



**EFSC**  
EUROPEAN FEDERATION  
FOR STREET CHILDREN

# Street Children Stories

Nobody's children are everyone's children.  
Voices from the street and for the street

European Federation for Street Children - Help us to save the children from the street

**2010**  
**European Year**  
**for Combating**  
**Poverty and**  
**Social Exclusion**



Each street child has its own destiny and its own story. The following stories sent by Member Organizations of the European Federation for Street Children (EFSC), illustrate such destinies giving a voice to these children who are often invisible. They also show the great humanitarian support work that these organizations are carrying out to help those children living on the streets, the majority of them in very precarious conditions.

These stories originate from our member organizations in Greece (The Smile of the Child), Portugal (Istituto de Apoio à Criança - IAC), Albania (Save the Children Norway – South East Europe, Child Trafficking Response Programme in Albania), Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Save the Children Norway – South East Europe, Centre for Social work), Italy (Istituto Don Calabria), Bulgaria (Gavroche Foundation, Alliance for Children and Youth), Poland (Society for the Friends of the Children - TPD).

Beyond the specific differences of each case, most of the stories have a common theme that shows the families situation, the experiences of poverty and social exclusion, as well as the initial difficulties experienced in the first contact with the NGOs and their ability to accept help. They often speak a simple but authentic language describing the reasons for their situation in an honest way and therefore strongly accusing a cold and ignorant society that ‘produces’ them.

Exploited children spending most of their time on the streets, forced to earn money and supporting manifold forms of violence, families unable to care for their children and paying for transporting them to “richer” countries hoping to offer them a better life, children abandoned by their parents, not able or willing to take care of them, children who decide to leave their country in order to find a better life, child victims of family violence ... in all of these stories one of the crucial moments is when the child makes contact with a street worker and begins to develop more and more confidence in him and the support centre to where they return regularly. Feeling a sense of inclusion with the help of the other children and the centre’s team, they increasingly join the activities and “Sometimes they look like busy and worried little adults who are trying to use every moment spent in the centre to learn something” – decisive moments on the way to a sustainable integration within the society.

The stories illustrate concretely many aspects of the difficult and admirable work of the social organizations working with these ‘lost’ children in the field trying to create the framework conditions to answer to “their expectation to be able to have a better life”.

They tell about the sufferance, the feeling of exclusion, discrimination and marginalization and many other difficulties that all those children have to face. Unimaginable experiences for children growing up under normal conditions. They illustrate the desire to travel in the hope of finding a better life that results in facing a slew of horrible problems, such as being alone, selling their bodies, slave labour and fleeing from dangers to remain alive. It is impressive to see how strongly the meetings with the street workers and the other children in the centre represent an anchorage point for the street children to develop a sensation of safety and inclusion.

Poverty and marginalization of children are often associated with developing countries, but they also exist in the middle of Europe, and very often in extreme forms.

Street children are a growing issue, not only in the mostly concerned new Member States in Central and Eastern Europe (especially in Romania, or in the Mediterranean Member States following the strong migration flows from outside Europe) but throughout European countries. Street children are particularly visible in certain European metropolis. Although there is a lack of concrete current data and facts on

street children, EFSC member organisations and other NGOs working in the field estimate that there are at least 150.000 - 250.000 street children, most of whom are living in the new Central and Eastern European Member States of the EU. Following a UNICEF report some years ago, approximately 1.7 million Roma children are not administratively registered in Central and Eastern Europe. This applies for a large part of street children too and is a reflection of social exclusion as well as one of the root causes for its perpetuation from generation to generation. Specific and targeted measures should be defined and implemented in order to improve the situation of street children, as it is clear that normal social intervention strategies are not sufficient or do not reach them. Most of these children live in the shadows and are strongly traumatised and socially excluded. They receive no formal education or health care and they are particularly vulnerable to becoming the victims of human trafficking, prostitution, drug addiction and crime.

Given the increased number of street children (also of Roma origin) who are migrating from Romania and some neighbouring countries in particular, to the metropolis of Western European countries, most of the larger urban areas in the older Southern and Western Member States are faced with a growing number of street children (in particular Italy, France and Spain). The last decade has also witnessed a growing number of illegal migrants and unaccompanied minors arriving on the shores of EU Member States in the Mediterranean area, in particular to Spain and Italy. Many of these migrants are unaccompanied minors who resort to living on the streets.

EFSC's Romanian member organisation FRCCF and Terre des Hommes conducted some years ago several pieces of research on Romanian children found alone on the streets of Rome by the Italian authorities. Their research shows that more and more Romanian minors migrate alone to Italy (as well as to France and Spain) dreaming of and being promised a better life. Unfortunately, they end up homeless, begging, shoplifting and prostituting themselves. Some of them become victims of child trafficking networks and may even disappear for good. **Thus, what used to be a problem on the national level has become a European issue.** Given this extremely alarming evolution, only a holistic European wide approach with the close co-operation of the EU with the Member States and European networks of NGOs can contribute to solving the problem in a sustainable manner.

Unfortunately, a number of predominantly concerned EU Member States still are not complying with their duties following European and international conventions, which they have signed, in particular regarding unaccompanied minors.

