

Ref: N74x-16-19

Brussels, 18 april 2016

REPORT YOUTH CARE PLATFORM ACCELERATE TO INDEPENDENCE: 'AFTER CARE GUARANTEE' IN YOUTH CARE

The final report of the project “Accelerate to Independence: After Care Guarantee in Youth Care”, the presentations of the conference and the attendance list are available on www.youthcare.eu.

1 WELCOME

Welcome and introduction by **Stefaan Van Mulders**, chair

Welcome by **Marianne Thyssen**, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility (video message)

[Videomessage Marianne Thyssen](#) (password: youthcareplatform)

2 ASPECTS OF YOUTH WELFARE: A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Borboly Csaba, Committee Of The Regions

[Presentation](#)

3 ACCELERATE TO INDEPENDENCE: ‘AFTER CARE GUARANTEE’ IN YOUTH CARE VIA PERSONAL BUDGET” UNDERSTANDING THE AFTER CARE CONCEPT, PROJECT AIMS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Maria José Aldanas, Feantsa

[Presentation](#)

[Final Report with Conclusions and Recommendations](#)

4 PANEL 1 DESIGNING AND EXPERIMENTING AFTER CARE MECHANISMS, HEARING THE VOICES OF YOUTH AND YOUTH WORKERS

Participants: **Youngsters From Flanders, Carinthia and Veneto**

Patrizia Gassler, Florian Winkler, Jeroen Brits, Nicole Ponce Trelles, Chiara, Sabryna, Gabriele

Moderator: **Kris Clijsters**, Cachet, the Voice of Youngsters in Youth Care

[Video message Youngsters from Veneto](#) (password: youthcareplatform)

Questions addressed in the panel:

Young persons with experience in care expressed their perspectives on the following questions:

- Do you recognize the problem that we need more support for youngsters who leave youth care on their road to adult life? And this already from the age of 16 years when they are still in care?
- What do you think about such a youth service in local social public services? What can be possible benefits? On which domains/aspects in life, such as a youth service, should offer their guidance?
- Do we have to oblige youth care facilities to give the chance to every youngster when he/she leaves care and feels the need for it, to get in contact with his/her former facility in some way? It seems like a good idea for every facility to build a network for the youngsters by activating him/her for hobbies and so on. Did they support you in building a network? In which way?
- Is it achievable to draft a (sort of) After Care Plan at the age of 16? Why yes/no? If yes: which elements should there be recorded into the plan? Who guides this process? (a new mentor? One the youngster already knows? Can the youngster choose his after care worker?)
- Should there be priority measures for care leavers (considering the access of adult care or after care)? If yes, on which domains there are the biggest needs? How should they give meaning to his priority measures for education, work, housing, health care, general services, ...

5 PANEL 2 FAILING OF THE SUPPORTIVE MODELS: DEVELOPING OPPORTUNITIES FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE AT LOCAL, REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND EU LEVEL: STRATEGIES, POLICIES AND MECHANISMS

Julius Op De Beke, European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, **David Debrouwere**, Flemish Agency for Youth Welfare (Belgium), **Job Tanis**, Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (The Netherlands), **Christine Gaschler-Andreasch**, Regional Government of Carinthia (Austria), **Federica Gerri**, Azienda Speciale Consortile Ovest (Italy)

Moderator: **Freek Spinnewijn**, Feantsa

Each representative started with the viewpoint of his or her country or region as well as the current situation and developments when it comes to (after)care for children and young adults. The moderator then asked some question, as well as the audience.

Job Tanis, Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (The Netherlands)

Systemic change in the youth care system in The Netherlands in 2015, which consisted of a decentralisation of the responsibility and youth care budgets to the local level. The local governments now receive 100% of the budget (before just 10 %), which should also cover psychological care as well as care for mentally disabled youngsters. The local governments are now responsible for making contracts with the youth care institutions.

The new Youth Act and the new social support Act focus on care continuity, not care and aftercare as separate issues: during the period of care they already put emphasis on aftercare. Aftercare is an important political topic in the Netherlands, last year they had, for example, a motion in the Parliament to call for an individual action plan for youngsters leaving a care institution.

When it comes to the recommendations, Job stated: firstly in the Netherlands we put more emphasis on aftercare during care and prepare more for adulthood in the institutions. Secondly, we focus on a tailor made individual action and personal development plan. Thirdly we put forward the need for mentors, professional and non-professional, as well as care and maybe foster care to continue once the youngsters turn 18. In the Netherlands we also provide special protective housing for youngsters with mental or psychological problems, which might be a good solution for aftercare topic. The fourth recommendation concerning a personal budget for the youngster is not one we will pursue in the Netherlands. We have experienced a number of problems with personal budgets in health care, cases of fraud and we question if youngsters are capable of managing personal budget at that age. We are looking

for a good solution at a local level, a kind of care duty for the local governments. We have explicit written policy for young people, stated in law, but in practice this proves to be difficult. Best practices are however stimulated in the Netherlands.

