

BE THE CHANGE!

Improving outcomes for care leavers

BUCHAREST 12-13 JUNE 2019
ORGANIZED UNDER THE HIGH PATRONAGE
OF THE ROMANIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE
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**SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES**



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IMPRESSUM

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FOREWORD BY TWO YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED IN TRAINING CARE PROFESSIONALS

I am very happy to be part of this project, and I am glad that this project involves young people with care experience and child protection professionals working together to learn how we can all support the process of leaving the care for young people in the system.

I want professionals to understand that they work in the child protection system and not the other way around. I want professionals to understand that we need time, energy and patience on their part. We need useful tips to prepare for the independent adult life. We need trust and someone to be there for us. We do not need a ton of papers and reports, we need dedicated people who want to help us! We have not chosen this life, we have not decided anything for our lives so far. We need professionals to support our participation in decisions that affect our future. I trust that through this training, things will change a bit, and professionals will understand that we really need them!

I have learned that not all professionals are prepared to work in difficult situations. Not all know how to manage their emotions, and so the children are left to deal with their frustrations. I have learned that in the system, professionals need help. They need supervision and monitoring to help them in their everyday work.

We need to be allowed to make life-related decisions at the age of 14 at the latest. We need health education, financial education, we need to learn the rights and obligations of citizens, and we have to be supported to study. As we approach the age of 18, we want to look for alternatives, a home, a job if we do not study, and join a family doctor, be counseled and supported after leaving the system.

Andreeas

Social worker

President of the Council of the Institutionalized Youth

Some of us are born into a family where they are loved and cared after and supported in any possible way. But some of us don't have this opportunity. They are born into unstable families who may not be able to give the love and the support children need so desperately to grow from a small seed into a pretty flower. Every child deserves unconditionally to be cared after. If it is not the parents who take this role, it is others who take their place and who try to support the child in the best way they can. But as we're all humans, no one is perfect and there are times, when the support of a child fails. To improve the support of a child, why then not working together with young people with care experience, who grew up in this system and may be able to tell from their human and personal perspective what they may have needed? With the exchange between the caregivers and the care leavers, we combine the two sides and we could create a new way for providing a better care system for all the children who will arrive there after us.

It was a special and sometimes surprising experience for us all, to share with the professionals the obstacles we faced while living in and leaving care. We weren't seen as people who only complain about something, but as individuals who want to help and be part in this project.

We would love to be a part of this change, to help to improve the future lives of many young people. Every child deserves to become a flower.

Fabienne

Care Leaver

YouthLinks! Administrator and Speaker
of the Austrian Young Experts Group

CALL to ACTION¹ **BE THE CHANGE!** **‘LEAVE NO CARE LEAVER BEHIND’**

2019 marks an important year for children’s rights with the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 10th anniversary of the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development states to ‘leave no one behind’ – we commit to ‘leaving no care leaver behind’ and to act now to ensure full respect, protection and fulfilment of their rights:

Action 1: REALISE CARE LEAVERS’ RIGHTS IN THE LAW² **- at EU³, national, regional and local levels**

- a.** Ensure care leavers with a migration background have the same rights and access to support and services as others⁴
- b.** Allocate a specialised person of reference for each young person in alternative care as a minimum from age 16 to 24 in order to support them throughout the process of transitioning into independence
- c.** Anchor the right of care leavers to access child protection/social services after their 18th birthday – a continuum of services is needed, enabling a tailor-made and progressive ageing out of care process depending on individual development and capacity and not on an ‘expiry date’
- d.** Make ‘Pathway Planning’⁵ and its regular review mandatory from age 16-24 (or 26)⁶
- e.** Anchor the right to ‘come back’ for support if and whenever needed
- f.** Anchor the right to be supported throughout education / study / work path – a few failures or change of direction on the way are allowed like for any other young person and do not result in losing support

Action 2: REALISE CARE LEAVERS' RIGHTS in Practice

- a. Secure and encourage full and meaningful participation of care leavers in decisions affecting their lives⁷
- b. Ensure that support to care leavers is provided by professionals in a caring manner⁸
- c. Improve care leavers' access to relevant information (e.g. support the creation and existence of digital platforms which compile all relevant information for care leavers)
- d. Support care leavers in organising themselves in networks or associations to enable them to better connect to peers and supporters, thereby feeling less alone and increasing their capacity to assert and advance their rights
- e. Create a mechanism allowing care leavers to file a complaint in case they experience a violation of their rights – make sure they are informed about its existence and how it can be accessed
- f. Simplify administration and access to services – integrate services better – and improve privacy and data protection in administrative/ counselling/legal proceedings
- g. Up-date basic and ongoing education of care professionals working with care leavers in a way that ensures they can acquire adequate skills – enable professionals to access capacity building initiatives and supervision
- h. Enable young people leaving or having recently left alternative care to participate in training care professionals to help ensure that child protection systems adequately respond to the realities of young people leaving alternative care
- i. Do not separate siblings because one of them is 'ageing out of care'
- j. Improve inter-sectoral working across sectors, such as health, education, accommodation and employment, and with judiciary and legal professionals as well as other essential professionals
- k. Regularly collect and analyse data on care leavers and their situation after care to accurately inform and enable efficient planning and realisation of needed services

Action 3: ALLOCATE ADEQUATE FUNDS FOR REALISING CARE LEAVERS' RIGHTS (in legislation and in practice – at EU, national, regional and local levels)

