

Daphne Programme – Year 2000

Final Report

Project Nr. : 2000/DAP/338/C

Title : MinMig: Risikogruppe unbegleitete minderjährige Migranten: Erfahrungen der Betroffenen und europäischer Informationsaustausch zu Schutzmechanismen und politischen Reaktionen

(MinMig: Unaccompanied minor migrants as a vulnerable group: Experiences of the minors and the need for political action on a European level)

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End Date : 31/12/01

Co-ordinating Organisation name : Berliner Institut für Vergleichende Sozialforschung

Contact person :

Name : Dr. Thomas Schwarz

Address : Schliemannstr. 23

Postal code : 10437 **City :** Berlin

Country : Germany

Tel. N°: +49 30 44 65 10 65

Fax Nr. : + 49 30 444 10 85

e-mail : info@emz-berlin.de

Partner Organisations' names and countries :

Università degli studi di Firenze, Dipartimento di Scienze dell' Educazione (Italy)

Väestöliitto - The Family Federation of Finland (Finland)

1. Aims of the project

The research project “MinMig” (Minor Migrants) aimed at a better identification and description of a potential risk group and at improving the situation of unaccompanied minor migrants in Europe. Based on the analysis of interviews with youths in Finland, Germany and Italy, and in co-operation with welfare institutions and non-governmental organisations, the project aimed at an evaluation of existing protection concepts and at the development of policy recommendations on the national and European level.

The research which was carried between January and December 2001 in the three European cities of Berlin, Florence and Helsinki, was based on the results of the DAPHNE project “MinorMig” conducted by the same partners in 2000.

During this **first year of the project**, the efficiency as well as the shortcomings of current protection measures were examined in co-operation with public authorities and non-governmental institutions at local and national levels in Finland, Italy and Germany. The results have been based on **interviews with experts, round-table discussions and on the analysis of documents, statistics and literature**. In summary it has to be stated that in none of the countries analysed are the measures of protection adequate to the special needs of unaccompanied minor migrants. Too often, considerations contained in the national aliens act overrule the measures of the respective child and youth welfare laws.

In order to evaluate the project’s initial findings, the **implementation and analysis of interviews with young migrants** in Finland, Germany, and Italy was focused on during the **project’s second year**. To get more precise information on their real life situation and on potential risks they face, unaccompanied minor migrants were questioned during an extensive series of interviews.

2. Implementation of the project

CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

The project was carried out by **three partner institutions**: the “Berliner Institut für vergleichende Sozialforschung (BIVS)”, the “Università Degli Studi di Firenze, Dipartimento Di Science Dell’ Educazione (DSE)” and by “Väestöliitto - The Family Federation of Finland”. The researchers from Berlin worked as project co-ordinators.

The time-table of the research as formulated in the project proposal was not changed and all activities took place according to plan.

As foreseen in the project application, the main focus was to carry out **interviews with unaccompanied minor migrants**. In **Finland, 28 interviews** have been conducted, whereas in **Germany 42** minors were interviewed and in **Italy 48**. The variety of numbers is grounded in the different situation in each country. Whereas in Finland the total number of asylum seeking young migrants is very low and their ethnic background is quite homogenous, both in

Germany and Italy the numbers are much higher and the individual situation of the youth is more complex in general.

In addition, several **expert interviews** with social workers and other professionals working in topic-related areas have been conducted by all project partners. This was not explicitly foreseen as a planned activity in the research design but it was considered to be essential in all three countries in order to contrast the minors narration against those of experts.

The **methodology** used was to a large extent the same in the partner countries. The partners used a semi structured and theme focused **questionnaire** with both “closed” and “open” questions. To make our results comparable, the main themes were standardised. These main topics were identified in the first project phase as particularly significant measures of protection applicable in all investigated cities. Beyond that, each partner concentrated on country-specific measures, such as the family reunification programme in Finland, assisted repatriation in Italy, or the German practice to place minor refugees under certain circumstances in detention jail.

The biggest methodological differences between the investigated countries were in the **interview techniques**. In Italy, for example, some interviews with minors were conducted by social workers employed in diverse care facilities. In Finland and Germany all the interviews were conducted by the researchers themselves and in most cases they were accompanied by an assistant.