Given this situation we consider it very encouraging that the resolution of the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home affairs on the EU Communication "Towards a strategy on the rights of the child" dated 16.01.08 (2007/2093(INI)) stresses the situation of street children. It *"takes the view that the EU should set itself the objective of ensuring that there are no homeless children or street children in the EU; calls for appropriate and targeted measures to be taken."*

EFSC is particularly encouraged by the speech given by Deputy Secretary-General of the Council of Europe Ms de Boer-Buquicchio on the occasion of the Spring Session of the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, held in Strasbourg on 27.03.2007, in which she pointed out that street children are an escalating phenomenon on the global and European level.

It must also be noted with great satisfaction that the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities has approved during the spring session of the 27-29 May resolution 271(2008) and recommendation 253 (2008) on "the social reintegration of children living and/or working in the streets".

We also welcome that the European Commission and the Member States have made the fight against child poverty a priority under the Open Method of Coordination on Social Protection and Social Inclusion (OMC), which forms a framework for mutual learning between the Member States based on a series of common objectives and indicators, and the adoption of national strategies to promote access to and ensure the quality of social protection systems.

However, enormous efforts still need to be made in order to set a strict legal framework to efficiently protect these children and to implement the above mentioned protection measures both on a national and European level.

In conclusion, we are facing a situation in which the horrible phenomenon of street children is increasing and gaining more and more a pan-European dimension. At the same time the above quoted institutional approaches of the EU showing a growing sensibility for the issue and an increasing political will to tackle the problem jointly with the NGOs and the EU Member States, can only succeed if it is possible to implement them in the regional and local framework.

Realizing in particular the concrete support work for these most vulnerable children on the local and regional level necessitates another important element: the contribution of the civil society. From all of our collective experiences in particular of our NGO's we can say that the active involvement of civil society and other relevant parties in terms of volunteers, either as experts or as practitioners, is an inalienable element of any successful inclusion strategy for street children.

The 2010 Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion constitutes an extraordinary occasion to advocate for raising political and public awareness on the situation of street children as a highly vulnerable and at-risk group within the EU. As an active member of the European Coalition of NGOs committed to implement the objectives of the 2010 European Year, EFSC appeals to the EU and the Members States to recognize this dreadful phenomenon and to further develop joint strategies in order to tackle it by setting up positive inclusion actions at the European, national and regional levels and combating all forms of offence and abuse of these most vulnerable children actively involving the child rights NGOs committed to this task as well as all relevant actors of the civil society.

EFSC aims at making street children a key target group of the European Year against poverty and Social Exclusion 2010. In order to achieve this goal, and to gain a maximum awareness-raising effect, it will coordinate and mobilise the national actions of its member organisations throughout this European Year 2010.

The fundamental aims of its co-ordination actions will be:

- to set the framework for a joint awareness-raising campaign of EFSC and its members;
- to improve the availability of data on the situation of street children in Europe, in line with the recommendation of the 2008 EC Report on "Child Poverty and well-being in the EU" to make more efforts to take special steps to monitor the situation of children in particularly vulnerable situations, and
- to increase the participation and visibility of street children.

These actions will have both a political and media awareness-raising at the European and national levels.

In the activities of EFSC member organisations, the element of children's participation will be strongly highlighted. They will involve children in different kinds of artistic activities to raise the public's attention closer to the living conditions of street children: photo exhibitions, documentaries, theatre shows will represent the living conditions of street children and some successful stories of their rehabilitation. In order to bring these closer to the general public, a final exhibition **"European Year 2010 final exhibition: Nobody's children are everyone's children. Voices from the street and for the street »** with brief presentations using multi media support will be organised in October 2010 in Luxembourg where the result

of these activities will be presented with the aim of showing that extreme poverty and social exclusion of children concerns us all.

The present compilation of street children stories is one of the key awareness raising tools in order to make both the public and policy level within the EU aware of the fact that the problem of street children represents beyond figures and policy designs actual concrete human destinies of those who are the most vulnerable and at the same time those on whom we shall build our future:

Our children.



## THE SMILE OF THE CHILD – GREECE

### HALIF'S STORY

Halif lived with his family in Kurdistan. Over a decade ago, his two older brothers had sought and received asylum in England and he was left alone with his struggling, elderly parents. Unable to care for him and hoping to give him a better life, his parents decided to take the risk and pay smugglers to transport 11-year-old Halif to join his brothers in the UK.

The smugglers took away the mobile telephone that Halif's parents had given him so that he could call his brothers and the 20 U.S. dollars that they had managed to scrape together. Halif along with 6 other Pakistani children was transported in the trunk of a Turkish taxi. The journey began in Kurdistan from where they crossed the border into Turkey, drove across Turkey and entered Greece from a northern border. The entire journey took approximately 8-10 days. Halif lost track of time in the trunk of the car and one day blended into the next. He and the other children were given a piece of bread and water only when they were transferred from one car to another as they crossed the borders' of each country.

Once in Athens the smugglers lied to the boys and told them that they had finally reached England. They would then stop the car and drop off each boy separately, telling them that they should now make contact with whoever was waiting for them in England.

Halif was dropped off in downtown Athens. He had no money, no food or clothes and was unable to speak Greek or English. Lost, cold, disoriented and frightened Halif initially hid. Eventually he came out of hiding and not knowing where to turn for help, he sat on the sidewalk. To Halif's good fortune, a truck driver who had stopped for gas noticed his confusion and physical state. The driver approached Halif gave him some water and a sandwich and not knowing what to do, called SOS 1056, The Smile of the Child's helpline.

