



**Life after institutional care project: focus on young people's thoughts**

**Nice to meet you (Bucharest 28th-29th April 2009)**  
**Nice to see you (Bologna 1st December 2009)**

During the "Life after institutional care" project, two events gave young people the opportunity to become the main focus of both the reflection and the activities, thus allowing them to take part in events of international relevance and to develop a better self-confidence and self-esteem when they had to expose their needs and worries; the latter came out clearly during the activities.

The European workshops were attended by about twenty care-leavers who were about to leave, or had already left, the childhood protection system of Bulgaria, Romania, Italy, Latvia, Moldova and Ukraine.

The seriousness with which they pursued their tasks deserves to be underlined; they were able to analyse freely, although backed by proper assistance, the care-leaving process they are undergoing, or they have already gone through in their countries, together with their priorities, their fears and the social actions they believe to be necessary or pressing.

It is of fundamental importance to underline some of the issues that emerged from the workshops, which are coincident with the findings of the recent research carried out on European care-leavers.

The issues that emerged more clearly are: the care-leavers fear of facing the transition towards autonomous life, the scarce clearness of the information they get and the scarce availability of assistance programmes, the request of better granted minimum welfare requirements (welfare salary, house-rent, health insurance) and bigger flexibility in the programmes meant to accompany care-leavers towards autonomy (the flexibility should concern the leaving age or the characteristics of the programmes) the possibility of benefiting of living accommodations after care leaving, if need be; the care leavers' awareness of not being able



to complete their education even if they want to, the fear (especially present in Italy) of not obtaining the documents (such as the residence permit) necessary to start an autonomous life.

The boys and the girls live in a situation of manifest urgent need (they need to find a job and a house in the shortest time possible) and precariousness and thus they are more focused on the material aspects of their life rather than on the relational ones, or on overcoming the traumas they may have suffered before.

The five priorities of care leavers are: housing, work, education, welfare and health insurance (often a big problem), building their own family and their own network of relationships. Housing and job are by far the most important priorities, while education can be among the first as well as in the last places according to the care leavers' country of origin.



## Guidelines to improve social inclusion of young people without parental care

One of the main results of the project **"Life after institutional care"** has been a matrix that collects all the indexes that have been identified during the development of the project. The existence and use of such indicators would increase the likelihood of social inclusion for young people who have been released from the child protection system.

In the 5 countries involved, the central project and the scientific management collected the data that are necessary to build the matrix.

**1.Desk analysis:** relevant legislation, context and specific data (if any), services' organisation and list of players

**2.Qualitative analysis:**

a.administering of 75 in-depth questionnaires (15 for each country) to the main actors in the social protection system, starting from those farthest from the subjects and proceeding inwards to the people most involved in the case (i.e., from the central decision makers, to the national co-ordinators, the local decision makers, the institution and education community managers, the social workers and finally the educators).

b.administering of 125 in-depth questionnaires (25 for each country) to young people who have been living outside the child protection system for at least two years, but for no longer than 5, and young people in the transition phase to adult life (recipients of specific social inclusion programmes).

**3.Exchange and discussion activities with stakeholders and social operators.**

The need for a matrix of guidelines comes from the need to increase the quality of the activities implemented to support young people in the residential care system to become autonomous.

Activities that are often left to the good will or insufficient resources of single operators that decide to accept this burden even outside their field and duties.

Although issues and needs are common to all of them, each European Union member state reacts differently, thus highlighting the total absence of minimum standard which, if in existence and applied, would increase the social inclusion opportunities for this category of young people at risk.

The nature of our tool is based on the provisions of the "Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion – Com

(2008) 42 -- final communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions", the official document on social protection and social inclusion issued by the Commission in March 2008 and addressed to the other institutional bodies, stating that:

- 1.the category of young people who have grown up within the residential care system is at high risk of social exclusion
- 2.the situation of these vulnerable groups cannot be monitored with standard instruments, but requires specific monitoring instruments.

