Children in street situation raise their voice

RAPPORT

Convention on the Rights of the Child:
European Consultation for drafting the General Comment on children in street situation

VENUE: 4th floor - 4ème étage
SCHEDULE: From 09:30 to 12:00 and From 13:00 to 17:00
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INTRODUCTION

Participants

The European consultation for children and young people living in street situations took place in Brussels, Belgium on the 18th and 19th of April, 2016. It was organised by Dynamo International\(^1\) (DI) in partnership with the Consortium for Street Children\(^2\) (CSC).

The event brought together a total 27 children and young adults, accompanied by 20 social workers: 13 girls and 14 boys were consulted, with an average age of 20 years old. The youngest participant was 13 years old. (Annex 1: list of organisations present during the conference). Together, they were able to make the voices of children and young people living in street situations from the following 14 European countries heard:

Albania, Austria, Belgium, Spain, France, Greece, Italy, Norway, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, the United Kingdom, Slovakia and Switzerland.

This report is extremely important as it gives a voice to these children and young who are often unseen and unheard, capturing their thoughts and ideas. The majority of the participants were able to look back on their experiences with hindsight, describing them with maturity. All of them openly expressed the wish that this type of conference be held on a regular basis.

Problems with attendance

Bringing together children and young people living in street situations presented a major challenge. Right from the planning stage, issues relating to their situation arose, highlighting the difficulties they face exercising some of their rights.

- Some participants were in a difficult administrative position, linked to the problems faced by non-Europeans in obtaining identity documents or passports - the right to legal registration (Article 7 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child).
- For minors, parental consent is required to leave the country, but it is difficult to obtain this when the child is no longer under the parent’s responsibility and even more so if the minor is of foreign origin [outside of the EU] (Article 20 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child).
- For the accompanying social worker: to have a child or young person under their responsibility can be difficult if they are unstable due to their situation and/or to their health.

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\(^1\) Dynamo International-Street Workers Network is an international network of ‘street’ social workers who work at ground level with young people living on the street. The network represents 11, 500 ‘street’ social workers in 50 countries in Europe, Africa, Asia and America. [http://travailderue.org/](http://travailderue.org/)

\(^2\) Consortium for Street Children is a network that was created 21 years ago, reuniting more than 80 organisations over 130 countries, supporting the voices of street children, their rights and to improve their living conditions, including campaigning at an international level. [http://streetchildren.org/](http://streetchildren.org/)
Some participants were not available during the week due to either school or work commitments. Moreover, the attacks that took place in Brussels 20 days before the consultation also prevented some participants attending the event.

These circumstances explain the lower than expected attendance of young people during this event as well as last-minute cancellations (five cancellations and one early return.)

**Participants and Guests**

Mr Bernard Gastaud (an expert on the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child) and Margaret Tuite (coordinator of Children’s Rights to the European Commissions) were the distinguished guests who opened the two-day conference.

The opening session was covered by the press who also collected statements from participants.²

² Media coverage: we have been interviewed by 3 radios (RTBF, La Première, Libres ensemble) and a French radio (franc info) and 2 articles have been written in the press (metro and agence belga).

European consultation with street-connected children and young people for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s General Comment on children in street situations – Dynamo International and Consortium for Street Children
Items Discussed

During the conference, participants were asked to work on three rights from the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The objective was to approach these three rights from the children’s point of view and to find ways to help avoid developing long term ties to the street:

- The right to freedom of assembly and association (Article 15)
- The right to special protection and assistance for children deprived of a family environment (article 20)
- The right to an adequate standard of living (article 27)
- Developing long term holistic plans so that children do not build strong connections with the street.

Methodology

Different activities and techniques were adopted according to the age of the children taking part. This encouraged their participation based on a "bottom up" approach and helped participants raise their points of view directly. We alternated workshops and icebreakers depending on the pace of the discussion and the children’s attention span (Annex 2: Conference program). The methods chosen made sure that all of the children/young people were heard. They hugely appreciated that everyone, both fellow participants and organisers, listened sincerely during these activities (Annex 3: methodology).

Each participant was accompanied by their street-based social worker who was there to listen and give support, especially in translating and communicating. In several groups, the children were the only ones to express themselves. Given that not all children spoke English, social workers took the time to listen and translate what each participant had said. This added several challenges: rhythm of discussion was interrupted, information was lost and it was difficult to attribute quotes to a specific person.

Day 1: Discussing the difficulties associated with rights.

This first day of the conference aimed at highlighting the problems street-connected children face with respect to the three rights. Participants were asked to talk about their experiences with regards to these rights in their respective countries. Primarily it was important to develop an atmosphere of trust so that the children could express themselves freely.

The report summarizes the main points of discussion raised during workshops. These in turn illustrate the main difficulties that children living in street situations face in relation to the three rights. To motivate discussion, we worked according to the ‘world café’ method.

Day 2: Courses of action and recommendations relating to the rights.

The second day was aimed at suggesting recommendations to governments and possible courses of action. The children worked in subgroups according to a method based on the principles of sociocracy. Together they worked to build solutions and suggest courses of action in response to a specific problem expressed by a participant the day before. It was important to give the participants a lot of freedom in the way they expressed themselves when
discussing their experiences, particularly since they were publicly relaying harrowing stories. The recommendations in this report are also transcripts of solutions / courses of action.

These recommendations are addressed to different actors at different levels. Primarily they are addressed to local, national, European and international actors. However, they also address social organisations and society in general. This second part focused mainly on the three rights, but contains many valuable elements relating to the fourth question asked by the Committee (the long term strategy).

During the two days, we were regularly divided into working subgroups, i.e. three English groups (yellow, pink, orange) and three Francophone groups (purple, green, blue). Details of the structure of these working groups can be found in Annex 4. Some thoughts in this report are not attributable to one person but to a group and therefore do not appear as a single quotation. Some quotations (i) have remained anonymous upon request of children (ii) were collected during the workshops ‘the street and me’ and ‘my personal feelings’ (see methodology). All data in this report comes from the children, even in cases where there is no personal quotation referenced and no attribution to a subgroup.
PROBLEMS

States Parties recognise the rights of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly.

No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of these rights other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

DISCRIMINATION AND POLICE REPRESION

The relationship between groups of children living in street situations and the police were the subject of many discussions.

In numerous countries the police were said to discriminate against children living in street situations. It was noted that specific groups were targeted:

- Social groups: discrimination due to racial origin
- Social classes: discrimination of the disadvantaged (identified by the fact of living in certain regions/areas or by accent)
- Appearance: discrimination due to their style of clothing, thus based on stereotypes
- Groups identified as Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT): discrimination of sexual orientation (e.g. Slovakia where homophobia is still a major issue)

There are some examples of groups undergoing police repression but most participants stressed that the police always find a reason or a pretext to arrest someone living on the street, even if they do not fall into one of these categories.

SLOVAKIA, a 21-year-old woman, " in Slovakia, the police wait outside popular restaurants offering a free meal for people who live on the street or who are poor, just to arrest them when they come out. "

Police discrimination linked to racial origin has worsened since the recent terrorist attacks in Europe: the police have increased their checks and often do so based on physical appearance. Similarly, in France the right of association has been affected by the establishment of a state of emergency and the ban on the right to protest (temporary?)

Police forces are described as acting arbitrarily towards groups living in street situations, according to a logic of persecution and harassment.

Romania: a 27-year old man, " ...in certain areas the police know us very well, nevertheless they stop us systematically, to ask for our papers, trying to find excuses to give us fines, ... "

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Two ambiguities concerning relationships with the police:

- The role of the police: police have to enforce law and order AND protect individuals, these two aspects can sometimes seem contradictory.
- The perception between groups of young people living in street situations and the police: the young people have a negative image of the police and vice versa. Communication is halted on both sides.

The young people believe, as a rule, that police are violent\(^4\). However, this violence is changing: before it was physical violence, today it is more insidious and less visible. They described in particular several cases of corruption or abuse of power.