We called police and along with them, our social worker attended the scene and found Halif. Because of his physical state, he was taken immediately to hospital and kept for medical examination.

Throughout his stay in hospital we had volunteers who stayed with him to ensure that he was never alone.

Through The Smile of the Child's cultural networks in Greece, a Kurdish translator was located and Halif was able to narrate what had occurred to him and the 6 other children that were dropped off on the streets of Athens.

With the assistance of the Kurdish community and Embassy, Halif's brothers in the United Kingdom were located. All the information was confirmed and with our assistance Halif applied and was granted asylum in Greece. Based on the Dublin Agreement arrangements are being made for him to be repatriated with his family in the U.K. In the interim, Halif is safe in one of our community homes.

Halif's story has a happy ending; however sadly police have continued their investigation, but based on the vague description provided by Halif they have been unable to locate the other 6 children and their destinies are unknown.



## INSTITUTO DE APOIO À CRIANÇA (IAC) - PORTUGAL

### CARLA'S STORY

"Carla" used to spend the days begging in the centre of Lisboa; she didn't do the normal activities that the other children usually do, such as playing.

"Carla" knew that there was a place called school that she should attend to, but that she missed most of the time.

Her father brought "Carla" and her two brothers to the city centre to beg. He stayed close and controlled them. By his look, they knew exactly how to behave.

The family had lost the mother, whom she missed much. "Carla" knew that the other children had a family and went to school everyday. She, instead, picked up her bag everyday, passed by the school and went to her "working place". In the street she felt the raindrops, the torrid warmth of the sun or even the wind blowing, but she had to hang on and suffer while in there, so that she could survive.

"Carla" says that when she met IAC – Projecto Rua's team, the first thing she remembers is that they cuddle her hair and asked her name. She lied and said another name because she felt a bit frightened. But the team came to meet her frequently and "Carla" realised that they were part of an institution that helps children and that they believed that all the children have the same rights. As she felt that this team was interested in helping her and the street animators were affectionate, "Carla" began to like and trust them.

When the team spoke with her father, "Carla" was scared. She was afraid that he could be angry about that, punish her, and even forbid "Carla" from being with the street animators. But he listened with attention, understood that the IAC wanted to help "Carla" to have a better life and he explained that this kind of living was the way he found to support the family. The father accepted IAC's help.

IAC implemented then a team in "Carla's" neighbourhood to work with the many children that lived in difficult conditions there by that time. So, "Carla", her brothers and neighbours learned many things and

lived many new experiences with this team. They went to the beach, camped, met different people and visited new places. She learned that when we live “in black and white”, we can “colour” the life. Today “Carla” is a woman and a mother and she recognizes that it’s not easy to be a grown up person. Her father helps her in her child’s education. IAC team’s continues present and available for her and she says that they are “an unforgettable reference”.

## JOANA’S STORY

IAC – Projecto Rua met “Joana” in a late and cold afternoon during December, while the team was developing a street activity in the neighbourhood she lived in.

“Joana” was walking with a friend of hers, carrying her two years old sister, which her mother had trust her while she was working.

“Joana” was 9 years old and, as the rest of the children of her age, looked forward to playing, make friends and learn... However, this was more difficult for her than to most of the other children. “Joana” had a disease that, slowly, was stealing her ability to see.

Despite her difficulties, “Joana” quickly fit in the group that IAC accompanied, involved herself in all kind of activities and always tried to give her best.

She barely talked about herself but, in between games and paintings, IAC’s street animators found out that she had the dream of buying some pretty glasses that could give her back the joy of seeing better.

“Joana” inclusively called her friends to join her in this plan, who sometimes brought her ownerless glasses they had found. However, no glasses could ever solve “Joana’s” problem.

What IAC knew about Joana both fascinated and concerned the team. The autonomy she revealed, although reflected a unique willing and an extraordinary ability to overcome the challenges she faced, put her safety at risk.

“Joana” only distinguished people by their voice, which demonstrated her difficulty to perceive the danger. In spite of that, she walked freely, roaming in the streets.

Whenever she could, “Joana” tried to run out of her tiny and dark house, also bringing her sister with her, in order to play with other children in the brightness of the day.

Without understanding the needs of her children, “Joana’s” mother neglected her children’s health, hygiene and safety cares. “Joana’s” mother revealed herself deep difficulties.

According to this, it was IAC’s responsibility to ensure the change needed by this family. IAC – Projecto Rua developed a partnership work with the school, specialized teams aimed to protect children, and with health care institutions.

Step by step, IAC supported this family into such a path of change, including the resumption of medical treatments, hygiene habits and the integration of “Joana’s” sister into the kindergarten. This process also suffered some step backs since suddenly “Joana” saw herself forbidden to get out of her house alone, which contrasted with her previous situation of total freedom.

At its own time, everything was solved. At last, IAC managed to achieve the authorization to integrate “Joana” in a school specifically designed to children with needs such as those “Joana” had.

Even though it was hard for “Joana” to leave her school and friends, she understood that she needed help in order to become truly independent and responsible, since her problem could not be solved by those wished “magical glasses”.

