

# UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Day of General Discussion

Nidos – Providing family-based care to unaccompanied children

## Introduction

### *The role of Nidos*

Nidos is a certified youth care organization in the Netherlands. Nidos is responsible for guardianship for all unaccompanied and separated children that arrive in the Netherlands. Nidos is appointed as guardian by the court and guardianship is exercised by professionals who ensure proper accomplishment of the care provided to the child. Depending on various factors such as age, gender, vulnerability and level of independence, children are placed in different settings of alternative care. Aside from arranging appropriate shelter and living circumstances, Nidos is also responsible for protecting the children, intervening when their development is at risk of stagnation, acting in their best interest and legally representing them.

Congruent with article 20 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Nidos strives to ensure that when children are temporarily deprived of their family environment, there will be a sense of continuity in the child's upbringing and special attention to their ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background. Therefore, one of the living modalities that Nidos proudly works with is cultural family placement whereby children – depending on their age and needs- are placed in families with similar cultural backgrounds. Specialized Nidos professionals are involved in the matching, placement and evaluation process.

### *Unaccompanied children*

When children (are forced to) migrate and embark on a dangerous journey without their parent(s) or guardian(s) they often experience a lot of uncertainty and hardship. Although these unaccompanied children in the Netherlands form a distinct group with shared experiences, vulnerabilities and strengths, this group is far from homogeneous. Diversity is not only encountered in terms of age, gender, origin, or reasons to migrate, but also in terms of perspective for the future, migration goals, qualities, strengths, and difficulties. Therefore, there is no such thing as a one size fits all approach in attending to the needs of these children.

## Alternative Family Care (ALFACA)-manual

Nidos and project partners in the EC co-funded Alternative Family Care (ALFACA) project that ran from 2015-2017, developed a helpful manual for professionals working with reception families and the unaccompanied children living with them.

It may be useful to different kinds of practitioners, depending on the country they work in and the childcare system in operation there. The manual could therefore be used by guardians, social workers, mentors, staff at reception facilities, behavioural scientists, psychologists or any other professional responsible for the reception of unaccompanied children in families.

The ALFACA manual contains all the basic information regarding working with reception families who take care of unaccompanied children:

- Module 1 shines a light on the general approach for supporting unaccompanied children. It focuses on the particular situation of these children and their need for guidance, and on working in an intercultural environment.
- Module 2 provides specific information on recruiting, screening and matching families, and on placing a child in a reception family. The manual is available in English, Bulgarian, Catalan, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Italian, Latvian and Swedish. A PDF version of this manual, as well as an e-learning, literature, tools and other useful information, are available through the [European website of Nidos](#).

Under the PROFUCE project that Nidos partnered in from November 2017 to October 2019, country specific separate annexes to the ALFACA Manual have been developed for Bulgaria, Greece and Italy. These annexes can be found on the aforementioned website as well in the language of the particular country. These annexes aim to support further implementation of family-based care in these countries.

## Background

The ALFACA training was developed as part of the 2015-2017 ALFACA project, co-funded by the European Commission, and coordinated by Nidos (the Netherlands) and its partners Jugendhilfe Süd-Niedersachsen (JSN, Germany), Organization for Aid to Refugees (OPU, Czech Republic), Danish Red Cross (Denmark), Minor-Ndako (Belgium) and Kija (Austria).

The impulse to develop a training like this came from the Reception and Living in Families (RLF) project that ran during 2013-2015. This provided an overview of the then-current state of the art for reception in alternative care – more specifically family-based care – of unaccompanied children in EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland. One of its recommendations was to develop practical training that would help guardians, social workers and other staff working with unaccompanied children to provide them with professional family-based care.

Work at case level is similar in different countries, making more cooperation, knowledge exchange and training of interest and potential added value to all those involved. European providers of reception and care from different countries have much to learn from each other. Providing reception in families for unaccompanied children has many similarities – the content of the work in practice differs only slightly from country to country, whereas this work differs significantly from the same services provided to other target groups. Coordinated development of tools and training for recruiting and screening suitable and willing families, making the right matches, and supporting both the family and the child during the placement is therefore beneficial. This also holds true for training the families on how to take care of this specific group of children living ‘between’ cultures, and to help them to cope with loss and other traumatic experiences. This will improve the care provided and reduce placement breakdowns.

## Contact details

Liedewij de Ruijter de Wildt  
Head of Policy and European Cooperation Unit  
[www.nidosineurope.eu](http://www.nidosineurope.eu)  
[l.deruijterdewildt@nidos.nl](mailto:l.deruijterdewildt@nidos.nl)