

FAMILIES FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN

Family foster care in Spain: challenges, procedures and good practices



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Coordinator: Álvaro Puyo

Authors: Álvaro Puyo, Cristina Fuentes, Eva Ortigoza, Marta Martín, Ana Rojas, Karina Barandiarán

With the collaboration of Vanesa Martín

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has three objectives. First, to understand why in Spain, despite the fact that the regulations value family foster care as a priority, it hardly exists in reality. Second, to identify the main issues that affect young people who migrate alone to our country, a particularly vulnerable group. And third, to determine the benefits that family-based foster care have to overcome them and ensure a transition to adult life with guarantees for their development.

In Spain, most of the migrant children are in residential centers, without alternative housing when they turn 18 years old. Practically all of them leave foster care protection without documentation, making their transition to adulthood a very difficult period. It is in that moment when problems arise to access the labor market, training, the health system, but also to be part of the host society.

On top of that, public perception is increasingly fed by racist and hate speech. This begins from the moment in which, at the legal level, migrant children are categorized as migrants, and not as children. A series of problems begin to appear that accumulate and perpetuate over time, and which become evident precisely during the transition to adult life, which is where all the problems and failures of the reception system intensify.

For the preparation of this report, porCausa Foundation team has conducted interviews with foster families and people who are or have been in foster care in the past, as well as associations and civil society networks working with migrant children. This research exercise evidences family foster care as a very useful tool to combat social exclusion and the need for promotion and support from all key actors and authorities involved. Not only for those who have already reached the age of 18, but especially for those who are still minors.



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I.—INTRODUCTION

This report is based on a preliminary investigation into the situation of unaccompanied migrant children arriving to Spain and the assessment of the family foster care. It identifies a series of failures, such as very high levels of institutionalization in the reception of migrant minors who arrive alone in Spain. Despite the priority given by law to the family foster care option over the residential one, the figures from different Autonomous Communities show that this option is practically non-existent.

Spanish immigration laws barely refer to migrant children. Multiple administrations and public entities play a role in the reception and foster care in a highly decentralized State. This complexity has an impact in how migrant children foster care is dealt with by different regional and local approaches with different resources. But it also results in some bad practices which question the validity of the family foster care as a feasible option. This second report addresses the reasons for this paradox through the testimony of migrants, organizations and those responsible actors all along the reception and foster system for unaccompanied migrant minors. The purpose was to identify from their perspective what are the main problems faced under guardianship and once foster care is terminated for young adults. Also, to understand why there is hardly any family foster care in Spain and, last but not least, to know first-hand what are the real benefits of family foster care in the lives of migrant children.

The report highlights the serious problems deriving from a complex legal framework which prevents and conditions the access to documentation, social services, employment and training or enjoyment of socialization spaces. In addition, public perception of unaccompanied children in migration is being polluted by hate speech and xenophobic bias. All these elements have a crucial incidence during the transition to adulthood, once the young adult comes out of the protective mantle of the foster care system.

Based on interviews with foster families, foster children or former foster children, legal experts and organizations working in the area, the main conclusions depict family foster care as a feasible and beneficial alternative to alleviate the administrative and political burden of the Spanish foster care system.



2- METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this research has been qualitative in nature, applying in-depth interviews as the main data production technique. The interviews have been carried out following the sample criteria of the research objectives. A differentiation has been made between: a) associations that work with migrant children and youths; b) temporary or permanent foster families; c) former foster children; and d) experts in migrant childhood and adolescence. All the interviews have been conducted online by videoconference in which the audio has been recorded. In total 15 in-depth interviews were conducted.

The data analysis technique used was discourse analysis, as it is a technique that captures and gives meaning to the words, gestures and expressions of the people interviewed, and that especially takes on value in vulnerable groups (Van Dijk, 2010). The Atlas.ti software was used to facilitate and structure the data found in the interviews.

METHODOLOGY	QUALITATIVE
DATA PRODUCTION TECHNIQUE	in-depth interviews
TOOL	Semi-structured script
PROCEDURE	Video Conference/ audio recorded
SAMPLE	15 in-depth interviews 4 associations 6 families 3 former foster children 2 experts
DATA ANALYSIS	Discourse analysis Atlas.ti versión 9

PROFILES INTERVIEWED

EXPERTS	Expert lawyer in migrant children Dirección General de Infancia del Ministerio de Derechos Sociales y Agenda 2030
ASSOCIATIONS / NGO	APDHA Punt de Referencia Barcelona Actúa Somos Red Solidaria Red de Acogida El Puerto de Santa María Somos Acogida
FAMILIES	6 Foster families
FORMER FOSTER CHILDREN	2 former family foster children 1 former foster residential children



3. FAMILY FOSTER CARE IN SPAIN

3.1 KEY POINTS ABOUT THE SPANISH LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Legislation, case-law and legal doctrine are unanimous in defending the suitability of family foster care for the protection of children in distress. In Spain, the reception system for minors does not differentiate between nationals and foreigners. This should facilitate their management and avoid any stigmatization of migrant children. The law expressly supports family foster care as a priority option over residential care, but the implementation of this option faces three major challenges: 1) the simultaneous and sometimes contradictory application of child protection laws and immigration laws; 2) the complexity of the distribution of powers, derived from political decentralization and 3) the indolence or lack of political will on the part of the responsible administrations to undertake a reform.

The cornerstone of the global protection of children is in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (hereafter CRC) which should inspire all regulations or policies related to minors. Since its ratification by Spain in 1990, the best interests of the child must be the guideline or pattern to be followed in every decision that affects any child.

The best interest of the child implies attending individually to their needs, rights, desires and aspirations in order to promote their well-being and integral development. Along these lines, the CRC gives prevalence to family reunification as the most desirable environment to grow up, but if this is not possible, it promotes the integration of the minor in the host country.

The protection of children's rights is explicitly enshrined in the Treaty of the European Union, as well as in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. In line with the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (2010), the EU has been committed for a decade to the transition from institutional or residential care to family and community-based services, also called "deinstitutionalization" of childcare.

In Spain, the 1978 Constitution establishes the obligation of the public authorities to ensure child protection. Their double identity as children and as migrants has consequences in the legal system. The Immigration Law, a restrictive norm conceived to contain the arrivals of immigrants, makes an exception in the case of minors to adopt a protective and guaranteeing approach. Thus, when an unaccompanied migrant child arrives in Spain and repatriation does not proceed (due to the impossibility of returning with her family or to the country of origin), a supervised residence permit will be granted. As the minor is considered to be in a situation of helplessness, he or she will automatically enter the reception system under the supervision of the competent authority. The Organic Law 1/1996 on the Legal Protection of Minors (LOPJM) prioritizes reintegration with their family and, failing that, establishes a new regime for the guardianship of minors that applies to all of them regardless of their nationality and administrative status. This institutionalization of guardianship - included in article 172 of the Civil Code (CC) - shields the ward, leaving the expulsion of it tacitly prohibited. The CC regulates foster care, assesses the adequacy of foster care and gives priority to the family foster modality over the residential one.