Therefore, “Joana” followed her own way. She changed school, went to live in a better house and, with her willingness to win, IAC is sure she will never waste any of the chances she will have to be happy.



**SAVE THE CHILDREN NORWAY – SOUTH EAST EUROPE  
CENTER FOR SOCIAL WORK - ALBANIA**

SH.M is a Roma child living in Kucova in a family with incomes under the minimum living allowance. SH.M has been staying home since he was born, and he is now aged 6. His parents were unemployed and they had no possibility to enroll their child in the kindergarten.

During meetings of the Child Protection Unit (CPU) and “Roma Association” with parents from the Roma community, one of the problems coming out was related to difficulties facing their children when they entered school due to the fact that they had not attended preparatory classes in the kindergarten, this leading to school dropout. SH.M was one of these children who had problems in adaptation with the school, and he didn’t like going to school.

During meetings with parents, to face this problem, preparatory classes for these children were made possible with CPU support. Children started to attend intensive preparatory classes with basic numeric and literacy skills to prepare themselves for the school. SH.M enjoyed attending this course and gradually he adapted with the teacher, other children, school hours etc. With the support of CPU, he got enrolled in the first class and books were also provided to him. SH.M is actually a good pupil in his first class and he likes to go to school to learn and stay with his friends.

**Alma.K** is one of the activists of Cerrik Youth Center (YC). She currently attends the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of high school “Tomorr Sinani” in Cerrik, and from November 2009 onwards she has been a member of the leading board of the YC. When Alma first came to frequent services in the YC, she was noticed for her closed, fragile, quiet character with no interaction and communication with other peers. She used to speak just a little bit, and when other peers wanted to communicate with her, it seemed like “they were disturbing and breaking her silence”.

In the first training with peers in the YC, Alma was seated close to the door, staying still without speaking, looking and exploring carefully the environment with her steady eyes, and ready to speak only if asked. Gradually, by becoming a regular user of the YC Alma started to interact more with her peers and behind her fragile voice, a well formed character with force and personality was discovered. Peers organizing activities in the YC started to discover in her a person with values and mature arguments and invited her regularly to participate in all the activities. During these activities, while interacting with others, Alma started to build skills around team work, communication and flexibility, and gradually her internal barriers were seemed like being breaking down piece by piece. Socialization with other peers and engagement in YC activities is making Alma a person free to say her opinion, disposable to undertake entrepreneurship initiatives and full of energy to act. Today we see Alma help others, conduct trainings with peers and be an active member of the YC leading board.



SAVE THE CHILDREN NORWAY – SOUTH EAST EUROPE  
CENTER FOR SOCIAL WORK – CANTON SARAJEVO, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

STORY FROM THE DROP-IN CENTER FOR CHILDREN PERFORMING STREET WORK

Most of our children come here on a voluntary and free basis, they are usually loud and extroverted, and very curious. But when the police brought to us three girls (aged 7, 8, and 12) who were found washing car windows at a street intersection, they were so scared and silent. It took us a whole week to make them talk (the only communication from them was that they kept coming voluntarily every day after the first time). They would just sit, eat something, or colour papers and draw. They learned the first letters of the alphabet, and kept asking us if we could teach them to read. We contacted their mother, but she was not very cooperative. After the first week, they kept coming occasionally, hiding it from their mother. They were spending time mostly learning to write and read, and teasing us to show them more and more.

After the police took them to the drop-in centre for the second time, the girls stopped coming, so when we went on a home visit to their mother's, she informed us that they were staying at her daughter's in the other part of town. They were seen on the streets in that part of town, washing car windows until late at night. We waited for some time, and then we went to their mother again. We offered to help her have identification documents issued for her children, get health insurance, and enrol them in school. The girls also talked her into letting them come to the Center. It took us a long time to persuade her, but something finally changed, and she decided to cooperate.

Now the girls are coming almost every day, although I suspect some of that time is spent here without their mother's consent. They are much more open and louder now, they have learned most of the alphabet, and their drawings are becoming more colourful and joyful. They are giving us more and more of their trust. They are improving themselves and becoming happier almost every day. Also, over the past few weeks they have been bringing new children every day, including their cousins and friends, to look after them and offer them help.

These girls are obviously victims of child exploration. They are not supposed to return home before earning a given amount of money. According to the police, their mother and her oldest daughter lead a group of 40 children involved in street working, taking the money they earn and exploiting them. However, they have gradually developed enough confidence to return regularly to the Center, hiding it from their mother or persuading her to allow them to come, and inviting and taking care of other children. Every hour spent in Center for them means an extra hour on the streets, trying to earn some money. *Coming to the Center is their conscious and brave choice.* So, sometimes they look like busy and worried little adults who are trying to use every moment spent here to learn something. We hope we will one day succeed in letting them be children as they deserve to be.



## ISTITUTO DON CALABRIA - ITALY (Albania)

### **Introduction: familiar context, experiences of poverty and social exclusion in the country of origin**

The life story concerns a juvenile from Albania who, on his arrival in Italy, was 14 years old. In Albania Miron (fictitious name) lived with his mother; his father was killed for political reasons in front of him when he was just 10 years. This fact had brought hard diseases within the family and, obviously, also economical problems, in fact the mother was not working.

Then the grandmother and the brother of the mother supported them financially even though it was very hard for him to continue his education path.