- a.** Include in the European Social Fund Plus regulations a predictable proportion of funding to strengthen child protection and care systems, including ensuring adequate support for children ageing out of care
- b.** Ensure the regulations of the European Social Fund Plus stipulate the need to reinforce the quality of alternative care for children, including through the establishment of an adequate policy and practice for care leavers
- c.** Create a special fund to support care leavers that is quick to access especially when they find themselves in a financial crisis situation
- d.** Support care leavers in securing decent accommodation – start-up help for first furniture, act as guarantee for rental contracts, cover additional costs (real estate agent fees, provision, etc.)
- e.** Provide free access to health services including specialised support like psychotherapy
- f.** Provide financial support to enable care leavers to study up to their highest potential
- g.** Invest more in the skills, knowledge and abilities of all professionals and caregivers with responsibility to support care leavers, in order to ensure an enabling environment that allows them to undertake their responsibilities with enough resources and to do so in a caring manner

Released in Bucharest on June 13th 2019 by care leavers across Europe and the professionals at their side

ENDNOTES

1. Draft version prior to the conference – the final version will be released after the conference.
2. A good practice to look into is the concept of “corporate parenting” that the UK and Scotland have recently anchored in their laws and which means that duty bearers should be doing everything they can for every child in their care – and every care leaver – to give them the opportunities that other children get. The purpose of “corporate parenting” is to increase the sense of accountability of duty bearers towards care leavers’ well-being. For more info see: <https://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council/policies-plans-and-strategies/health-and-social-care/corporate-parenting-strategy/>
3. The EU is working on a ‘child guarantee’ and has been implementing the ‘youth guarantee’ since 2013. However, care leavers’ special status and complex needs are not fully covered in the youth guarantee. They are at high risk of falling out of those guarantees and being left behind. The ‘child guarantee’ should include the provision of adequate support for care leavers, since children in institutions are one of its target groups.
4. For specific recommendations related to young refugees in transition to adulthood, see the Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood, adopted in April 2019 https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016809416e1
5. A Pathways Approach to leaving care is the initiation and implementation of a process that encompasses all necessary considerations and actions to meet the needs, circumstances and wishes of a young person when planning for and supporting the different stages of their leaving care process - preparing to leave care, transition or semi-independent living and, the move after care to independent living (adapted from Pathways Handbook and Pathways Materials, Scottish Executive, 2004), [Prepare for Leaving Care Practice Guidance](#), p. 68.
6. Up to 24 years old as a minimum, but with the possibility to extend until 26 under certain conditions.
7. Also see the ‘Bucharest EU Children’s Declaration on Child Participation in Decision-Making at National and EU levels’ <https://childrendeclaration.typeform.com/to/h8dSPt>.
8. In the scoping that took place at the start of the project, care leavers highlighted that trust, respect and feeling genuinely cared for are the most important aspects of a relationship between themselves and those that support them.



PART 1

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE

● ‘I would like it to be cheerful and relaxed – not a
● farewell, just a goodbye where you keep in touch with
● the other side, finding a point of contact and not of
● collision. It should be a gradual process, where you stay
● close to each other, help each other, sharing insights and
● points of view. It should be an informal process, based on
● communication, not on screaming in each other’s face,
● finding an excuse for fighting or looking back at the past
● as a hurdle. It should be a long-lasting path. Something
● that lasts over time, because if you care about a person,
● you want to know how he or she is, even afterwards. And
● that’s not always the case.’

● *(Young person with care experience)*

PROJECT OBJECTIVE

Embed a child rights based culture into child protection systems, which improves outcomes for children and young people, in particular in the preparation for leaving care.

How we achieve this objective

Capacity
building of care
professionals

Build a
supportive
network for
care leavers
– digital one-
stop shop
(YouthLinks!)

Awareness
raising and
advocacy

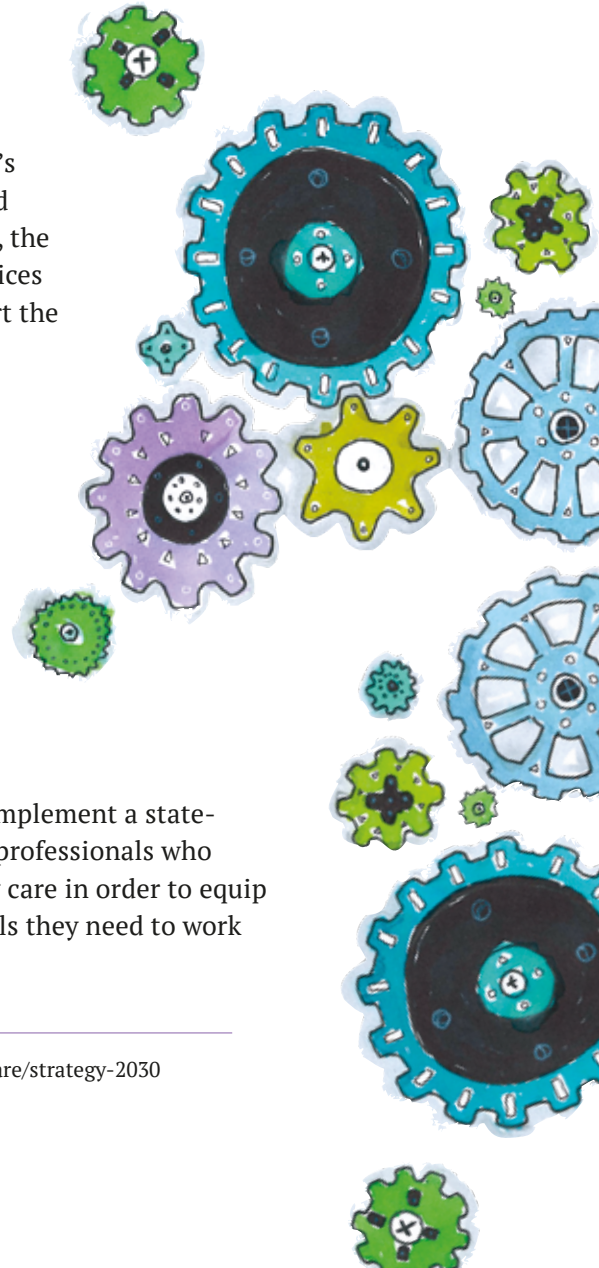
Numerous studies have highlighted that in Europe people with care experience are amongst the most socially excluded groups and are at greater risk of poor outcomes in education, health, employment, criminality, mental health and social functioning in general as compared to the wider population.