The Autonomous Communities (CCAA) assume territorial competence in matters of social assistance, which includes the protection of children, equal rights, social services as well as foster care and adoption. But there are 17 CCAA with very different incidence of reception, legislative development and degree of commitment. In a decentralized State such as Spain, National Administration, the Autonomous Communities and the City Councils have to coordinate to avoid dysfunctionalities or bad practices that can cause or aggravate situations of social exclusion (for example, mistakes in tests determining the age of young migrants, or overcrowding in juvenile centres, among many others).

The Law 26/2015 of July 28 amending children and adolescents protection's system supports the preference for the family foster care model. To simplify the process, this law "extra-judicializes" the procedure by giving to the guardianship public responsible the competence to formalize it, after an assessment of the suitability of the foster family. An attached document will be included as an agreement or legal transaction where rights, obligations, cohabitation and care rules are signed and sent to the Public Prosecutor's Office.

All the Autonomous Communities have transposed the state prevalence of family foster care in their regulatory framework. Some of them, such as Andalusia or Castilla y León, have incorporated the *Statutes of host person* into their legal systems, as a tool to encourage external family foster care. Although minors go through residential foster care at some point, this should be a temporary or transitional resource whose purpose is to lay the foundations for a future family foster care.

But existing data do not respond to the legal, scientific and political desire for priority family foster care. It is very difficult to quantify such a complex phenomenon, of which there is no single record and which suffers from a lack of territorial disparity and from legislative and political tensions. Despite the multilevel consensus on the prioritization of family foster care as a model of guardianship, the reality gives a different picture: that of an overwhelming majority of minors residing in protection centres and a stagnant and testimonial number of foster families.

Andalusia, gateway to the southern Spanish border, is a good example of this disparity. In December 2020, 1,379 boys and girls were in residential foster care in regional centres of Junta de Andalucía, while only 36 kids were with foster families. In other Autonomous Communities, such as Extremadura, Castilla La Mancha, or Galicia there were no children in family foster care. In Valencia or Madrid, the disparity in figures between family and residential foster model was also surprising. In Madrid 4 in front of 320 or in Valencia 2 in front of 242. Surprisingly, there is a higher proportion of former foster children in the family-based model, once the guardianship is terminated, in a vital period for the inclusion in society of the young adult.



3.2 – BENEFITS OF FAMILY FOSTER CARE

While family foster care is the ideal option according to Spanish multilevel legal framework, reality shows almost non-existent cases of family-based fostered children.

The testimonies and experiences of interviewed people have helped to identify the benefits that this type of foster care represents for the people involved in the process. It also evidences the need of more commitment, promotion and support from all administration levels involved, so that respect for the best interests of the child. The benefits of family foster care are multiple, they cover different essential aspects for the development of a child or young person, and range from legal to practical and everyday aspects, but also psychological and integration into the host society.

3.2.1 – BENEFITS FOR FAMILIES AND SOCIETY

Family-based foster care brings personalized care for the foster child in line with his/her best interest.

“I personally believe that a stable environment in a family is very different from a juvenile centre, no matter how well they do it, no matter how much involvement, no matter how much love, no matter how hard they put in. In a family, in a stable, smaller environment, and with people who can devote much more attention to the kid... It has to work better because it is a matter of time. It is different to have to dedicate time to two hundred kids than to dedicate it to one in your own environment”.

EXPERT LAWYER IN MIGRANT CHILDREN

Many of the people interviewed agree that family foster care brings normality and stability to people who have faced insecurity and probably a traumatic background.

“This family is going to offer physical and emotional stability to a boy who has spent most of his childhood or adolescence on the streets.”

PUNT DE REFERÈNCIA



Next, we review the main problems faced by migrant children. For all of the interviewees, foster family is a support that can be crucial to overcome and solve their problems successfully.

Foster families, who normally participate in associations and networks, or are supported by specialized NGOs, can be very beneficial for this process. They facilitate access to information, legal procedures, paperwork and deadline compliance. They support and accompany the foster children to appointments and formalities in embassies or consulates of the country of origin. There is a crucial implication on the part of the families in order to obtain, access and/or maintain the documentation in order.

[...] We went to Madrid to request it, and due to their mistakes, it took more than a year. This boy was given the card a few months ago. In the meantime, we have had to go to the embassy more times. Well, it was, really ... At last, he already has his card and has already applied for his passport. Now he is waiting another month for the passport to come and when he has it, he will be able to ask for the residence card ”.

FOSTER FAMILY, EL PUERTO DE SANTA MARÍA FOSTERING NETWORK

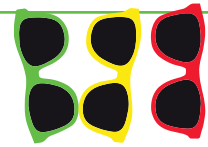
A. EMPLOYMENT

Children who migrate alone to Spain leave their homes behind to find better means of life, an education or/ and a job to improve their future. Despite this, the employment outlook is not easy, bearing in mind that in most of the cases they don't even have a work or residence permit.

Foster family is helpful for a number of reasons. First of all, word-of-mouth is a valuable source of information for accessing job opportunities. The possibilities of this happening are multiplied with the support of a family, as this is much more involved when preparing for job interviews or acquiring key skills and tools so that young migrants learn to function in a job. quite complex and limited market.

“He found the job offer because the family accompanied him to the interview, because the family has been there doing all the paperwork with him....in the end (the family) helps a lot. It facilitates the good evolution of the boy, at levels that are incredible ”.

BARCELONA ACTÚA



Many of the young migrants arrive with the goal of working, rather than receiving training. This reality is closely linked to their background factors such as the economic need of their families and the environment in which they grew up. Foster families help them to have access to information on local training opportunities well adapted to the needs of the foster child in their specific context (e.g., training in the hospitality sector in a high demand area as is Cadiz' coast).

"Up to now, we have 13 young people working. Some of them are still in temporary jobs in the fields. My two boys, they both have a contract now. They are working in the hospitality industry because we give them job training courses. And of course, a training focused in the hospitality industry because it is the main employment source in the beach area".

FOSTER FAMILY, EL PUERTO DE SANTA MARÍA FOSTERING NETWORK

"For example, I have a reputation for being blunt and putting the red line on them. I tell them: if you want to stay, your training is important, otherwise, are you going to stay with me until you're thirty-something?"

FOSTER FAMILY, EL PUERTO DE SANTA MARÍA FOSTERING NETWORK

Foster family encourages the will to study, since it is aware that training is essential to access a specific job. On the other hand, engaging them in wrong training can be counterproductive and demotivate kids whose main purpose is to work. A balance must be found that adjusts the person's job expectations with the reality of the local labour market.