### **The travel and the arrival in Italy**

Miron leaved Albania in the month of July 2009 with a ship bound for Bari (South of Italy); once arrived in the city, he went to the station to take a train directed to Rome (Central Italy) where his unique brother aged 17 (placed in a house family) lived. Indeed, Miron took the wrong train arriving in the city of Verona (North of Italy). The minor went into a pub, "fortunately", the owner of the same saw him alone and exchanging him for a young homeless decided to call the Police.

He was just arrived in Italy from the morning. Two policemen reached the pub and, after some questions, took Miron to the Police Headquarter and assessed his physical conditions; through the support of a mediator they explained him that he would be placed in a residential facility/community for minors (as prescribed by Italian Law). Accompanied by Police, he arrived to Istituto don Calabria (Don Calabria Institute), he had been received by an educator and placed in a residential facility/community.

Miron arrived there at 7.00 p.m. and, along with the educator, prepared his room depositing his baggage containing a pair of trousers and two t-shirts. Subsequently, he had a shower and it was time for dinner; Miron had his dinner with the rest of the group but he couldn't eat so much as he was still a bit affected.

In the next three days, he didn't spoke with anyone and he was closed in himself but, thanks to the other minors, he started to feel accepted and stimulated in establishing new relationships. After the phase of reception started the joint work between the educators of Istituto don Calabria and the Social Services of the Municipality of Verona (meeting with mediator).

The principal difficulties for Miron have been the linguistic one and the disappeared hope to reach his brother in Rome, although, he was continuing to follow his dream which was to study to realize himself in a Country able to offer him a better future.

From the beginning Miron understood that he will have to work hard and grow up quickly to feel at "home" in a Country different from his place of origin and above all far from the love of his mother.

### **Which expectations/desires on arrival and which is his idea now?**

The first expectation was to be able to have a better life close to his brother in Italy. His desires were the ones to study and/or work in order to build his own future. Miron does not regret the choice to reach Italy but he wouldn't recommend it to anybody as he still feels strong disease for being far from home. Miron

reports to be happy to have been inserted in a school because this allows him to feel "free" first of all and more integrated.

### ISTITUTO DON CALABRIA – ITALY (Morocco)

#### **Introduction: familiar context, experiences of poverty and social exclusion in the country of origin**

The life story involves a juvenile coming from North of Egypt who, on his arrival in Italy, was 13 years. The situation in Egypt was not positive even if Mehmed (fictitious name) refers that not all Egyptian are poor, he says: *"In Egypt, you can find men who are not able to eat but also others who are rich... I think they are a lot"*

Mehmed started to work at the age of 8 in his Country: he cut the grass, feed the cattle and so on. The family is composed by n.5 person: the father is a policeman and the mother is an housewife; the other members are the younger brothers of Mehmed. When he leaved his brothers were 10 and 7 and they attended the school. Mehmed also went to school too from 6 till 12 years but the frequency was not regular *"...every other day because I had to help my family and so I used to work in the countries"*

The difficulties were therefore of economical reasons as the relationship with the family were good and there were no abuses.

#### **The travel and the arrival in Italy**

*"I decided to come to Italy as anyone spent good words for Italy..."*

*My friends used to say that it was a rich Country"*

Mehmed said to his father that he intended to come to Italy but he does not agree for several reasons, principally for the travel ahead. Eventually Mehmed decided to leave and took a small boat taking him to Libya. He leaved alone after paying a person who collected quotes and organized the travel costing 4.000,00 € per person. The money, obviously, has been given to him by his family, who had to make debits with other taskmasters. Once arrived in Libya he took a boat but in the meanwhile he had to live for a month in a shelter where he has been beaten repeatedly for any rebellion depending upon the hunger and the need for food; in fact they used to receive just some bread once per day (10 pieces for about 40 people).

Subsequently, he arrived in Lampedusa (an island in Sicily in the South of Italy); the travel lasted 2 days and Mehmed was with other 350 person...*"the major part were men and I was the younger...I saw people and youth die, they were older than me of just few years..."*. Once arrived in Lampedusa the group, decimated, has been received and inserted in a Reception Centre (minors and adults together); only the children and the women had a bed, the rest of the person used to sleep on the floor...he was considered "adult" so he slept on the floor.

Through a flight he arrived in the North of Italy, this time he travelled with other people (45 in total)...

*"We were 45, all men except for 3 women... I was with 5 friends met in Lampedusa"*. Mehmed spent 6 months in a Community for minors and subsequently has been inserted in Istituto don Calabria with other juveniles who flew with him. *"When we arrived they treated us well...medical assistance...then I started the school... I understood but I spoke just a little"*.

The staying of Mehmed lasted till the age of 18; after the educative path he has been inserted in a building enterprise for the attending of a stage as builder, after the stage he has been employed by the same firm.

#### **Which expectations/desires on arrival and which is his idea now?**

*"I'd like to became a builder... it likes me and it is well paid"*

There is no the idea of making easy money but simply to earn the necessary to live and to help who remained in his homeland.

*“At the beginning I thought Italy was a rich Country...I realized that it is not so...well Italy is a Country in crisis but not as poor as Egypt...”*

The desire to come back home was a fixed thought for Mehmed, he wanted to embrace his family again but his idea was clear: he wanted to stay in Italy as he could earn money to live in dignity and help his family.

