



Euromf EZA Seminar – Summary Report

NEET Youths amongst Euro-orphans and Unaccompanied Minor Refugees

Approach and Prevention

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One of the issues that arose at the 2015 and 2017 Euromf seminars was the problem of the *children left behind by migration*, referring to children of migrant workers, staying behind (alone) in the country of origin. We chose to further focus on this theme during our 2019 seminar. Indeed, for this group of youngsters there is an increasing chance of becoming a NEET (*Not in Education, Employment or Training*). Additionally, we expanded the subject by including unaccompanied minor refugees, yet another group with a heightened NEET-risk.

Jerzy Wielgus (member of the National Commission of Solidarność) welcomed the participants to the seminar and specified the steps taken by Solidarność to improve access to the labour market for NEET youths. Youth unemployment is a major issue in Poland as well.

At the start of the seminar the participants were asked about their expectations concerning the topics NEET youths, Euro-orphans and unaccompanied minor refugees. The survey showed that the participants' expectations were threefold: people were looking for knowledge on the topics, for tangible practices and for policy recommendations.

Veerle Miranda (Senior Economist, OESO) presented an overview of the situation of NEET youths in the OESO countries. Figures show some progress regarding the number of NEET youths over the past decade. Nevertheless, one in seven youths in Europe still isn't in training or at work. There are significant regional differences, South European countries often being worse-off. Being a NEET youth also strongly influences the living conditions. We can tell, for instance, that 34% lives in poverty, as opposed to 16.5% of the youths in training or at work. An important remark is that there are several types of NEET youths who each need a different approach. Particularly the long-term NEET youths deserve special attention.

Evelien Maris (Education Worker Arktos) mentors and counsels NEET youths in the Missing Link project: difficult to reach youngsters receive an extensive guidance to labour or a meaningful pastime. During this process the youth is always at the wheel himself, his network is reinforced, steps are taken together in the areas of housing, training, leisure, etc.

During the plenary workshop the participants were asked which measures, in their opinion, could ensure an easier integration of NEET youths into the labour market or their participation in a training course. Some notable answers are: to facilitate the transition from education to work, to improve the detection of early school-leavers and to ameliorate the cooperation between institutions.

Janne Bemelmans (UAntwerpen) did research on the situation of children of labour migrants, left behind in the Philippines. This study mainly focused on the effects depending on age and gender of the child and the gender of the parent. Children below the age of 13 appear to suffer mainly adverse consequences, whereas children older than 13 undergo mostly beneficial effects. A link is also found between age and gender. For instance, boys younger than 13 suffer more negative effects than girls from the same age cohort. Conversely, girls above the age of 13 suffer more negative consequences than boys in this age group because they tend to leave school more often. In general, the consequences for children of labour migrants are more detrimental when it is the mother that migrates, compared to the father leaving.

Professor Beata Nowak (University of Warsaw) conducted research into psychosocial implications on children of labour migrants in Poland. According to Professor Nowak the economic improvement of migrant workers' families does not outweigh the social costs because the absence of the parents often has a traumatic effect on the children. This results in increasing antisocial behaviour, harmful alcohol consumption, psychological issues and suicide rates with these youths.

Professor Haeghe Nore (Oslo Metropolitan University) used to be coordinator of the EU project RefuNEET that devised a method allowing young refugees to escape the NEET status by training and work. The aim is twofold. On the one hand an approach was developed to conveniently track down, recognise and cultivate the skills and competences of young migrants. On the other hand the focus is put on developing and supporting counselling services for this target group.

Omran Barikzai (KAJ de Mug and Minor Ndako), who arrived in Europe 11 years ago as an unaccompanied minor refugee, is an experience expert. He narrated his personal story about his integration. This showed that more often than not the trajectory is made unnecessarily complicated by public authorities. It is very important not only to talk about the target groups, but also to talk with the target groups themselves.

Melanie Zonderman (Platform Children on the Run) explained the condition of unaccompanied minor refugees in Belgium. Above she all emphasised a number of sore points in the policy, such as the disappearance of a lot of youngsters, the limited access to psychological counselling, the overly complicated procedures and the fact that aid is often discontinued when the youth reaches the age of 18.

Each of the participants provided a number of recommendations to ameliorate the integration of unaccompanied minor refugees into the labour market and the educational process. During the asylum application procedure access to the labour market should be faster, sufficient attention should be paid to language acquisition and getting acquainted with the culture, a centre should be established connecting youths and employers and closer attention should be paid to the youngsters' skills and competences instead of to their training.

The documentary 'Waiting for August' tells the story of a Romanian family of which the mother went to work in Italy. The father too is out of the picture. The 15 year old daughter Georgiana assumes the role of head of the family. The movie properly clarifies what the absence of the parents means to the children. After the screening the participants had a chance to ask questions to the director, Teodora Mihai, herself of Romanian origin.

At the end of the seminar a number of policy recommendations were drafted: privacy legislation cannot result in hampering the flow of information between humanitarian organisations and research institutions, combining work with studying should be facilitated, mentoring students should get a more active role when it concerns drop-outs, youths should be approached in a multidisciplinary way, the transition from education to the labour market should be improved and education and training must be better attuned to a globalised world.