Knowledge of the host country language is an essential tool to interact and integrate into the society, but it is often not learned correctly. All the families interviewed agree that the direct and daily contact that family coexistence provides, highly improves their language skills and hence, their social inclusion and future work opportunities.

B. SOCIALIZATION

Another successful element linked to family foster care is the ability of foster families to provide boys and girls with socialization tools, allowing them to gradually build a social network. Domestic day-to-day life allows the possibility to address all kinds of issues and situations, shared in the same intimate space where the young person feels safe. This favours the development of essential skills that benefit their migration project. From a psychological point of view, this homely atmosphere is key for potentially traumatised people and those who underwent serious hardship, especially young children. These family havens allow them to feel sheltered, supported and accompanied throughout different processes.



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“At home, it is a bit special because I personally work a lot with them on emotions, emotional maturity. Also, on social skills and their training itinerary. For me it is essential to work with all of them, depending on the profile they have. Here you read, you talk about politics, you talk about religion, you talk about everything. If there is any concentration, any story, I try to bring them not only to those who are staying at home, but to everyone”.

FOSTER FAMILY, EL PUERTO DE SANTA MARÍA FOSTERING NETWORK

“When you are already in a family, it is encouraging and you can forget a bit (...) it is like being in your own family, the same”.

FOSTER MOTHER IN MADRID

3.2.2 BENEFITS FOR FOSTER FAMILIES AND THE HOST SOCIETY

It should be pointed out that not only foster children benefit from foster care. All the families we have spoken to agree that by hosting fostered or former fostered children they receive many good things from them. For example, they bring new experiences to a family, having to open up to new routines, new situations that they have not had to deal with before. They also bring knowledge about other cultures, different realities that are often invisible and criminalised, or even the opportunity to learn a new language.

[...]” then, a lot of joy, a lot of youth. I’m a little bit older now, right? So, well, they bring me a lot of happiness, a lot of affection. And well... experiences of their country, they tell me things about their land, their food, their culture... you learn a lot with them”.

FOSTER FAMILY, EL PUERTO DE SANTA MARÍA FOSTERING NETWORK



In cases where the family has children, the fact of taking in a migrant minor or former foster child can be a great learning experience for them. Inevitably, dynamics will be generated in which they will also take part, fostering solidarity, open-mindedness, empathy and the breaking down of prejudices. The importance of this experience at all levels, and all the learning that comes with it, is repeatedly pointed out in the interviews.

“So, in fact, my eldest son was the one who made a space in his room. It was thanks to him that we were able to host and it was very nice. He doesn’t value it, but I do. Both my husband and I have always valued it very much”.

FOSTER FAMILY, EL PUERTO DE SANTA MARÍA FOSTERING NETWORK

And this openness to other realities will have a direct impact on the family environment, and therefore on society and its perception of migrant children. It is a very controversial and contested issue, and therefore the host family in this sense becomes a key factor in the fight against discrimination and racism.

This is especially effective in local contexts, such as the cases that will be discussed in the section on good practices later in the report. Cases such as La Puebla de Almoradiel or El Puerto de Santa María demonstrate that, in terms of perceptions of children, there is great progress at a local level.

“We have made known all the positive things they bring, haven’t we? And then, well, a little bit to raise awareness among the population, which is very important. And then when they are in our homes, through our neighbours, our friends... well, whether you like it or not, it’s like a chain”.

FOSTER FAMILY, EL PUERTO DE SANTA MARÍA FOSTERING NETWORK

In short, the family makes it possible to prevent or limit the associative prejudice mixing up young migrants, conflict and crime. Living in a family in a neighbourhood means that neighbours get accustomed to young migrants considering foster children as any other family members and hence build up acceptance and respect.

“How do you deal with this problem? Do you deal with it by isolating them or do you deal with the problem by trying to integrate them into society? I believe that a person that you integrate into society is something of incalculable value”.

FOSTER PARENT IN ARAGON



Even so, it is important that foster families have support. This support can take the form of a network of families coming together in an association, or NGOs with family fostering programmes that provide them with tools and specialists in migrant children. Also local or regional institutions can provide support. And it is key to the success of this type of initiative that this happens.

“It seems to me that this is ideal, that families as a whole put their problems on the table, mediate with the administration, find out what are the resources that exist...”

APDHA

But above all, institutional support is key. This includes the support of local administrations, which can greatly facilitate access to basic services for people who, due to their circumstances are unable to care for themselves, as well as financial support, which is essential so that the reception can be carried out properly. The case of the local association Somos Acogida in the small town of Puebla de Almoradiel demonstrates this. The Town Council supports the project, which greatly facilitates its sustainability over time, allowing the boys and girls to get proper care.

“The Municipality gives us [...] a significant amount. But it is true that the City Council gives us something much more important than that. It is all the lines of work of the City Council, Social Services, Food Bank, care... but they go beyond that. They are committed to us in the active search for employment, in providing them with sufficient training to access the labour market... all the town’s leisure programs, the children can participate perfectly well...”

SOMOS ACOGIDA

In conclusion, the benefits of foster care are many and are perfectly in line with what is required to respect the best interests of the child. It is necessary to promote it so that it can be easily accessed by minors and not only by former foster children.

“The foster family is a multiplying factor of the positive opportunities that this child can have in his or her environment, even after the end of foster care”.

BARCELONA ACTÚA



4— ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN IN SPAIN

Foster care has multiple benefits in helping to overcome certain limitations faced by migrant children in Spain, as we have already seen. In this section, the five main determinants of this phenomenon and of the conditions in which young people who migrate alone to Spain find themselves will be discussed.

The basis of all the problems is legal. The regulations and jurisprudence relating to migrant children have already been detailed. And it is this regulatory framework that determines, conditions and accompanies these people from their arrival until their transition to adulthood; in other words, throughout their personal development. This is a determining factor for the rest of the issues that will be discussed below, which show that there is a structural problem in the reception of migrant children to which solutions must be found.

4.1 — LEGAL FRAMEWORK

4.1.1 — THE TENSION BETWEEN CHILD PROTECTION LAWS AND IMMIGRATION LAW

Children who migrate alone often see their rights violated for a reason that prevails over all others: the regulatory framework in which they are forced to move is the Alien or Immigration Law and not child protection laws, which should preserve the best interests of each individual child.

“It is true that the child’s status as a foreigner is often privileged over his or her status as a minor. The minor, and I am quoting the words of the General Prosecutor for Foreigners, the minor does not necessarily have to have a nationality. The minor has something in his or her favour, which is called his or her best interests.”

LAWYER SPECIALISED IN MIGRANT CHILDREN

Despite this, it is the regional administration that has guardianship responsibility, and therefore, the obligation to attend to the needs of any minor in foster care. The extent to which this is respected will be decisive in all stages of the care and personal development of migrant minors in Spain.