*“I used to call my family once a week...they asked me to come back...*

*I had liked it but I had no money...*

*Just for some weeks, for homesickness, not for returning to live there”*

## **Reinsertion and social inclusion**

### **1. Which focal point for integration?**

The two boys have been inserted in the Diurnal Centre of the same Community, where they attended both the school programme as well as the recreational one.

Within the Centre the objective is to reduce the language difficulties and the ones connected to relationships through the sharing with the group; the class in fact are mixed and involves juveniles who are external the Residential Community.

The work implemented in the residential Community aims, instead, to reduce the daily difficulties and to create a familiar context allowing the learning of the ordinary life rules; all this is realized and carried on in an optical of insertion in a new culture different from the original one.

### **2. Which suggestions to implement good practices with minors in similar situations?**

- Attention and ability to listen the minor, his/her background and his/her needs;
- Implementation of a linguistic path primarily (teaching to read and write);
- Inclusion of the minor in contexts external to the residential facility to favour, from the beginning, a social and shared integration;
- Description, with the support of Services/mediators of the reality that he/her will have to cope with in Italy i.e. racism, economical crisis, inability to work without documents and so on.

*A special thanks to the educators who were able to take care of these children “at the mercy of life”...*



## GAVROCHE FOUNDATION – BULGARIA

### THE CASE STORY OF MUSTAFA AND IANAKI

Mustafa and Ianaki are two from the tree children of Mariana Zlateva – 37 years old woman. She doesn't have a permanent address and often the boys have to sleep in different places. The boys are neglected from their mother and the team of Gavroche decides that is better to accommodate the boys in The School for healing " Nikola Samodumov " but during the holidays and weekends the boys can live in Gavroche.

The children don't have educational habits and often shirk school and wander through the street, begging and spending hours in the computer clubs. Once it happened that the transport police find them in Turgoviste or Shumen.

Mustafa and Ianaki were included in the session for functional education and prevention of sexual abuse. They were a part of the programs in the centre – art therapy, summer camps, sport and culture events. We helped them to learn to write and read, to take care about their hygiene. They were in Gavroche centre several years.

Today they are living in an institution and go to school everyday.



## ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH (ACY) - BULGARIA

### SONYA

Sonya is 30 years old woman from Roma population. She has eleven children and is taking care for them on her own. She lives in a house that is almost destroyed, with no running water and electricity. Legally she doesn't own the house. She has no education. She's trying to contact social and governmental institutions to ask for help. She is bagging with her children. Almost every day she is going to Sofia city center to at St. Petka church. The youngest child is a baby. When a child is sick she is bagging until she reaches the amount for medicines. She is spending almost whole day outside even if it's very cold. Unfortunately children are involved in this also. Social workers from Alliance for Children and Youth met her during outreach social work. She's been supported with food, medicines and legally consulted. Four of her kids were in crisis center for street children for three months. She is willing to take care for all her children on her own and is difficult to be separated with them.

Here's a conversation in front of St. Petka church between Sonya and social worker from Alliance for Children and Youth.

Social worker /SW/: Hello, what is your name?

Sonya /S/: My name is Sonya Traichova Ilieva.

SW: How old are you, Sonya?

S: I'm thirty.

SW: What are you doing here?

S: I don't have a home, I don't have anything. The ceiling of the house fell down. And I'm bagging to provide food for my children. I have eleven children. I don't know where to go.

SW: How old is your youngest child?

S: She is two and a half.

(Social worker to a child): What's your name?

Child: My name is Georgi.

SW: How old are you, Georgi?

Child: I'm six years old.

SW: What are you doing now? Are you coming every day here at the church?

Child: Yes...

SW: And what are you doing?

Child: ...../silence/

SW: Do people give you any money?

Child: ...../silence/

SW: They don't give you money...And you, what is your name, hello (to another child).

Child: Mitka

SW: Hello Mitka! How old are you?

Child: I'm seven.

SW: Do you go to school?

Child: Yes I do.

SW: Which school do you visit?

Child: ...../silence/

SW: In you neighbourhood probably.

S: I don't receive money from social services for motherhood. Only support for the children, but I don't know how I will survive only with this amount.

SW: Have you heard about Child Protection Services.

S: Yes, I have.

SW: And have you go there?

S: I haven't. I don't know where they are situated. I have asked people around and decided to go; I decided to ask for help. I want to have my own home, to take care for my children; I need only hot water and electricity, nothing else.

SW: Do you know that Child Protection Services can come and take your children, because you are on the street with them and to put them in social institutions. Do you want to give your children to social institutions?

S; I don't want to; I want to take care for them.

SW: How are you going to take care?

S: I want to have a place to live and to take care.

SW: Have you ever visited the Municipality?

S: I've been at the Municipality. I've met with the major twice but he didn't pay attention to me. And now I don't know what to do, where to go.

SW: Do you have relatives and close people that you can stay at?

S: No, I don't have. My brother dies, my sister is married. I can't go at her place with 11 children. Her husband won't allow this. My mother is very ill, my father left us and got married again. I live like this, go

on the streets to survive. If it was summer we could sleep outside, but now is very cold. It's very difficult for me. There's no running water at this house I live in now, no electricity. My children go to school when they are able to, but sometimes they go dirty to school.

