

Current situation on CLN and needs analysis report



LeaveCare-LiveLife (LC-LL)

Building the European Care Leavers Network for youngsters leaving foster and residential care and actively living and participating in life

n. 2017-2-IT03-KA205-011223

Deliverable n. 01/A1 Current situation on CLN and needs analysis report

Document information	
Due date of Intellectual Output	31 st March 2018
Actual submission date	15th May 2018
Revision	
Author	Maria Chiara Vita Finzi, Agevolando – Co-authors all partners

DELIVERABLE REVIEW HISTORY

Version	Name/Partner	Status *	Date	Summary of changes
0.1	Agevolando, FICE, CLNI, CLA, Tiberius	A	30/04/18	National reports
1.0	Agevolando	A	15/05/18	Joint report

(*) A=Author; C= contributor; REV= reviewer; EXT = external reviewer

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



This document is licensed under Creative Common Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International.



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
1. The current situation of Care Leavers networks in the Partners' Countries	4
1.1. Legal framework and policies	4
1.2. The boys and girls living far from their families: number and characteristics	9
1.3. The Care Leavers: number and characteristics	13
1.4. Institutional forms of support to Care Leavers	17
1.5. Right to participate: current situation	20
1.6. Associations/Institutions operating in favour of Care Leavers: quantitative and qualitative analysis	25
2. Results of the training needs analysis in the Partners' countries	28
2.1. Has your association or have you ever participated in collective listening and participation activities involving care leavers?	28
2.2. How would you define "participation activities"?	29
2.3. Do you have qualitative research experience? In particular, focus groups and semi-structured interviews?	30
2.4. Which methodologies of active participation do you know? Have you experienced them?	31
2.5. Do you have experiences in facilitating peer discussion groups (teenagers)?	33
2.6. Have you ever organized meetings between care leavers coming from different kinds of support/protection paths? Could you tell them?	34
2.7. How would you define "Care Leavers Network" as a concept and as an actual system?	34
3. Overall results of the current situation analysis	36
3.1. Legal framework and policies	36
3.2. The boys and girls living far from their families: number and characteristics	36
3.3. The Care Leavers: number and characteristics	36
3.4. Institutional forms of support to Care Leavers	37



3.5.	Right to participate: current situation	37
3.6.	Associations/Institutions operating in favour of Care Leavers: quantitative and qualitative analysis	37
4.	Overall results of the training needs analysis	38
4.1.	Has your association or have you ever participated in collective listening and participation activities involving care leavers?	38
4.2.	How would you define “participation activities”?	38
4.3.	Do you have qualitative research experience? In particular, focus groups and semi-structured interviews?	38
4.4.	Which methodologies of active participation do you know? Have you experienced them?	38
4.5.	Do you have experiences in facilitating peer discussion groups (teenagers)?	39
4.6.	Have you ever organized meetings between care leavers coming from different kinds of support/protection paths? Could you tell them?	39
4.7.	How would you define “Care Leavers Network” as a concept and as an actual system?	39
5.	Conclusions	40



INTRODUCTION

While a great effort has been and is being made in Europe for fully responding to the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the steps ahead, at least under the legal aspect, if not under the actual statistics, are good¹, still too few relevance is given to the period of transition, for vulnerable children, from childhood – and protection system - to the adulthood and autonomy. The difference among EU Countries, also when considering only the principles and the legal basis, is still huge, with Countries having issued laws and others having completely missed to recognise both the target and the problem². Only in the last two decades, furthermore, this problem has arisen to been taken into account as relevant at a European level.

This report is aimed to guarantee a better knowledge, to all partners, of the current situation of Care Leavers in all the project partners Countries, and of the training needs of the partners staff. In fact, even in 5 Countries, the differences we found are huge.

The report is composed of two parts:

- In the first one, the legal framework and the current situation both of children in care and care leavers is described per each Country,
- While in the second one the learning needs about active participation methodologies and care leavers networking are deepened, in order to better understand how to proceed towards the joint staff training envisaged in the project.

Conclusions, with a comparative analysis and tips for the training and materials development, close the document.

¹ See https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Handbook_rights_child_ENG.pdf

² See these relevant reports on the differences among States, on legal, policies, and services provision: <https://www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/pubs/pdf/ageing.pdf>; <https://www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/pubs/pdf/ageing.pdf>

1. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF CARE LEAVERS NETWORKS IN THE PARTNERS' COUNTRIES

1.1. Legal framework and policies

Croatia

The Croatian Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy is governing body for regulation alternative care in Croatia but as well some responsibilities are under Ministries of Justice and Health.

The Croatian Constitution ensures children special protection and in 1992 Croatia adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which increased the state's commitment to children's rights.

Croatia follows EU guidance for social exclusion through ten principles (Council of European Union 15/223/01) which are integrated in Croatian Social Welfare Development Strategy (2011.). They are: Subsidiarity, holistic approach, transparency and responsibility, appropriate services to users, effectiveness, solidarity and partnership, dignity and human rights, social inclusion, personal growth, permanent improvement and sustainability.

The Social Welfare Act defined the obligation of providing services in accordance with the Social Services Quality Standards. Article 11. Is about "Principle of individual approach" –In a system of social care participant realizes a rights according with his individual needs and active participation. All this mention above make a great start point to create a strong backup for care leavers but it need a time and effort to provide all this to benefit for care leavers in real life.

National Plan of Deinstitutionalization and Transformation of Social Welfare Institutions started more than 10 years ago but due to political, economic and social challenges, it has been a slow and rigid process with Croatian residential child care still in the middle of transformation.

The main goal is reducing the proportion of children in institutional care in favour of family-based care (foster care)in ratio 80:20 in favour of non-institutional care. The Homes are supposed to take over some new services like support to family in order to prevent separation of children from the family and should provide leaving care services.

In residential care children can stay until are 18 years old, when they have opportunity, depending where they are, to go to a residential community until 21. Somewhere they have to leave residential community when they got a job, somewhere not. They have right to use backup from ex residential care (advisory or psychological) but it is very individual, depending on House.

If care leavers stop to get support when they are 18, they decide to refuse help when going out of system, don't have a good relationship with social workers or because bad experience during care and wish to end all connection with social welfare (Oterholm, 2009.) and quite often don't



know any contact or identity of their social worker (Milošević, 2011., Žižak and others., 2012., Sladović Franz and Branica, 2013.)

Ireland

The primary legislation regulating child care policy is the [Child Care Act 1991](#) which brought in considerable changes in relation to children in care. Until the main part of the Act was implemented in 1995, child care policy had been regulated by the 1908 Children Act.

Under the Child Care Act 1991 Act, as amended by the [Child and Family Agency Act 2013](#), [Tusla - the Child and Family Agency](#) has a statutory duty to promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care and protection. The definition of a child is a person under 18 years of age who is not or has not been married.

When carrying out its statutory duty, Tusla must have regard to the following:

- It is generally in the best interests of the child to be brought up in his/her own family
- Having regard to the rights and duties of the parents, the welfare of the child is the first and paramount consideration and, as far as is practicable, the wishes of the child should be considered

Among other things, Tusla is required to:

- Identify children who are not receiving adequate care and protection and co-ordinate information on children from all relevant sources
- Provide child care and family support services with the aim of helping parents to care for their children and to avoid the need for such children to be taken into care
- Prepare an annual report on the adequacy of the child care and family support services

If a child is in need of care and protection and is unlikely to receive it at home, then Tusla must take them into care. This may happen, for example, in the case of an orphan or an abandoned child.

In other cases where parents are unable to cope due to illness or other problems, they may agree to their children being taken into the care of Tusla. This is known as voluntary care. In these cases, while Tusla has care of the children it must consider the parents' wishes as to how the care is provided. Tusla is obliged to maintain these children for as long as their welfare requires it.

Since 1 September 2017, [young people leaving care at the age of 18 will have the right to an aftercare plan](#) prepared by Tusla. This plan will identify the transitional supports that the young person requires, such as education, training, financial support and social network support. The

aftercare plan must be provided before the young person leaves care.

Italy

In Italy the paths of foster and adoption are governed by the **Law of 28 March 2001, n. 149** ("Amendments to the law of 4 May 1983, No. 184, on the "Discipline of the adoption and foster of minors"), as well as with Title VIII of the first book of the Civil Code.

The legislation that at national level regulates the possibility of continuing the foster care path up to 21 years is the *administrative continuation*, to date a residual practice ordered by the Courts and whose foundation is the art. 25 of the law establishing the Juvenile Court (R.D. 1404/1934 replaced on the point from the **Law 25 July 1956, No. 888**).

There are also regional regulations that provide for the possibility of ensuring the continuation of the foster care, such as the **D.R. n. 42/10 of 2006** of the Region of Sardinia, the **DGR 79-11035** of 17 November 2003 of the Piedmont Region, the **directive n. 1904 of 2011** of the Emilia Romagna Region.

The main normative reference for the right to participate in Italy is **Law no. 176 of 27 May 1991**, which ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and established the Guarantee Authority for this purpose.

The **Law of 28 August 1997 n. 285** "Provisions for the promotion of rights and opportunities for children and adolescents"³ is the only Italian regulatory reference that identifies participation as an instrument for the promotion of children's rights. This does not refer to the specific of children and /or boys/girls in alternative care, but this rule should be considered transversal to the various fields of policy development.