The legal and juridical provisions will limit access to documentation, but will also hinder the transition to adult life or access to social and protection services, among others. These obstacles will hamper the normal development of the child in all aspects of his/her life.

The prevalence of the status of foreigner over that of child also leads to other problems, the consequences of which are stigmatisation, racism or discrimination, as we will see below.



The prevalence of the status of foreigner over that of child also leads to other problems, the consequences of which are stigmatisation, racism or discrimination, as we will see below.

“The treatment we give them makes us... consider them less valuable or with less valid opinions, or less interesting lives, or less necessary, or more susceptible to undignified or degrading treatment, such as sleeping on the floor or sleeping in groups of 20.

DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR CHILDREN, MINISTRY OF SOCIAL RIGHTS AND 2030 AGENDA

If the Immigration Law is going to be the framework within which migrant children operate, this will have consequences in terms of access to regulated documentation and therefore access to basic social resources and services.

4.1.2 – LACK OF ACCESS TO VALID IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENTS

Migrant minors rarely arrive in Spain with documentation. This is a problem, especially for those arriving close to the age of 18. When a minor is placed under the guardianship of the administration, a process begins that can last for months and is conducted while the minor is placed in a residential centre of the responsible administration.

[...] “they have to go through the MENA [unaccompanied migrant minors] register of the National Police. This is then passed on to the administration, in our case the regional one. The administration has to declare the situation of abandonment, in six months, between six and nine months. There is no established time limit but they say that this is the maximum period [...] And once they are in this system, they go to residential foster care [...] and after that, the time they spend there is coordinated with the Autonomous Community in charge. This process can last a year and a half”.

APDHA

Bureaucratic delays have a major impact because the deadlines imposed on minors are very strict and the demands are high. Depending on the deadlines and the age of the child in residential foster care, he or she may or may not obtain a NIE [foreigners' ID], residence card and/or work permit. This demonstrates the incongruence of a process that is going to be decisive for the children's future, given that without a work permit they will not be able to apply for the renewal of the NIE.



“When they leave, if they are very lucky, they have their passport, they have a NIE for residence and a work permit. But either they leave and the NIE is still being processed, or the NIE expires in three months. Then they have to renew it. There are few options for renewal: work contract”.

BARCELONA ACTÚA

To process the documentation, papers from the country of origin are also required, which in many cases is very laborious or even impossible to obtain. This requires procedures at the embassies of their country of nationality, including displacements and long waits to obtain documentation for having a residence card. Bearing in mind that this situation occurs in many cases when they have already left the residential foster care, if they are alone and undocumented, this process becomes almost impossible to carry out by themselves, unless foster families support them in this process.

“What happens is that in the foster care centers it is not possible to be registered (in the Municipality) so he could not renew his card. And then, with us he renewed it without problem. And then, with his renewed card we were able to ask him for a scholarship and now he is studying”.

FOSTER FAMILY, EL PUERTO DE SANTA MARÍA FOSTERING NETWORK

The age between 16 and 18 is a critical period for migrant children. It is during this age group, when the reception system fails the most, in the midst of the transition to adulthood. The cases are diverse; there are those who leave the centres with their situation regularised, and enter programmes for ex-custodians that accompany them in this transition. However, many of them leave without documentation and without a housing alternative, as the interviewees repeatedly point out.

This is where foster families and civil society organisations and networks come into play, as they host and accompany former-foster children during the time it takes to resolve these procedures. Their work strengthens the autonomy and independence of the young adults and multiplies their chances of success, as will be seen in the section on good practices.

“We were discovering how, when they went to the Public Prosecutor’s Office, when they were declared adults, only one week after, in many cases they were left on the street. Today, but not tomorrow, you end up sleeping in the street because the decree from the Public Prosecutor’s Office has arrived and you have been declared an adult. A wonderful boy had to sleep in the park”.

SOMOS ACOGIDA

“You have 16-year-old... get them a residence permit, right? I mean, at least, when they are older, you don’t condemn them to begging, or living on the street”.

FOSTER PARENT IN ARAGON



4.2 – DIFFICULTY IN ACCESSING SOCIAL RESOURCES

Migrant children see their arrival and development subjected to structural factors that, even if they vary in intensity from a region to another, are common to them all.

4.2.1 – FAILURE IN THE TRANSITION TO ADULT LIFE

18-years-old means the frontier to adult life, meaning for many boys and girls to leave their centres undocumented, unemployed and, in the worst cases - but very often - without a housing alternative. No care is being taken to ensure their transition to adult life in an autonomous way and with guarantees. A successful transition to adulthood would allow them to function successfully in society and access social resources in the same way as the rest of the population.

“In the centre of Melilla they don’t give you a chance of a flat, a flat or anything else. You finish, you turn 18 and you leave. Just like that. If you have papers, that’s fine, but if you don’t, see you later”.

FORMER FOSTER CHILD HOSTED BY A FAMILY

4.2.2 – LACK OF SPECIFIC CARE PROTOCOLS

Specific care protocols are needed that contemplate both the extension of protection during the transition to adult life and access to housing resources, training and employment. There are numerous associations that have programmes and flats for autonomy, but they are not sufficient to deal with the volume of foreigners who leave the juvenile centres. Many of them are then left on the streets, further aggravating the vulnerability factors faced by this group.

It is important to note at this point that access to these resources is not only conditioned by the availability of places. The testimonies collected suggest that they are also conditioned by the previous behaviour of the child during his or her stay in the centre. That is to say, having attended training courses, behaving appropriately, etc., ignoring the fact that in many cases it is the most problematic people who are most in need of these care tools and resources.

“... and not making rights conditional, well... on the behaviour of the person, on the availability of resources, places, etc. That is the great challenge ahead of us. And it is that children’s rights should not be conditioned or have nuances”.

GENERAL DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, MINISTRY FOR SOCIAL RIGHTS AND 2030 AGENDA



“When they leave the foster care system, they can decide whether... they go to live on their own; whether they return to their family, whether they have an extended family, or whether they enter an assisted flat. The flats are shared flats with the support of an educator. They have this possibility, but there are not enough places for all the boys and girls... they don't exist”.

PUNT DE REFERÈNCIA

The autonomy flats are an essential tool for former foster children to learn how to cope in the society they have arrived in and to have real possibilities of economic independence and social integration. So are the families who are willing to take them in and accompany them in this process of obtaining documentation, access to training and access to the labour market.

“In other words, the fostering was for as long as the procedures lasted, which is not two days, it's months. So that we had them, that they were not on the street. In other words, our objective was that they should not be on the street and that is why we started to take them in, mainly because they were no longer minors, but they were coming from centres for minors and had been under guardianship”.