_An 18-year-old Frenchman, "I was in the subway, thrown on the ground by 6 plain-clothes policemen, I didn’t know who they were, they did not identify themselves but it was the public, the passers-by who reacted and forced (the attackers) to identify themselves."

The right to freedom of association is not respected in the same way depending on if you are a minor or an adult, if you are native to the country you’re living in or if you’re a foreigner.

In several countries, the police arrest minors found on the street.

_A 17 year Slovakian woman, "In Slovakia, if are you a minor and are stopped by the police, they take you into custody._

In certain cases, for example in Greece, refugees and/or migrants don’t have the same constitutional rights as local citizens. Greek nationals can congregate, but refugee/migrant groups are persecuted. Refugee/migrant minors therefore experience a double discrimination.

In other European countries, relations with the police are less problematic: as long as the group in question doesn’t break the law, there is no risk that the police will abuse their power.

Freedom of association functions in line with current national laws: if they are very restrictive, the right to freedom of association will be restricted, and supported by the law.

**LAWS EXIST BUT ARE NOT APPLIED**

Officially, the right to freedom of association exists everywhere in Europe and is codified in constitutions. However, in reality, obstacles prevent or restrict the realisation of these rights:

- The freedom to make noise, move about where you want and to occupy certain public places decreases, which in turn restricts street gatherings, even peaceful ones.
- In certain countries, the right to protest is restricted, or even denied.

Generally, minors have the opportunity to express themselves and put forward their opinions, but if this goes against the interest of adult, their comments are ignored.

\(^4\) Exercise 1\(^{st}\) day, World Café, pink group.

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With regards to a more formal interpretation of freedom of assembly, namely, as the possibility of starting a group or voluntary project, children and young people living in street situations face various obstacles. It is often difficult for them to find the right information on starting up a project. This information is often only available at certain times and in certain places, and not easy to access, especially for this group of young people. Often the children in questions are not educated highly enough to see their projects through. They are therefore usually dependent on an outsider, especially if they are a minor and must be accompanied by an adult. Finally, on a more psychological note, their tendency to be withdrawn prevents these children to commit to a project.

This demonstrates their difficulty taking part in a project which goes beyond their individual survival processes. Several young participants did not know how to start up a group project or initiative in their country, illustrating a major fault in the present system.

A 23-year-old Frenchman; “In the grand sense of things we don’t know what to do, what to say, how to make a case ...”

GROUPS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING IN STREET SITUATION ARE OFTEN STIGMATIZED

Groups of children and young people living in street situation are often stigmatisated by the public. Stigmatisation prevents these young people exercising their right to freedom of association. This is especially true for those under the age of 15. Once they become adults this changes.

England; a 21-year old man: "Politicians and the media have stigmatised children and young people living in street situation for years, establishing a campaign of terror, which creates a public fear of young people"

Politicians and the media are responsible for this stigmatisation as they only underline the negative aspects of street presence to the public.

Switzerland, a 20-year old man; "They attach a label us and that’s what we become ".

To escape this stigmatisation, some young people try occupy other places like squats, and can sometimes fall into criminal activity.

Stigmatisation exists the other way around: these young people have a negative view of, and may distrust, adults in general. This applies particularly the police, the world of politics and institutions.

5 Exercise 1st day, World Café, group purple and orange.
6 Exercise 1er Jour , World Café, groupe violet, orange.
THE STREET IS NOT PERCEIVED AND VALUED AS A SPACE OF CREATIVITY

The street is not the end. It can be a place of creativity, games, learning, expression, solidarity, strong friendships and freedom. The street allows one to grow outside of school and the family environment.

Switzerland, a 24-year old man “the street can help you make your way and make the right choices”.

A SYSTEM WHICH PREVENTS FRIENDSHIPS FROM DEVELOPING

The constraining system of hostels can prevent friendships from developing. Adults and external rules control the freedom of children and young people living in street situations.

There are also regulations in certain areas which restrict friendships and social connections. Children are often forced to stay in the same area (urban discrimination), which in itself limits a child from developing socially. A young person who wants to get off the street must to leave the area. However, it’s difficult to detach themselves from their living environment and other influences, particularly when integration outside the area is contentious (stigmatization).

Austria; a 22-year old woman; “when we find ourselves on the street it’s difficult to get out, difficult to re-socialise, difficult to rebuild relationships”

Finally, certain court orders can prevent friendships: a judge can forbid someone seeing friends or acquaintances even if they live in the same area. This can be especially problematic for countries (France for example) where the notion of a ‘quartier’ is very strong; to be on a street, is to be in a ‘quartier’.

THE RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN GROUPS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING IN STREET SITUATION ARE UNCLEAR

Relationships between children living in street situations can be ambiguous. A group, normally considered to consist of 3 or more people, form for different reasons depending on the country. Bonds may be formed around: childhood connections, lifestyle, a community, a region (district), a reception centre, an addiction (alcohol, drug).

Generally each situation is different according to the country, region, city size or unifying experience. The history of the group and reasons behind its formation influence the type of bond which unites the group. It is difficult to generalise but we can underline some common problems.

Exercise 1st day, World café, group purple.

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In certain cases, groups protect themselves from outside violence, often caused by other street groups or by the police.

Groups revolve around strong bonds of solidarity, trust and friendship which are strengthened by common real-life experiences and problems.

"The street is a place where we help each other but it still remains a place of little respect".

In some cases, relationships are more problematic. Pressures within the group can lead an individual to break the law even if s/he doesn’t want to. Bonds which unite some individuals within the group are not always healthy and can potentially be toxic. Sometimes someone may be betrayed by another from their own group, but may feel forced to stay in the group.

A 19-year old Albanian man, “I think that everyone on the street forms a group completely separate to everyone else.”

Note: most of the groups described here were unisex; generally, the issue of gender was rarely addressed.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**POLICE REFORM REGARDING DEFENDING THE PUBLIC**

Several recommendations were given concerning the police, namely; to restore its role protecting of the public and to move away from repression:

- Establish police training to defend children’s rights
- Establish multicultural police forces
- Creating local police forces that would have a close relationship with the public in their area

To maintain equal treatment, it was suggested that rules were established authorizing police controls, which everyone should know and which should be applied in the same way for all.

The police should be sanctioned when they overstep their rights:

- Establish surveillance operations within the police itself, particularly regarding instances of abuse, racism or discrimination (body searches, ID control, appearance based discrimination, gratuitous violence)
- Monitor, and create a record of police violence

By defining in law the role of the police officer as a defender of both the population and public space, we can reopen a dialogue between persecuted populations and the police.
TO PROTECT AND ESCORT “STREET CHILDREN” and “STREET YOUTH” WHILE IN POLICE CUSTODY

Access to justice is difficult and complex, even more so for children and young people living in street situations. It is important therefore that these children are accompanied should they be arrested and placed under police custody:

- Establish supervision through a free and independent system which would support children during questioning or time in custody.
- Create a monitoring centre for police violence.
- Make sure the child may call an appropriate person during their arrest. This right should be applied without discrimination.
- Ensure the presence of a lawyer, whatever the age and social status of the accused.

Social and psychological assistance must be made available to minors whilst in custody if there is a prison sentence.

OPEN A SOCIAL DIALOG BETWEEN THE YOUNG PEOPLE, SOCIAL WORKERS, AUTHORITIES, THE PUBLIC

It is the responsibility of the political body to reverse what is seen as a tendency towards judgement between different sections of society. Governments should therefore implement awareness campaigns through policy and media channels aimed at promoting non-stigmatisation of children and young people living in street situations. They should also establish spaces for dialogue between young people living in street situations and the authorities. Social workers could facilitate this dialogue.