Leaving the formal alternative care system is an important phase for both young people and the service providers responsible for their care and development. All the efforts and investments made throughout the child's alternative care path risk being rendered futile if the preparation for leaving care, the transition out of care and aftercare services fail to provide the individualised support the young person needs.

In its Strategy 2030⁸, SOS Children's Villages has committed to modernising youth care with young people's participation and deepening the integration of young people into their communities. SOS Children's Villages' actions are also focused on strengthening care and coaching in order to enable young people to better succeed in life.

This project was set up to develop and implement a state-of-the-art training programme for care professionals who work directly with young people leaving care in order to equip them with the skills, knowledge and tools they need to work with young people in transition.

8. <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/who-we-are/strategy-2030>
Nigel Cantwell, Chrissie



To achieve this goal, we have listened to the voices of young people with care experience from ten European Union countries⁹: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Spain. Through peer-to-peer interviews, these young people have shared what worked for them during the leaving care process, what should remain the same and what should change, as well as what skills, knowledge and experience people who work with care leavers need to have. The research undertaken during the project has shown how young people experience leaving care:

The findings tell us that care leavers experience a range of emotions when leaving their place of care: a mix of happiness and expectations of freedom and independence along with feelings of loneliness, anxiety and, sometimes, fear. Care leavers have concerns about their protection, inadequate levels of support, the unsatisfactory manner in which support is offered, lack of access to services, and insufficient participation in decision-making. They feel their needs and wishes are not being fully met by those responsible for supporting them through the care leaving process.¹⁰

⁹. Five countries in the Prepare for Leaving Care Project (2017-2018) and five countries in the current Leaving Care Project (2018-2020). Both projects co-funded by the REC programme of the European Union.

¹⁰. Nigel Cantwell, Chrissie Gale, Kenny McGhee, and Kate Skinner, *Prepare for Leaving Care Practice Guidance*, (Innsbruck: SOS Children's Villages International, 2017), p. 26.

SCOPING FINDINGS

BEING CARED FOR

an inter-sectoral approach

participation

preparation & support for transition and after care

individuality

independent living

age of leaving care

Leaving Care

TRUST

a transition period

maintaining relationship

an enabling environment

consistency of the leaving care process

active listening

capacity building

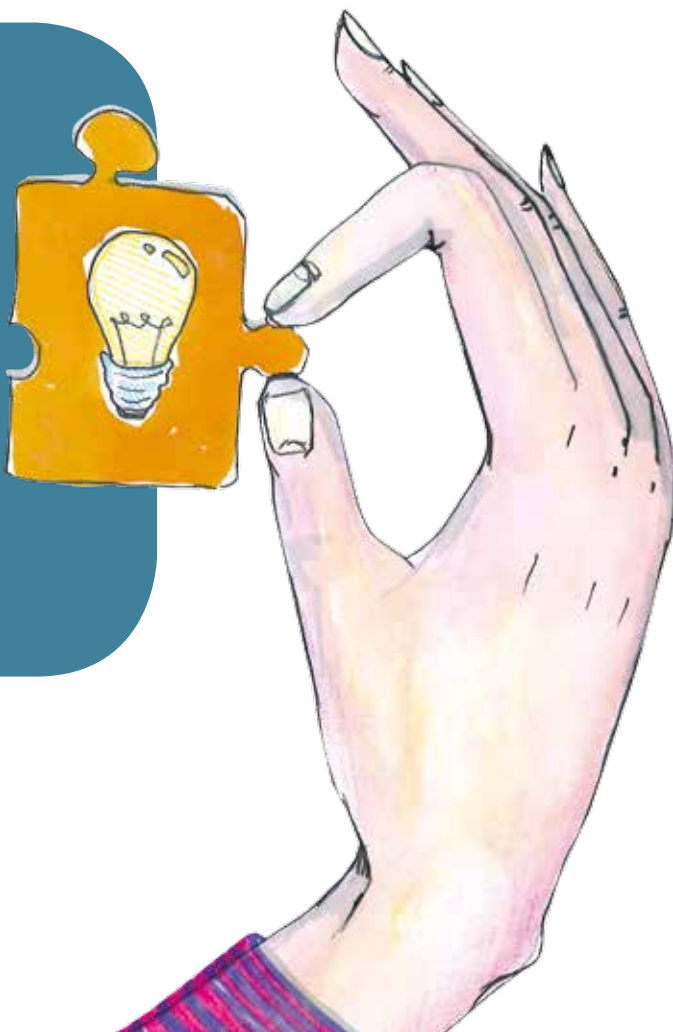
promoting positive change

The project builds on the experience of the project partners to deliver a training programme that enables care professionals to learn how to integrate a child rights based approach into their work and how to best prepare children and young people for leaving care.