FOSTER FAMILY, EL PUERTO DE SANTA MARÍA FOSTERING NETWORK

It has been pointed out in the previous section that the family can be a multiplying factor for success when it comes to training, employment or health care. It is necessary to promote the foster care system in families, especially when access to autonomy flats for ex-custodied persons is so limited.

4.2.3 – LACK OF ACCESS TO EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

In terms of education and training, many challenges remain. It is clear from the interviews that employment is the main objective of migration. However, so is education, but it is not always possible to access it adequately due to the saturation of the centres where they live, or because their legal situation hinders their access to educational resources.

“There were courses. There were classes, but when there are a lot of people then you sign up and you are on the waiting list, which can be for 1 month, 15 days, 20... wait and see when this thing comes up”.

FORMER FOSTER CHILD HOSTED BY A FAMILY



Moreover, it is necessary to listen to their expectations so as not to hold them back. Training - starting with language learning - is key to accessing the labour market, but not just any training that could discourage them. It is necessary to personalise the itineraries more and help to create life projects that match both the expectations with which they come and the reality that these people face. Here again, the host family is shown to be an ideal framework for young people to develop on the basis of their personal life expectations.

"We take it for granted that the children know, and that they are like sponges that will quickly learn the language. And they learn the language, but often with a lot of effort. And we don't have methods."

DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR CHILDREN

4.2.4 – LACK OF ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT

An undocumented person is relegated to the black economy. This is the case of ex-custody detainees who leave the centres without having been able to process or renew their residence or work permits, and who find themselves faced with jobs they cannot even consider applying for.

"Imagine in July, the corn harvest in the area of Lebrija in Seville. There was a shortage of workers! But the kids we had in the network didn't have work permits. So, let the corn, onions and tomatoes go to waste".

FOSTER FAMILY, EL PUERTO DE SANTA MARÍA FOSTERING NETWORK

It should be noted at this point that this can have a strong psychological impact on a person who has migrated alone, and as a minor, with the aim of working to build a future for himself or to support his family. The expectations placed on the minor and those he or she had when coming to Spain clash head-on with the Immigration Law.

"The wait is agonising, because sometimes the family says well, you are the family's hope, who is sending you there. They always have to pay money and they bring the family's savings or they try to come as best they can, but they are the family's hope".

FOSTER FAMILY, EL PUERTO DE SANTA MARÍA FOSTERING NETWORK

4.2.5 – LACK OF ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

As in the case of education or employment, the lack of documentation hinders access to primary health care. Minors and young people formerly under foster care see their healthcare limited to hospital emergency care or private or solidarity initiatives instead of being entitled to go to the basic health services.



“For example, we now have one of them with a nasty cold. Well, as he doesn’t have any papers, we have to take him to the hospital emergency services. We have a good relationship with the village basic health centre, through a doctor, a physician who is from Haiti. He understands the situation perfectly well and has a personal commitment to us”.

SOMOS ACOGIDA

4.2.6 – INTEGRATION AND SPACES FOR LEISURE AND SOCIALISATION

Successful integration into the society to which they arrive depends on many factors, among which the three previous ones - education, employment, healthcare - to which access is quite limited and decisive in their lives. Another factor, which can also intensify non-integration, is leisure and socialisation.

Leisure and socialisation are determining factors in adolescence and youth. Due to the configuration of the foster care system, foster minors and former foster kids enter into sometimes very endogamic dynamics that prevent them from opening their social circle to other people of their age and with their concerns. It is necessary for more vulnerable groups such as these to enter public and open leisure spaces, and not only leisure spaces restricted to certain profiles.

“When we think about the integration of unaccompanied migrant children, we have to think about an integration that goes beyond education and employment, even though we know that this is what they come for. We must also accept that they come to work, not to be entertained. And that their right to play, their right to development, their right to social relations, it is important to accompany them and promote them in normalised spaces”.

GENERAL DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, MINISTRY FOR SOCIAL RIGHTS AND 2030 AGENDA

“They need to have an active life, they have to go out, interact with people, have a social life and take part in training, go to courses. And because of the profile they take in, they are sometimes people at risk or people who have contact with people at risk”.

BARCELONA ACTÚA

Having a circle of friends and a complete social network is a determining factor in the development of a minor or a young person, both in terms of finding the forms of leisure that they like best, and in terms of accessing other elements such as employment through word of mouth. It has already been seen previously that the foster family is a key factor in this, and likewise with their close social circle. This is very important for very young people, who have gone through quite traumatic emotional processes and who fall into a system that by inertia ends up intensifying their vulnerabilities.



4.2.7 – DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITIES

In all of the above, the differences between territories are notorious, and not all offer the same access to these resources. Nor is investment in or regulation of the guardianship of minors homogeneous. It has been observed, as will be discussed in the section on good practices, that there are autonomous communities in which access to education and primary health care is guaranteed, while in others it is at the mercy of the solidarity initiatives that may exist in that territory. There are also communities with quite effective programs for transition to adult life and which promote foster care to a greater extent, both in a relative's family and in an extended family.

"Here [Cádiz], the children are aged under 16 and they are all in school. That's unquestionable, come on. Something that doesn't happen in Ceuta and Melilla. The issue of... medical consultations, basic health care and all that is also basic, even if they older. This is something we have been fighting for together with Doctors of the World".

APDHA

"Transition to adulthood programmes depend a lot on Autonomous Communities, right? There is a law that allows these programmes to be carried out, but as a regional competence. In Catalonia for example, we can say that it is correct. There is room for improvement, obviously, and the organisations are making pressure on that sense. But the possibility was contemplated that the boys and girls, when they leave the foster care system, can decide if they prefer going to live on their own, return to the family in case they have an extended family, or enter an assisted flat".

PUNT DE REFERÈNCIA



4.3 – REALITY, PERCEPTION AND SELF–PERCEPTION

The origin of migrant minors in Spain is mostly Moroccan- 71% of the total in 2018 -. This already carries a certain degree of stigma in our society, which is aggravated by all the vulnerability factors already listed: documentation, training, health, social network and territorial differences.

This can sometimes lead to criminal behaviour on the part of some young people that ends up relegating them to the margins of society, further preventing them from being seen for what they really are: children.

The reasons why they are here and all the difficulties they have faced at a very young age without being prepared for them are often forgotten.

“We think that under-age children are here on a whim. They are here and we don’t realise that they come from very complicated situations, and that if they are here it’s for a reason. And they are not children with stable families, nor have they received an education with a nice family environment, with love, with care...”

LAWYER, EXPERT IN MIGRANT CHILDREN

Finding themselves in this situation, the frustration of their expectations is enormous, as they are often unable to respond to their aspirations or those of the families they left behind.