CHANGE THE CITY AS A WHOLE AND NOT IN A DISCRIMINATORY WAY

Policy makers at a national level have a responsibility to develop urban spaces and erase the concept of districts and social segregation, thus encouraging the youths to live together and to give everyone an equal chance. Cities and their streets need to be an accessible, pleasant environment which encourages a multi-cultural environment.

City boroughs should improve the aesthetics and facilities of their various neighbourhoods, making them a friendlier, more pleasant place to look at and live in. For this purpose, they should invest more and propose voluntary community projects with local groups, charities and NGOs.

TO RECOGNISE AND DETERMINE THE STREET AS A PLACE OF CREATIVITY

Local authorities should appreciate the artistic expressions of the local residents, from both a cultural (graffiti, music, sculpture, film) and sport-based point of view. For this to happen, it’s important to open community centres available for everyone, where the young people can meet, even those usually marginalised. This would also help to assure good neighbourhood cohesion (rights respected both ways).

This approach would mean involving, respecting and financing the young people and local residents, to support their ad-hoc programs. Financial and material funding (via community projects) on behalf of the government is essential. We must reinvest in the street and to use it as space of creativity.

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GUARANTEE THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE ONES FRIENDS AND SOCIAL GROUP

Systems such as care homes should make sure that youths are free to make and keep their own friends. There must be an open dialogue between the authority figures involved and the young person, and all rules should be communal and not only based on the law.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS LINKED TO THE RIGHT OF ASSOCIATION

The right to protest unconditionally must be upheld by government authorities. If a state of alert is made, a dialogue should be established, rather than a ban on protesting.

ARTICLE 20 - RIGHT TO PROTECTION AND CARE

PROBLEMS

A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State.

States Parties shall in accordance with their national laws ensure alternative care for such a child.

Such care could include, inter alia, foster placement, kafalah of Islamic law, adoption or if necessary placement in suitable institutions for the care of children. When considering solutions, due regard shall be paid to the desirability of continuity in a child's upbringing and to the child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background.

WHERE MONITORING IS NON-EXISTENT OR INEFFICIENT

The presence of children and young people living in street situation demonstrates the failure of the effectiveness of this law.

Amongst the children and young adults present at the conference, many didn’t receive help from their government and lived on the streets until they were able to get the proper alternative care. Apart from certain cases which were identified handled directly by the justice system, it seems there are instances in which authorities identified at-risk cases or cases of proven abandonment (schools, police, doctors) but either they did not react, or coordination between the various bodies was inadequate.

Left to their own devices and unprotected, the children are deprived of a representative who can exercise their rights. They experience problems linked to their health (sickness, hospitalization, insurance problems etc.) to their identity (administration, legal papers…) and their freedom of movement.

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These problems only increase if one of these young women, effectively children themselves, gives birth.

On the other hand, when a child who has been taken away from their family only temporarily is returned, the situation is often fragile, and isn’t followed up properly by the authorities. Some family situations are even more dangerous than the streets. These young people feel neglected during these times and are not consulted during the assessment of their family situation. This instability risks making the child feel like they have been abandoned again (de facto abandonment or abandonment of responsibility of protection) and that s/he will fall through the safety net of government protection.  

The participants all talked about the visible and invisible violence which they face on the street, even when the government authorities are there to protect them. 

The participants unanimously condemned and criticized this violence. They emphasised that their loss of freedom (in prison or detention centres) could not be considered as adequate alternative care. Police forces should, on the contrary, be part of the solution, working on prevention and awareness raising together with child welfare departments.

Detentions centres are perceived by these young people as a place where they learn about criminal behaviour and meet “bad company” (Anonymous).

**HUMAN RESOURCES AND FINANCIAL AID ARE INSUFFICIENT FOR QUALITY SAFEGUARDING**

Alternative care offered by certain government bodies doesn’t represent acceptable care or protection, pushing many of these children to run away, choosing the freedom of the streets despite its dangers.

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8 Exercise 1st day, World Café, group purple, blue.

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"I was 13 years old when I arrived illegally in France from Pakistan, I was placed as a matter of urgency in a host family then quickly to a children’s home. At the beginning, the hardest thing was not being able to call my family in Pakistan to reassure them I was safe. I felt very alone and frightened. I would have preferred to stay in a host family, to have a family life, leisure activities and holidays, to have a normal life as other children do with their parents." Anonymous

Unsatisfactory living conditions:

- In some cases, sanitary conditions are deplorable.

  "In the home there were animals and disease, compared to that, the street was clean!" Anonymous.

- Rules were too strict, (schedules, behaviour, few leisure activities, no contact with outside help, the feeling of seclusion and loneliness, and no respect for the young people): no respect or trust.

"Nothing entices us to stay in a home, on the street we are free to live according to its rules, to its pace but there are also more dangers"

  Czech Republic, 24-year old man, "In the street we are free, we have no plans"

- Many homes are overcrowded. Staff are overworked and have little time to give individual attention. It is felt that follow-up stops when the child is placed in a home, nothing more is done for them.

  23-year old Frenchman "Teachers do the bare minimum just to get their money at the end of the month."

- In certain countries, staff have little or no adequate training
- Hardly any hobbies or developmental activities are offered in homes.
- Little or no psychological or psychiatric help available
- Little or no legal support about their situation is available

**CHANGING HOMES OFTEN TAKES AWAY STABILITY FROM THE CHILD/YOUTH: CONTINUITY, TRANSITION AND SUPPORT ARE IMPORTANT**

These children/youth come across many changes in their life. They are pushed around from home to home, from host family to host family, sometimes because of their age, other times to avoid becoming too attached.

The changes are hard for these young people; they are a source of constant adaptation and instability during their life time, this includes education (geographical distances between homes). This lack of stability will only emphasise their disorientation, loneliness and sense of seclusion.

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9 Every following quotes are from working groups per thematic; it’s difficult to be more precise and to specify which children said what.

10 Exercise 1st day, World café, groups purple, green, blue.

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The need for urgency, and the non-individualisation of help means that the children’s opinions are not taken into account when looking for a better solution to these difficulties.

"When I was a child I lived with my father on the street up to the age of 10 years. Then, I lived with my mother, as it didn’t go well, I asked to be taken into a home, but the pace of life, rules, lack of hobbies and the constant change from home to home didn’t help me feel secure. I stayed in several squats, at friends’ houses. School was difficult, my head just wasn’t in it”. Anonymous.

A feeling of an abandonment is felt by almost all of the young people present at the conference. Coming up to adulthood, no preparation for independence is planned within the organization. When they’re 18, they see themselves thrown into adulthood without the adequate tools to face it. Often they feel they have been dumped and return to the street.

OTHER DIFFICULTIES CONNECTED TO THIS RIGHT

- In the Czech Republic, all expenses (doctors etc.) are in the name of the child. If the parents don’t pay these before the child is an adult, the child is liable for them.
- In Albania, recording the birth of a child is not routine or systematic. Children who are not registered do not legally ‘exist’ and therefore have no rights.
- MENA (Unaccompanied foreign minors), do not have the same rights, nor financial support or care systems (police and not child welfare).

RECOMMANDATIONS

IMPROVE EFFECTIVENESS OF OBSERVATION

The efficiency of child welfare departments differs from government to government. However, the participants agree that coordination between those in regular contact with the children and those in charge of child welfare is highly important.

They emphasise the role played by, and responsibility of certain key actors (schools, doctors and police) in the systematic monitoring of families and children at risk. These reports must be made available to all in specific cases. This would ensure that all individuals in touch with the child coordinate, guaranteeing regular contact between the departments, and respecting professional confidentiality.

A single telephone number would allow easy access to this central resource, allowing the people in charge of

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the child to receive information and direction to other services simultaneously.

It is necessary to guarantee coordination between countries for foreign children. Communication between social services of both countries (origin and residence) can be very useful if a child or a young person is sent back to his/her country of origin.

Throughout this process, the child’s voice must be heard and taken into consideration.