In Italy and Finland the interviews were usually tape-recorded whereas in Germany they were not. Instead, notes were written during the interviews. Immediately afterwards, these notes were formulated into protocols to which personal impressions and observations were added.

CO-OPERATION AND EXCHANGE OF THE PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

Each partner has written **regular reports on the respective status of the research** including emerging problems, for example in finding interview partners or on ethical questions of information gathering. These country reports have been distributed and discussed among all partners.

As planned, in addition to the exchange of experiences by e-mail and telephone, **four partner meetings** took place. The **first** was held in Rome and served as a constitutional meeting for discussing the research procedure and the sharing of tasks within the partner institutions. Further, main topics which the young migrants would be questioned were developed.

The **second** meeting took place in the context of the 33th EUROFOR Conference on “The Integration of Refugees in the European Union” in Aquafredda di Basilicata, Italy. This was of special use, because one project representative of each partner institution was an official conference participant giving a presentation on the situation of unaccompanied minor refugees in the respective city. Beyond that, the research project was introduced to young and to senior researchers committed to matters of refugee and asylum policy in the European Union. At this stage of research, the first interviews had been completed and, therefore, the

partner meeting first of all served for discussing how the common questionnaire worked so far and other methodological issues.

The **third** partner meeting was held during an Anti-Racist Meeting in Cecina, Italy, organised by ARCI Toscana. Here, the project was presented to the public during a round table meeting on unaccompanied minor migrants. First results of the interviews in all three countries have been discussed. This has led to a European level debate on common problems and the need for action. This activity was not planned in the project application, but it proved to be extremely valuable for all participants. Since several social workers from various Italian areas were invited, a practical and useful exchange of experiences and knowledge took place.

At a separate partner meeting, the research progress as well as technical questions were discussed. For example, each participant reported on the experiences while recruiting interview partners and conducting interviews during the research. As a result, the creation of three papers on methodology was agreed upon. It was decided to include them both in the country and the comparative analyses.

The **fourth** meeting took place again in the context of an official occasion - the annual EUROFOR meeting in Brussels. At this stage of the research, the individual country analyses by three institutions had been completed and, in preparation for the meeting, distributed among the partners. The results were discussed and similarities as well as differences in the countries were identified. This served as a preparation for the comparative analysis which aims to find good practices and common problems in order to formulate recommendations for European policy. Beyond that, the research results have been presented at a workshop which was attended by researchers of the EUROFOR networks and by representatives from international organisations situated in Brussels.

3. Results and impacts of the project

As mentioned above, our research aimed at the **accumulation and evaluation of the results gathered during the first project year**. At the end of that period of research, a significant lack of information on the real life situation of unaccompanied minor migrants was noted in each country. This was particularly the case for those young people without legal residence status. Therefore, we interviewed **the afflicted minors themselves**.

As it was expected, we gained a **deeper insight** into the immigration conditions and life situation of unaccompanied minor migrants in the three European cities. Further, the empirical data collected served to complete the **information** on the range and impact of existing measures of protection for this highly vulnerable group of migrants.

Thanks to the co-operation of non-governmental organisations, altogether 118 interviews with young people have been conducted. In general, the interviewed youth talked openly about their lives and experiences. This included their motivation for migrating, migration paths, access to social care and education, aspects of integration and their inclusion into the

labour market. Their **detailed narration** provided important insights both into their current life situation and their future prospects.

Based on the **analysis of the interviews** and other data, it was clear that the situation of the minors concerned is still very weak. Consequently, a **local need for action** has been identified in the individual countries. Further, **recommendations on a local level** have been given. Both the interview analyses and the resulting local recommendations have been **published** as working papers at “Edition Parabolis” in the form of **three individual country reports**.

Despite a diversity of motivations for migrating and the current social life situations of the youths, some common patterns have been found in this regard. This led to the identification of a political need for action on a **European level**. As a result, a **comparative research report** was written by the project co-ordinator, which was also published as a working paper at the Edition Parabolis.