“Because they are sold an idea, a confusion, an image that they come here and it’s paradisiac... El Dorado. They will have everything in order... it’s not true. Because there is a lack of awareness of what happens after entering a centre for minors”

BARCELONA ACTÚA

All the above elements are factors that lead to social exclusion and vulnerability. Those who do not manage to make an adequate transition to adult life, for the reasons outlined above, can develop problematic behaviour that leads to social rejection. When it comes to surviving in very adverse conditions, young people may develop behaviours that end up increasing the rejection of migrant children and their presence in certain neighbourhoods or territories.

“They suffer stigma, rejection, marginalisation, violence... lots of aggressions and frustrations that are emotionally and psychologically harmful. The young also have the escape mechanisms that people have when things overwhelm, frustrate and distress them, such as self-harming attempts, or even mental disorders that are produced to adapt to realities, addictions, etc.”

GENERAL DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, MINISTRY FOR SOCIAL RIGHTS AND 2030 AGENDA



Where there has been family fostering - as minors or as adults - this does not happen. A family nucleus multiplies the options for vital development in all areas of the lives of young migrants, preventing what can happen when someone turns 18 and is left on the street without any housing resource.

Foster families also help to cope with social rejection. In the face of the unknown, a common reaction is fear and stereotyping. Society does not see migrant children as children, but as foreigners and poor, leaving aside everything that makes them vulnerable in a social environment that is strange and hostile. In this context, the legal framework that does not help to fight against vulnerability factors, and even perpetuates them. Besides, antimigration and hate speeches become more and more accepted in media and politics.

“The first thing people feel is fear. “He’s a foreigner, ...I’m going to bring him home and he’s going to do this and that...””.

FORMER FAMILY FOSTER CHILD

“In the case of foreign minors, there is also the handicap that in addition they are foreigners, of foreign origin and in an irregular situation. And if we were to look at them from an intersectional perspective, we would see that they are affected by other elements”.

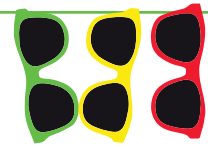
GENERAL DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, MINISTRY FOR SOCIAL RIGHTS AND 2030 AGENDA

The interviews repeatedly point out the great social ignorance about this issue, contaminated by highly mediatised hate speeches and constantly fuelled by distorted ideas that lead to stigma, racism and discrimination. A change of social perception on the issue of migrant children would be very useful to improve the processes of welcoming foreign minors and make them more humane.

“I think that being aware of what happens after the age of 18, of normalising the migratory process of foreign minors, of former foster youth, will help us and will also facilitate the message to host families. I think it is very, very important for citizens to be aware of what is happening”.

BARCELONA ACTÚA

There are examples of the way in which social alarm has been generated and fuelled by certain sectors of politics and the media. Cases such as the demonstrations and attacks on the Hortaleza minors’ centre in Madrid, or the “anti-UAMs” electoral propaganda in the Madrid Metro stations, demonstrate the difficulty of shifting society’s focus to improving the reception processes and conditions of migrants under guardianship and former guardianship.



"It was just when the hate messages started. Much more reinforced when politicians of a certain party came to the door of the centre to hold press conferences and so on. Then the hatred of the neighbours and everything increased even more... with hatred and looks at the kids, marginalisation of the kids..."

SOMOS ACOGIDA

Again, family foster care is a very effective tool to fight against this negative and entrenched public perception. Family foster care becomes a key tool against stigma at local level by sharing and integrating foster children or young adults in their closest social circle. Neighbours, family and friends become aware and familiar with their situation.

"And because of what we do with the kids at the centre,... to make visible that these kids are good kids, it's like people like me, who have been in the neighbourhood for 40 years, who are well known, because they come to shop with everywhere... at the fish market... and you can see how we are evolving. [...] The local community has to see that we, their neighbours, go everywhere with the kids, that they come up to our houses and that we don't mind. And they tell us through social networks and others: "Bring them up to your fucking house!". Well, yes, and we are very proud to take them up to our house".

SOMOS ACOGIDA

In short, migrant boys and girls and young people enter into dynamics from which it is difficult to escape without solid support to help them access the basic resources offered by society. There is a strong risk of falling into a kind of vicious circle, in which legal rigidity leads to social exclusion, which is increased by a stigma that makes social rejection grow, and which makes it difficult to find solutions and improve reception processes.



5/ GOOD PRACTICES IN FAMILY–BASED FOSTER CARE FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN

Good practices related to the fostering of migrant children cannot be understood solely as successful fostering cases, as this would be biased towards the interpretation that a few cases are favourable. This is not true. The purpose is to highlight strategies and dynamics that are generating positive results of fostering migrant children in families, making this type of fostering visible and promoting it, moving away from the stigmas and prejudices that exist in our society.

We have selected five good practices in family foster care for migrant children and young people in Spain. A distinction has been made between the practices reported by associations and/or social groups that work with people under guardianship or out of guardianship, and foster families. There are individuals -foster families- who are implementing good practices, public institutions that are developing actions on family fostering -see Annex I-, and first-person experiences of fostered persons.

“I think that being aware of what happens after the age of 18, of normalising the migratory process of foreign minors, of former foster youth, will help us and will also facilitate the message to host families. I think it is very, very important for citizens to be aware of what is happening”.

BARCELONA ACTÚA

5.1. BARCELONA ACTÚA

The Barcelona Actúa Foundation is a non-profit organisation that has been working since 2011 as a link between vulnerable groups and people who can help these groups. Among its programs, Barcelona Actúa has one related to family foster care for migrants which request formalization before a notary. The young migrants recruited are students from Barcelona Actúa’ s training programmes.

The foundation acts as a link between the foster family, the responsible public administration and the fostered person (rarely a minor due to the lengthy response times of the administration). The foundation presents a project with a programme in which it establishes that the potential foster family will offer stability to the foster person on physical, emotional and psychological levels. In addition, Barcelona Actúa has work plans and occupational itineraries to support the migrant in order to increase their chances of entering the labour market. A multilevel practice is established, offering migrant adolescents and young adults the possibility of family foster care, preparation for the labour market and an environment of physical and emotional security.

Barcelona Actúa points out the potential of family foster care as a factor of social inclusion. This would range from the ease of access to a work contract that is a gateway to the administrative regularisation of the young person, such as accompaniment to job interviews or an increase in the chances of getting a place in a supervised flat. There are other social and psychological benefits for the foster carer, even after the placement has ended.



“The foster family is a multiplying factor of the positive opportunities that this child can have in his or her environment, even after the end of the fostering period.”

BARCELONA ACTÚA

Barcelona Actúa’s good practices include: a) recruiting young people to become involved in the foundation, such as the language immersion courses; b) continuous follow-up given to adolescents and young migrants, which builds mutual and lasting trust over time; and c) support in the relationship between families and people who have been taken in, such as the promotion of communication tools.

“We want them to take advantage of the reception, for them to have enough linguistic tools to communicate their emotions, to communicate their needs to the person they are living with”.

