries of transition, therefore the institutions which care for the youth are often challenged with disappearing clients, which have moved on to northern Europe. In Turkey a high number of Syrian refugees forms a, until now, quite distinct community, which only now is being gradually integrated into the Turkish mainstream society. In Italy and Turkey illegal work and the maintenance of the human rights of youth are an issue. In Slovenia the overall number of young refugees is low and while the country is not very used to welcoming refugees, it can study the best practices of other countries to set up a capable system, based on a flexible and knowledgeable educational system. Details of the situation in each partner country are described in the main report.

The Situation in Germany

Germany has accepted a high level of recent intra-EU migration and a surge in refugees since 2015. 30% of refugees are under 18 years old and a further 25% are below 25 years. In 2017 there were 47,990 UAM and further a 15,000 older young adults under guardianship of the youth support services. The youth support services, whose main mission is to care for youth at risk or with additional developmental needs as well as the education system, have responded by developing a number of ad hoc measures, pilot projects and initiatives, which in sum are quite substantial in quality and quantity but have not yet developed into a comprehensive education and transition system adapted to the needs of the specific group of unaccompanied minors, which have to face the challenge to master the transition from education and childhood to adulthood and employment all of their own. The development of a specific consolidated system has been delayed by the extreme quantitative temporality of the phenomenon. While in 2015-2017 the quantity of arrivals has been a huge challenge, the very limited new arrivals now have led to a quick phase-out of structures that

had been built. One of the key challenges for the minors themselves is a high level of uncertainty due to changes in government policy and a greater pressure for immediate deportation of those young adults who are not granted a protected status. This applies to many youth from Afghanistan, a country which the large majority of the civil society deems as unsafe.

In Germany the youth support services put UAM under guardianship and the overall system of measures is complex, but generally favourable vs. the general system for refugees. For youth the guiding principle in all cases is the interest of the individual while for adults a complex balance of entitlement to asylum or protection vs. security and general interests to limit the extent of migration prevails and all provisions, particularly those for applicants without refugee status, are far more basic. Housing is often provided by commissioned NGO organisations (licensed actors of youth protection services) and state vocational schools, which have set up special classes for youth up to 25 years in some federal states) are also main players. Both actors serve minors as well as young adults and German as well as migrant students and are therefore places of integration. Here particularly the state vocational school centres have a high potential to develop integrative practices.

The report highlights the role of the major providers of social and training services, which are run by the catholic and protestant churches as well as secular organisations. These large and resourceful organisations provide comprehensive portfolios of services, which allows for an internal coordination of activities for UAM and young adults alike in spite of a fragmented legal and financing system, which assigns care and integration measures to these organisations. A number of smaller NGOs complement the engagement for UAM. A professional association of organisations (Bundesverband unbegleitete minderjährige Flüchtlinge) acts as a clearing and consultancy office, collecting information and elaborating policy proposals and advice. The well-developed youth support system and a potentially good system of vocational training for young adults in the dual system opens up good opportunities for UAM and youth, the contradictory policies create a situation of uncertainty which weakens prior and current efforts to create an effective overall integration system. Youth without a good perspective of permanent residence are excluded from many measures of education and training and are therefore at a high risk of de-integration and illegality.

In Germany the main qualification gap is that the training of all agents occurs along the institutional responsibilities, while a good transition management requires multi-disciplinary and multi-factorial competences. While the specialist knowledge is mostly excellent, agents need to know more about the related institutions and their approaches in order to contribute to overarching solutions. Training programmes need to focus on an exchange of experiences, multi-disciplinary teams and competences for cooperation.

In Germany main areas of learning for UAM and young refugees include personal and life competences, planning of life projects and building social skills and resilience. In order to be prepared for alternative scenarios, youth in transition also need to maintain competences in their original language, international communication and competences which are universally applicable. Such “transnational competences” must be complemented with orientation in the host culture and the insight that continuous learning and coaching is useful and acceptable.

The partners agree on a number of common points:

- Psycho-social resilience training
- Coping with stress and uncertainty, prevention of violence
- Cultural awareness and integration skills
- Ability to self-orient and self-organise (life-projects)
- Knowledge about institutions and legal procedures
- Knowledge about training and education opportunities
- Vocational skills and knowledge about how to get a job as a prerequisite to leading an independent life
- Training of competences for cultural expression

- Fostering social learning through supporting contacts to civil society organisations
- Organising civic and social participation to include the perspectives and needs of youth

According to the research in Germany, schools must be the focal point of such efforts. Because schools, due to universal obligatory school attendance for children, are an universal contact point to state and societal organisations as a whole, they can potentially be a hub for such holistic approaches or at least be an important part of them.

Being able to play such a role presupposes the insight into the desirability and necessity of such a role as well as the willingness to develop a matching role profile.