Romania

According to the study promoted by UNICEF together with The World Bank and the Romanian Ministry of Labor and Social Justice, *The Government of Romania has made significant progress in the past 25 years in terms of reducing the number of children in public care. At the present time Romania's rate of children placed in public care, compared to its entire population of children is about average among the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and those in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS).*⁴ However, in absolute numbers, the child protection system in Romania is still one of the largest in the region, having to provide an adequate response to the needs of about 60,000 children.

Despite the large number of children placed in public care, the Government of Romania has acknowledged the fact that the residential type of care has negative effects, especially on the development of young children, and has managed to improve child protection services

³ <http://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/97285l.htm>

⁴ Romania had in 2014 a rate of between 1,600 and 1,700 children in public care aged between 0 and 17 years old as compared with 1,850 children per 100,000 children, which is the average rate in CEE/CIS region, as well as in the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. TransMonEE 2015 database, Table 6.1.22

substantially by developing family-type care alternatives. Therefore, at present, two-thirds of the children in the protection system are placed in family-type care services.

However, following the global crisis, which affected the situation of children in the entire CEE/CIS region, the process of reducing the number of institutionalized children slowed down significantly, both in Romania and in other countries in the region. The reasons for this are twofold. First, many families have been leaving their children in institutions either temporarily or permanently because of their declining living conditions and severe poverty. Second, the system's capacity has decreased as a result of the hiring freeze in the public sector and of the limited budget, particularly the budget for family-type care services. Consequently, decreasing the number of children in public care remains a priority for the foreseeable future. In response to the recent trends, the government has committed to speeding up the deinstitutionalization process and has acknowledged this as a priority in various strategic documents including the National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights 2014-2020, the National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction 2015-2020, and the Romanian Partnership Agreement for the 2014-2020 Programming Period. In line with the European Commission's Social Investment Package and Recommendation "Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage," the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption (ANPDCA) has set its priorities for 2014-2020 with regard to the need to transition from institutional care to community-based services and to provide children with early and preventive interventions that enforce their right to grow up in a family environment and help them to achieve their full potential and exercise their rights.⁵

The Romanian state provides for institutionalized children the necessary protection, which means "material support, healthcare, education and housing", as stated on the General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC) website. But what happens to these children when they become adults? If the social workers' attempts to reintegrate them into their family are successful, they return home. But there are very few such cases. In fact, as the representatives of the department say, if reintegration has not been achieved until the age of majority, there is little chance of it to happen later. Therefore, they have to manage by themselves, to find a rental home, a job. State aid is minimal this time.

"Revocation" - is the term used in the child protection system that refers to the order by which the child or young person leaves the system. At that point, he has to hand over all the goods he has received from the state, including clothes, linen and towels, to the centre's officers. Everything is received on official record, and on departure they have to return what they have from the state directorate, except for the donations. In order to start in the new life, the state also provides money support for the rent. There are also "training for life" apartments, a preparatory phase before leaving the protection system, where young people live before they reach the age of 18. In these apartments, young people learn to manage by themselves: cook, clean, wash and manage their wage money - those who work, or social scholarships - those who are still studying.

Theoretically, after leaving the centre, they should be "monitored" for another three to six months: where they live, where they work and if they have problems, but practically they are lost much

⁵ Romania: Children in Public Care 2014, M.S. Stanculescu, V. Grigoras, E. Tesliuc, V. Pop, Alpha MDN Printing House, Bucharest 2017



earlier. Legislation does not impose a follow-up of their development, and even the existence of a service that offers them, at country level, it is not known how many of the young people who grew up in placement centres are employed and what their family situation is. Social assistants know about themselves whether they find out from others or because they meet on the street.

United Kingdom

Eligible children are defined in the Children Act 1989 Schedule 2 Part II, 19B(2) where, in sub paragraph (1) “eligible child” means, subject to subparagraph (3), a child who:

- (a) is aged sixteen or seventeen; and
- (b) has been looked after by a local authority for a prescribed period, or periods amounting in all to a prescribed period, which began after he reached a prescribed age and ended after he reached the age of 16.

According to Children (Leaving Care) Regulations 2001 Regulation 3 (1) For the purposes of 19B(2)(b) of Schedule 2 to the Act, the prescribed period is 13 weeks and the prescribed age is 14: children aged 16 and 17 who have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who are still looked-after.

Relevant children are defined in the Children Act 1989, 23A(2) in subsection (1) where “relevant child” means (subject to subsection (3)) a child who:

- (a) is not being looked after by any local authority;
- (b) was, before last ceasing to be looked after, an eligible child for the purposes of paragraph 19B of Schedule 2; and
- (c) is aged sixteen or seventeen.

According to Children (Leaving Care) Regulations 2001 Regulation 4 (2) For the purposes of section 23A(3), the category of children described in paragraph (2) is an additional category of relevant children: children aged 16 and 17 who have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, and have been looked after at some time while 16 or 17, and who have left care.

Additional groups of relevant children are those who would have been relevant children but for the fact that on their 16th birthday they were detained through the criminal justice system, or in hospital.

All policies and guidance linked to Children in care and Care Leavers can be found in the

government portal about Looked-after children and children in care⁶.

1.2. The boys and girls living far from their families: number and characteristics

Croatia

In Croatia there is no systematic monitoring for boys and girls living far from their families. The Ministry in charge for social policy through last ten years changed the name three times: first it was called Croatian Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, than Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, now it's called Croatian Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy. Each political change made its own way of direction.

Sometimes is hard to see the right number of children in care, as well care leavers, as statistic data show number of children in governmental and non-governmental residential care and foster families, but do not include the children who are situated in institutions for behaviour problems as well with the general learning disabilities.

Year	Government residential care	Non-government residential care	Age 16-18 years-male	Age 16-18 years-female	Age 18-21 years-male	Age 18-21 years-female	Pregnant or with a child	Foster families	Total
2010	782	188							
2013	867	229	47	45	9	17	12	2204	
2014	716							2403	
2015	818	216						2218	
2016	772	203							

Croatian population is 4.17 million.

According to the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, in 2014, there were 716 children in children's homes (64 living in housing communities) and 296 children living in correctional institutions/residential treatment institutions for children and youth with behavioural problems (22 in housing communities) and 2403 children in foster families.

Of these, 71 children left children's homes (and returned to birth families), 47 went to foster care family from children's home, and 33 children were adopted from children's homes.

⁶

<https://www.gov.uk/childcare-parenting/looked-after-children-children-in-care#/childcare-parenting/children-and-young-people-leaving-care>

Two studies carried out in residential institutions for young people give some detail which suggests that this group were generally attending schooling, but this was on the whole in lower level academic settings. Maurović and Ratkajec Gašević (2015) found that, of 201 young people living in 12 institutions, with a median age of 17 years, just over three-quarters (77%) were male.

Of this group, 88% were in school, of which 28% were in elementary school and 68% were in high school. Two thirds of those attending school had achieved mark of 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent' in the most recent end of year assessment. In a further analysis Maurović (2015) found that of a sample of 228 young people in a slightly larger group of residential institutions, 54% were female, and there was an average age 16.79. Among this group, 79% went to high school, of which 53% were in three year high school for crafts and 26% in the four year high-school. Six percent did not attend school.

Ireland

As of March 2018, there are **6,452** children in State Care in Ireland:

15 (0.2%) of children are placed in Residential Special Care.

314 (5%) of children are placed in Residential General Care.

5 (0.1%) of children are placed in Residential Out-of-State Secure Placement.

4,124 (64%) of children live in foster care.

1,880 (29%) of children live in relative foster care.

114 (2%) of children live in other care placements.

Italy

In Italy there is no systematic data collection system on children outside the family. The most updated, by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy⁷, refers to 31/12/2014 and detects 26,420 children and adolescents – net of unaccompanied foreign minors (MSNA) - temporarily removed from their household, equal to the 2.6 per thousand of resident juvenile population. Of these, 14,020 are in foster families and 12,400 are accommodated in residential locations.

The 33.9% of children in foster care is part of their family of origin, just under 30% change to another form, approximately 12% see the starting route foster and the 6% reaches an autonomous life.

The 27% who are accommodated in residential services fit into family, always the 27% switched over to a new experience of community, while transit to a foster home care covers the 8%.

⁷ https://www.minori.it/sites/default/files/QRS_40.pdf

Romania

There are no statistics for the young Care Leavers. We can give general statistics of the situation of all institutionalized children offered by state institutions.

Over the years, alternative services have been developed that provide basic services to families who have difficulty staying together and keeping their children in the family. New types of residential centers have been set up following the closure of many of the old institutions. The impact of the child protection reform is obvious in the annual statistical data indicating a significant decrease in the number of children receiving special protection measures in residential services as well as the decrease of the number of residential institutions in favour of family-type alternatives.