BARCELONA ACTÚA

5.2. SOMOS CANARY ISLANDS

The SOMOS collective was created in 2021 in the Canary Islands with the aim of forming a reception network for young migrants. SOMOS is a reception network made up of families from the Canary Islands who have antennas in different parts of Spain, such as Jaén, Irún, Valencia, Bilbao, Alicante and Barcelona. Specifically, in cities with an important migratory dynamism.

The network is based on temporary family fostering for a maximum period of 15 days. After that time, the foster person is offered another possibility of family foster care, either outside or inside the Canary Islands, but always trying to seek the autonomy of the migrant. In the event that the foster person has someone with whom to continue their migratory journey, they are helped with the management and costs; and if they do not have someone but want to move to another part of Spain, someone from the network is found who can take them in temporarily.

“Don’t lose sight of the children’s objective, right? The kids initially went out because they had contacts in Bilbao, for example, a brother in Bilbao... so you can’t lose sight of that. That is to say, from the beginning, to make a video call with his brother in Bilbao, to know what his [the young person’s] perspective is and his [the brother’s] perspective on whether he can take him in, and, if so, then together we provide him with a plane ticket so that the boy can go with his brother”.

SOMOS CANARIAS



Among the good practices of SOMOS Canarias, the following stand out: a) transparency and good communication before the fostering process between families and fostered persons. From the beginning, it is clearly stated what the family can contribute to the young person and the duration of the fostering; b) information and resources to continue their migratory journey - if the fostered person wishes so - under the premise of promoting their individual autonomy; c) during the family fostering they are encouraged to participate in local sports and/or cultural activities as well as to continue to broaden their education, be it linguistic or in other areas of knowledge.

“There were families who felt that well, this kid was locked up, went back to the room and only came out to eat for the phone, for the wifi or whatever. It’s more useful for everyone, when the kids didn’t lose their contact in Spanish classes, their contact in sporting activities with other kids”.

SOMOS CANARIAS

5.3. PUNT DE REFERÈNCIA

The Punt de Referència association was created in 1997 with the aim of favouring the full emancipation of vulnerable young people. Punt de Referència carries out a work of accompaniment and mentoring of migrant youth who are about to leave the centres – “tutelados”- and those who have already left the centers – “extutelados”-. At the time of this transition to adult life, they accompany migrant youth by generating networks of links with other people and social groups. The association points out that the number of adolescent foster families is low and quite complex at the bureaucratic level, which is why they have chosen to work with young people in the transition to adult life, i.e. from the age of 18.

The accompaniment programme aimed at migrant youth is called “Referents” and is the first in Spain that puts a volunteer in contact with a young person. In this programme, bonds of trust are generated between the mentor and the young person, who is accompanied during the stage that begins when he or she leaves the juvenile center. They also have a social educator who provides the necessary experience and knowledge for this process. The aim is to promote autonomy and their preparation for the social, work, emotional and psychological spheres, and ranges from simple tasks such as bureaucratic procedures to more complex ones such as life itineraries.

“Therefore, to build a space of trusting relationships that makes it easier for the boy or girl to decide what his or her future project is. What is his or her future project? But they have someone with whom they can compare it, with whom they can talk, who can support them on a day-to-day basis”.

PUNT DE REFERÈNCIA



Punt de Referència promoted a temporary foster care programme - for a maximum of nine months - for people in foster care. Foster care works similarly to mentoring and aims to create a safe network for the fostered person, but in a more intense way than in the case of mentoring due to the fact that they live together in the same home. It generates a real cohabitation that allows for a constant dialogue between the fostered and the foster carer.

"It is a much more intensive way of getting to know our culture, our language, our customs, our society, from real cohabitation (...) that is proactively sought, so the conversation at breakfast or dinner... and why do they also build a relationship like mentoring, right? a relationship of trust, a circle in a much more intensive way".

PUNT DE REFERÈNCIA

5.4. EL PUERTO DE SANTA MARÍA FOSTERING NETWORK

The El Puerto de Santa María Fostering Network was formally constituted in 2018, but many of its members had already been fostering for decades. The network was born when several families came together to provide a solution to the moment when the young migrants in the Jerez de la Frontera centre left the centre when they turned 18 and found themselves in a street situation. At the time of publication of this report, there were 17 people in the network, 11 of them in family foster care and another 6 in two of the network's flats.

The Fostering Network not only offers young migrants the possibility of having a home, but also promotes family dynamics such as the search for shared leisure time, advice on how to regularise their administrative situation, network promotion to find a job opportunity or medical accompaniment.

"We share many things, we share housing, we share food, we share being together. In short, an infinity of things and then a lot of joy, a lot of youth".

FOSTER FAMILY, EL PUERTO DE SANTA MARÍA FOSTERING NETWORK

Specifically, the administrative situation of former foster children is one of the first circumstances that the network tries to solve by means of legal advice and accompaniment.

"When you know where there is an area or a building where there are kids who are living as squatters, you try to approach them, you try to look after them, not all of them can be given a house, but at least you pay attention and try to find them a job and organise their papers".

FOSTER FAMILY, EL PUERTO DE SANTA MARÍA FOSTERING NETWORK



“Here in the network, what we try to do is first of all to welcome them. We look at the issue of their papers, how they are. Well, we contact our friends’ associations about legal matters, how to try to arrange their documentation and then, well, right now the problem we are facing, let’s say, is job offers”.

FOSTER FAMILY, EL PUERTO DE SANTA MARÍA FOSTERING NETWORK

Best practices of the El Puerto Shelter Network are: a) direct accompaniment by host families, which in many cases have become long-term foster families and b) security provided to the people who have been taken in, as they feel part of a family that advises them and guides them in their development in society.

5.5. SOMOS ACOGIDA

Somos Acogida is an association created in 2019 in the Madrid’ neighbourhood of Hortaleza. A group of neighbours of Hortaleza realized that young people stayed on the streets once they turned 18 and had to leave the local minors center. They began to get in touch with these young people, and started an informal temporary shelter while they looked for alternative housing. This shelter lasted from 7 to 15 days depending on the needs of the people they took in and the capacities of the families.

After starting these experiences, they decided to form an association in order to be eligible for more resources and to have some administrative coverage. The association works on two levels. On the one hand, temporary host families where the people who are taken into care are guaranteed accommodation, legal accompaniment, training alternatives and family leisure activities, with the aim of making family fostering a real alternative for the social integration of young migrants.

“Fostering goes through two important phases. The first is integration; if there is no integration, it is very difficult to welcome. And secondly, that they see our life’s natural routine and found themselves their own routine with their personal characteristics. Because they come from other cultures. The process of integration or the process of welcoming has to respect this”.