On the topic of residential care, we feel there is a need to have fewer youngsters in residential care. Therefore the new Youth Acts aims at more prevention, ambulatory youth care and foster care. We are concerned that the topic of care and aftercare is not being dealt with in the (European) working group on social policy nor the working groups on education and youth, as the jurisdiction of youth the youth working group is just youth work. We suggest a European working group on integrated youth topics.

Christine Gaschler-Andreasch, Regional Government of Carinthia (Austria)

Carinthia has a couple of services to guide youngsters on their way to independence, Carinthian youth welfare Act, and they provide an extension of care after the 18th birthday. One of these services is assisted living for youngsters, internal as well as external. Internal assisted living means that they have their own flat inside of the care facility, where they learn to take care of their own household. Once they master this, they can move to external assisted living located in any place of the town, they pay rent, insurance, take care of their own place, manage a budget and so on. The government pays about 1800 Euros to the organisations and they pay for the young adults. The youngsters get a high level of independence but they can ask for help with job applications. They also work on finding jobs for vulnerable youngsters, which has proven a success story.

On the residential care they added that sometimes this is a necessity, but should only be for a short time.

David Debrouwere, Flemish Agency for Youth Welfare (Belgium)

This topic and age group plays a prominent role in policy documents of the last year. In Flanders you can stay in youth care after the age of 18 and there is the possibility to re-enter when withdrawn up to the age of 21.

They have a good practice where youth care and adult care work together to make the transition easier. An action plan is drawn up, but today the actions are often limited to short-term services (cooking, finances...) and there is a lack of attention for long term actions taking in consideration the life trajectory of the youngsters.

Good practise in Flanders is limited to welfare organisations; there is a lack of involvement of housing, education agencies and others. They also experience a lack of personal network of the youngster. They might live independently but they are not alone: family, friends... Need to look for their roles and strengths.

Youth care up to the age of 24. Important to stimulate cooperation locally with several agencies and employees that work with youngsters, to look further than local actors to voluntary coaches to stand beside them and support them and create greater effects than mere legislation.

Preference for foster care and not residential care, but there is still a need for it.

Federica Gerri, Azienda Speciale Consortile Ovest (Italy)

No possibility for an aftercare plan after 18. They only have one legal instrument: judge decides that a young person needs more support and calls upon a local service to follow the youngsters. However this legal aid isn't used so often and there is a lack of resources at the local level.

As some policies are at the national level it is also difficult to change something at the local level.

Julius Op De Beke, European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
Mr Op De Beke points out the role of the European Commission in social affairs in general. Most competences are at level of the member states. Some relevant initiatives of the COM are: social investment package, youth guarantee, pillar of social rights (consultation is launched),

(Moderator mentioned that an evaluation of this year showed that youngsters with the most important needs fall out of the youth guarantee programme)

The existing scheme should also cover the most vulnerable group, if this group is missing out, something extra should be done within the existing scheme as extra attention is fully justified.

Personal note: What about deinstitutionalisation?

12.15 Q&A

SOS children's villages international

We are talking of extending the rights of children in care to after care, but they already do have rights. There are the UN guidelines and a framework already exists. Also, how does the EC foresee the implementation of this framework within the care, how do they translate the discourse to actions?

Job Tanis: the new youth law is explicitly based on the UN-convention on child rights. Although there has been a decentralisation of youth care to the local government whereas the national government is still responsible. We also have a "Kinderombudsman" who refers to the rights of the child. This is a major topic and a responsibility of every level of government and every institution.

David Debrouwere: This is more or less the same in Flanders. There is no need for a new framework but they wonder if the youngsters know about their rights and claim them.

Christine Gaschler-Andreasch: Austria has signed UN guideline for children's rights and legal acts are all based upon this.

Deputy of Estonia: *We are concerned that children in care are treated unequally. In the residential care they can stay until the end of their studies, but in foster care the custody ends when you turn 18. The only support from the state then is 350 Euros "start capital for independent life", but no services. This puts a big burden on these families, they are often poor and do not have the same resources. How do other countries tackle this problem and what can the European level do?*

Federica Gerri: We offer foster care aid for foster family and do sensitization on foster care.

Christine Gaschler-Andreasch: Carinthia is set up very well but we have more steps to do, such as an after care plan where we write down concrete goals and adding necessary steps, help for better start in independent living, important to write down these goals.

David Debrouwere: The youngsters can stay in foster care to 22 but once they turn 22 all the benefits are gone. There are student allowances, when older than 21 it may be interesting to still receive that maximum students allowance even after foster care.

Jos Sterckx

How could this be a part of the Pillar of social rights, which is under development?