The total population of Romania is about 19,870,647 inhabitants. Among them, children under 18 years old are 3,734,667. At the end of September 2017, there were 55,610 children in the special protection system, out of which:

- 18,419 children (33.12%) received a special protection measure in residential services, out of which:
 - 14,635 children were in public residential services,
 - 3,784 children were in private residential services.
- a total of 37,191 children (66.88%) received a special protection measure in family-type services, out of which:
 - 18,498 children were in foster care,
 - 13,930 children were integrated in families with their relatives up to the 4th degree inclusive,
 - 4,763 children were integrated in other families

United Kingdom

The number of looked after children continues to increase; it has increased steadily over the last nine years. At 31 March 2017 there were 72,670 looked after children, an increase of 3% on 2016. The number of children starting to be looked after in 2016-17 has also risen in recent years and has increased by 2% compared with the previous year. The number of children ceasing to be looked after in 2016-17 has fallen by 2% compared with the previous year.

In 2017 there was a total of 72,670 children in local authority care. Of them⁸

⁸ Source:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664995/SFR50_2017-Children_looked_after_in_England.pdf



- 40,960 where male
- 31,710 where female

Age statistics:

- Under 1 - 3,820
 - to 4 - 9,170
- 5 to 9 - 14,100
- 10 to 15 - 28,540
- 16 and over - 17,040

Ethnic origins statistics:

- White
 - White British - 50,870
 - White Irish - 230
 - Traveller of Irish heritage - 100
 - Gypsy\Roma - 310
 - Any other white background - 2,790
- Mixed
 - White and black Caribbean - 2,390
 - White and black African - 700
 - White and Asian - 1,270
 - Any other mixed background - 2,290
- Asian or Asian British
 - Indian - 300
 - Pakistani - 880
 - Bangladeshi - 410
 - Any other Asian background - 1,830
- Black or black British
 - Caribbean - 1,410
 - African - 2,770
 - Any other black background - 1,020
- Other ethnic groups
 - Chinese - 80
 - Any other ethnic group - 2,390

1.3. The Care Leavers: number and characteristics

Croatia

Due to lack of information there is approximately 100 care leavers per year (range from 80-150). We don't know the right number and their characteristics.

Ireland

Almost 500 young people leave State care in Ireland each year. Based on estimates over the past fifty years, it is estimated that there are approximately 15,000 care leavers in Ireland. The Irish Government decided to strengthen the legislative provisions regarding aftercare. This is in response to concerns that there was insufficient focus in this area and that such planning was not taking place on a properly structured and consistent basis. The approach adopted is to impose a statutory duty on the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) to prepare an aftercare plan for an eligible child or eligible young person. This is the Children and Family Relationships Bill 2015⁹, passed by the Parliament. The aim of the Bill is to create an explicit, as opposed to implicit, statement of the Agency's duty to satisfy itself as to the child's or young person's need for assistance by preparing a plan that identifies those needs for aftercare supports.

Currently aftercare support may be available to Care Leavers engaged in education / training once they have not attained the age of 21, as per Section 45 of the Child Care Act 1991¹⁰ which outlines the obligations on the state to provide such aftercare. In January 2014 the General Scheme and Heads of Aftercare Bill 2014 was published, although a welcome development on paper, in practice it is not effective without a statutory obligation to implement.

In the area of aftercare, the numbers of care leavers involved with homeless services and also in prison / probation services are greatly scattered and somewhat unclear on a national level. In 2017 1,685 18 – 23 years olds were in receipt of aftercare services, up 15% on 2013 figures¹¹, however the report does not illustrate to what extent aftercare service is delivered, how many opt out, at what age, possible reasons for non-engagement, the care type of those in receipt of aftercare services; foster care, residential, high support, special or others and the level of current preparation gone into same.

There is a property crisis in Ireland at present, and many care leavers are facing homelessness. Another key issue which the legislation must address is the eligibility for aftercare. Some young people who were not in care for more than a year prior to reaching 18 years are being refused aftercare support. This means they have to access adult homeless services, which can have very negative consequences. Therefore some very vulnerable young people who should be in receipt

⁹ <http://www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=/documents/bills28/bills/2015/9415/document1.htm>

¹⁰ <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1991/act/17/enacted/en/html>

¹¹ http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Annual_Report_2014_Final_.pdf

of aftercare support are being excluded for administrative reasons rather than on the basis of need. Aftercare needs to ensure that supports are provided on the basis of need rather than solely based on time spent in the care system. The legislation should facilitate professional discretion and assessment in this regard. While improving the statutory basis for aftercare is to be welcomed, CLNI believes that young people must also be meaningfully supported to secure long-term accommodation. Young people must be able to access the support services they need when facing homelessness. For example, the emergency out of hour's social work service should be expanded to be more widely available. Further investment must also be made into services which assist young people in sustaining their accommodation and remaining out of homelessness. These include mental health, addiction, and employment services. Investment in such services is a crucial preventative measure to ensure young people remain in secure accommodation.

Early school leaving and low educational attainment. One of the most consistent findings in research on young care leavers' outcomes is their poorer educational progress compared to their peers. Kelleher et al (2000) found that just 10% of young people who had left health board care had taken the Leaving Certificate exam (compared to 82% in the general student population). Of the health board population, 60% had left school at age 15 or younger, with almost 50% having no qualifications on leaving care. Similarly, in their study of care leavers in Northern Ireland, Pinkerton and McCrea (1999) found that nearly one half of young people had left care with no educational qualifications. Research from other countries has added further support to these findings. In the study by Dixon and Stein (2005), 52% of young people were rated as having poor educational outcomes as they did not have any standard GCSE grades.

The rate of participation in further education amongst young people with a care background is deemed to be five times lower than the national population in five countries: Denmark; England; Sweden; Spain; and Hungary (Jackson and Cameron, 2011). The authors argue that this is likely to be due to early school leaving and low educational attainment at second level. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that many care leavers are at risk of unemployment. This is consistent with findings by the Care Leavers Network Ireland group.

Risk of unemployment: In the study of Irish care leavers by Kelleher et al (2000), 39% of the health board population were unemployed six months after leaving care, which fell to 24% two years later. Similarly, in their study of care leavers in Northern Ireland, Pinkerton and McCrea (1999) found that one quarter of young people were unemployed. In the UK, 44% of young care leavers were found to be unemployed at the follow up stage of the study by Dixon et al (2006). Being unemployed for a long period of time can contribute to economic marginalisation and social exclusion.

Physical and mental health: In terms of Irish research, the study by Kelleher et al (2000) found that 39% of young people leaving health board care had a special need. The authors suggest that this is largely due to the emotional trauma experienced before coming into care. Other research

has shown that young people's health can worsen over time.

Addiction problems: In addition to the health concerns already raised in some of the research, addiction problems were also identified in some of the findings. Kelleher et al (2000) found that 30% of the health board population had addiction problems two years after leaving care.

Italy

In Italy, about 3200¹² girls and boys leave the foster care every year, and unfortunately their current situation is not enough known.

Taking into account smaller areas, such as regional ones, there are two interesting studies to be mentioned. In 2011 Rebecca Zanuso has conducted a research for the European program Life after institutional care. Equal opportunities and social inclusion for young people: identification and promotion of best practices. Such research has allowed to compare the situation of care leavers between Western and Eastern European countries. In Italy, the study focused on Emilia Romagna Region, and the researcher concludes by defining care leavers as being at risk of social exclusion due to major gaps in receiving support during the transition from the system of care, in addition to steps widely varying and depending on the resources of the municipality which is in charge of the case, on resources from the community where the boy/girl lives, and finally on expectations, on personal problems and resources of the individual user's. This creates major problems of (lack of) equal opportunities for boys/girls and of territorial heterogeneity, also due to specific legislation on the part of the Regional authorities. (ZANUSO 2011:24)¹³

In the Sardinia Region too an important research work on exit from foster care and transition to adulthood has been issued. This work, conducted by Luisa Pandolfi, has also analysed the outcomes of Social inclusion programme "Prendere il Volo" promoted by the Region (Pandolfi 2015)¹⁴.

This is the only supporting program for care leavers implemented in Italy, and is focused on all young people between 18 and 25 years, leaving residential communities for children and foster care families, who have already reached the straight pre-minimum requirements for independent life and should complete the transition to a more stable autonomy and social integration, and then achieve the education and/or training started¹⁵.

Research has revealed indicators supporting resilient paths. See the text for any insights, but it is important to emphasize that the work of implementation and analysis of the results obtained is currently under way and see the direct involvement of a group of care leavers, also involved in the validation of the research tools.

Finally, we mention the text *Neomaggiorenni e autonomia personale. Resilienza ed*

¹² <https://www.minori.it/it/news/fondo-triennale-per-i-neomaggiorenni-fuori-famiglia>

¹³ Zanuso, R. (2011) *I care leavers. Giovani a rischio di esclusione sociale. Paper for the Espanet Conference*, Innovare il welfare. Percorsi di trasformazione in Italia e in Europa, 29 Settembre - 1 Ottobre 2011, Milano.

¹⁴ Pandolfi, L. (2015) *Costruire resilienza. Analisi e indicazioni per l'accompagnamento educativo in uscita dalle comunità per minori*, Edizioni Angelo Guerini e Associati SpA, Milano.