**PROTECTION VS DETENTION**

The processes involved in detaining children and youths due to a criminalisation of street activity does not constitute, in any case, adequate measures of alternative care.

Les mesures de détention des enfants et jeunes directement liées à une criminalisation du phénomène de rue, ne constituent en aucun cas des mesures de protection de remplacement adéquates. (alternative care)

This only adds an additional stigma to these so-called “criminals” simply for being in a public place. Moreover, it is also counter-productive and counter-educational.

Police forces must nevertheless be a part of the solution, by assuring a role of prevention and vigilance, by consulting with child welfare services.

**INCREASING HUMAN RESOURCES AND FINANCIAL AID TO HELP SAFEGUARD QUALITY**

With regard to the difficulties encountered by the participants within protection agencies, the latter recommended more help tailored to their needs, obstacles and individuality.

They think that a more flexible living environment would encourage respect and confidence allowing them to become more independent and self-sufficient. Children’s homes should encourage these children and young adults to succeed in life, placing them in a positive circle of empowerment instead of inhibiting them.

Accepting and addressing each child’s specific needs goes hand in hand with a strengthening of professionals capacity to identify the needs of the child, young adults and families, with a view to bring about a quality response. It’s also essential for these children that the professionals helping them (educational, health and social) are very sympathetic.

Safeguarding organized by governing authorities within state homes and institutions should assure the child the same standard of living that parents are required to give their children, allowing their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. From this perspective, children and the young adults advice allowing more access to sports, cultural activities and hobbies.

In order to take into account all these considerations, the participants recommend adapting finance to on-the-ground realities.
THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUITY, TRANSITION AND SUSTAINABILITY IN THE CARE OF A CHILD TO GUARANTEE THEIR STABILITY

In all decisions, the wellbeing of the child/young adult should be the most important factor.

To do this we need to follow each child closely according to his/her language, culture, ties to a given region. This will help reduce loneliness and seclusion by ensuring continuity and stability. On no account can we leave the child out of this process. This is why we have to involve him/her from the beginning in the creation of their life plan.

Equally, from a legal perspective, to make sure that decisions are made in the best interest of the child/young adult, it is important that judges take into account statements from all those associated with the child. For those whose parents are in a precarious and unstable situation, the opinion of those close to the child such as social workers, extended family, institutions, their school, should be preferred. Moreover, the length of proceedings and time taken to make decisions concerning the child should be reduced and should be based solely on the child and his/her development.

Participants also underlined the importance of anticipating transition into adulthood by proposing programs aimed at taking the person through the processes of employment, legal and administrative issues (invoices, signing documents and contracts, legal aid). Post-educational requirements of 18-25 year olds need to be highlighted by implementing programs for 18+ at a national and European level.

D’autre part, un accent particulier doit être mis sur le post-éducatif des 18-25 ans pour assurer la durabilité de l’aide en mettant en place des programmes destinés au 18+ à un niveau national et européen.

“When I arrived in France at 15, I was taken into care by children’s social workers and placed in a host family. Then, I was placed in a children’s home until I was classed as an adult. When I was 18 years old, I had to leave the home but hadn’t yet received my residency papers so I found myself on the street.” Anonymous

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS LINKED TO THIS RIGHT

During discussions, the participants emphasised the importance of involving young people in, and talking to them about national, European and international laws so that these texts would better reflect their realities and allow for a une meilleure adéquation avec leur mise en œuvre.
ARTICLE 27 – LE DROIT À UN NIVEAU DE VIE SUFFISANT

PROBLEMS

States Parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

The parent(s) or others responsible for the child have the primary responsibility to secure, within their abilities and financial capacities, the conditions of living necessary for the child's development.

States Parties, in accordance with national conditions and within their means, shall take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement this right and shall in case of need provide material assistance and support programs, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing.

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to secure the recovery of maintenance for the child from the parents or other persons having financial responsibility for the child, both within the State Party and from abroad. In particular, where the person having financial responsibility for the child lives in a State different from that of the child, States Parties shall promote the accession to international agreements or the conclusion of such agreements, as well as the making of other appropriate arrangements.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS IN OBTAINING HELP

The participants expressed numerous problems obtaining help from government authorities. For example, official documents or an address are often needed to receive aid, but many children and young people in street situations will not have either. The conditions determining access to social aid are not compatible with the realities of those living in street situations.

The immensity of administrative procedures is also a problem: even for one off assistance, limited and fast, there is often the need to fill out multiple forms and to move from one institution to another. This administrative burden discourages many people in need. Failure to comply on their part puts a stop on all procedures and takes them back to square one.

Administrative language is extremely complicated, and people who don’t understand it (i.e. most children and young people living in street situations) are excluded. They need help from an outsider to help them understand and complete these documents; this where the importance of NGOs and the accompanying person lies. Several young participants testified that without this type of help they remain on the margins of social assistance. Here lies a dual exclusion as most children and young people living in street situation do not have an adequate education.

These administrative procedures are also long and slow and are contradictory to the urgent needs children and young people living in street situations. Governing authorities in charge of looking after these needs do so via social programs which are unsuitable to the needs of the people concerned.

European consultation with street-connected children and young people for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment on children in street situations – Dynamo International and Consortium for Street Children
English, man, 19: "If you want to go to a food bank you have to ask for a paper from the local authority which proves your situation ... this paper is difficult to get and so your rights aren’t respected”.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING IN STREET SITUATION DON’T KNOW THEIR RIGHTS AND DON’T KNOW WHO TO ASK

Children’s rights are little understood by the children themselves, often perceived as just words and not reality. Their knowledge of the help to which they are entitled is almost non-existent. Social workers are very often the only dependable adult with whom the children are in contact. However, they often propose support based on needs and rarely on rights. In numerous cases, social workers don’t receive the right training and parents are also unaware themselves of specific children’s rights.

Albanian man, age 19: “there was a wave of destruction in the slums but we received no explanation on how to get rehoused. We didn’t know we had the right to suitable accommodation. Therefore, most people chose to live in the informal housing or in unlawful accommodation. The public isn’t informed. They recreate the slums”

The role of NGOs and associations, and especially “Street” social workers, being the only link which restores confidence, seems crucial to compensate for what’s missing. Several young participants confirmed that when they stop receiving help from a social worker, the exclusion process is very likely to being again.

GOVERNING AUTHORITIES OFFLOAD THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES ONTO SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

Governing authorities offload the care of vulnerable people onto NGO’s and therefore doesn’t assume responsibility for them. In numerous cases, governing authorities don’t even guarantee sufficient means for adequate care.

All the young participants emphasised the work done by NGOs but say there are not enough resources. Projects are done as a one-off and don’t get to the root of the problem and the real causes of exclusion. There aren’t any national programs that take care of a holistic strategy to support parents and children.

STIGMATIZATION OF PEOPLE IN NEED

Asking for help is stigmatised, often seen as something negative; those who ask for help are “poor”, they cannot manage alone, they are a society outcast. Many people are afraid of turning up for social benefits for fear of being stigmatized. Many parents try (often in vain) to find other solutions to avoid being confronted with this idea of helplessness.

FEAR OF SOCIAL SERVICES (public)

Along the same lines, in certain countries such as Slovakia, Romania, or Albania, when social services see that a child has a problem, they remove him or her from the family, without talking to the parents or offering to helping
them. Numerous families are therefore afraid of social services who take away the minimal family stability they have.\textsuperscript{11}

"Finding help is possible, but comes with embarrassing concessions"

Pressure falls again on the children: they can’t complain (feeling of guilt) in case they are taken away from their family. It is even explained that in certain cases (e.g. Poland\textsuperscript{12}), parents hide from social services for more underhand reasons: if they lose their children, they lose their family allowance.

The young participants nevertheless pointed out huge differences between the public social services described previously and the “Street” social workers, who try to find alternative solutions and make things happen.