Julius Op De Beke: At EU level, we feel responsible but the actual work has to happen at the national level which is where the competences are. The EU did not ratify the UN convention on the rights of the child but the MS did. So if unhappy with how they comply then take them to court. An EU Recommendation on investing in children has been adopted. So there is knowhow and also money through the Structural Funds. But political can be a problem and there is a lack of good projects that could be funded. The EC promotes and encourages, but there is no EU framework for after care, this only exists at MS level. The Social Pillar enumerates lots of principles but not rights, rights only exist at MS level. The question is how we can give more flesh to these common principles. A public consultation is in order. There is also the question of non-accompanied minors from third countries who are also part of the target group and who will need lots of funding, advice and manpower.

Other concerns

Need for a more integrated and intersectorial approach, the topic of aftercare should constantly be part of the agenda, difficult to get projects approved and receive funding, national authorities do not always use the money of structural funds for social projects...

The topic of non-accompanied minors is a big issue and very urgent!

6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Jo Vandeurzen, Flemish Minister for Welfare, Public Health and Family

Acknowledges the importance of this target group and the aftercare project and stresses that there is a necessity of starting a policy process at the national and EU level on rights of beneficiary groups to be provided with services after 18. In Flanders, an Action Plan has been

developed with 6 clusters concerning the identification as a separate target group, specific support targeted at the young adults, parents and mentors, continuity in support and client consultation with young adults. The project also addresses the problem that vulnerable youngsters are not able to identify their needs.

When looking back on the proposed recommendations, Flanders is already making progress, portrayed in the [Action Plan for Youth Support 2.0](#):

- Foster care as a first choice and address the role of foster families in after care
- Expanding the allocation of the mentor, work from strengths and reinforce networks
- Actions on the attitude of young people in care
- Conduct a more coherent policy towards young adults who leave youth care
- Promote continued social support to the age of 25.

There is however still a need for a structural policy directed at this group. Need for a move towards a cross-sectoral policy where the transition is better aligned and coordinated. The EC needs to continue the support to the MS and local governments. The EU can show the example of aftercare that exists in several MS as good practices.

7 EXPERIMENTATION: A WAY HOME – A MODEL OF PREVENTION AND COLLABORATION TO END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Stephen Gaetz, Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and the Homeless Hub and **Melanie Redman**, A Way Home Canada

[Presentation](#)

WHAT IS A WAY HOME?

A Way Home is a national coalition dedicated to preventing, reducing and ending youth homelessness in Canada. They:

- Help communities and government plan and implement comprehensive strategies
- Supporting adaptation of effective models of youth homelessness prevention
- Putting Youth Homelessness on agenda of decision makers
- Public spotlight on Youth homelessness to combat stigmas and raise awareness

HOW DID THEY GET THERE?

Structurally speaking, they did not set up a new organisation that would compete for scarce resources. They started by [mobilizing local capacity](#) projects by taking all the strategies and resources at the national level and realigning them for maximum impact. They drafted a [vision paper](#) for change and [mapped the current activities](#). This way a body of work emerged comprising a research component, and the gaps became visible. Then they started [building the coalition](#), which has different partners that are implicated in different ways.

COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Collective impact is different from collaboration.

First shift is from thinking in [specialised agendas to a common agenda](#) and think in terms of systems, address systemic causes. Lay everything on the table to avoid duplicating and leaving gaps. Coordination and a backbone organization is necessary to delegate the efforts in the right way. Pick out the unusual suspects and don't try and solve problems only from within the sector. [Integrated services](#), work with the system and not just an agency

Second shift concerns [cooperation](#): the relational aspect is important as well as structure and agency, put in place the mechanisms and share credit

Third shift: progress is a [gradual](#) one. Take innovation to scale: scale up, scale out (greater numbers) and scale deep (cultural roots). If you don't scale deep, there will not be an impact.

The 5 conditions for a successful collective impact:

- [Common agenda](#): a common understanding of the problem and a shared vision for change

- Shared measurement: collecting data and measuring results, focus on performance management, shared accountability
- Mutually reinforcing activities: differentiated approaches, coordination through joint plan of action
- Continuous communication: consistent and open communication, focus on building trust
- Backbone support: separate organizations with staff, resources and skills to convene and coordinate participating organizations

HOW DO THEY WORK?

You need key constellations of activity. In each constellation there is one natural lead organisation or multiple and the constellations function as very significant working groups. The key words of this constellations are:

- Partnership & collaboration: get key national partners involved, funders can be partners
- Community planning: local of municipal plans, which allow the development of resources and different toolkits, which are highly applicable in many parts of the world and available
- Youth voice
- Research
- Programs: to prevent, reduce and end youth homelessness
- Government relations: aligning federal, provincial, territorial and local efforts, ensuring that government policy, programming and funding support community efforts
- Public engagement
- Community of practice

ADDRESSING YOUTH LEAVING CARE

The current model/system is very outdated whereas the context has changed drastically: 40% of 20-29 live at home, youngsters stay in school much longer, good jobs are missing... The current system is good at dealing with children but less with youth.