¹⁵ <http://www.sardegna sociale.it/index.php?xsl=342&s=290381&v=2&c=3074&nf=1> Consultato il 12/02/2017

emancipazione (young adults and personal autonomy. Resilience and emancipation), edited by Paola Bastianoni and Federico Zullo, which collects the contributions of national and international authors on the subject of care leavers, providing theoretical models, and good practices (BASTIANONI, ZULLO 2012)¹⁶. This text does not follow a field research in order to know the situation of care leavers in Italy, nor provided their direct involvement, but represents a very interesting contribution to frame the topic in a comparative perspective at international level.

The most recent document on this subject is the report “Una risposta ai care leavers: occupabilità e accesso ad un lavoro dignitoso”¹⁷ (A reply to care leavers: employability and access to decent work), edited by SOS Villaggi dei Bambini (April 2017), which aims to better understand what the relationship between care leavers and work is, identifying it as a determinant key of their growth path, but currently a source of vulnerability.

Romania

Even if there are no statistics, we estimate somewhere at the order of hundreds the number of young Care Leavers each year. After the age of 18 they are given support for two more years - accommodation and meals in social centers or apartments. It can continue up to 26 years of age at public residence center or social apartments, or with a rent allowance of approximated 200 euros if the young person attends an educational institution. The best condition are those in the family-type system who can stay with the host family after 18 years old.

Gradually, the young leaves the protective system. There were no programs specifically designed for these young people after leaving the system. Visinel Balan asked for the situation of post-institutionalized youth held in detention centers. The numbers should alert authorities, but the National Penitentiary Authority demands that the information remains strictly secret. It is hard to assume that the policies promoted in the field of child protection are a real failure.

United Kingdom

The number of children looked after who ceased to be looked after fell for the first time in 2017 after rising steadily since 2008. There were 31,250 children who ceased to be looked after in 2017, a decrease of 2% on 2016. 8,700 children ceased to be looked after on their 18th birthday, which is 28% of all children ceasing to be looked after. This has increased from 6,830 (22% of children ceasing) in 2014 and is likely to reflect the increased number of looked after unaccompanied asylum-seeking children over this time.

The next largest group is children aged 1 to 4 years – 7,160 children ceased to be looked after which is 23% of all children ceasing to be looked after. The number and proportion of children ceasing to be looked after in the 1 to 4 years age group have fallen from 28% since 2014 – this is likely a reflection on the fall in the number of children who have been adopted. Reasons for ceasing to be looked after In 2017, of the 31,250 children who ceased to be looked after, 9,970

¹⁶ Bastianoni, P., Zullo, F. (2012) *Neomaggiorenni e autonomia personale. Resilienza ed emancipazione*, Carocci Editore S.p.A., Roma.

¹⁷ <http://www.sositalia.it/getmedia/909c64e9-9a06-4334-be53-8c231b5b49cb/una-risposta-care-leavers>

(32%) returned home to live with their parents or relatives.

This is down slightly from 34% of all children ceasing to be looked after in 2016 and 34% of all children ceasing to be looked after in 2015. We cannot compare to earlier years due to changes in recording categories. 4,350 children ceased to be looked after due to being adopted (14%).

Whilst this is higher than in 2013, it is 19% lower than the peak of 5,360 (17%) in 2015. 3,690 (12%) ceased to be looked after due to a special guardianship order up 33% from 2,770 in 2013 but down slightly since 2016. 15% ceased move to independent living, similar to the 14% in 2013, however more are living independently with supportive accommodation, up from 10% in 2013, to 12% in 2017.¹⁸

1.4. Institutional forms of support to Care Leavers

Croatia

- Government provide money support till the end of schooling
- Available special scholarship for care leavers for studying (care leavers have opportunities but have to be proactive and motivated)
- Residential community / Free apartment

Usually children are not left alone and put on the street when they are 18. If happens, It is from their lack of interest, no motivation no knowledge or resistance toward authority.

Ireland

From 1st September 2017, all young people leaving state care upon reaching the age of 18 will have the right to an aftercare plan to identify any future supports they may require.

Section 45 of the [Child Care Act 1991](#) now places a statutory duty on Tusla to form a view in relation to each person leaving care as to whether there is a “need for assistance” and if it forms such a view, to provide services in accordance with the legislation and subject to resources. The core eligible age range for aftercare is from 18 years up to 21 years. This can be extended until the completion of a course of education in which a young person is engaged, up to the age of 23 years.

As per the Child and Family Agency TUSLA website;

“The Child and Family Agency provides leaving and aftercare services for young people which are responsive and relevant to each young person’s circumstances under Section 45 of the

¹⁸ **Source:**

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664995/SFR50_2017-Children_looked_after_in_England.pdf

Childcare Act 1991. All young people who have had a care history with the Agency are entitled to an Aftercare Service. Services are provided on the basis of assessment of need, age and the length of time the young person was in care.

Services are provided in partnership with a wide range of statutory and non-statutory agencies. Preparation for leaving care starts when a young person enters into the Care system but formal preparation should begin no later than the young person's 16th birthday and the approach to aftercare is informed by the wishes and agreement of the young person. Services can be provided up to 21 years of age or 23, if in full time education, for those young people who are eligible as per Section 45 of the Child Care Act 1991".

There are a range of other support services for Care Leavers including: homelessness accommodation and support. There are over forty organisations that provide a range of supports for children leaving State Care in Ireland, and they are part of a support network called the Irish Aftercare Network.

Italy

The possibility to continue in the path of hospitality/support for a recently come of age being in foster family or community may derive from:

- Disposal of the juvenile court through Administrative pursuance (until 21st year of age);
- Provision of the relevant Social Service within a pursuance project shared with the boy/girl and the hosting adults/educators, particularly where suggested by a regional law (e.g. Directive Emilia Romagna n. 1904/2011) or initiated by a Regional Resolution (i.e. Piedmont Region¹⁹) but in any case at the discretion of the local authority that sometimes fixes the transfer of the project from Minors' Service to Adults' Service.
- Regional Regulations allowing guarantee of continuity where required directly from minor next to the age of majority (in Sardinia, D.R. n. 42/10 of 2006 provides up to 3 years of pursuance

¹⁹The DGR N. 79-11035, 17 NOVEMBER 2003 about aftercare states: "Così come consolidato in dottrina e giurisprudenza, con riferimento all'art. 147 del c.c., i coniugi, che hanno l'obbligo di mantenere, istruire ed educare la prole, tenendo conto delle capacità, delle inclinazioni naturali e delle aspirazioni dei figli, sono tenuti, di fatto, a mantenere i propri figli fino al raggiungimento di un'autonomia personale e lavorativa. E' necessario, quindi, intendere tale orientamento anche per garantire il mantenimento del contributo alla famiglia affidataria di minori, che abbiano compiuto i diciotto anni e che non abbiano raggiunto l'autonomia. L'affidamento può essere realizzato per i casi in cui il minore non possa far ritorno nel proprio nucleo familiare oppure non abbia ancora raggiunto la propria autonomia; tale intervento non può essere prorogato oltre il ventunesimo anno di età. L'affidamento familiare di ultradiciottenni si riferisce esclusivamente, in questo contesto, a prosecuzioni di affidamenti iniziati in età minorile e la cui durata non può superare i 21 anni (in coerenza con la prosecuzione che può essere stabilita dal Tribunale per i Minorenni)" (As well as consolidated in doctrine and jurisprudence, with reference to art. 147 of the Civil Code, the parents, who have the obligation to maintain, educate and educate the offspring, taking into account the abilities, natural inclinations and aspirations of the children, are required, in fact, to keep their children until they reach personal and working autonomy. It is necessary, therefore, to intend this orientation also to guarantee the maintenance of the contribution to the foster family of minors, who have completed eighteen years and who have not attained autonomy. The assignment can be made for cases in which the minor cannot return to his family or has not yet reached his/her autonomy; this intervention cannot be extended beyond the twenty-first year of age. The family custody of over-eighteen-year-olds refers exclusively, in this context, to the continuation of assignments started in child age and whose duration cannot exceed 21 years (consistent with the continuation that can be established by the Juvenile Court))



with individualized social inclusion projects financed by the Region up to 15000 Euros per year per person).

- Unpaid family or foster home or community choice, which is probably the most widespread practice, due to the structural shortage of appropriate and guaranteed interventions on almost all the national territory.

The administrative pursuance seems to be courts' residual practice, except in some regions (in the South, it seems to be quite widespread in Campania and Sicily). Even where it is common, there is often an economic problem as specific budgets are not engaged/arranged by local authorities which should be in charge with the path²⁰.

In 2010 Agevolando was founded as a volunteers association aiming to support the paths of boys and girls in transition from foster care. The Association has undertaken both direct support actions and advocacy actions, such as “5buoneragioni” campaign or Care Leavers Network, which has allowed the Association to bring the direct voice of care leavers within the institutions.

After a long process promoted by some associations, a fund of 15 million Euros was approved that will allow a three-year national experimentation for projects to accompany the autonomy of young people aged 18 to 21 years leaving foster care.

Romania

The only help is rent allowance. Otherwise, state institutions to support CareLeavers don't exist, only foundations and private associations. Young CareLeavers who know the detailed situation decided to form associations and even a Council of Institutionalized Youngsters to support those in the same situation. Among the associations we mention the Voice of Abandoned Children, Volunteers for life, Tiberius Association. Visinel Balan, a friend of our association, is the counselor of a deputy in the Parliament of Romania and is trying to change the legislation in the field of adoption and social protection of institutionalized children.