SOMOS ACOGIDA

On the other hand, due to the lack of host capacity Somos Acogida started another project. They managed to obtain a house in a municipality of 5,000 inhabitants close to the Madrid region, where the Town Council facilitated the procedures, and the local population collaborated in the restoration of the house. Currently, three young people live in this house, which has cohabitation rules created and agreed by the association and the young adults, including a month’s trial period. The aim of the house is that the people living there have the same opportunities as the foster families, and to this end, the association constantly monitors the house.



“What we want is that the children do not have any deficiencies, that is, that they have the same resources and the same functionalities that they can have during the time they are in our homes”.

SOMOS ACOGIDA

The best practices to be highlighted in Somos acogida are the capacity to promote the autonomy of the people in foster care. In addition to guaranteeing them a host family or a house where they can live with all their needs covered, they also promote the social inclusion of migrant youth. This is done through leisure activities and stimuli for academic training where they interact with boys and girls of the same age, either in the municipality or in the neighbourhood of Hortaleza.

5.6. SYSTEMATISATION OF GOOD PRACTICES

The following are identified as good practices for the reception of migrant children and young people in families:

- The follow-up given by associations and social groups to family fostering processes, prioritising the welfare of families and fostered persons. In addition, to generate channels of communication between all the parties involved in this process.
- Stimulate communication within the family unit -including the fostered persons- where the expectations of both parties are clearly delimited as well as what the families can offer and/or contribute to the fostered persons from before the start of the fostering process.
- Safeguarding the autonomy of people who, for the most part, have a defined migration project. Families should listen and discuss this, also helping young migrants to channel their expectations.
- Create links between the people under guardianship / foster care / fostered / fostered with the population of the same neighbourhood / town / municipality through shared activities whether they are leisure, sport, culture and / or training. To this end, families and associations have to promote channels of participation that will later lead to social, affective or working relationships.
- The creation of links between the people under guardianship and formerly fostered with the population of the neighbourhood, or municipality, through shared leisure, sport, cultural or educational activities. To this end, families and associations promote channels of participation that can subsequently lead to the creation of social, emotional or work-related networks.



6/ CONCLUSIONS

This report has identified a number of challenges for migrant children for whom family foster care could provide major solutions.

Speeding up the bureaucratic processes to regularise their administrative situation, facilitating access to all social resources they may need.

From a legal point of view, there is a restrictive framework that places the legal condition of migrant minors above the defence of their own interests, contrary to what is established by law. This is a determining factor in the development of the life project of young people and migrant minors, insofar as it greatly limits their access to proper documentation.

Facilitating the transition to adult life, removing the main stumbling block in the whole foster care process. This is a structural problem, although it affects minors coming of age in an uneven manner depending on the territory in which they are. Lack of resources and of specific care protocols hinder access to the labour market, professional training or to the health system, as well as prevent socialisation and building up of social networks in the host country.

Providing specific training on migrant childhood for all social agents involved in the reception process, including on the social and economic context of the countries of origin of foster children.

Understanding why there is such a high percentage of children in residential foster care. The figures gathered in the first report from Fundación PorCausa show a deep disparity between both foster care models (residential and family-based) despite legal and political support for family-based foster options.

The benefits of family foster care can be explained by a much more personalised tutoring and follow-up in all areas. From help with complex legal procedures and processes, to access to training or to a social network of contacts that can be very useful when it comes to employment. It also has an impact on socialisation in the host community or on the emotional and psychological well-being of people who have often lived through very traumatic experiences, for whom an atmosphere of normality is so helpful.

It should be noted that it is not only the people who benefit. There is a positive social impact that helps to fight against a bad perception of the issue of migrant children. The fact that they are linked to families close to them or from the same locality dilutes prejudices and racism.

In short, there are many benefits of foster care and it would considerably contribute to alleviate a serious situation of limited basic rights for migrant children.



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LINKS

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<http://www.puntdereferencia.org/>

<http://www.somosacogida.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/RedAcogiaElPuerto/>

<http://www.apdha.org>



ANNEXES

ANNEX I

Throughout the territory, there are numerous projects, both from the institutional and the social intervention spheres, focused on the issue of family fostering for migrant children. Here are several examples that have been left out of the fieldwork, but which are interesting to highlight.

1- Red Cross Reception Programme

Territory: Spain

The Ministry of Labour and Social Security provides financial and technical support to Public Administrations to develop a Public Social Services System at State level. This project is developed in accordance with the provisions of the Organic Law 1/1996 on the Legal Protection of Minors, which guarantees the possibility of temporary cohabitation with a family. The aim of this system is to guarantee support to foster families through information, guidance, support to the cohabitation unit, accommodation alternatives, prevention and social insertion. Before the fostering takes place, it is necessary to draw up a document specifying the consent of the parties concerned, the duration of the fostering, the modality, rights and duties, as well as the system for covering damages, living expenses, education and health. This project aims to guarantee the happiness required of minors and their social integration.

Status: in development

2- EPIC Project (European Practices for Integration and Care)

Territory: Europe

The EPIC project is a continuation of the European FORUM project financed by the European Union and the Asylum Fund. Both aim to ensure the reception of unaccompanied minors. The EPIC project takes part in associations from Italy (l'Albero della Vita, Citta di Palermo, Organizace pro pomoc), Czech Republic (Reach for change) and Sweden (CIDIS), as well as Accem. They aim to develop good practices and methodology in relation to this group, as well as to raise awareness of the measures that are being implemented. In addition, families are sensitised and private sector resources are invested.

Status: in development

3- Migration Project for Unaccompanied Foreign Minors

Territory: Catalonia

The Generalitat has opened a portal offering information for foster families. In order to promote family fostering, financial aid is offered to families, as well as linguistic, cultural and religious knowledge.

Status: initial development, mentoring



4- Program for the care, reception and social and labour insertion of Unaccompanied Foreign Minors on a non-competitive basis.

Territory: Andalusia

This is a subsidy from the Junta de Andalucía for associations and entities that work for the labour insertion and reception of unaccompanied foreign minors.

5- Izeba Project

Territory: Guipúzkoa

The Izeba project is a program of accompaniment or family support for unaccompanied foreign minors. The aim is to cover the emotional and affective needs of this group. Specifically, it involves taking part in a network of families interested in taking in this group thanks to grants from the Department of Social Policy of the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa. Regular meetings are held with volunteer families to pass on recommendations and suggestions.

Status: in development

6- Specialised External Family Foster Care Programme

Territory: Canary Islands

Program for the reception of unaccompanied foreign minors between 14 and 18 years of age for their integration in a family environment. Foster families must pass suitability procedures and one member of the family must have specialised education. Some financial, cultural and linguistic support is required.

Status: in development since 2018

7- Transition to Adult Life and the Kairos Programme

Territory: Valencia

Program designed by professionals to insert Unaccompanied Foreign Minors into an independent lifestyle.

The Kairós Programme focuses on helping 34 unemployed young people between 16 and 25 years of age to improve their working conditions thanks to personalised employment guidance.