**VICIOUS CIRCLES WHICH CAN LEAD TO ILLEGAL OR CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR**

In regards to what has been said previously, the young participants have emphasised “vicious circles” to raise two main concerns.\textsuperscript{13}

From the moment when an individual, in the margins of the system because of their street connection, does not meet the necessary requirements for access to social assistance, s/he enters a vicious cycle: with no work, no welfare and no money for food, they are too weak to get their life back on track.

If it is difficult or almost impossible to get help via social services, an individual may have to break the law in order to meet their basic needs.

"If we’re talking about basic needs like eating, and there’s no social help, you have to find a plan B, to get by on your own, even if you risk breaking the law"

This vicious circle can engulf children and young people already living in street situations, as it can take them down even further. It l’entraine plus loin encore.

Often alternative ways (outside of the law) are faster, more effective, thus more attractive. The street becomes synonymous with money, freedom, creating a gap between these marginalized people and the system in place.

“The street it is a game: you do something bad to get something. If somebody gets robbed it’s so they can eat.”

**PROBLEMS OBTAINING SOCIAL BENEFITS**

In certain countries, outgoing expenses are paid in advance and then reimbursed afterwards in the form of social benefits. This raises problem for several reasons:

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\textsuperscript{11} Exercise, 1\textsuperscript{st} day, World Café, group orange, yellow.
\textsuperscript{12} Exercise 1\textsuperscript{st} day, World Café, group yellow.
\textsuperscript{13} This notion of vicious circle has been raised both in francophone and Anglophones groups. Among them the group purple and yellow.

European consultation with street-connected children and young people for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s General Comment on children in street situations – Dynamo International and Consortium for Street Children
• It’s sometimes impossible to pay large sums in advance (e.g. education in Spain)
• A bank account is necessary to be reimbursed which can cause administrative problems.

The reimbursement of advanced costs does not always correspond to the date of payment which can cause large overdrafts.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**SIMPLIFY ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES**

Case files for those in need of social assistance should be made simpler and less complicated so that those most in need are neither discouraged from applying, nor afraid of the procedure.

Schools should offer lessons to help students understand the complexity of these social aid systems. Social workers should always be on hand to help them with administrative procedures.

In order to fully respect these rights, measures should be put to ensure that all procedures are completed in a timely manner. Certain procedures should be made easier, for instance, recognizing a handicap which is difficult for those already marginalized. Others procedures should be free (e.g. obtaining identity papers).

**ENABLE ACCESS TO SOCIAL BENEFITS**

A scheme needs to be put in pace for families who are between two situations/circumstances. Help is often unavailable for families with a salary, even if this salary is too low to cover the fundamental needs of the child. Social benefits should not be based on having work but on the amount needed to live. We must take into account the parent’s salaries in relation to their expenditures, not simply whether they are working.

The absence of a safety net drove many families/people to the street; this has become more apparent since the economic crisis of 2008.

The right to receive a family allowance should be legally obligatory even for children and young people living in street situations.

**SOCIAL SERVICES IN LINE WITH THE REAL WORLD**

The most important point within this recommendation is that social services listen to the child’s story. A person must be assigned to each child from the very beginning, aiming towards independence.

Government authorities should to give their support to social campaigns, even if it involves hiring and training new “Street” social workers.

This also means improving a warning system, in particular establishing good coordination between social, security, educational and health services. It is necessary to identify any problems the child may have as soon as possible and in an efficient manner

European consultation with street-connected children and young people for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s General Comment on children in street situations – Dynamo International and Consortium for Street Children
PUT INTO PLACE A FREE EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR EVERYONE WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION SO THAT THEY ARE PREPARED TO INTEGRATE INTO SOCIETY

If free education for all up to the age of 18 (independent of academic achievements) is established in law throughout most European countries, this should be implemented effectively, without discrimination. This is not the case today.

Government authorities need to improve quality and increase the means for education everywhere, even in disadvantaged regions. Education should be non-discriminatory.

They also have to recognize, train and prepare schools and teachers for informal education in order to establish a common language and understanding with children and young people living in street situations.

Regarding social benefits for schools, they have to take into account material help needed, which in certain cases, may go beyond school costs, for example: transport, accommodation, buying supplies and textbooks. School funding must be assured even if a child is in a difficult family situation which may lead to absenteeism. Classes on their rights should be made available.

The scholarships should be:

- Available to those over 18;
- In balance with the school curriculum (without this there is a risk of discrepancy and disengagement);
- Must not be linked to their academic achievements.
We have addressed the fourth principle recommended by the United Nations committee under the concept of "prevention" (how to prevent children from living in the street or for staying in street situations for too long). Numerous recommendations cropped up in this category.

Long-term holistic and rights-based strategies were expressed in the recommendations.

- Prevention

**STIGMATIZATION - DISCRIMINATION**

The media play a role in stigmatizing young people and poverty. In a diverse society, media should not portray poverty as fate, but should instead open up opportunities for the future.

Particular attention should be paid to the protection of young girls on the streets who are often victims of violence.

“The street leaves its marks (rape, abuse...): either you get by, or you don’t.”

**INVOLVING CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS IN INTERNATIONAL DECISIONS**

Young people don’t necessarily see themselves represented in the Convention of Children’s Rights. They would like to be able to establish, at the same level as the Convention of Children’s rights, a permanent advisory body of children and young adults who would represent the interests and points of view of the children themselves. The Committee of United Nations would therefore be able to consult this body on all matters concerning children’s rights.

**HELP FOR FAMILIES**

Provide preventive support for parents or families who are at risk. Government authorities should not only give material support to these families but should provide social and even psychological help. The support system must, in addition to caring for the children, help parents who are in trouble (e.g. alcohol addiction) get back on their feet and look after the children during this time.

In certain cases of disability, drug addiction, long-term prison sentences, mental health issues, each case must be treated individually by talking with the children. Parental responsibilities could be shared or the child could be taken care of by the extended family or close friends.

Other participants suggested implementing universal benefits for all from birth, or a basic allowance for all.
ACCELERATE THE JUDICIARY SYSTEM

A number of decisions concerning children in street situations are dependent on judicial verdicts. The children often find themselves, therefore, waiting for a judgement which can take years to be passed. In the meantime, the child grows up in a precarious situation and can lose their way time and again. Damage is often done when the decision is finally made. The judiciary system should be accelerated to allow children in street situations adequate development. Defence of children’s rights should be guaranteed systematically through the presence of a lawyer.

OTHER ASPECTS: HEALTH AND FINANCE

It is important to reinforce all matters relating to promoting health and reducing health risks like drug use. Prevention work by “Street” social workers should be put in place.

Consumer credit offered by stores without knowledge of the customer’s financial situation should be banned. Awareness raising programmes for people in financial difficulty (parents and guardians) should be promoted. Poorly managed credit and loans are part of the reasons why families get into financial circumstances they can’t get out of.

Other recommendations:

PROTECTION VS SECURITY

- Government authorities should transfer budgets allocated to security to education.
- Re-define and agree at a European level, the legal age of an adult.

RIGHT OF EUROPEAN NATIONALITY FOR REFUGEES

- To stop and penalize any form of discrimination to people who have just obtained the nationality of the country or are in the process of legalization.
- To implement laws already in place at a European level for the protection of the Roma population

UNACCOMPANIED FOREIGN MINORS

- Regarding taking children into care, there should be no difference in treatment between native children and child migrants or refugees.
- To set up support programs for illegal immigrants.
CONCLUSION

A number of recommendations were suggested during discussions on each of the three rights, attesting to their necessity. Participants repeatedly stressed the important differences between the laws, written articles and their current implementation. They deplored the lack of control in the application of these laws.

Other issues and recommendations could not be applied generally to all countries represented at the consultation, despite belonging to Europe geographically. This illustrates the differences in public policies and reveals a lack of cross European co-ordination in the implementation of children’s rights.