United Kingdom

Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to make sure that they promote the educational achievement of the children they look after, regardless of where they are placed. All Looked After young people in education should have²¹:

Care Plan - this is the main plan; it outlines a child's needs, how they will be met and the plan for

²⁰ The text refers to a document of the promoters of the campaign Donate Future
<http://www.alleyoop.ilsole24ore.com/2018/02/23/donare-futuro-difendiamo-il-diritto-dei-minori-ad-avere-una-famiglia-e-dei-ragazzi-a-non-rimanere-soli/>

²¹ Source:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/397649/CA1989_Transitions_guidance.pdf



the child. It should include named contacts for health and support and is thoroughly integrated with plans for education and health and the Pathway Plan.

Personal Education Plan (PEP) - is the joint responsibility of the local authority and the school. It is a record of what needs to happen for the child to fulfil their potential and reflects any existing education plans. The PEP should set out clear objectives relating to academic achievement and out of school activities as well as other personal and if appropriate behavioural targets.

Pupil Premium (previously Personal Education Allowance) – should be used to provide additional support to prevent children falling behind or helping them to catch up. It should not replace any services already offered by the Local Authority or school and should be directed towards buying non- school support for learning such as additional tutoring, music lessons or learning linked to the PEP.

Pathway Plan – explores a child's wishes and aspirations for the future and outlines steps to prepare the child for leaving care, ensuring relevant preparation and support is in place. It takes into account relevant information from the PEP and integrates with the child's Care Plan

Virtual School Head (or equivalent) – because looked after children are being educated across a large number of schools, the virtual school head has a powerful role in tracking their progress as if they were in a single school. The core purpose of this role is to improve the educational progress and attainment of all children looked after by their authority, including those that have been placed in schools in other authorities. The Department for Education website has a useful section on virtual school heads which we are informed will include a list of all virtual school heads in England in the near future.

Designated Teacher - have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of the child's PEP within the school and are a central point of engagement between social workers, heads of virtual school and other stakeholders. They also have lead responsibility for helping school staff understand the things which affect how looked after children learn and achieve.

All information on the legal support for care leavers is in the following document

The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Volume 3: planning transition to adulthood for care leavers

1.5. Right to participate: current situation

Croatia

Last few years in the country were made effort to present children right in general, through media as well through different projects/program. Today children and youth are well known with their

right but unfortunately their responsibility is not at the same level (much lower) which leads to unsatisfied lost youngster who is aimed on their right but not on responsibilities. Care leaver has fallen in the same trap and their voice is heard in residential care but have not input on policy, where politician play their games. There is no Care leaver network at the time, where they jointly share experience and try to do advocacy.

Ireland

One of the key factors seen as contributing to educational attainment at school is stability in care placement, typically in a long term foster care placement. Irish research has shown that young people who remain in their foster care placement at age 17/18 are significantly more likely to continue their education after second level schooling than those who move out of the foster care home (Daly and Gilligan, 2010). Similarly, the study on care leavers in England by Dixon et al (2006) found better educational outcomes for young people who had been in a long term settled placement which they found was more likely to be a with a foster carer who valued education. In addition to factors related to a young person's experience of being in care, what happens when a young person leaves care is also important to how they will fare during the early years of adulthood.

The importance of having adequate aftercare support has been identified as one of the key ways in which young care leavers can get the help they need to make a successful transition from care. Having access to 'reliable accessible support' was deemed to be a 'mediating factor between poor starting points and good outcomes' (Dixon and Stein, 2003: 15). In particular, formal aftercare support was seen as having a positive impact on young people's social development outcomes including self-esteem, friendships and developing healthy relationships although it was less significant for enhancing educational and career outcomes (Stein et al, 2000). Based on young people's views of leaving care, the support received before leaving is just as important as that received when living independently (Harris and Broad, 2005). Good preparation before leaving care has been linked to young people's ability to cope after they leave (Dixon and Stein, 2005).

Care Leavers Network Ireland has provided a range of aftercare support to over 750 care leavers in the past three years.

Impact	Outcome
Development of the Aftercare Advocacy Committee to produce policy papers and advocate for statutory entitlement to aftercare support for all care leavers.	<p>2016 Increase budget across Government Departments of 10-15% for aftercare supports; Two advocacy papers on homelessness and mental health produced for pre-budget submissions;</p> <p>2016 - 2018 Change to aftercare bill for statutory entitlement to aftercare plans for care leavers;</p>

	<p>At least five personal stories covered in the media for public awareness per annum;</p> <p>Five advocacy papers per annum on requirements for improved outcomes for care leavers.</p>
<p>Develop partnership arrangements with the Irish Aftercare Network of professional organisations working with care leavers.</p>	<p>2015 Develop mentoring programme with appropriate policies and procedures;</p> <p>2016-2018 Participate in aftercare plans, training and mentoring for 50-100 care leavers per annum; Agree service level agreements with 20 organisations and TUSLA to allow the ICLN to provide mentoring and training to care leavers for agreed fees; Measurable outcomes for the care leavers developed including: Wellness, independent living, education, employment, life skills, support structures.</p>
<p>Incorporate the Irish Care Leavers Network into a company</p>	<p>2018 onwards Launch of the ICLN with Board and strategic plan published Develop strategic and operational plan, governance structure, policies and procedures and administrative support; Periodic strategic and operational plan reviews; Production of annual reports and outcomes; Develop funding plan.</p>
<p>Grow the network of care leavers. Recruit care leavers for training. Organise networking and seminar events for care leavers.</p>	<p>2017 Grow the network to a membership of 1500; Train up to ten care leavers for mentoring; Develop the Care Leaver Records Access Unit as a service to care leavers.</p> <p>2018 Onwards Launch the ICLN with high profile care leavers; Grow the membership to 3000 care leavers; Organise 20 regional seminars and networking events; Train up to fifty care leavers for provision of mentoring; Provide mentoring and training for up to 100 care leavers per</p>

	<p>annum; Provide support to aftercare plans for up to 300 care leavers per annum.</p>
<p>Produce information support booklets and online content of use to care leavers.</p>	<p>2015 - 2018 Produce guides for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessing further and higher education; • Accessing records from your time in care; • Making the transition from care to care leaver; • Independent living programmes; • A guide to well being; • Leaving care guide. <p>Produce metric for online interaction and level of engagement.</p>

Italy

In Italy the task of drawing up a monitoring report on the implementation of the rights enshrined in the *Convention on the rights of children and adolescents* is entrusted to a group of organizations coordinated by Save the Children. The latest report available, in the part on the right to participation (article 12 CRC) asks the Government to include participation in essential levels under art. 117 of the Constitution and to implement initiatives of coordination, systematization, promotion and support of experiences of participation of minors and to create training curriculum on this issue for adults and administrative/policy makers²². Initiatives that aim to promote participation in the context of *alternative care* paths are infrequent and often uneven. We will describe below some projects in Italy focusing on exploring the opinions of boys and girls in alternative care, with attention to the step of the research design and to the possible practical implications they have had.

The Veneto region promotes since 2009 the collective participation and listening activities of boys and girls living temporarily outside their original homes, in foster care or in the hosting communities. The project *ECCOCI* (Here We Are), which took place between 2015 and 2016, involved about 100 boys and girls aged between 11 and 18 years in a location that made them meet as a group for about twenty meetings, during which had the opportunity to tell their experience and express their point of view, pointing out difficulties but also the needs, goals and desires. [...] A major project of collective listening, then, with a twofold purpose: on the one hand, to provide an additional psychological and social support to young participants, on the other hand

²² <http://www.gruppocrc.net/IMG/pdf/rapportocrc-x2017.pdf>

to collect indications and evidence relevant to the planned revision of the *Regional Guidelines for the Protection of Minors*, in addition to figuring out how to develop in the Veneto territory this innovative participation by boys and girls at crucial choices for their lives²³.

The European project *Training Professionals Working with Children in Care* is a two-year project (2015-2016) funded by the European Commission that has seen as main objective to promote an approach centred on the rights of children and boys/girls and, starting from the right to participation, to promote their participation in decision-making processes that affect them. Promoted in Italy by SOS Children's villages, saw the involvement of a group of care leavers throughout the design phase of the actions, as well as groups of boys and girls into host foster communities between 11 and 17 years in a process of collective listening. Boys and girls have had the opportunity to make professionals who participated in the formations to listen to their views, giving concrete opportunities to meet and exchange. In the same direction also moves the project *Prepare for Leaving Care*, which aims to improve the transition from foster care through training for operators and listening to groups of children exiting from foster care paths, involved in processing recommendations on the subject.

Also relevant is the proposal document *Residential communities for minors: for defining policies and standards*, by a coordination consisting of delegates of associations and organizations or active national coordination in the foster care system in Italy, supervised by the Authority for Childhood and Adolescence. The produced document was also written in an easy-to-read way and the work was presented in an SOS Children's village to four groups of guys living in three foster communities managed by CNCA and organizations, in order to collect their opinions. It was an experiment aimed at including their views in this work of reflection of the adults. (AGIA 2015:32)²⁴

Finally, the work of the National Coordinating Committee on the rights of the Child and Adolescent-PIDIDA is to be quoted; aimed since 2001 at achieving both regionally and nationally activities for promoting the right to participation of children and young people. The recent project *To participate, present infinitive!* worked to implement activities promoting the participation of children and young people with particular emphasis on their involvement together with adults, in decision making on issues that affect them directly (coordination PIDIDA 2015:27)²⁵.