INTERNAL EVALUATION

As previously mentioned, through an **intensive exchange among the project partner institutions**, the interim research results have been internally discussed and evaluated regularly. Moreover, a presentation of the results **within the individual institutions** enabled a discussion of emerging problems, for example the methodology and analytical approach.

Additionally, interim country reports both on the state of research and the first results have been sent to **experts**, such as social workers, and later discussed with them. One of the most important procedures, however, was to offer **each interviewed minor** a summary of the respective interview. This was to give them the possibility to make corrections or even to provide feedback. Not every interviewed youth was interested in this option, although this was a useful opportunity both for adding information and to point to the importance of the opinions and experiences of the minors themselves.

Finally, the **presentation of research results to the public** on various occasions will be mentioned here again. Since this happened both in the framework of scientific conferences and round-table meetings, the opportunity to get feedback and stimulation from other researchers as well as from experts working in the field of refugee protection was provided.

EXTERNAL EVALUATION

In the context of the DAPHNE programme, the project was **evaluated** by the co-ordinator June Kane. According to the project proposal, an external evaluation should be undertaken by a German NGO. However, as was discussed with June Kane, this intention was slightly changed. Instead, Professor Jürgen Nowak from the “Fachhochschule für Soziale Arbeit”,

who is an experienced researcher in the field of social work with migrants, took over this task. Therefore, at the end of the research phase, he was provided with all the project output and published materials of the project. In addition, a discussion of research results took place.

4. Dissemination and follow-up

Due to the necessity of improving information on the issue of unaccompanied minor migrants, a **distribution list** was created by the project co-ordinator. The basis for this data pool was addresses gathered during the first year of research from local and European organisations who work on the behalf of minor migrants. This list was up-dated and enlarged. Beyond that, non-governmental organisations from Eastern Europe and from the countries of the young migrants’ origin were added to the distribution list. All these organisations and institutions will get project information through a link to the project co-ordinators’ **homepage (www.emz-berlin.de)**, where project information the country reports were published.

As mentioned above, the research results have been **presented to the public** on several occasions at an international level. In addition, each partner had various **contacts with non-governmental organisations** in the respective cities, with whom the research results have been discussed regularly.

Since it was intended to improve the networking of non-governmental organisations working on behalf of minor migrants, a **follow-up research project** was applied for. It has been confirmed that it will be co-financed by the **DAPHNE-programme** of the European Commission again. The situation of unaccompanied minor migrants in all EU member states will be focused on. Therefore, twelve additional country studies on the specific situation of this group of migrants will be carried out. Through international co-operation the exchange of information will be improved. Further, first steps towards a topic-specific European network will be undertaken.

5. Conclusions

Resulting from interviews with unaccompanied minor migrants in three European countries, both deficiencies and good practices regarding their protection have been identified on a **local level**. In addition, proposals for improvement were made. Some selected topic characteristic of the respective national situation will be highlighted here:

FINLAND

Problem areas	Recommendations for Improvement
Long waiting periods for residence permit and family reunification, resulting in uncertainty, long institutional care	Quicker application procedures, more and better qualified staff in the responsible authorities

Pre-flight traumatic experiences, experiences of the flight, psychological and psychosomatic symptoms in Finland	Improvement of therapeutic and mental health services; Staff and teacher training
Insufficient support of representatives; lack of contact	Clarification of the representatives's role, formulation of written instructions
Identity conflicts resulting from loss of cultural identity	Promotion of contacts with co-ethnic communities
Cognitive and other problems at school	Teacher training; remedial education; Sensitive approach; "ethnic" teachers
Difficulties of independent life	Development and realisation of after-care programmes

GERMANY

Problem areas	Recommendations for Improvement
The young people's lack of information about the meaning and consequences of the asylum procedure; resulting insecurity and being unsettled	Abandonment of asylum application procedure if there is no realistic chance from the beginning; instead: granting minors a secure residence title
Necessary instrumentalisation of educational measures for reasons of residence status	Granting minors a secure residence title at least until they come of age
Double role of social care personnel: psycho-social and legal support; work at the margins of self-exploitation	Providing adequate legal support; employment of adequately trained and paid personnel on a long-term basis
Highly complex legal situation; insecurity of responsible decision-makers	Special training for employees both of authorities and social care institutions
Limited access to education and labour market	General granting of training and work permit also for asylum applicants
Shortage of information concerning what the minors are entitled to	Better system of information distribution and access
Completely no protection for undocumented minors; criminalisation of their supporters	Development of strategies which allow even undocumented minors official access to social services