Sticky issue that stresses people in government, so need to be strategic and find a starting point. Pull together the good ideas, not starting from point zero, be solution focused in advocacy approaches.

Jurisdictional differences matter

Key components of care for young people: housing as a right and not something they can lose for bad behaviour, education, access to income, life skills, family reconnect work, engage with communities, other young people, adults...

No need for a different way of thinking for youngsters in care and "our" youngsters

QUESTIONS

A lot of business and money are part of this sector. When solving the problem a lot of street workers, shelters and such will lose reason to exist. Does this not make the sector hesitant to solve the problem?

They will not be out of work, the work is going to change. However this is a difficult change to make. Takes leadership and risk taking. Funder engagement is critical and need for change of the program model.

About the business strategy, how much money can you save?

Three door study:

1. Provide basic minimum support and then calculate forward: no high school diploma, health issues: how much does this cost?
 2. Adult support but no engagement and such, just get them off the street, and then again project forward.
 3. Stick with them, provide housing, education, jobs, supports and then see the total cost.
- This way you can develop indicators for change.

Data?

No great data collection in Canada, they need to get better at that and government recognises it.

Cost-effective approach versus human rights: public social administration and policy in Germany are not really interested in solving this problem. It is not a huge number compared to other social problems, and costs of people living in the streets are lower.

Real cost of homelessness in Canada and the US is quite expensive (health care, opportunity costs...). At Home/Chez Soi study is the largest study on this topic, return of 21 dollars for every 10 dollars spent on this type of care. You need different approaches and tactics to engage the different groups, human rights based is one, cost effective is another. Moral argument hasn't gotten Canadians far enough, slightly above zero impact. Also be solution focused. There is too much prejudice and stigma on homeless people for the moral argument to work.

8 DISCUSSION AND DEBATE: THE CANADIAN MODEL IN A EUROPEAN CONTEXT?

MODERATOR:

Moderated by Feantsa

Do you have data on the background of homeless people?

They are not there yet but data do not cover everything, in the case of sexual abuse for example this is moving more and more indoors. The national survey will give the most comprehensive data, which allows for correlation. There is a need for structures supporting international collaboration on this issue.

Cost-benefit approach versus human rights approach

More specified way of targeting and special attention for more vulnerable groups

Problem of debt: when applying for housing, health care and such this is a problem

There hasn't been a lot of research on this. Debt can lead the homelessness and vice versa. Idea of debt forgiveness as a strategy when the youngsters leave care.

Adapting the view on these youngsters to the view we have of our "own" youngsters, from whom we don't ask the same things. There is a tendency to put responsibility on youngsters instead of creating the right conditions. Thinking in a manner of planning is still very important however.

How is the community plan managed?

Try and find the right people at the right time and bring them together at one table. Then slowly people start showing up and relationships start to build. Having a plan doesn't suffice however, the trouble starts with the implementation. This requires all levels of government to be engaged. It depends on the community who initiates it. You need to find the leadership and initiative. Convince people that change is good and that it happens for the right reasons. The urgency around the issue is very important. In quite a lot of countries in Europe this is not on the political agenda and there will be no electoral repercussions. So there is a need to raise awareness of the problematic nature of this issue.

Problem of ignorance and informing people about their rights: do the local and regional levels have a role in this field?

Has to happen at all those levels, there is the national research survey, they develop tools from this to mobilise the results and talk with the community and local press. It is relatively easy to reach the youngsters in care and to find out if they will be homeless. It is not the only route into homelessness, but a useful one to start with and create a solution oriented dynamic.

Was it funded with the own means?

Received funding from different places such as the Province of Alberta. At the national level it came from Home Depot, the company and from the observatory, which includes researchers.

Link with crisis and welfare cuts, phenomena of youth homelessness growing in unexpected countries, risk of chronic homelessness

Link with other social phenomena such as migration (refugees from the Balkans, non-accompanied minors), people who have lost their jobs... The background and origin of the homeless need to be taken into account.

9 CONCLUSIONS

Jos Sterckx, Knowledge Centre Social Europe

Importance and value of involvement and input youngsters since the beginning. They were the most convincing when speaking and giving direction.

EU Social Pillar is one of the flagship of the EC currently, important that EU is more aware of the importance of social policies. There is a momentum for social legislation and services and we need to use it.

At national and regional level all actors are working to improve systems, we are not there yet, but everywhere there is the recognition of the problem and the need for aftercare, consensus that more should be done.

Next meeting in Rotterdam: 27th and 28th of June next meeting with youth care platform, part of ENSA network.



jongerenwelzijn



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