Among the explored areas, there is also the alternative care, which saw the involvement of a group of boys/girls in drafting of requests and suggestions on the issue of participation in relation to foster care. The project realized public moments to spread and bring together instances of boys and girls with significant stakeholders both locally and nationally.

At the heart of the projects above mentioned, there is the theme of the right to participation and possible declinations within which we can guarantee it. All projects have exploited the tool of

²³ <http://www.ulssvicenza.it/evento.php/507>, consultato il 15/02/2017

²⁴ AGIA (2015) *Comunità residenziali per minorenni: per la definizione dei criteri e degli standard. Documento di proposta*, Tipografia Legatoria Rossini s.r.l., Roma.

²⁵ Coordinamento PIDIDA (2015) *Io mi fido di te, se tu ti fidi di me - documento nazionale PIDIDA sulla partecipazione dell'infanzia e dell'adolescenza*, Comitato Italiano per l'UNICEF Onlus, Roma.



collective listening as a privileged place for comparison between boys and girls on the participative themes. On the other hand, the contexts in which it has been attempted to make it applicable are various. All paths have seen public bodies and third sector institutions as a first place for thought and initiation of projects (Veneto Region, Europe, UNICEF, SOS Children's villages, National Authority for Children and Adolescents, ARCI).

The Care Leavers Network Italy project is one of the most important national projects dealing with advocacy and participation of care leavers. The CLN is promoted by Agevolando in partnership with the Authority for Childhood and Adolescence.

Romania

The Associations wishing to get involved need to conclude a partnership with public institutions to get involved in joint projects. While they show transparency, state institutions hardly grant the right to non-governmental associations to take action in state residential centres, and even less to be involved in the situation of children and young care leavers. In addition, the situation of each social assisted, both minors or adult, is kept secret. We talk about the family, psychological or social situation and the housing situation or the criminal problems of those who leave the system. Hardly, young Care Leavers can find out the real name of their parents for example. Even donations can be made, but they are pursued by the Directorate-General, to be approved or not, and cannot be given to a particular child, for example a merit scholarship.

United Kingdom

Being able to participate and contribute to how services are run is a right of the child. Each local authority has a Children in Care group, which gathers the voice of those in care, many local authorities also have Care Leaver groups which operate in the same way. Below is a link for guidance of how to involve the voice of children and young people in the development of social care. This includes a tool kit and resources to track participation:

<https://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide11/comparison.asp>

1.6. Associations/Institutions operating in favour of Care Leavers: quantitative and qualitative analysis

Croatia

In Croatia there are 14 governmental institutions for children without adequate parental care. From those 8 institutions are residential children homes and 6 of them are centres for providing services in the community. As well there are 3 non-government children homes for residential care.



All of residential home care has included in their work preparation for return in family or independent life, but it is all individual for each home.

There are few NGO (beside the 3 who provides residential care) who do their best to help children in care, as well aimed at care leavers.

For example NGO Igra created Frame- manual for empowering care leavers,

SOS Children's Village among other activities and projects created Kids and youngsters in alternative care.

Fice Croatia try to build network of organisations/individuals – networking human resources, ideas, projects, programs with aim of making high quality services for children and youth in alternative care.

Rehabilitation centre for stress and trauma Zagreb had among others project "What I wear and independent lifestyle" with a goal of empowerment and support in finding a job to young people leaving in the system of alternative care.

The projects which involve care leavers are good, but when they are finished they don't leave the mark.

As well there are different individual project helping alternative care. Example: two mothers created Facebook page "Magic of Giving" and connect children who have a wish for birthdays with people who would like to make their wish come true.

Ireland

Care Leavers Network Ireland was formed in 2015 to help care leavers progress their lives.

We have developed a range of **Mentoring and training programmes** which are a source of income from various organisations who have care leavers in their care. This includes private fostering agencies, residential homes, homeless agencies, and charities. We have spoken to many of these organisations and they understand the need for this type of support as it will improve the outcomes for care leavers in their care. We are lobbying for increased funding from the Govt. Departments for this funding, and also entering into service level agreements with the different agencies to develop this. Through pilot mentoring and training, we have been able to demonstrate the value and improved outcomes, saving Government agencies significant money over time. We have been able to develop testimonials from care leavers explaining the value of the support they have received.

We have also developed a wider **training programme** for foster parents, social workers, solicitors, and other professionals who have a responsibility for children in care. It will assess various aspects of the challenges of looking after children in care, and provide perspectives from care leavers. The Irish Foster Care Association, of which Wayne Dignam was a Board Member, has an annual training allowance for foster parents to attend training courses. Social workers and solicitors are required to attend Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses each year.



Private fostering agencies and residential homes also have budgets for training.

There are a range of organisations that provide additional support, including homeless agencies, advocacy agencies, mental health charities, and many others.

Italy

Many institutions and people are active in supporting care leavers, often as a result of the goodwill and boost to build virtuous paths, but they act without a shared and defined planning. These are therefore interventions creating a fragmented patchwork, and dependent on existing or available resources in the area.

In 2010 the Associazione Agevolando was created in Italy, which identifies its core mission in the support to boys and girls in transition from foster care paths.

Agevolando ("Facilitating") is a volunteers organization that aims to develop projects around the theme of home, work and relationships. Since 2013 it has been promoting Care Leavers Network, a project of collective listening and participation. The project is co-lead with the Childhood and Adolescence Authority and the Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy and Applied Psychology (FISPPA DEPARTMENT) at the University of Padua, but there are many organizations cooperating to its realization.

The "National Committee for the social and work integration of girls and boys outside the family of origin and young mothers with children hosted in communities" (*"Comitato nazionale per la piena integrazione sociale e lavorativa di ragazze e ragazzi fuori dalla famiglia di origine e di giovani mamme accolte in comunità con bambino"*) was born in February 2017 with the aim of supporting, soliciting, facilitating processes in favour of care leavers. The committee main purpose is to achieve measures for the protection and support of life projects of young people from foster families, communities, group homes, and young mothers with child who lived in a protection and assistance period of their lives, outside the usual context of life.

Romania

Non-Governmental Associations involved in the situation of young CareLeavers are a few, 2 are in Bucharest : Tiberius Association and Voice of Institutionalized Children. Unicef, Hope and Homes for Children, S.O.S. Children's Villages are international associations that integrate children into residential centres, but few take care of the young people leaving the system, and usually their help is limited to a few months.

United Kingdom



2. RESULTS OF THE TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS IN THE PARTNERS' COUNTRIES

Below the answers collected from the interviews taken by partners:

2.1. Has your association or have you ever participated in collective listening and participation activities involving care leavers?

Croatia

FICE Croatia staff participated in different activities that includes collective listening and participation activities involving care leavers. We worked with mixed groups in which were involved only individual care leavers, we manage organisation of group activities where were included 28 different homes for residential care, as well on international level through youth exchange project, award the best one in Austria 2016- Be the change.

Ireland

Yes, each year we conduct an online survey of approximately 150 care leavers, in which we listen to their concerns and challenges, and we share the results with the wider community. We have presented these results to Tusla, the Irish Foster Care Association, the Department of Health and Children, and to the wider public.

Italy

Our Organization promotes from 2013 the project "Care Leavers Network Italy", a project of collective listening and participation aimed at care leavers. There are currently 6 regions and about 100 care leavers involved.

Romania

Our Association has developed the Stories and Destiny project, in which successful young people from the institutionalized environment have told the high school students, middle school children and other children from social protection system, how to start a new life if you are an abandoned child and turn this situation into a success story. Here is a brief description:

Young people are directly confronted with problems in society and experience situations such as exclusion, lack of jobs, the impossibility of ensuring decent living and becoming independent. Those coming from the state social care institutions, struggle with these barriers in fulfilment of their own destiny. Each of them has a star that they follow, and those who have managed to keep this star in their hands are the models that can guide the young Care Leavers at the beginning of their independent life.

Few lessons in the school curriculum address career counselling, successful integration into the labour market for each individual to ensure success. Many young people are choosing unsuitable lifestyle. We bring them just a few years older role models, who have faced many obstacles and



can communicate effectively their destinies.

We can build with these young people a true motivational workshop dedicated to high school students, a course in which we encourage talent and imagination, to bring to light skills and defects. It is a workshop in which the human resources will build the main engine, helped by the experience of a psychologist or a pedagogue.

Another project of our association was the editing of the book of Tiberiu Antipa - Confessions of an Orphan. Tiberiu is a young man grown up in the children's foster homes. Today he can pride himself with many results: He succeeded in changing destinies and continues to impress us with involvement and attitude. He works hard and his dream is to set up a center for the abandoned children, has three years of experience in the social, educational, cultural and artistic fields, but also in the coordination of projects meant to bring a ray of light to the life of some fellow children. He leads as a president a non-governmental association with whom he wants to bring a change in the public perception of institutionalized children.