To date, over 700 care professionals across the ten countries have completed the Prepare for Leaving Care training. The impact of the participation of young people with care experience as co-trainers is clear from the training evaluation: **the majority of the trainees stated that they had gained a better understanding of the situation of care leavers and that they now know how to support them better.**

A key element that was a highlight throughout the project and should come as a well-known fact to many practitioners and decision-makers working in the child protection sector is the following:

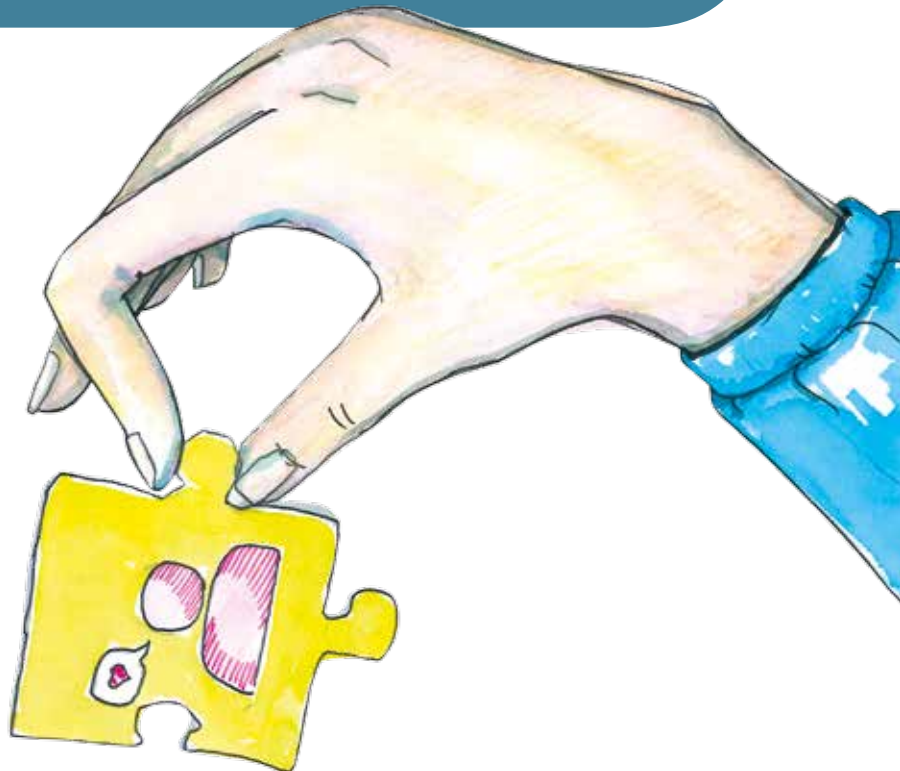
Young people with care experience are in the best position to take decisions for their own lives! They need to be given the space to be heard if we are to truly improve policy and practice to achieve better outcomes for children and young people who grow up in alternative care.



Another precondition we are all aware of, BUT that is often lacking in reality is proper resourcing:

The needed changes in the services provided and, most importantly, in the way the support is delivered to each individual will not happen without allocating proper resources and effectively investing money and effort into:

1. strengthening the capacity of care professionals to support and empower young people transitioning out of care
2. designing and implementing services that support and empower young people transitioning out of care (such as semi-independent living programmes) with young people's participation
3. enabling care leavers to easily access services and support in a non-discriminatory, non-labelling and non-bureaucratic way



PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH CARE EXPERIENCE

Youth participation is at the heart of all project activities. National Young Expert Groups (YEGs) have been set up in all project countries. Members of the YEGs are young people aged 16–27 who have experienced alternative care, transitioning from care, and aftercare.

The YEGs have significantly contributed to national scoping studies, the development of the *Prepare for Leaving Care Practice Guidance* and the *Prepare for Leaving Care Training Manual*, the development of the Training of Trainers programme, national and European events, and they are now working on their input to national policy recommendations.

The young people are involved in co-delivering the Prepare for Leaving Care training in part or in full in each of the countries. They are active in the various events organised to raise awareness and get their key messages across when it comes to what needs to be changed in policy and practice in order to improve outcomes for care leavers.

Two young people from each national Young Expert Group are members of the International Young Expert Group, which holds three face-to-face meetings during project implementation. In addition, two young people are part of the project steering group.



The young people with care experience who participated in the Training of Trainers in Budapest 16–18 October 2018.

PART 2

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A COMPREHENSIVE LEAVING CARE FRAMEWORK

The **UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children** (the Guidelines) gained the approval of the international community at the UN General Assembly in 2009. We are celebrating their 10th anniversary, and it is high time to recall the standards they set in terms of preparing children and young people for leaving care as well as the aftercare support that should be available to them.

Those standards have been further detailed and explained in *Moving Forward: Implementing the 'Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children'* (*Moving Forward*), which also highlights the implications they have in terms of policymaking with the corresponding allocation of budget and resources.

Previously collected evidence and experience show how valid those policymaking implications still are and, unfortunately, also the fact that they have not yet been fully realised.