Access to social care is a result of good fortune and coincidences	Clearer and more generous local standard regulations
Missing local political lobby	Strengthening of NGOs and their public relations

ITALY

Problem areas	Recommendations for Improvement
Growing risk of repatriation against the minors' will	No involuntary repatriation; preventive policy in the countries of origin
Contrary and diffuse competences of the responsible institutions hinder protection	Clearer and simplified protection system
Lack of receiving centres; numerous minor migrants are homeless	Improvement of the whole receiving system
Varying practices of individual reception centres	Better co-ordination; creation of a network in order to make proposals for improvement to the government
Lack of educational perspectives; missing integration into the Italian labour market	Study programme in Italy with the possibility of return; bi-lateral agreements
Sexual Exploitation of trafficked girls	Development of European programmes

NEED FOR ACTION ON THE EUROPEAN LEVEL

During the first project phase in the year 2000, examples of good practices at the institutional level have been identified. At the end of this research period, a significant lack of information on the real life situation of unaccompanied minor migrants was noted in each country.

By asking the afflicted minors themselves, we got a deeper insight into the immigration conditions and life situation of unaccompanied minor migrants in three European cities. Further, the empirical data collected now, served to complete the information on the range and impact of existing measures of protection for this highly vulnerable group of migrants.

Based on the analysis of the interviews it was shown that despite a diversity of motivations for migrating and current social life situations of the youths, some common patterns do exist

in each country. It became clear, that effective protection measures provided by the responsible institutions have a strong impact on the general well-being of those who are the “users”.

According to international laws and regulations, measures of protection should be enforced by each government. However, the major role of non-governmental organisations in fulfilling these duties of protection has to be pointed to. Those measures range, among others, from the supply of adequate accommodation and care, to educational measures and legal counselling, both on an official and informal level.

One political recommendation given at the end of the first project phase, pointed to the necessity of further European networking:

*“During the last few years, initiatives and organisations working on behalf of unaccompanied minors have been newly established or further developed all over Europe. To widen their network and to intensify their action on a European level, the **co-operation between organisations lobbying for unaccompanied minors should be supported and promoted** by the European Commission. Contacts should be established with similar organisations situated in the countries of origin¹“.*

As intended, the political recommendations having been given by the end of first years research have been elaborated on in the ongoing research. The real life situations of unaccompanied minor migrants in three investigated European countries, however, have been found to be so diverse, that **the local need for action** proved to be the primary focus for improvement. One precondition for improvement is to look for examples of good practices and to see if their modified application to the respective national situation is possible. For this to occur, the information on other local practices is essential and therefore the necessity of exchange on a European level was emphasised.

On a European level, however, **political need for action** is essential. Looking at the development during the last few years, in general, the numbers of juvenile refugees migrating to EU member countries are relatively low, and, as our Italian partner stated, “there is no emergency at all”. Therefore, a more generous practice in both reception and integration seems to be justified more than ever. This, again should be orientated towards their minor age and not, as currently practised, towards their attribution as being migrants. To ensure that basic children and juveniles rights are not violated, a **common European strategy** is necessary in order to monitor the practices in the individual countries.

¹See: Berliner Institut für Vergleichende Sozialforschung (Hg.), 2000: Unaccompanied Minor Migrants as a Vulnerable Group. The Examples of Berlin, Helsinki and Rome/Florence: Identification of Necessary Actions, Transnational Exchange of Experiences, Development of Protection Mechanisms. Information and Recommendations. Berlin.

NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The essential basis of a common European strategy requires a network dedicated to working on the issues of unaccompanied minor migrants. Therefore, the MinMig project will continue its research in the context of the DAPHNE programme. First, it is necessary to gather more information on the European situation as a whole. Therefore, the information base will be enlarged by including all EU-member states in the research. The national procedures and regulations referring to unaccompanied minors will be analysed and important agencies and protagonists in the field of migrants and youth aid will be identified.