The TIBERIUS Association was founded with the desire to bring added value to the lives of institutionalized children and young care leavers, as well for disadvantaged or under-privileged social backgrounds as well as other disadvantaged social categories such as the elderly, the sick, the families from poor communities, street people and children.

Confessions of an orphan - a book describing a reality, of those left in state care institutions, but an optimistic story and an example of life. Looking at this book with much attention and interest you can find new impressions and stories from the life story of a young man who, although his life has not given him the chance of a happy childhood or a family, manages to find the power to dream of a big family, becoming himself a "parent" for children like him.

United Kingdom

The Care Leavers Association is a user led membership organisation, and it built upon the use of participation of care leavers to build our strategy and plan of work. We often host focus groups for our work and also on behalf of other organisations to gather the voices of care leavers. This includes hosting focus groups for the National Audit Office. Our resources and projects are co-produced with care leavers to ensure that they represent the user voice throughout.

2.2. How would you define “participation activities”?

Croatia

Activities where all included communicate through active participation and provide benefit to all involved. On the other side whatever we do we always participate on some way. Participation activities can help us to become more responsible for our lives and to make distinction between

event and experience.

Ireland

The activities that foster participation build places where someone hands over a little power and someone appropriates a little more. The challenge is that adults become available to act intentionally a transfer of their own power and care leavers feel protagonists of the issues affecting them, not only for themselves and their own history. Participation works if both of them put it into practice. If both poles are available to meet. Participatory activities create the conditions for this to happen.

Italy

The activities that foster participation build places where someone hands over a little power and someone appropriates a little more. The challenge is that adults become available to act intentionally a transfer of their own power and care leavers feel protagonists of the issues affecting them, not only for themselves and their own history. Participation works if both of them put it into practice. If both poles are available to meet. Participatory activities create the conditions for this to happen.

Romania

Participation activities we see as activities that help young careleavers for post-institutionalized life. We also see as activities of non-governmental organizations to improve the current situation of young careleavers.

United Kingdom

We define participation activities as activities that involve help encourage those involved to not just 'be' at the activity but to be gaining from the activity.

2.3. Do you have qualitative research experience? In particular, focus groups and semi-structured interviews?

Croatia

FICE staff have experience with Focus groups especially in topics dealing with prevention of unacceptable ways of behaviour and addiction, and research needs of youngsters to prevent addiction where is included and prevention from modern technologies as well.

Ireland

Yes, as CEO of Care Leavers Network Ireland, I have four degrees: Two undergraduate degrees and two masters degrees. Each of the degrees required focus groups and semi-structured interviews to gather research and form a thesis. We have participated in research with Universities and other institutions.

Italy

By 2016 we started experimenting with structured qualitative research paths through thematic focus groups, under the scientific supervision of Professor Valerio Belotti, Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy and Applied Psychology the University of Padua. We never used the instrument of semi-structured interviews, but some of our staff have experience.

Romania

We did not have any qualitative results. It is very difficult to have these because state institutions do not allow access to statistical data and do not record the path in life of young careleavers.

United Kingdom

Being able to gather the user and participant voice is very important to the evaluation of our work. For example for our Health project, we sent out a questionnaire to care leavers on their experiences in care and post care on their health, we gained over 400 responses. We also set up and ran a number of focus groups who gave their voices and ideas for improving the care system. The Young peoples project was created by using young people focus groups and gathering information on what they wanted to change and improve. For the GOAL project we questioned the mentors and young people throughout on their experiences, change of perception, self-evaluation of their journeys and also asked them to complete evaluation on how we could improve the project in the future.

2.4. Which methodologies of active participation do you know? Have you experienced them?

Croatia

- Focus groups aiming on specific thematic
- Group work – with bigger number of participants where the goal is to achieve team work and cohesion, through individual and group empowering.
- Work in small groups – the most powerful, have learning techniques and it can deal with conflict and other situations on clear and characteristic way.
- Debate – it provides awareness to understand there is always other side that it might not be so wrong if we deal with roots of beliefs of others.

Ireland

Our experience in participative projects allowed us to experience ourselves on various levels of participation and related activities.

A first level of participation concerns the possibility to listen to each other and recognize a skill that has value not only for themselves but also for others. This awareness is the first step to activate and engage in participatory dynamics. Activities that fall under this level are discussions, workshops, testimonials.

The emerging contents can be used to communicate with other people and become the

instruments of dialogue, confrontation, transformation. The focus groups suggested by Care Leavers Network Ireland aim to work in this direction, giving the self-expression a dimension coming out from only individual space and becoming a collective expression.

Another participatory level is to build intentionally places where such collective expressions can meet people or institutions available to enter into dialogue and discussion, transferring some of their power. The activities that we have experienced on this level are for example the conferences where the first speakers are the boys and girls, or training for operators who focus care leavers point of view.

We finally experienced the possibility of sample surveys on topics significant for the experience of care leavers, created with input from professionals but then validated and disseminated by the boys/girls as co-researchers. We have conducted this form of research with Trinity College Dublin to assess outcomes of care leavers.

Italy

Our experience in participative projects allowed us to experience ourselves on various levels of participation and related activities.

A first level of participation concerns the possibility to listen to each other and recognize a skill that has value not only for themselves but also for others. This awareness is the first step to activate and engage in participatory dynamics. Activities that fall under this level are discussions, workshops, testimonials.

The emerging contents can be used to communicate with other people and become the instruments of dialogue, confrontation, transformation. The focus groups suggested by Care Leavers Network Italy aim to work in this direction, giving the self-expression a dimension coming out from only individual space and becoming a collective expression.

Another participatory level is to build intentionally places where such collective expressions can meet people or institutions available to enter into dialogue and discussion, transferring some of their power. The activities that we have experienced on this level are for example the conferences where the first speakers are the boys and girls, or training for operators who focus care leavers point of view.

We finally experienced the possibility of sample surveys on topics significant for the experience of care leavers, created with input from professionals but then validated and disseminated by the boys/girls as co-researchers.

Romania

The care leavers we were able to bring them as volunteers of the association, to help the children left in the system, to provide food to homeless people or to clean up the parks in Bucharest.

Few wanted to get involved in writing projects or doing business on their own. There are very few associations built by young care leavers, and the TIBERIUS Association is one of the two in Bucharest.

Instead, we have always provided support for these young people to use legislation, to register associations or eventual businesses.

We organized conferences that described the situation of young care leavers and discussing solutions to their life problems.



United Kingdom

Empowerment model, user led model, Co-production model.
We use these models throughout all of our projects and work.

2.5. Do you have experiences in facilitating peer discussion groups (teenagers)?

Croatia

Yes we have experiences, mostly with primary schools (13-14 years old)

Ireland

Care Leavers Network Ireland has been facilitating groups of teenagers. We also experienced the introduction of peers in the actions themselves. For example, each regional group includes senior care leavers engaged in development and joint planning of the activities of their own group

Italy

During these years of Care Leavers Network we have been testing quite often the facilitation of groups of teenagers. We also experienced the introduction of peers in the actions themselves. For example, each regional group includes senior care leavers engaged in development and joint planning of the activities of their own group.

Romania

TIBERIUS association organized camps, personalized psychological development workshops in which we discussed about career, job offers, integration into the labour market, and the uncertain future for teenagers.

United Kingdom

Yes, we work directly with young people through all of our projects, (the Criminal Justice Project, Health Project but primarily through our Young Peoples Project. The YYP is dedicated to helping young people feel more empowered and knowledgeable about their lives and their entitlements as they enter the adult world. The work we carry out involves facilitating peer group work and discussions. Our GOAL (Getting On And Living) independent living programme was based on group peer mentoring, where life experiences were shared in positive ways, to teach independent living skills to those living the care system. We worked with a number of local authorities to collect the voices of young people leaving the care system on what they felt helped, harmed and what was needed in terms of improving the care system and leaving the care system. This was carried out with over 100 young people in 10 different areas.



2.6. Have you ever organized meetings between care leavers coming from different kinds of support/protection paths? Could you tell them?

Croatia

No, we mostly deal with children coming from residential care.

Ireland

Yes, Care Leavers Network Ireland has a network of care leavers throughout Ireland who host support meetings for care leavers. These meetings consist of care leavers coming from different kinds of support/protection paths. These meetings are called 'Turn up and speak up' and we encourage care leavers to share their experience in confidence. In Dublin, such meetings are hosted once per month, as in other counties throughout Ireland.

Italy

Our meetings involve care leavers who come both from residential care and foster families. Today many care leavers involved in our networks are also migrants, often as unaccompanied minors.

Romania

We organized conferences where children from state care centres met with those who left the system but also with children from families or with foster families.

We had several actions in the **Valea Plopului**, where in a little village are assisted hundreds of abandoned children and was built by a non-governmental association.

Also children from state care centres and young careleavers have had meetings with street people, have cooked hot meals for them and learned about their life stories.

United Kingdom

We work with young people with different experiences of care, from foster care, kinship care and residential care. We work in different local areas and ensure that these young people meet and are able to talk and share their experiences.

