

# ‘Policies and actions of the Special Secretariat for the protection of unaccompanied minors from violence, exploitation and abuse’

Refugee and migrant children Survivors of Gender-Based Violence/  
Existing initiatives and the way forward

Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors

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## Prevention Strategies

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Individual

Professionals  
surrounding the  
minor

Community

Society

## Prevention: Raising the awareness of unaccompanied minors

### ***Promoting the delivery of workshops in accommodation facilities and day centres on risks and coping strategies (1/2)***

#### Aim of the Workshops:

- For minors to understand the existing risks, recognize their right to be safe and protected, exercise how to react in simulated cases and being guided as for where to seek assistance
- To empower the minors, focusing on positive aspects like their rights, protective factors and their resilience

#### Key points:

- Provide child-friendly information, in the form of workshops, in all accommodation schemes, regarding risks and dangers
- Workshops targeting separately girls and boys and in small groups
- Information conveyed in a child-friendly manner (considering the age group, the level of education, the language barrier)
- Employing role playing and theatre methodology

## ***Promoting the delivery of workshops in accommodation facilities and day centres (2/2)***

- Content of these workshops shall include references to:
  1. children's rights
  2. risks that minors might encounter regarding a variety of issues, from loss of property or personal identification documents
  3. forms of violence, exploitation, such as trafficking, smuggling, engaging in criminal activities
  4. helplines and services to seek help
  5. learning expressions on what to say and how to react
- Regarding girls, content shall be enriched with references to risks run by girls including harmful traditional practices
- Cultural mediators and former unaccompanied minors shall be consulted during the design of such workshops; being implemented with the support of an interpreter or cultural mediator
- Helplines should be in clear sight of everyone that could need help and focal points shall be appointed for matters of crimes against minors

## ***Promoting gender equality awareness raising***

- Gender equality awareness raising activities, in order to have an actual preventive effect against gender-based violence, should be targeting teenagers over the age of 12 years
- Such projects invite girls and boys to assess and question through experiential activities their gender stereotypes, approaching gender differences
- Experimental activities should take place in educational and accommodation settings

### Topics included:

- Healthy and unhealthy relationships
- The influence of gender stereotypes on their relationships
- Connection between stereotypes and gender-based violence
- The impact of stereotypes on people falling outside of the norms
- Adolescents' contribution to the prevention of all forms of gender-based violence

## ***Promoting sexual and reproductive health of minors and particularly girls***

- Support and intervention to ensure good sexual and reproductive health for young people can have a life-long beneficial effect; must take place already from a young age to prevent unsafe behaviors and empower minors
- In designing projects for sexual and reproductive health promotion targeting unaccompanied minors, cultural considerations and sensitivities are very important
- Cultural perceptions about sex and the position and rights of girls deeply affect the sexual behavior of both genders
- Effective and sustainable sexual and reproductive health programmes should be conducted:
  - Targeting both girls and boys
  - Fostering a human rights approach to the issues of sexuality, equality, empowerment and contraception

## Prevention: Setting standards for the protection of unaccompanied children

***Ensuring the development and implementation of child protection policies in every state or non-state actor involved in the treatment of unaccompanied minors (1/2)***

- Organisations, agencies and authorities working directly for and with minors should be guided by child protection policies

Child safeguarding standards shall include:

- The description of the agency's or organisation's policy on the prevention and response to harm to children
- The description of key roles of professionals in promoting the policy, training the staff on child protection issues, monitoring the implementation of the policy

## Prevention: Setting standards for the protection of unaccompanied children

***Ensuring the development and implementation of child protection policies in every state or non-state actor involved in the treatment of unaccompanied minors (2/2)***

Child safeguarding standards shall include:

- The description of procedures that are in place to ensure that the staff adheres to child protection rules
- The measures that are taken in the framework of the organisations' activities to ensure that children are safe and their rights are safeguarded
- The procedure that is followed if a child discloses or is presumed to be a victim of violence, exploitation etc
- Monitoring mechanism in place to ensure that all protection measures are applied across the organization



## Prevention: Setting standards for the protection of unaccompanied children

### ***Promoting the development of a Code of Conduct for professionals coming into contact or working with minors***

- Professionals working with minors/ who potentially come into contact with minors should be bound by a code of conduct
- Following elements shall be included:
  - Basic principles underlying their work
  - Accepted/prohibited behavior; in the context of specific profession more details shall be included describing tasks that should be fulfilled;
  - Crime committing reporting
  - Discipline measures in case of breach;
  - Regulating contact of third people with minors;
- Professions bound by a Code of Conduct include guardians, social workers, psychologists, lawyers, interpreters, cultural mediators, care takers, caseworkers, healthcare workers, any staff working in an accommodation facility, and volunteers

## Prevention: Training of professionals in matters related to violence and abuse of minors to improve their knowledge and skills to respond

- Professionals working with unaccompanied minors must receive trainings enhancing their knowledge and skills on the detection, response, support and reporting of abuse or violence of minors
- Be familiarized with:
  - A theoretical background, available statistical data, the context of migration and the risks that minors are exposed to (country of origin, transit and destination country)
  - The impact on the minors' wellbeing, their resilience, the care plan to be developed upon the event of abuse or violence
  - How to enhance minors' coping strategies and resilience or when and when to refer minors for more specialized help and treatment

## Prevention: Training of professionals in matters related to trafficking of minors

- Professionals working with unaccompanied minors must be in a position to recognize signs indicating that a minor may be a victim of trafficking

### Related Aspects:

- Knowing how to respond in such cases to protect and support him or her and where to report; knowing how the National Referral Mechanism works
- Be informed about how these issues are legally framed
- How imminent the risk is for unaccompanied minors being smuggled to Greece by illegal networks
- Recognizing different forms of human trafficking and their impact on minors' wellbeing

In such trainings frontline professionals should be targeted, such as accommodation facilities personnel, reception and identification service personnel, law enforcement, coast guard, asylum service personnel and health workers, but also labour inspectors

Prevention: Promoting the **development and use of tools and materials** to support the practice of frontline professionals on issues of abuse, violence, exploitation and trafficking

**Materials & tools:**

- Guidelines; handbooks; information sheets for target group; forms; questionnaires; checklists; assessment forms, etc
- Specific tools and material should be made available to complement the trainings of frontline professionals and support their practice
- Reassuring that some standard procedures will be followed (uniform practice that is evidence based)
- Drawing on existing materials and further enrich them or revise them etc

## Intervention: Ensuring efficient response to violence, exploitation and abuse of unaccompanied minors

### ***Supporting minors survivors of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse***

- Develop, test, evaluate and mainstream a (flexible) model of support for victims of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse
- Adopt a holistic, multidisciplinary and rights-based approach
- Support being tailored to the needs of the survivors, focusing on building their resilience, providing life skills and concluding on an action plan for the next steps to come
- Aiming to:
  - Actively engage child survivors of sexual abuse and exploitation in defining the type of assistance they would like to receive and the projects they would like to get involved in to help them regain control of their lives and feel that they are active agents in their own right

**Thank you very much for your attention!**

**Any questions, thoughts, worries or ideas?**