Extract from *Moving Forward*, pp. 100-101:

- **Implications for policy-making**
-
- **Guidelines: § 131-136**
-
- Children who leave care require support through planning,
- preparation and information in order to prepare them positively for
- moving on from care. They should have the opportunity to develop
- skills as preparation for independent or semi-independent living as
- young adults. Support should be available for young people after they
- have left care and into young adulthood.
-

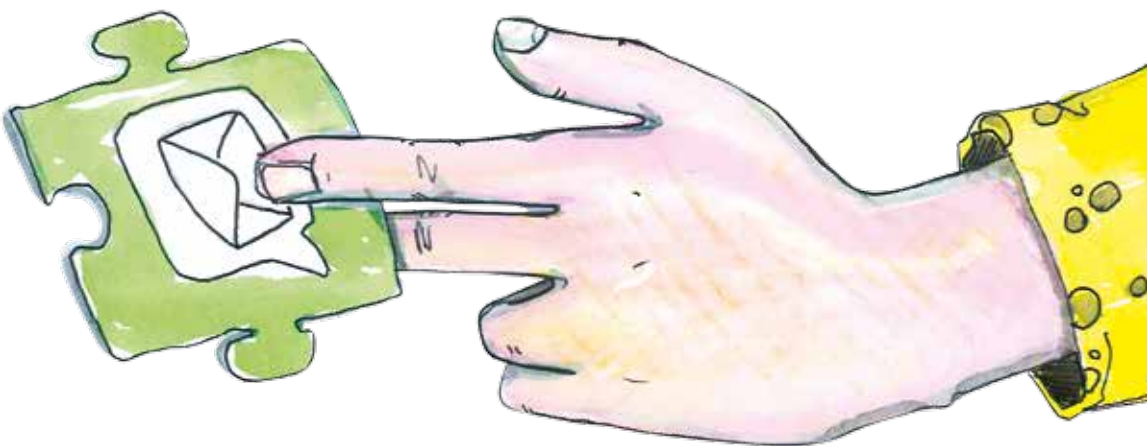
National policy should:

Ensure planning is in place for children leaving care

- Develop and implement legislation and guidance which outlines measures to support children who are leaving care and provides for aftercare support
- Assign a specialised support worker to provide guidance, advice, facilitate and empower each child throughout the process of preparing to leave care and during aftercare support
- Provide consistent assessment, individualised planning and appropriate support for all children leaving care and as early as possible in their placement
- Ensure that children are not leaving care too young by supporting them to remain in their long-term care as they move into young adulthood
- Support foster carers and children so as to encourage the foster family to continue to be there for the child when they move into adult life
- Put in place mechanisms so that children can fully participate in planning for leaving care and can contribute to how this will be organised
- Ensure that different agencies with, for example, responsibility for housing, welfare, health and education are involved in planning and ongoing support to children leaving care
- Require the monitoring and review of aftercare plans regularly after a child moves on from care until s/he is able to live independently without systematic support

Provide support to children leaving care

- Provide opportunities for children to develop the necessary life skills and to have access to information when they are preparing to leave care
- Require systems to be in place that ensure support for young people after they leave care with a named person available as ongoing contact
- Provide services for children who are leaving care including access to health, social welfare, educational, vocational and employment opportunities. This should include specialist support for children with disabilities and other special needs
- Consult with children leaving care to identify where they would like to live. If this is not close to the community where they were living during or prior to entering alternative care, discuss the implications and respond accordingly
- Ensure that children who are currently in education and wish to continue their studies are supported in the transition to leaving care
- Ensure that a range of different living and housing arrangements are available to children leaving care and that this is of appropriate quality



Provide aftercare support to young people

- Support opportunities for young people to maintain contact with their previous care service, carers and friends, in recognition of the importance of ongoing relationships
- Ensure that contact can be maintained with siblings who remain in care and other family members as appropriate
- Ensure that children leaving care have access to high quality vocational and tertiary education, where appropriate, so that they have the same opportunities as their peers in parental care
- Provide support with accessing education and vocational training, including financial support. Consideration should be given to the provision of scholarships or fee elimination to offset the disadvantage experienced by children raised in alternative care
- Collect data on the progress of young people who have left care in order to contribute to greater knowledge and understanding on the outcomes of children in care
- Encourage the extended family, community and civil society to provide support to young people who have left care. This should include support and encouragement for former foster carers and staff in formal care to stay in touch where a child wishes
- Counter stigma and discrimination of young people who have been in care and promote children and young people's contributions as citizens



PART 3

Find out more about : THE TRAINING

The Training of Trainers and national training events¹¹

3 LEAD TRAINERS						TRAINING OF TRAINERS
AUSTRIA	BULGARIA	ESTONIA	HUNGARY	ITALY	ROMANIA	
2 master trainers	2 master trainers	2 master trainers	2 master trainers	2 master trainers	2 master trainers	
6 co-trainers with care experience	3 co-trainers with care experience	2 co-trainers with care experience	3 co-trainers with care experience	2 co-trainers with care experience	1 co-trainers with care experience	NATIONAL LEVEL
45 professionals trained	60 professionals trained	40 professionals trained	60 professionals trained	60 professionals trained	120 professionals trained	

THE METHODOLOGY

The Prepare for Leaving Care training is based on two key principles: adult learning and deliberate practice¹², and participation of people with care experience.

Master trainers were required to undergo a Training of Trainers before delivering the national training sessions so that they could ensure the quality of training and appropriately manage the inclusion of young people with care experience as co-trainers.

¹¹. The figures are estimates as the training is still ongoing in all countries

¹². Deliberate practice refers to a special type of practice that is purposeful and systematic. While regular practice might include mindless repetitions, deliberate practice requires focused attention and is conducted with the specific goal of improving performance (<https://jamesclear.com/deliberate-practice-theory>)

It was required that at least one person with care experience should be involved in, and remunerated for, part of the delivery of the national training sessions. This component is of utmost importance in bringing the experiences of children and young people in care to life for participants.