2.7. How would you define “Care Leavers Network” as a concept and as an actual system?

Croatia

Connection between different experiences and stimulating motivations aiming in direction for



wellbeing of all included participants through act of giving and receiving.

Ireland

The Care Leavers Network is an opportunity to capitalize on the experience of people who have a central point of view to improve foster care solutions, as they have directly lived them. The Care Leavers Network is likely to change for the better the lives of many children and adults, if so many believe that this is possible. The Care Leavers Network is an experience of collective resilience, because it leaves room for the stories of those who lived a difficult path, but did not give up and wanted to share their experience. As care leavers, having lived in the State Care system, we can prove that there are better ways.

Italy

The Care Leavers Network is an opportunity to capitalize on the experience of people who have a central point of view to improve foster care solutions, as they have directly lived them. The Care Leavers Network is likely to change for the better the lives of many boys and girls, if so many believe that this is possible. The Care Leavers Network is an experience of collective resilience, because it leaves room for the stories of those who lived a difficult path, but did not give up and wanted to share their experience.

Romania

Care Leavers - It's an unknown term in Romania. We see Care Leavers Network as a system to monitor the situation of those who left the state care system, but for this also requires a good collaboration of the state institutions.

A first step in Romania is the Institutionalized Youth Council which brings together associations founded by young care leavers and the Voice of the Institutionalized Children in Romanian Parliament - Vișinel Balan.

United Kingdom

The tag line for the Care Leavers Association is 'An ever growing network of care leavers'. We believe that no matter how old you are and wherever you are from, you are always a care leaver and that you have a right to feel connected and have a sense of belonging. We created a online website to reunite care leavers from different care homes called 'Care Leavers Reunited', and currently working on a project how we can create a similar piece but with the ability to also provide advice/guidance and key information to those who are involved. We believe that each and every care leaver is part of a bigger 'care family' where we can offer support and understanding to each other, that you cannot get anywhere else.

3. OVERALL RESULTS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION ANALYSIS

3.1. Legal framework and policies

The situation in the five Country is highly heterogeneous: all countries have issued a specific legislation for Child Protection, but policies resulting from it are still different both under the choice between institutionalised and foster care, and about services offered to the children and to the care leavers. All countries excepted Romania provide some services for the youth 18-21 years old, even in different ways and intensity. In Croatia there are residential communities till 21 years, but decisions are taken by the Hoses directly. Ireland issued a law about aftercare only last year, while in Italy aftercare is yielded by Courts decisions only in some cases, and only in few regions there are more specific laws. In United Kingdom at 16 children are provided with a plan to help their transition to adulthood, and at 18 they are no longer in care, but can still receive advice till they are 25. In Romania, the situation is worse due to the really huge number of children in care, and aftercare services are not provided at all.

3.2. The boys and girls living far from their families: number and characteristics

Again the situation of the five Country differs, mostly in Romania and United Kingdom towards the other countries, if we consider the number of children living in public care. Furthermore, while in most partners' Countries foster care is the main used solution, in Romania and Italy residential care is still adopted for about the half of children in care. In the table below a comparison is given:

Country/year	Children in care	Institutionalised/ public residential care/Placement orders	Small/private residential care/Voluntary agreements	Foster care	Relatives foster care
Croatia 2015	1034	818	216	2218	
Ireland 2018	6452	448		4124	1880
Italy 2014	26420	12400		14020	
Romania 2017	55610	14635	3874	4763	13930
United Kingdom 2017	72670	5440	13800	44600	8830

3.3. The Care Leavers: number and characteristics

Most of the Countries – excepted United Kingdom and Ireland – have no analytical studies and statistics related to the number and situation of care leavers. This corresponds to a lack of

legislation and services offered to this target in a structured way. Anyway, the problem is felt as relevant, as in all countries there are data about the increased risk of marginalisation, criminality, addictions and exclusion of this group. While in Ireland and United Kingdom laws and policies addressed to this problem have already been issued, even in a different way, in the other Countries many steps ahead have to be done.

3.4. Institutional forms of support to Care Leavers

As above mentioned, in Ireland and United Kingdom a detailed plan and services for Care Leavers have been provided, even if leaving many problems unsolved and in Croatia existing policies aim at safeguarding them and their right to complete education, in Italy there are no specific laws and policies at a national level, and in Romania “the only help is rent allowance”.

Due to this general incomplete coverage of the problems, in almost all Countries associations of and for Care Leavers have been created, in order both:

- To give immediate support to the Care Leavers
- To strengthen their voice towards the public institutions, and in the long term to improve their life and the services devoted to them.

The majority of project partners belong to this group, while the Croatian partner is part of an international umbrella organisation supporting actions in favour of children in out-of-home care or with special needs.

All the partners are actively involved in the support improvement process in their countries.

3.5. Right to participate: current situation

This aspect shows, more than the previous ones, how big are the differences among the partners' Countries: starting from United Kingdom, where authorities have Children in Care groups to be heard on their problems and wishes, and lasting with Romania, where not only it is impossible to participate, but also to obtain information by the care centres and to be involved in Care Leavers support, participation is felt and acted in a heterogeneous way. Croatia and Italy started to work on this theme, but results are still partial.

3.6. Associations/Institutions operating in favour of Care Leavers: quantitative and qualitative analysis

In most of the partner Countries there are both international and national institutions operating in the field of children's protection, and often they deal also with care leaving problem. But again, as a result of the different cultures and level of application of the participation principles, in some countries there are no – or weak – users' associations promoting the rights and needs of care leavers and having some influencing power towards policy makers. In Croatia, there are many associations, but no care leavers' ones, in Romania a dialogue with public institutions seems to be a far objective, in the current situation; while in Italy the recently born Agevolando has got a

privileged dialogue position towards national policy and decision makers, and also a very good relationship with the professionals' bodies. In UK and Ireland, relationships among associations of users and associations/public bodies with a professionals' perspective are frequent and good.

In all the Countries where there are Care Leavers' associations, their aim is to offer support to the transition, advocacy services, training to professionals and foster parents, representing care leavers in the dialogue with the public authorities.

4. OVERALL RESULTS OF THE TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the results of the five national reports above described will be compared and conclusions about the differences, and the work to be done for decreasing them, will be issued, in order to help the project consortium to better build the needed training for their staff.

4.1. Has your association or have you ever participated in collective listening and participation activities involving care leavers?

All partners excepted Romania have participated and participate to collective listening activities. Romania has experimented testimony activities, where young people in care are confronted with positive examples.

4.2. How would you define "participation activities"?

All the partners' definitions, excepted that from Romania, are in line with the following concepts:

- Participation build places where someone hands over a little power and someone appropriates a little more
- Participation activities involve help encourage those involved to not just 'be' at the activity but to be gaining from the activity
- Participation activities can help us to become more responsible for our lives and to make distinction between event and experience.

4.3. Do you have qualitative research experience? In particular, focus groups and semi-structured interviews?

All the partners, excepted Romania, where the partner affirms it is almost impossible to get data, have got experience in qualitative research, and particularly in focus groups and interviews.

4.4. Which methodologies of active participation do you know? Have you

experienced them?

Different methodologies are used by partners, depending on the context and aim of the activity. Below a resuming table:

Methodology	HR	IE	IT	RO	UK
Thematic Focus Groups	X	X	X		X
Empowerment through working groups	X	X		X	X
Debate	X				
Testimonials		X	X	X	
Surveys		X	X		X
Workshops	X	X	X	X	X

4.5. Do you have experiences in facilitating peer discussion groups (teenagers)?

All partners are experienced in facilitating peer discussions groups of teenagers.

4.6. Have you ever organized meetings between care leavers coming from different kinds of support/protection paths? Could you tell them?

All partners excepted Croatia deal with youth coming from different care paths, and organise meetings among them for let them sharing their experience.

4.7. How would you define “Care Leavers Network” as a concept and as an actual system?

From the different answers to this question, a general definition can be deduced, it is:

Care Leavers Network is an opportunity to capitalize on the experience of people who have a central point of view to improve foster care solutions, as they have directly lived them, no matter how old they are and wherever they are from.

The Care Leavers Network is likely to change for the better the lives of many children and adults, if so many believe that this is possible.

The Care Leavers Network is an experience of collective resilience, because it leaves room for the stories of those who lived a difficult path, but did not give up and wanted to share their experience.

We believe that each and every care leaver is part of a bigger ‘care family’ where we can offer support and understanding to each other, that you cannot get anywhere else.



5. CONCLUSIONS

The results from the partners' current situation and staff needs analysis show a tremendous gap among legislations and policies in the five considered countries, whilst principles, methodologies, and used tools are common to most of the partners.

In view of the joint training of the partners' staff the results show a need of peer-to-peer comparison of methodologies instead of new contents taught by trainers, at least for the active participation topic.

All partners seem to have developed effective ways for making care leavers and in general teenagers to participate and to be empowered by the active participation to their needs analysis and solution.

Following these indications, the joint training to the partners' staff will be organised as a workshop where experiences and methodologies will be brought together for achieving a common understanding and common procedures - where possible – drafted in a final document. A preliminary session for discussing differences among the legal framework in the five Countries will be held, in order to enhance the awareness of the participants about the need of acting together at a European level for improving the integration of laws and policies in the member Countries.