Fact sheet
Children on the move in Central and South Eastern Europe
Produced by Terre des hommes Lausanne

Region / countries
Which region, which countries is this fact sheet about?

Central and South Eastern Europe (including elements of EU policy)

Background
What is the political / historical / juridical / social context in this region/country?

The Central and South Eastern Europe (C/SEE) region is characterized by an increasing imbalance between rural and urban areas and a growing economic instability. Widespread discrimination towards minorities, especially Roma, and a reinforcement of security measures, as far as intra-European mobility is concerned, is also to be noted. Confronted with the reality of migration, child protection services and law enforcement agencies lack the capacity to manage cases of children out of their “jurisdiction”, even at national level, for various reasons, among which the lack of collaboration with their counterparts in the places of origin of the children. This is even more striking at transnational level, where collaboration between child protection authorities as well as law enforcement and judicial and/or immigration authorities is weak.

Specific situation, “problem” of the concerned children
Who are the children on the move? What is their specific situation and what are their difficulties?

Two main groups are relevant to the Destination Unknown campaign:

1. the issue of foreign unaccompanied minors (that can be defined as non-European children separated from their primary care giver in a European country), and
2. the issue of European migrant children (that can be defined as European children migrating alone or accompanied to a European country other than theirs).

1. According to the UNHCR, in 2008, 11,000 asylum applications were lodged by unaccompanied minors in 22 European countries. Some 15% of these applicants are girls. Reception conditions are problematic as is access to fair and effective asylum procedures (including guardianship).
2. They mainly concern Roma children moving from one European country to another. This raises concerns of life conditions in countries of destination, as well as access to education, and contribution to the income of the family through, inter alia, begging. It is very difficult to come up with any numbers, and gender ratios and age also vary depending on the activity. Child trafficking concerns arise when children undertake these activities in networks. Sexual exploitation is also evidenced in different countries.

Responses of the state / government
What are the legal, politics and policy responses in the country/region to children on the move?

The European region is characterized by strong integration dynamics and different regional synergies. The European Union (EU) plays a catalyst role in bringing about positive change in child protection systems in the process of accession, while in its external policy towards the east (such as the European neighbourhood policy and the eastern partnership) it also encourages structural changes. The response given by the EU when it comes to foreign unaccompanied minors is to be seen through the asylum prism, and the current trend is on return, with the building of facilities in

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countries of origin, rather than on local integration. Tightening of the rules of the asylum system is a concern as are reception conditions (and assistance) and effective access to asylum procedures.

Regarding the second group of children on the move, there is no coordinated response. Member states and municipalities with an increasing number of children involved in street activities, address the issue rather differently. However, return remains in the forefront of the responses – which more often than not happens without a best interest determination procedure.

**Solutions Terre des Hommes and partners**

What are the responses to the problems of Terre des Hommes organizations and their partners?

1. Foreign unaccompanied minors are not a category Tdh and its partners are working on. However, through the Federation and/or through different research, Terre des hommes is promoting streamlined reception conditions and procedures among which inter alia, the expeditious appointment of qualified guardians during alien policing procedures and best interests determination procedures that are child centred and based on objective criteria (both largely based on GC nb 6 of the UNCRC).

2. Based on its field experience, Terre des hommes promotes the reinforcement of Child Protection Systems at national level and the importance of their interconnectedness at transnational level. Adapted best interests determination procedures are presented as the cornerstone of efficient transnational case management systems, while durable solutions, among which local integration along the design of a life project, are given substance through empirical research and direct actions.

**Examples**

Short description of 2 projects.

A) **Project Mario** aims at improving the level of protection of C/SEE migrant children who are vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and/or trafficking. The project seeks - through transnational outreach research, advocacy, trainings and direct support to professionals and empowerment of C/SEE at-risk migrant children - to find multilateral solutions to the problems that children face and that require coordinated and individual protection schemes. Though the situation of unaccompanied minors coming from third countries is widely known, Project Mario fills an information and protection gap on an under researched European phenomenon that has not been addressed comprehensively by other international organisations so far. Activities at national and regional levels, coupling field work with a strong research component, will foster inter-institutional and transnational collaboration while promoting evidence-based and European solutions.

Its 3 objectives read as follows:

1: By December 2014, the wellbeing of Central and South East European migrant children will have improved thanks to quality services that meet the protection needs they express
2: By December 2014, Central and South East European migrant children will benefit from protective frameworks that are in line with their best interests along 3 migration corridors
3: By December 2014, Central and South East European migrant children will have an established network of advocates actively promoting their rights.

**Case story: A 13 year old girl from Tirana, identified in Ferizaj.**

“When I beg, people tell me I am too old and must go and find a job. When we beg in bars, people shout abuse at us using the worst words possible. I wear a veil on my head when I go out to beg as I earn more money this way. I feel scared and stay close to my mother to avoid bad things happening to me. I do not earn much more than 20 Euros a day”.

(Abstract taken from the Kosovo Albania Mario observation report).
B) The REVENI project aims at improving the level of protection of, and decisions taken for, EU unaccompanied minors victims, or at risk, of exploitation and/or trafficking in Europe through professional exchanges, monitoring, research, collection and dissemination of best practices in countries of origin and destinations in Europe.

Its 3 objectives read as follows:

1: To increase knowledge and foster deeper coordination of professionals on the situation of EU unaccompanied minors victims, or at risk, of exploitation and/or trafficking in Europe according to identified migration axes.

2: To provide professionals with knowledge-based solutions to the inadequate protection of EU unaccompanied minors victims, or at risk, of exploitation and/or trafficking in Europe through established transnational collaboration among counterparts in countries of destination and origin.

3: To advocate for change in professional practices and raise awareness of decision makers at national and European level regarding services offered to EU unaccompanied minors victims, or at risk, of exploitation and/or trafficking in Europe and to contribute to Europe wide response to these issues.