TRAINING MATERIAL

THE PRACTICE GUIDANCE SEEKS TO:

- promote improvement in practice
- stimulate reflection
- provide material



THE TRAINING MANUAL SEEKS TO:

- raise awareness of the content of the Practice Guidance
- build knowledge and skills to support young people through the process of leaving care
- help trainees to understand and develop some of the tools which are helpful in the leaving care process

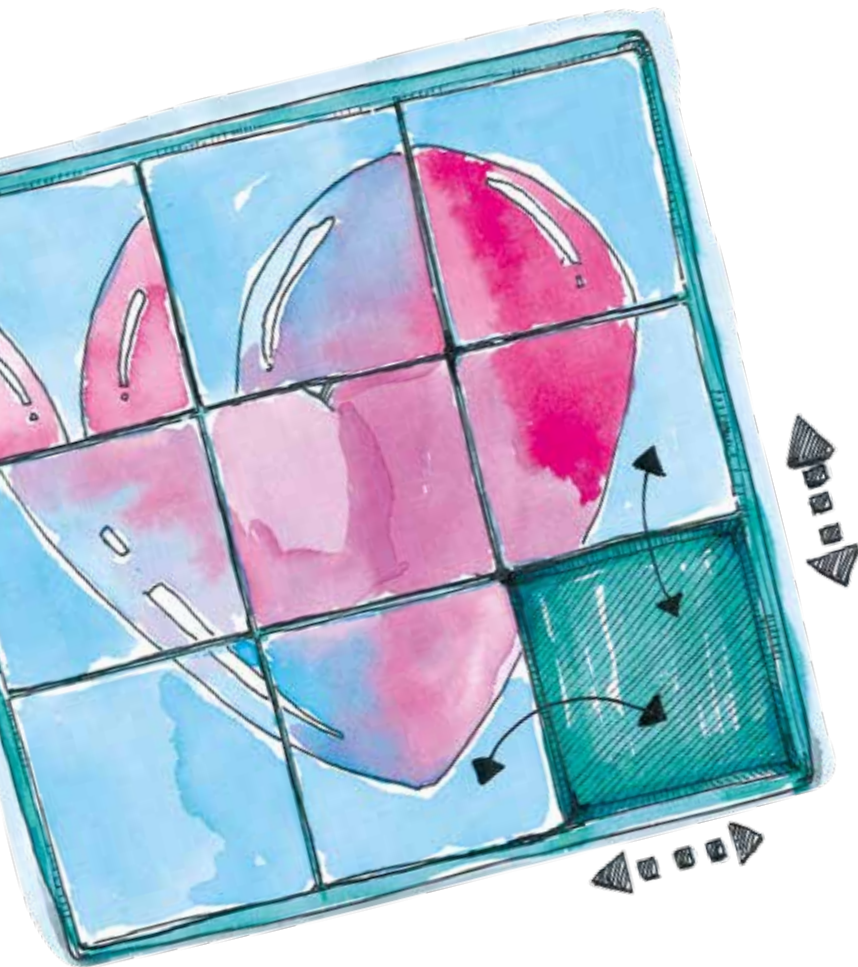


The Prepare for Leaving Care training fills a gap that exists in most child protection systems by giving care professionals access to comprehensive training materials. It has the added benefit of being **co-delivered by young people with care experience**, which gives care professionals the opportunity to hear first hand how young people experience current leaving care practices and to reflect together with them on how to improve this experience in the future with the overall aim of ensuring better outcomes for care leavers.

Four guiding principles emerged out of the scoping undertaken at the start of the project. They should be mainstreamed in child protection systems and realised at all stages of a child's path in alternative care. Therefore, they form the backbone of the *Prepare for Leaving Care Practice Guidance* and the Prepare for Leaving Care training.

These cross-cutting principles are:

- building sustained relationships of care and respect
- aiming for high levels of participation
- promoting and protecting all human rights of children and young people
- the need for an inter-sectoral approach



THE TRAINING EVALUATION AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT - SUMMARY OF RESULTS¹³

The care professionals who attended the Prepare for Leaving Care training in the five project countries completed pre- and post-course evaluation forms. This body of data, together with the findings from focus group discussions that took place in each country, was compiled and analysed. The analysis also included feedback from the master trainers with regard to the Training of Trainers (ToT) they underwent in order to get ready to deliver the national training sessions. Here is a summary of evaluation results quoted directly from pp. 79–81 of the training evaluation report¹⁴:

Evaluation of the ToT for 16 master trainers and national training delivered to 433 trainees in Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Italy and Spain was gathered through the application of different tools. This included the return of 332 fully completed pre- and post-course evaluation forms, a quiz and focus group discussions. The analysis of information provided through these evaluation methods illustrate the overall success of the training programme component of the Prepare for Leaving Care project. Through a process of self-rating, the information gathered from master trainers show a definite increase in skills and knowledge, most especially in the areas of being able to deliver training on topics defined in the Prepare for Leaving Care Practice Guidance. These include issues relating to rights and legislation, development and review of care plans, inter-sectoral working practices, understanding of trauma and loss and how to support care leavers in a caring and supportive manner. Master trainers highly rated the Training Manual and all other training materials they were provided with, and many commented on how detailed, organised, attractive and clear they were.

13. Those results are from the Prepare for Leaving Care Project (2017-2018) – training evaluation for the Leaving Care project will take place in the fall of 2019. We assume that findings are going to be similar.

14. Irene Stevens and Chrissie Gale, Evaluation of the “Prepare for Leaving Care” Training Programme, (UK: Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland, 2018).