The document goes on underscoring the importance of the involvement of the anti-poverty and child welfare workgroup in the "Indicators sub-group" (ISG), whose social inclusion programme last year contained also the specific area of Child Well-being as one of the priority development areas, with regard to the increase in the interactions between the open co-ordination method and the Lisbon Convention: there can be no economic growth without the integration and development of social policies.

The dimensions considered in the matrix pertain to the different development and growth areas of a child in a residential placement that must be prepared to leave the system and to the adult life with a holistic approach that includes necessarily some systemic variables.

As the support path towards the social life integration cannot start immediately before the moment the subject leaves the system, some transition programmes start six months before the release. Therefore, the dimensions we have considered refer to two specific time periods of the case taken in charge, that coincide in a single, personalised action bases on a necessary continuity:

the dimensions concerning the "basic" path inside a "classic" care structure

the dimensions concerning the specific transitional path

The guidelines have been published in five European languages (English, French, Italian, Romanian and Bulgarian) and soon will be available in English at [ChildOut.org](http://ChildOut.org).

For further information or to order a copy please write at [aibi@aibi.it](mailto:aibi@aibi.it) indicating in the object: "Life after institutional care guidelines".



## Entrer dans l'Age Adulte: la préparation et l'accompagnement des jeunes en fin des mesures de protection - ONED France

Nowadays young people find it somewhat hard to get integrated into society when turning 18 years old. Getting a decent job as a step towards independent life is not the only problem youngsters have to deal with when building their future, though it is one of the most pressing needs they have to go through.

If young people are experiencing serious problems in the current economic environment, young care leavers find themselves in a much harder situation given their lack of financial resources and affective backing support.

The Paris-based Observatoire National de l'Enfance en Danger (ONED), entrusted with monitoring "childhood in danger", has organized last 11th of December a one-day conference on how to help support young care-leavers when leaving the national system of social protection.

Committed to supporting young care leavers, AiBi has been invited to divulgate the outputs of the research project "Life after institutional care" which has run from 2008 to 2009. AiBi has hence informed on the methods applied to get young care leavers involved into the research through a participative methodology.

For further information please visit [www.oned.gouv.fr](http://www.oned.gouv.fr)

## Eurochild members survey on children in alternative care

In 2009 Eurochild network carried out a survey of the situation of children in alternative care in Europe through its member organisations. The survey requested information on the numbers of children in alternative care including residential, community and family-based care; the profiles of children in care; the outcomes for children in care and the actual situation of care-leavers in Europe, the institutional framework and availability of data; and the existence of standards and support for children's participation. 26 European countries participated, including the 4 nations of the UK and Moldova.

The survey was not intended as a scientifically rigorous research exercise but rather to identify what information is readily available and some common trends across Europe.

The research will be presented a Bruxelles in January and published on Eurochild web site: [www.eurochild.org](http://www.eurochild.org)



## 2010 Report on Child Abandonment

*The path towards social inclusion of young people without parental care*

The "2010 AiBi. Report on Child Abandonment: an Emergency - Life After Institutional Care" is now ready and will be soon published. This is the third report released from AiBi. after the first two issued in 2007 and 2008 on respectively child abandonment and the social protection systems of the out-of-family children in five E.U. countries. The report is one of the two concrete outputs (results) of the E.U. co-financed project named Life After Institutional Care which Ai.Bi. has carried out over the last two years in Italy, France, Romania, Bulgaria and Latvia to help identify effective social policies for the successful social inclusion of out-of-family youths.

The second output has been a set of guidelines on how to encourage the professional and social inclusion of young boys and girls and it will be published itself.

The 2010 Report explores the world of the youths leaving the childhood protection system: expectations, worries, problems and needs of youths who have suffered already from abandonment and face now new challenges towards independence. It counts with significant contributions and data from the project countries, a grid of standards to assess social inclusion policies, relevant legislation, sentences from and pictures of young care leavers.

We are confident that the 2010 Report will turn out to be a useful tool for European policy-makers when planning concrete measures for the well being of care leavers.

If you want to receive a copy of the "2010 AiBi. Report on Child Abandonment: an Emergency - Life After Institutional Care", please write us an email at [aibi@aibi.it](mailto:aibi@aibi.it) indicating Report 2010 as object.

## Life After Institutional Care



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