The participants showed courage and maturity. We applaud their readiness to contribute and their commitment to building a better future for children and young people living in street situations. Their experiences and narratives are the backbone of this report.

Special instructions were given to the participants: they were asked to relate their experiences as a minor living on the street. While some of the participants were slightly older and had since left the street, their ability to look back on their experiences with hindsight enriched their testimonies.

Several young people were pleased about this conference, but were concerned about the practical implementation (and evaluation) of transcripts written by the United Nations. The distinguished guests who opened these two days of the conference emphasized that by being present the young participants have become agents of change. From this moment one, by being seen and heard, they have become part of the alternative solution suggested by states for the application of and respect for the rights of the child in their respective countries.

The final evaluation (Annex 5) completed by participants was very positive, with a particularly positive emphasis on group work but also a sense of frustration at the difficulty participants had communicating due to broken English.

We also noted the enthusiasm towards joint work and the collaboration between Dynamo International and the Consortium for Street Children, which, as always, was a success.

"Living on the street is to dream of happiness"

This conference was made possible thanks to the financial support of Baker and McKenzie and Salesforce* who were present during the two-day conference. Following a group of young people, they were able to follow the discussions closely. The conference took place at Google Brussels, who also supplied the meals/breaks coffee.

*In Annex 6 you will find a summary of documents passed on by the investors concerning the articles of laws of countries participating, specifically relating to the rights confronted during this European conference.
European consultation with street-connected children and young people for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s General Comment on children in street situations – Dynamo International and Consortium for Street Children
Annex 1: List of organizations participating in the consultation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATIONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARSIS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jugendstreetwork Graz/ CARITAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jugendstreetwork Graz/Austria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nadêje</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARSIS Association for the Social Support of Youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opengroup</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOSU - Norway</td>
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<tr>
<td>GPAS Praga/ OSOS Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grupa Pedagogiki i Animacji Społecznej Praga Północ</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPčko</td>
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<tr>
<td>PROGRAMA CONSTRUYENDO MI FUTURO DE ZAMORA</td>
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<td>Tiers sociétal</td>
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<tr>
<td>YMCA North Tyneside</td>
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<td>ASBL LES</td>
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<tr>
<td>LES ASBL Lutte contre l’exclusion sociale à Molenbeek</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apprentis d’Auteuil</td>
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<tr>
<td>Point Accueil Ecoute Jeune</td>
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<td>Fundatia PARADA</td>
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<td>Asociación ENBAT</td>
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<td>Espace Prévention</td>
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<tr>
<td>FUNDERS</td>
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<td>Baker &amp; Mc Kenzie</td>
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<td>Cargill</td>
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<td>Salesforce</td>
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<tr>
<td>GUESTS</td>
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<tr>
<td>International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comité des Nations Unies des Droits de l’enfant</td>
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<tr>
<td>European Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>ORGANIZERS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consortium for Street Children</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

European consultation with street-connected children and young people for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s General Comment on children in street situations – Dynamo International and Consortium for Street Children
Annex 2: Program

**MONDAY, 18TH APRIL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09:30</td>
<td>Welcoming participants</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:30 – 10:00</td>
<td>Welcome participants and signing in</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 – 10:50</td>
<td>Opening session</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speakers:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. Edwin de Boevé – Director of Dynamo International:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Welcome Presentation of Dynamo International and processes underway.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr. Sarah Thomas de Benitez – Chief Executive, Consortium for</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Street Children:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Presentation of other consultations that have taken place around the</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>world. [10min]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. Bernard Gastaud – Committee on the Rights of the Child Expert</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Short bio:
Edwin de Boevé earned a degree in Politics and Educational Practices before founding Dynamo in 1984. Dynamo serves children in Belgian communities and specializes in social street work. He worked as a teacher and then a street worker in Brussels for many years, and is now the Director of Dynamo International – Street Workers Network. He conducts training and supports the mobilization of street workers in Dynamo’s 50 network countries around the world. He is the co-author of several publications, including the International Guide on the Methodology of Street Work.

Short Bio
Sarah was the director and co-founder of two NGOs for street children in Mexico and Ecuador before becoming one of the world’s leading researchers on street children. She was a lead consultant for the United Nations report and recommendations on street children in 2011; wrote CSC’s State of the World’s Street Children series and chaired CSC’s Research Expert Forum.

European consultation with street-connected children and young people for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s General Comment on children in street situations – Dynamo International and Consortium for Street Children
The importance of participation in the drafting of the General Comment; the consultation process. [10min]

Short Bio
Bernard Gastaud is an expert member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. He was elected in 2015 for the second time. He represents his state, Monaco, among the 18 members of the committee’s independent experts, elected by member states for 4 years. He is the 1st « Monegasque » to have this function. His expertise is recognized especially concerning the defence of the most vulnerable people, a recurrent theme in his national and international policies.

Mrs. Margaret Tuite – European Commission Coordinator for the Rights of the Child :
Update on the stage of the four aspects selected by the Committee. [10min]

Short Bio
Margaret Tuite has been the European Commission coordinator for rights of the child since 1 November 2011 in the unit responsible for fundamental rights and the rights of the child of DG Justice, where the focus is on implementation of the EU Agenda for the rights of the child. Margaret and a small but dedicated team ensure proactive coordination within the Commission and also with external stakeholders. Margaret has worked for the European Commission for 28 years, 14 of them in the justice and home affairs domains. In her previous post as deputy head of unit for criminal law, Margaret was responsible for European e-Justice, contributing to the improvement of access to justice and cross border judicial cooperation.

Questions and answers with speakers [10min]

10:50 – 11:15

Presentation of two-day program, objectives and methodology by Dynamo International [15min]

Questions and answers [10min]

11:15 – 11:30

COFFEE BREAK

11:30 – 12:00

Icebreaker activity, led by Edwin [20min]

Forming the working groups [10min]

12:00 – 12:30

Working group - “The Street and Me” [30min]

In groups of 6-7, participants will be invited to describe their “connection” with the street, and draw a picture that expresses that connection.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12:30 – 13:30</td>
<td><strong>LUNCH BREAK</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:30 – 14:00</td>
<td>☑ Brief presentation on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (video) [3min]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>☑ Activity focusing on the 3-4 points of reflection specific to the consultation [25min]</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:00 – 14:15</td>
<td>Presentation of “World Café” workshops and formation of subgroups. [15min]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Linguistic subgroups of 7-12 people will have each member address the following rights:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The right to a good standard of living</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The right to care and protection</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The right to freedom of association</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does this right apply to me? What problems do I face related to this right?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Tuesday morning plenary session will include a summary of workshops to identify widespread problems.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:15 – 15:00</td>
<td>☑ ‘World Café’ workshop in subgroups (part 1/3) [45min]</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:00 – 15:45</td>
<td>☑ ‘World Café’ workshop in subgroups (part 2/3) [45min]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:45 – 16:00</td>
<td><strong>COFFEE BREAK</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:00 – 16:45</td>
<td>☑ ‘World Café’ workshop in subgroups (part 3/3) [45min]</td>
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<tr>
<td>16:45 – 17:00</td>
<td>☑ Personal Weather Report</td>
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<td></td>
<td>☑ Debrief and objectives of the second day</td>
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<td></td>
<td>☑ Final game altogether</td>
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</table>

**TUESDAY 19TH APRIL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09:30</td>
<td>☑ Welcoming participants</td>
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European consultation with street-connected children and young people for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s General Comment on children in street situations – Dynamo International and Consortium for Street Children
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09:45 – 10:00</td>
<td>Warm-up activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 – 10:45</td>
<td>Presentation of “World Café” workshop results [30min]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A summary of the key or recurring problems that participants identified on Monday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45 – 11:00</td>
<td>Presentation of “Sharing Solutions” workshop, in working subgroups [15min]</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The methodology used will be sociocratic, based on the testimony of one volunteer, followed by others suggesting solutions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00 – 11:30</td>
<td>“Sharing Solutions” workshop (1/3) [30min]</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30 – 11:45</td>
<td>COFFEE BREAK</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:45 – 13:00</td>
<td>“Sharing Solutions” workshop (2/3) [30min]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Sharing Solutions” workshop (3/3) [30min]</td>
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<tr>
<td>13:00 – 14:00</td>
<td>LUNCH BREAK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:00 – 15:00</td>
<td>Summary of “Sharing Solutions” workshops [60min]</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:00 – 15:15</td>
<td>COFFEE BREAK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:15 – 16:30</td>
<td>Open and participative workshop: “What about prevention?” [1h15min]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

European consultation with street-connected children and young people for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s General Comment on children in street situations – Dynamo International and Consortium for Street Children
Annex 3: participative methodology used throughout the two day consultation

MONDAY, 18th APRIL

Exercise: « personal weather report » (stay open all along the two days)

You are free, throughout the two days, to come and express yourself on the following 4 issues:

1. What made me angry
2. What made me happy
3. What I learnt
4. Freedom of expression

Some post-its will be provided, you can write your feelings on them (be creative) and stick them on the wall in the place indicated.