All the master trainers also rated the training methodology utilised during the ToT very positively. They found the course to be stimulating, challenging and diverse in the manner it was delivered by the lead trainers. They especially appreciated the role of the care-experienced co-trainer. A number of master trainers found the course to be intense and challenging at times although the same respondents appreciated how the full time of 6 days was actually needed to be able to cover all the subjects in the depth necessary. The master trainers reported how the ToT had prepared them well to deliver the training in their own countries and how it had helped them to critically reflect on their own strengths and developmental needs. The results of the pre- and post-training self-assessment tool clearly indicate a positive shift in the knowledge and skills of all the master trainers. This increase in knowledge and skills is reflected in the positive feedback received from the national trainees. 97% of national course participants rated the training they received as 'very good' (81%) or 'good' (16%).

Additional evaluation of the national training included positive acknowledgment of such aspects as:

- excellent, supportive, dynamic and effective nature of training methodology
- interesting, practical and useful content with applicability to the workplace
- use of group work and opportunities for sharing and listening to others
- useful and easy-to-use tools and *Practice Guidance*
- well-planned and clear structure
- homework that was necessary and understandable
- informative, interactive, interesting and motivational course
- easy transfer of knowledge that stimulates critical thinking
- well-structured with an emphasis on truly important and also new topics

Respondents also commented on the dynamic nature of the training delivery and the excellent presentation skills. **‘Wonderful,’** wrote one respondent. **‘All seminars should be like this one.’** Another respondent wrote:

‘I’m so glad I participated in education. I would particularly like to congratulate trainers who are highly motivated and willing to share with us many years of experience, and I would like to praise the young people who participated. Generally a very useful, instructive and interesting experience.’

There was particularly positive feedback in relation to the inclusion of care experienced young people in the training delivery. Respondents noted how this provided a special additional element to the training content and helped bring alive the topics under discussion. They reported how it had helped them gain additional understanding of the reality for young people and their concerns and how this will inform the way they can improve support for care leavers in the future. For example, one respondent wrote, **‘It has helped me to put myself in the place of young people and forget the position of “caregiver”’.**

‘Now I have new tools for working with young people, and I will use them.’

Other comments from course participants included:

‘Very useful and good for further work with young people, I will use it.’

‘Thank you very much for involving young people.’

‘I can understand young people better, their needs and support they need. It was exciting training...’


‘Super, special praise for inclusion of young people, their comments and suggestions.’

And finally, an exceedingly interesting comment that encapsulates the opportunity such training can provide. A respondent in Spain wrote,

‘This kind of training has made me reflect out of the bubble.’

Towards the end of project implementation, **an impact assessment** was undertaken. A total of 47 post-training interviews were conducted in Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania and Spain with professionals who had participated in national training sessions. The interviews were conducted approximately six months following the end of the national training.

This evaluation suggests the training of national stakeholders is having a positive impact on the support being offered to care leavers. In particular, these results indicate the relationships between professionals and care leavers is improving. For example, participants believe they have significantly improved their ability to listen and communicate with the children and young people they are supporting through the leaving care process. They are more aware of the emotions and feelings of individual care leavers and feel better able to respond to their worries and concerns. Participants wrote of their improved ability to truly listen and therefore take additional account of the wishes and aspirations of young people. They feel they have more empathy for the situation of young care leavers and as a result, are able to provide more individualised support to care leavers. Some participants noted how they are now better able to develop closer relationships with young people. In the initial scoping exercise for this project, this is something that children and young people identified as being very important to them.



‘Thank you young people for attending, it was interesting to hear your opinion.’

In addition, participants also believe they have significantly improved the active participation of care leavers in decision-making, planning for leaving care and, other components of the process of moving to independent living. It is believed that the involvement of care experienced young people in the training has contributed to these results.

Results also indicate that care leavers are now receiving more information about their rights and entitlements as well as services they should be able to access. This is reflected in the feedback from participants who are not only more aware of the importance of providing this information, but also have increased their knowledge of the different services that care leavers should and, can, access. This is reflected in the feedback

that improvements have been seen in the in the planning and content of Pathway Plans for care leavers.

The ability to better support care leavers is also reflected in the improvement of their relationships with colleagues and other relevant professionals. This has led to improvement in providing young people with increased and more holistic information that is relevant to a range of service provision. Pathway Plans not only reflect these changes but also better reflect the care leavers' own wishes and aspirations. In addition, some participants noted how the Plans are clearer, more specific and contain more precise information. However, the actual access to services for care leavers is reported to have only marginally improved.

Some participants have been able to share their new skills and tools with colleagues who did not attend the training – 'so that everyone on the team can understand how to work with young people'.

Almost all participants feel more confident following the training. This is reflected in their increased self-confidence regarding the ability to support care leavers. They also feel more able to share information and ideas with colleagues and have more confidence engaging with authorities.

In conclusion, the results indicate how the investment made in the preparation and delivery of an intensive training programme utilised in this project is having a positive impact on the support care leavers are receiving.

And last but not least, the evaluation of young people's participation in national training sessions shows that young people who participated in the project felt their contribution had been important. Young people felt their participation had been a positive experience for them. They also believe their participation contributed to the success of the project. In particular, their participation contributed to the success of the training for national stakeholders. Young people also feel they have gained skills and were proud to be part of this project.



PART 4

THE PARTNERS OF THE LEAVING CARE PROJECT

SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES

SOS Children's Villages is a non-governmental and non-denominational child-focused organization that provides direct services in the areas of care, education and health for children at risk of losing, or who have already lost, parental care. The organisation builds the capacity of the children's caregivers, their families, and communities to provide quality care. Finally, SOS Children's Villages advocates for the rights of children without parental care.

Founded in 1949, SOS Children's Villages operates in the spirit of the UN Convention on the Right of the Child and the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children in 136 countries and territories.

