

Prepare for Leaving Care – A Child Protection System that Works for Professionals and Young People



**PREPARE
FOR LEAVING
CARE**

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Background

Leaving the formal alternative care system is an important phase both for young people and the service providers responsible for their care and development. Young people should feel supported and empowered to transition into independent living successfully and become active members of their communities.

However, while some care leavers go on to lead successful and fulfilling lives, many struggle for years. Very few young people remain in care placements beyond 18, and a majority leave at just 16 or 17 years of age. This accelerated transition to adulthood contributes directly to their vulnerability and to their marginalisation from education, employment, and other areas of society.

What is 'Prepare for Leaving Care'?

'Prepare for Leaving Care – A Child Protection System that Works for Professionals and Young People' was a two year project (2017-2018), co-funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme of the European Union. It aimed to ensure that the rights and needs of young people in alternative care are respected as they progress towards adulthood and an independent life.

CELCIS partnered with SOS Children's Villages International and its national associations in Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania and Spain, to develop and deliver training for care professionals and elaborate policy guidelines to help ensure that child protection systems adequately support young people leaving alternative care.

Objectives

The overall objective of the project was to embed a child rights based culture amongst care professionals to improve outcomes for children and young people, in particular in the preparation for leaving alternative care.

Research such as '[Towards the right care for children](#)' has shown that insufficient preparation can have a detrimental effect on a young person's transition to independence. Care professionals do not always have the necessary training to best assist young care leavers, and adequate frameworks are often missing to support young people during the leaving care period.

A Practice Guidance was developed using evidence collected in the five participating countries to fill this gap that exists in many child protection and alternative care systems, with the aim of contributing to the knowledge and

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skills of front line professionals, carers and other stakeholders responsible for supporting children and young people leaving care.

Key project outcomes

CELCIS led on the development of the training, which provides care professionals access to comprehensive materials that focus on better supporting young people in preparing to leave care, transitioning out of care and in after-care.

The 'Prepare for Leaving Care Practice Guidance' includes a training methodology and manual based on evidence collected in the five EU countries. It provides practical guidance to care professionals and a range of front line practitioners. The main focus is on how to best plan the transition to independence with and for young people and support them both during and after the leaving care process.

Through a 'train the trainers' approach, a number of master trainers have been empowered to apply the developed tools and methodology widely in all five participating countries.

To date, the training has reached over 1,000 care professionals in Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Italy, Romania, and Spain.

Participation of young people

The participation of young people with first-hand experience in alternative care was central to the success of this project.

Young experts, aged 16-27, from all partner countries provided input throughout all activities, drawing on their personal experience and the challenges they faced while preparing to leave care.

In total, 169 young people with care experience have been involved in project activities of which 19 have been directly engaged as co-trainers at national level, delivering the Prepare for Leaving Care training to care professionals.

Useful links

[Read the Practice Guidance](#)