/The social worker visits her place/

S: The roof is old enough and can fall any moment and kill us. The walls are falling into decay. The door fell also. Now I'm pregnant again and will have another baby. I want to take care for my children by myself, I don't want them to be in social institutions, but I need someone to help me for place to live. I gave all my life for these children.

*In all countries in the world there are children living in exceptionally difficult conditions...Such children need special consideration...*

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989



### THE SOCIETY OF THE FRIENDS OF THE CHILD (TPD) - POLAND

**A.Z., KONIN, POLAND (LETTER PUBLISHED IN THE MAGAZINE "VOICE OF THE CHILD" nr. 1-6/2008)**

"The first time I came to one of the TPD Local Development Placement for children and youth, I was in the second class of the Primary School. The first three years I went regularly to school and to the TPD placement. I could prepare my lessons there, and I took part in all the activities, learned songs and poems. I most liked periods of Easter and Christmas Eve-maybe, because such events always brought the surprises, sweets and gifts, which I never had at my home. I loved also the trips organized by TPD, games and sports activities.

When I was in the fifth grade, my life changed and I changed as well. I began leaving the school classes and I have stopped coming to the TPD placement. I was fascinated by my new older friends, cigarettes and alcohol. I began having troubles at school. I felt like an adult.

But in that moment help from the TPD workers came. They contacted also the school psychologist and pedagogies. Thanks to them, I did not turned into the "wrong road". I couldn't count on any support in my own home- my grandmother was taking care of me, but I didn't know my father and my mother was constantly drunk alcoholic. Finally I broke all the contacts with my older friends that had bad influence on me. At TPD placement again I found peace and warmth.

Currently I am in the final year of the technical high school with specialization in gastronomy. Time to time I drop in the TPD placement. I am happy that I can share with my educators my little achievements and concerns. Soon I will start to live an independent live, by myself. I know that if I wouldn't receive support from TPD at that time, my life would have been completely different. "

## EFSC member organizations having delivered the street children stories

### THE SMILE OF THE CHILD – GREECE



The Smile of the Child, registered in 1996 has a mission to protect children living in Greece while generally promoting the rights of children, irrespective of race, religion, colour, ethnicity or socio-economic status in Greece, Europe and internationally. The organization pursues these goals by providing direct services to children and their families and by raising public awareness on issues about children. In addition, the Smile of the Child is involved on both the European and international level with advocacy work and campaigns in cooperation with other NGOs.

The mission and objectives of the organization include:

- ▶ Receiving complaints from the public on issues related to children
- ▶ Providing support to police and child protection authorities by supplying trained psychologists and social workers to assist in the care, support and transportation of children
- ▶ Supporting children with life threatening health issues
- ▶ Supporting families by providing material necessities

### ISTITUTO DE APOIO À CRIANÇA (IAC) - PORTUGAL



Istituto de Apoio à Criança – IAC (Child Support Institute) is a Private Social Welfare Institution created on 1983 that assumes the role of the speechless children, being the voice of their needs, and trying to help children to live a more happily childhood time.

IAC's objectives are:

- ▶ to defend and promote children's rights
- ▶ to contribute to the full development of children, considering the child on a global approach.

In order to achieve these aims, IAC organizes raising awareness sessions and acts directly in specific areas in which the State or other organizations don't intervene, having created the following sectors: Projecto Rua "Em Família para Crescer" (Street Project "In Family to Grow") ; SOS Criança (SOS Child helpline and hotline); Actividade Lúdica (Playing Activity); Humanização dos Serviços de Atendimento à Criança (Humanization of the Attending Services to the Child); Apoio Jurídico (Juridical Support); and the Centro de Estudos e Documentação para a Infância (Center of Studies and Documentation on Infancy).

**SAVE THE CHILDREN NORWAY – SOUTH EAST EUROPE  
CENTER FOR SOCIAL WORK – CANTON SARAJEVO, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**



Save the Children Norway (SCN) is a member of the international Save the Children Alliance, the Office for South East Europe in Sarajevo (SCN SEE) was opened in 2000, while we have supported the work of our partners in the region since 1997. SCN SEE has been implementing a variety of projects in the field thanks to its close partnership with a variety of NGO and governmental organizations by providing them with opportunities for capacity building material and professional support, monitoring and supervision.

SCN's long-term goal for the South East Regional programme for the current strategic period is: Children respected as rights holders at all levels within society.

The areas of intervention in which SCN SEE is currently involved are:

- ▶ Strengthening the implementation and monitoring of children's rights,
- ▶ Fulfilling children's rights to education,
- ▶ Fulfilling the rights of children to protection against violence and sexual abuse.

With respect to child protection, and in particular to the issue of street children, SCN SEE participates to a regional project called "Child Trafficking Response Programme," which has in 2009 entered its third phase.

**ISTITUTO DON CALABRIA – ITALY**



Istituto Don Calabria's mission is to promote and realize the fundamental principles of its own spiritual, religious, cultural and social patrimony through: development of specific services for minors, projects and initiatives directed to building of the active citizenship and the promotion of the well-being of marginalized young people and families experiencing poorness. The organization promotes paths and tailored projects with respect of each person and their needs.