Schools traditionally are only responsible for learners at obligatory school age, while many young refugees are beyond this age. Concerning educational prerequisites and personal development level however also older youth can profit from school type resources. School based vocational training also blurs the line between initial school education and adult learning. Transforming schools into more comprehensive training and learning centres therefore is an important point for development.

Teaching, social work and consultancy for transitioning to the general training and employment system are ever more integrated. However institutional separation is still a fact, as is the separation of training of professionals, professional communities and professional learning.

Given the differences in each national situation, the partners have still found a high level of commonalities regarding potential interventions, namely in those areas where the CiSoTRA project aims to make a contribution. One of these fields is the competency development of professionals and volunteers active in the work with young refugees.

While the specialist knowledge of actors is mostly excellent, agents need to know more about the related institutions and their approaches in order to contribute to overarching solutions. Training programmes need to focus on an exchange of experiences, multi-disciplinary teams and competences for cooperation.

Some common fields of learning are clearly visible:

- Providing psycho-social support, dealing with traumatisation, providing orientation, stabilisation and support
- Mutual learning of professionals from different fields, in particular social-work, education, integration to employment oriented training and employment, security and general civil society integration
- Self-care of professionals to prevent burn-out and maintenance of a professional attitude next to human engagement
- Exchange of international good practices in all of these fields
- Ability to cooperate with actors with different attitude and professional logic in order to contribute constructively to a system which allows for the smooth transition to adulthood and full economic and social integration

For all of this, the insight into the basic concepts of diversity, interculturality and inclusiveness as a mission for schools is necessary.

Specific Recommendations for the Situation in Germany

- The current indecision and desorganisation of the political framework puts all actors in an unfortunate situation: perspectives for youth are unclear, political aims in various fields of policy contradictory. No clear perspectives and consequently educational and vocational pathways for youth can be developed as a consequence. Frustration and societal disintegration, in some cases aggression and psychological health problems follow. A clear migration policy needs to be developed to set a clear and transparent framework.

- On operational level many good practices of language learning, socialisation, individualised social work and educational support have been developed which are quite effective, if costly. Currently these investments are lost for a large group of those serviced, if residence is finally not granted. Nevertheless a consistent system of “education chains” can be described. The general system as described by the federal initiative “education chains” can be complemented by standard operating procedures for unaccompanied minors of different age.
- On municipal level it is recommended that a dedicated effort for coordination of the different actors is made. Ideally an overall municipal integration strategy is formulated (as in the case of the Cities of Munich and Regensburg), of which the integration of unaccompanied minors is a part. The various actors must consult each other regularly. As a minimum, mutual information is necessary. As a maximum common policy goals and an overarching case management is implemented, which takes account of the often conflicting legal regulations and develops a case which uses the latitude in the interpretation of the various regulations for the benefit of the individual and according to the aims of the municipal integration strategy. The opportunities provided by various employers (as in the field of care and crafts) can be a strong motivator of such a municipal integration strategy.
- Current integration strategies have been overly two dimensional. The model followed was that either the applicant for protection is granted residence and therefore quickly and fully integrated into the (German) host culture or that protection is not granted and the applicant returns to his/her home country/culture without problem. This scenario turns out to be unrealistic. While many migrants aim to settle in Germany, many also want eventually to return to their home and families, move on or settle somewhere else in Europe. Also the idea of a “native” culture and “home” is unrealistic for many youth with a long history of escape.
- Research and the development of support measures must take more account of such “transnational” biographies, which develop into transnational, inter-cultural spaces and communities (Mecheril). The implications of this phenomenon are yet to be discovered. One of these is the significance of multi-lingual education, the significance of learning internationally valid languages of communication and providing education and educational resources in a format which is not dependent on a high level of proficiency in the contingent host country languages. European curricula and certification of learning outcomes, visual learning aids and good and acknowledged online resources must be developed.
- Currently a full education and professional training are denied when young refugees are not granted protection. As often they can not be deported either, a large group without means for economic independence and without means to return to their countries of origin has formed which will probably cause growing social problems. Education and vocational training along the dual system must not be regarded as a privilege for those allowed to stay, but as a means to support the return of those not allowed to stay. The education and training of a group of young professionals who will be able to contribute to the development of their respective countries could be a outstanding contribution of Germany to the reconstruction of countries suffering from the consequences of war and economic disaster. Operational concepts for the design of such measures need to be developed.
- Actors in the system need more overarching competences in fields like social support in an inter-cultural environment, operating the mechanisms of the complex educational and employment system for migrants, institutional cooperation etc. Overview knowledge on these and related topics must be taught to all actors in the system. To coordinate such activities a new profile of “Migration and Refugee Social and Educational Work Coordination” is needed as an academic profile.