During the two days, there will be moments dedicated to this exercise, thereby allowing times for personal thoughts and reflection.

Everyone is invited to express themselves.

Workshop: « The street and me ? » (12pm – 12:30pm)

One by one, you explain to your group your "link" with the street : how would you define this link? What characterizes your link with the street? For you, what does it mean to be "in a street situation"?

Once you explained this link to your group, draw this story on the sheet of paper that we will have distributed. Your social worker can help you formulate the sentence which describes your drawing.

The Dynamo International team will collect the drawings, which will be displayed anonymously over the two days.

The objective of this workshop is for the participants to become acquainted and exchange experiences on what defines (or defined) "links" with the street.

These groups are autonomous. Two Dynamo International organizers will circulate from group to group if needed.
The young people are the ones who will express themselves during this workshop. The social workers will help to write sentences on the drawings.

**Workshop: What do the Rights of the Child mean? (13:30pm – 14pm)**

During this small workshop, we are going to quickly review children rights. You will be invited to participate in small brainstorming sessions on the 3 rights we will consider during this consultation. This technique uses focus on word association: for example, when I say "social protection", which word comes to your mind?

The objective is that everybody has the same level of understanding of the working concepts. A Dynamo International organiser will run the session; you can follow his/her instructions.

This session is open to everyone, and participation must be spontaneous and unprompted.

The groups will be divided by language.

It is the young people who are invited to participate.

**Workshop: World Café: the experience of the rights (14pm - 16:45pm)**

For this workshop, you are going to move and speak!

You will be divided (according to language) into groups of approximately 12 people: 3 French-speaking groups and 3 English-speaking groups.

Every group will move from table to table. At every table, you will approach one right. There will be 3 tables for the 3 rights:

- Right to freedom of association.
- Right to protection and care.
- Right to a sufficient standard of living

The discussion by table lasts 40 minutes.

For every right, we shall ask you to answer to the following questions: how do I live this right? What are the problems I encounter?

For the first 5 minutes, you will be together with young people and social workers from the same country and will discuss of your experiences according to these questions. Then, each young person will be invited to share their experience with the group.

Nobody is OBLIGIED to express him or herself. The facilitator will lead the discussion and will give you additional instructions.

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In the main room there will be a map of your journey from table to table. It is essential that each group goes to each table and therefore discusses each right.

This is a time for the participants to describe their experiences. The social workers will be present in a supportive role; they can add to the discussion with other testimonies or with an explanation of rights violations in their country.

**TUESDAY, 19TH APRIL**

**Workshop: « sharing of solutions » (10:45am – 13pm)**

For this workshop, you will get into the groups you were in the day before. You will be with the same facilitator throughout the morning. This workshop is divided into 3 working sessions.

Process: some of you (the young people) will have to volunteer to share your thoughts and experiences on one of the difficulties exposed in the previous session of restitution.

- The 1st session of discussion: a young volunteer will choose among the difficulties linked to the Right of freedom of association.

- The 2nd session of discussion: a young volunteer will have to choose among the difficulties linked to the Right to the protection and care.

- The 3rd session of discussion: a young volunteer will have to choose among the difficulties linked to the Right to a sufficient standard of living.

Each discussion will last 35 minutes.

The instructions for this workshop are quite strict and we ask that you respect them.

The objective is to learn from your comrades and to build courses of action together to work out solutions to a problematic situation. We are neither in a debate, nor in a search for consensus, but in a creative search for possible solutions.

The different steps by session:

1. Testimony of the young volunteer on a problem (situation) which s/he choses.

2. The objective is to explain the problem, how that touches him/her, that affects him/her and why that raises him/her problem. (5 minutes)
3. First speaking slot: questions of clarification/of understanding (only) : at first by the young people and then by the social workers. Every participant asks a question, the speaker answers directly to the question, and we pass to the following participant.... One participant = one question. EVERYBODY HAS TO EXPRESS HIMSELF.

4. Second speaking slot: the participants express themselves one after the other (first the young people then the social workers). They have to formulate suggestions of possible courses of action: imagine what might resolve this difficult situation. This time the speaker listens and does not react, s/he can express him/herself at the end of the speaking slot if he/she wants to.

- Respect of the thought of the others, this exercise is based on listening.

- Warning: There is a tendency to go towards a judgment when we propose courses of action ("you should have done that like this..."). However, we are in a collaborative exercise! The facilitator/ animator intervene if the participants deviate.

Among the social workers, one will volunteer to be the group secretary (s/he has also the right to express herself). S/he is approved by the group and will be the speaker for the group in the plenary session in the afternoon. The restitution will be organized around a brief explanation of the problem exposed by the speaker and the main courses of action which have been proposed.

**Workshop: «what about prevention?» (15:15pm – 16:30pm)**

This workshop is an additional session which will not repeat what was previously said. It will go beyond the 3 rights which we considered over the last two days. We will open up the debate; everybody will be able to express themselves.

"Prevention" refers here to: how to prevent children ending up on the street, or staying on the street for too long?

You will have been asked to express your ideas in term of prevention on a flipchart; we will address them here.

Participation rules for the group:

- Speaking: raise your hand, the facilitator will give you the floor;

- The “yes / no”: to say yes (to approve what a comrade say), put both hands up, to say no, put both hands down;

- Off-topic discussions: if a person speaks for too long and digresses: make a windmill movement with your hands.

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The tone of the debate will not be restricted. However, because we will be speaking with large groups, it is important that you respect the facilitator and participation rules.

This will also be an opportunity to address issues which we were not able to address during the two days! The objective is to exchange ideas outside of a binding framework, while always keeping focused on respecting the rights of children in street situations.

Annex 4: Detail on the composition of working groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Francophone groups</th>
<th>Anglophone groups</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purple group</strong></td>
<td><strong>Orange group</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France, Romania, Spain</td>
<td>Czech Republic, Italia, Austria, Albania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 women, 5 men</td>
<td>3 women, 6 men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 social workers, 4 young people</td>
<td>4 social workers, 5 young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age: 25</td>
<td>Average age: 23</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Green group</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pink group</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>France, Spain</td>
<td>Czech Republic, Spain, Greece, England, Swiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 women, 3 men</td>
<td>4 women, 5 men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 social workers, 4 young people</td>
<td>4 social workers, 5 young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age: 19</td>
<td>Average age: 22</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Blue group</strong></td>
<td><strong>Yellow group</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>France, Swiss, Spain</td>
<td>Slovakia, Norway, Poland, England</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 women, 5 men</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 social workers, 4 young people</td>
<td>4 social workers, 8 young people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average age: 20</td>
<td>Average age: 17</td>
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Annex 5: Evaluation by participants

Results of the evaluation

A. Preparation of the consultation

A.1. The content and the consultation objectives were clearly communicated and on time:

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B. Organization of the consultation

B.1. The administrative and logistics management (registration, provision of the room) were good (reception, accommodation, facilities, rooms ...)