Between 2017-2018, the Prepare for Leaving Care project was carried out in cooperation with SOS Children's Villages' national associations in Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania and Spain, as well as CELCIS, the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland, based at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, who are the main authors of the training material and methodology. Eurochild was an associated partner and helped disseminating project information. Building on these findings, the project **'Leaving Care – An Integrated Approach to Capacity Building of Professionals and Young People' (2018-2020)**, is carried out in cooperation with SOS Children's Villages' national associations in Bulgaria, Estonia,

Hungary, Italy and Romania as well as the child-focused organisations FICE Austria and FONPC Romania. SOS Children's Villages International was the project applicant; it designed the project and is in charge of overall project management.

FICE AUSTRIA



FICE Austria is a member of FICE-International. FICE-International was founded in 1948 under the patronage of UNESCO in Trogen (Switzerland). It maintains contacts with UNESCO, UNICEF, Council of Europe and ECOSOC. It is also a member of the NGO-Group - Child Rights Connect and member of ENS-ACT. FICE-International contains more than 30 countries – FICE sections – from Europe, Africa, the Americas. FICE-International's vision is to create networks across continents worldwide to support actions and all those working with at-risk children, children with special needs and children and young people in out-of-home care. All activities aim to respect the personality, interests and needs of the child or the young person.



FONPC ROMANIA



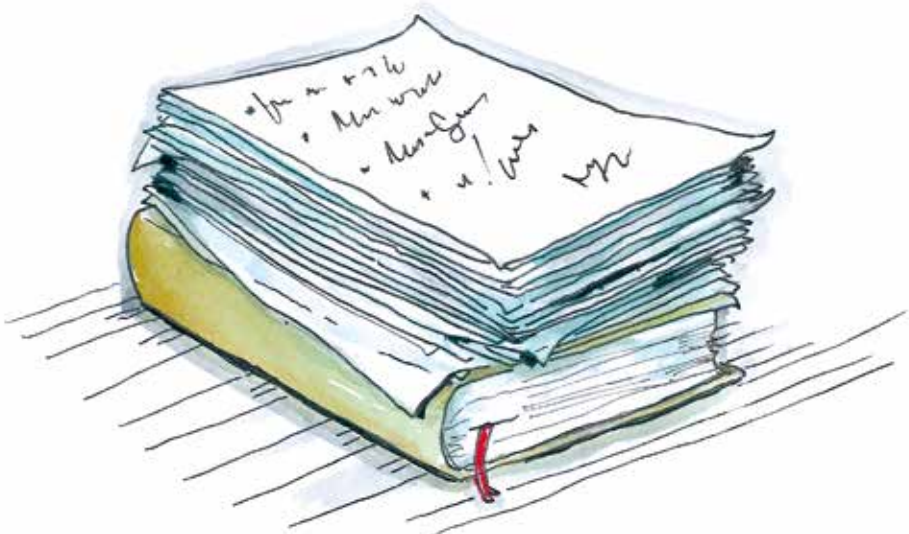
FONPC Romania is the main dialogue partner of the state, specialized in developing and redefining the children welfare policy, from the child rights perspective, using and developing a coherent and comprehensive experience and expertise of its members.

Founded in 1997, FONPC exists along with and in aid of its members, about 100 NGOs, which act for the benefit of children and community, guided by statutory principles and provisions, while promoting the following values: members' identity and autonomy, effective communication and action, democratic decision, solidarity, openness, trust, mutual respect, fairness, consistency and continuity, partnership, transparency, participation and involvement. In order to achieve its objectives, FONPC is working in close partnership with donors, fund raisers, local authorities and national NGOs, international organizations, European institutions, civil society, the community and other stakeholders in promoting children's rights.



KEY PROJECT OUTPUTS

- Scoping exercise (including peer-to-peer interviews) to gain a better understanding for the leaving care process in the project countries
- Training of 12 master trainers who will apply the developed tools and approach in training other care professionals in their countries
- Delivery of national training (including a youth module) to about 400 care professionals in the six project countries
- Implementation of the digital platform YouthLinks in five project countries
- Development of national policy recommendations on how to ensure that child rights, with a particular focus on leaving care, form part of the training of all caregivers and other professionals working in alternative care
- Be the Change! Conference in June 2019
- Delivery of national training of trainers to over 50 Master Trainers in the project countries
- Final conferences at national level
- Final project evaluation



PROJECT WEBPAGE

Leaving Care

<https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/leaving-care-project>

READ MORE

- **Prepare for Leaving Care**
<https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/prepare-for-leaving-care>
- **SOS Care Promise**
https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/2ccd4a43-00d9-489a-8eb1-b57089f08289/SOS_CARE_PROMISE_EN_Web.pdf
- **Decent Work and Social Protection for Young People Leaving Care**
https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/842a5811-fdb7-41c4-a0b2-45b0e5e79090/SOS_LeavingCare_web.pdf
- **Leaving Care and Employment in Five European Countries: An Undocumented Problem?**
https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/908bc3ed-244d-48d0-b8e1-d44d8cdd8e8a/SOS-CVI_Leaving-Care-and-employment-report_Final.pdf
- **Preparation for Independent Living (I matter)**
<https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/db45016e-a5df-4995-819e-af02d6634347/Preparation-for-Independent-Living,-Briefing-paper-3-web.pdf>

- **United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children**
https://www.unicef.org/protection/alternative_care_Guidelines-English.pdf
- **Moving Forward**
<https://www.celcis.org/files/4514/5450/2144/Moving-Forward-implementing-the-guidelines-for-alternative-care-for-children.pdf>

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#Bethechange

#train4childrights

#youthparticipation



**LEAVING
CARE**