Istituto Don Calabria accepts children in situations of disease from the earliest years of 1900. Since the second post-war period, at the will of its founder St. Giovanni Calabria, the reception becomes the specific mission. In 1974 the "Comunità San Benedetto" was officially addressed to the reception of many children in the city of Verona. Over the decades, it has developed many types of diversified services to cope with minors' disease. Following the socio-cultural and legislative developments in recent years the structure of the organization is increasingly modified and adapted to the required

quality standards.

## GAVROCHE FOUNDATION – BULGARIA



The Gavroche Association is a Bulgarian child-protection organisation working at regional level. It was established in 1994 and is comprised of a staff of twenty professionals, including the executive director, the chairman of the board, four social workers, one psychologist and general staff. They jointly aim at providing a network of social care and services to youth and children at risk within the city of Varna and its environs.

The mission and objectives of the organization include:

- Socialization and integration in the society of children and juveniles in risk
- Prevention of violence and homelessness of children and juveniles in risk
- Development of Gavroche as a model of prevention, support and a second chance for the homeless children and for the children and youth at risk
- Dissemination of the results from working with homeless children aiming to stimulate the good energy of the society
- Prevention of sexual abuse of children

Contact: [office@gavroche-bg.org](mailto:office@gavroche-bg.org)

## THE ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH (ACY) – BULGARIA



The Alliance for Children and Youth is a national organization for street children. Its mission and objectives are to defend the fundamental rights of street children and youth in Bulgaria in accordance with the UN Convention on the rights of the child, while placing special emphasis on the homeless children and 'at-risk' youth in Sofia; to contribute to the development and the strengthening of the Bulgarian legislation regarding children and the process of its harmonization with EU legislation; to promote in Bulgarian society the values on which the UN Convention on the rights of the child is based; and to provide decent conditions for the physical, mental and social development of the children and youth at-risk.

The organisation's general programmes include: Outreach work, health care, general education, social rehabilitation, vocational training, social work with families, administrative and legal services, development of creative abilities, entertainment programmes, and summer camp "Adrien Pochna."

## THE SOCIETY OF THE FRIENDS OF THE CHILDREN (TPD) – POLAND



TPD is a national humanitarian and welfare organisation operating within 16 regional sections in the country, which was established in 1919. It is made up of a vertical structure of management consisting of central management and a range of regional, administrative district and municipality level managements. It employs 6 supporting staff members who assist in the administration of its central board. The central board consists of a chairman, 2 deputies, a treasurer and a general secretary. There are also 31 members of the managing board and 5 members of the Revision committee. Besides these, are an unspecified number of educators, psychologists, rehabilitation workers, administrative officers and volunteers working at its regional branches and institutions.

The organisation concerns itself with socially excluded children - street children - providing educational, supportive and protective facilities in their environment. Additionally, they are involved in child protection from unwholesome elements and situations (poverty, homelessness, domestic violence, cruelty, greed and social orphan hood) and the establishment of child and youth care institutions. Their objectives include the protection of children's rights and raising awareness of the plight of the underprivileged child, provision of psychological, educational and legal advice to the children, their families and aid workers; counteracting social exclusion, and providing (self) assistance to disabled and terminally ill children as well as to their parents.

## EUROPEAN YEAR 2010 for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion



2010 has been declared European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

In March 2000 the Heads of State and Government pledged themselves to "making a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty" by the year 2010. Despite the efforts deployed, a significant proportion of the European population still lives in destitution and has no access to basic services such as health care. 2010 represents an opportunity to make policy changes that will have a real impact on combating inequalities and create a Europe free of poverty and social exclusion. NGOs therefore call for mobilisation at local, national, and European level.

- ▶ At European level, the European Commission is responsible for the overall organisation of the European Year. Link to the European Commission website for the Year:

[www.2010againstopoverty.eu](http://www.2010againstopoverty.eu)

- ▶ National Implementing Bodies have been appointed to coordinate the Year at national level.

During 2010 a whole range of events will take place across Europe, organised by NGOs and the Member States (see the website above).

## EUROPEAN NGO Coalition for the European Year 2010



A coalition of European NGO networks has been established for 2010 to ensure an active participation of social NGOs in the year and to advocate for an efficient realization of the the European Year's objectives.

The aims of this coalition are:

- To build consensus on the outcomes of the year
- To drive forward joint projects during the year
- To share information
- To support participation of those most directly concerned

The EY 2010 NGO Coalition is being coordinated by the EAPN (European Anti Poverty Network)  
Contact: [info@endpoverty.eu](mailto:info@endpoverty.eu); website: [www.endpoverty.eu](http://www.endpoverty.eu)



EFSC is supported by the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007-2013) PROGRESS. This programme is managed by the Directorate-General for Employment, social affairs and equal opportunities of the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment and social affairs area, as set out in the Social Agenda, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy goals in these fields.

The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA-EEA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries. PROGRESS mission is to strengthen the EU contribution in support of Member States' commitment. PROGRESS will be instrumental in:

- providing analysis and policy advice on PROGRESS policy areas;
- monitoring and reporting on the implementation of EU legislation and policies in PROGRESS policy areas;
- promoting policy transfer, learning and support among Member States on EU objectives and priorities;
- and relaying the views of the stakeholders and society at large

For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/progress>

The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.

## European Federation for Street Children

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