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B.2. The participant group was adapted (group size, level of expertise/knowledge of participants ...)

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B.3. The duration of the consultation is

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European consultation with street-connected children and young people for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s General Comment on children in street situations – Dynamo International and Consortium for Street Children
C. CONTENT OF THE CONSULTATION

C.1. The content of the consultation matched my expectations

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D. MATERIALS

D.1. The supporting documents and media were well designed and adequately supported the consultation

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E. CONSULTATION STRUCTURE

E.1. The oral presentation was full, clear and precise

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E.2. The exercises/workshops were well explained

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European consultation with street-connected children and young people for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s General Comment on children in street situations – Dynamo International and Consortium for Street Children
E.3. The educational progression is adapted (rhythm, progressive difficulty, balance theory / practice ...)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>47 responses</td>
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</table>

F. ANIMATION OF THE CONSULTATION

F.1. The animators have adapted to the participants and were able to motivate them (they gave desire to learn, participate, they adapted their message)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>48 responses</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

G. Utility and use of consultation

G.1. I think that this consultation will have a positive impact on the quality of my work (guides)

G.1. I think that this consultation will have a positive impact on the analysis of my situation (children / youth in street situations)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>45 responses</td>
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### H. Overall satisfaction

**H.1. Overall I was very satisfied of this consultation**

<table>
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<tr>
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<td>46 responses</td>
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</table>
European consultation with street-connected children and young people for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s General Comment on children in street situations – Dynamo International and Consortium for Street Children
Annex 6: short analysis of the legal situation in European participating countries provided by Funders.

The following information is extracted from legal research made by the funders of this event: Baker & McKenzie and Salesforce. They focused their research on the three rights studied in this consultation for 12 European countries: Italia, Greece, Czech Republic, Austria, Switzerland, Poland, Sweden, France, Spain, Belgium, and Portugal. The objective here is to summarize and select part of their work according to issues that were discussed during the two days of work. If you need more information, their work is available on demand.

All the countries of Europe have signed the UN Convention on the Right of the Child but both the adaptation of internal laws to its principles and the implementation are very long. Most European countries have special laws for child protection, but the question remains about the rights of children in street situations, out of the system.

It is also interesting to underline the definition of children in street situation for some countries. Just the definition they give is itself judgmental: they are truant in Austria or “on the run from institutional upbringing facilities, on the run from their own family (…), needing special care, or delinquent/pre-delinquent children” in Czech Republic.

We can also underline a major and widespread problem: in every country, there are different levels of power with different responsibilities regarding children’s care. Sometimes, there are different laws or treatments from one region to the other inside one country and this create confusion and unfair sanctions. For sure we cannot speak about harmonisation in Europe. In Switzerland for example “there are many mechanisms involved in the implementation of the Convention at both the federal and cantonal levels. These two levels of competence derive from the federal structure”.

1. The right to freedom of association and assembly (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) article 15)

In most countries, the right of association exists in the law (it can be a national or regional competence).

Discrimination of being under 18:

In some countries, there are limitations of this right regarding the fact that an individual is minor. In Italy for example “Minors are affected by widespread limitations in their prospect to engage in assembly and association’s related activities. These limitations are depending on the fact they legally didn’t reach adulthood; their legal condition of minors has far reaching impact on their prospect for the enjoyment of the right”.

Criminalisation

In several countries, it’s forbidden to beg and sleep in the street. The police have the right to disband groups being in the street both in public and private space...

An example in Czech Republic, “the City Police of Prague noted that they have amended several ordinances to discourage socially undesirable phenomena such as public space pollution, public alcohol consumption, dog leash laws, and smoking law. Although the primary motivation for these ordinances appeared to be improving Prague’s...
prospects as a destination for tourism, these ordinances, if effective, may result in the increased protection of street-connected children’s rights to association and assembly, as set forth above.”

In some countries, they are laws targeting homelessness but making no difference between children and adult being in the street. This means that the laws are targeting only visible aspects of poverty but not the real causes.

To be part of an association is perceived as a way to be part of the society, to be a citizen. There are specific conditions to build/participate to an association but the right is mainly existent in Europe.

2. The right to special protection and assistance for children deprived of a family environment (CRC Article 20):

| Italia: “Stigmatization is an important quality of life for street-connected youth and system responses need to function with that understanding. Sanctions, for example, should be mostly oriented towards rehabilitation rather than being purely punitive in nature.” |

Most of the countries have developed care systems for children who are deprived of a family in order for them not to depend on the street.

Protection for children at risk
European countries have legislation on family, especially to support families in need. In almost all countries in Europe there is policy to care about children in need, mainly the ones who are mistreated by their families. For example in Austria they established a phone line for children who experience violence and special programs for teenager being close to the street.

Parental responsibility:
Parents are completely responsible for their children except if the judicial system decides that they cannot. This responsibility can have some consequences:

- In Austria, the parents can have a fine if the child is found in the street or begging.

- In Switzerland, “the parents must provide for their child’s maintenance, including the cost of raising the child, its education and training and measures taken for his or her protection. A parent who fails to fulfil his or her family law duties to provide maintenance or support, even though he or she has or could have the means to do so, is liable on complaint to a custodial sentence not exceeding three years or to a monetary penalty.”

- In Greece: “the Civil Code provides that parents and children are under a reciprocal obligation of assistance, affection and respect. «Parental care" is both an obligation and a right of the parents. A decision made by the parents in the exercise of parental care must aim at the promotion of the child's interests”.

Foster family and Adoption
In European countries, there is protection and care for children deprived of their family, as far as they are in a foster family or in a foster institution. The situation is less clear if the child is in the street.

In most cases, the law encourages the children to be living in foster family (avoiding foster establishment), in order to recreate a family environment (ex: Suisse, Italy, Poland). Again, the responsibility level of authority for such placement is not clear.
In Poland, municipalities are responsible to put children in foster care because it’s considered that the child should stay in the same environment, an environment that he/she already know, in contact to a social group that is close to the child. Municipalities are also responsible at a financial level, they support foster family and the family has to fulfill the basic need of children.

Focus on migrants:
Lots of European countries are under equipped in terms of law, material, knowledge, in order to decently face the migrant crises. Migrants under 18 years old can be with or without their family and this situation gives them different rights.

Children from migration are discriminated, like in Austria: “Youth Welfare Law - provides that the State has a responsibility for all children residing in Austria, apart from their country of origin. Thus, services must be supplied to refugee and migrant children and children victims of child trafficking”. In Greece also the law itself is discriminating: “The Constitution affords this right only to Greek citizens; therefore the right of non-Greek street children to assemble and form associations is not protected constitutionally.”

If the law often gives equal treatment to everybody present in the country e.g. every family should receive support, based on objectively verifiable criteria; the reality seems to be different.

3. **The right to an adequate standard of living (CRC article 27):**

The economic crisis in Europe had consequences in the public system. In Greece: “The economic crisis has contributed to a rapid decrease in children’s standard of living. In 2014, UNICEF reported that 686,000 children (or 35.4% of the children population) in Greece are at risk of poverty or social expulsion.”

In most countries, the state should provide health care “equally to all citizens, irrespective of their economic, social and occupational status, through a unified and decentralized health system.” But since the beginning of the crisis, the government is privatising health and education.

Governments should « (1) implement these policies into local law, (2) ensure that more targeted legislation focusing on street children is enacted, and (3) publicize these laws and policies so children know where they can get help. »

“Courts may hear the opinion of the children’s social and legal protection authority as well as the opinion of the child, taking into account the age and intellectual maturity of the child.”

European consultation with street-connected children and young people for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s General Comment on children in street situations – Dynamo International and Consortium for Street Children
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