Based on these results, the third phase of the MinMig project will develop further measures of protection on the European level. The results will be disseminated throughout Europe and a proposal for a European directive on the protection of this vulnerable group generated.

There are some questions strongly connected with the phenomenon of unaccompanied minor migrants, which our study did not cover, as for example:

- Trafficking in minor migrants for reasons of prostitution or criminal activities
- The potential opportunity of sexual abuse by care givers
- Unaccompanied minor migrants who were former child soldiers

With the exception of the Italian case where two girls were involved in prostitution, our empirical data did not suggest these problems exist among the interviewees. However, since the topics mentioned may create serious risks for unaccompanied minor migrants, further research is needed here.

Annexes

1. List of keywords describing best your project (please use the form attached);
2. Final Accounts;
3. List of materials produced during your project (audio or audio-visual media, publications, brochures, manuals, posters, CD-ROM, web-site,...).

ANNEX 1 : KEYWORDS

The main purposes of the Daphne Programme are to create networks and to encourage the exchange of information and best practice. The Commission has therefore set up a database containing the details of all completed Daphne projects. This database is accessible via the Daphne page on the EC web-site :

(http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/project/daphne/en/index.htm).

The matrix below allows us to categorise your report according to certain pre-set search words. Please complete it carefully.

Mark all the areas of action and types of activity listed below which were covered by your project.

Beneficiaries	Daphne Objectives	Areas
X Children	<i>Support to the collaboration of organisations</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Sexual violence
X Young people	<input type="checkbox"/> Support to multidisciplinary networks	<input type="checkbox"/> Gender violence
<input type="checkbox"/> Women	X Exchange of good practices	<input type="checkbox"/> Violence in family
	X Studies	<input type="checkbox"/> Violence in domestic context
Specific groups	<i>Support to public awareness</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Violence in schools
<input type="checkbox"/> Homosexuals	<input type="checkbox"/> Information campaign	<input type="checkbox"/> Violence in institutions
X Migrants	X Information sources	<input type="checkbox"/> Violence in urban areas
X Refugee	X Recognition and reporting	<input type="checkbox"/> Violence in rural areas
X Asylum seekers		<input type="checkbox"/> Violence in the work place
X Trafficked persons		X Trafficking in human beings
X Ethnic minorities	Specific Objectives	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial sexual exploitation
<input type="checkbox"/> Handicapped	<input type="checkbox"/> Prevention of violence	<input type="checkbox"/> Internet
<input type="checkbox"/> Domestic workers	X Protection from violence	<input type="checkbox"/> Child Pornography
<input type="checkbox"/> People in prostitution	<input type="checkbox"/> Treatment of victims	X Racism
<input type="checkbox"/> Elderly	<input type="checkbox"/> Reintegration of victims	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-harm
<input type="checkbox"/> Prisoners	<input type="checkbox"/> Counselling victims	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical punishment
	<input type="checkbox"/> Support to families	<input type="checkbox"/> Female genital mutilation
Targeted Audience	X Legislative measures	<input type="checkbox"/> Health impacts
<input type="checkbox"/> Violent men	<input type="checkbox"/> Treatment of offenders	
<input type="checkbox"/> Perpetrators / offenders	<input type="checkbox"/> Reintegration of offenders	Instruments
X Public Authorities		X Network with NGOs
X General Public		<input type="checkbox"/> Multisector network
<input type="checkbox"/> Medical staff		X Awareness-raising
X Educational staff		X Dissemination of good practice
<input type="checkbox"/> Police staff		<input type="checkbox"/> Guidelines / Counselling
X Judicial staff		<input type="checkbox"/> Models (analysis / development)
X Media / Journalists		<input type="checkbox"/> Training
		X Production of materials
		<input type="checkbox"/> Conference / seminar
		<input type="checkbox"/> Telephone / Internet Helpline
		X Field work

ANNEX 3: Materials produced

- Project information (leaflets) in English
- Three country reports on the state of research March 2001
- Three country reports on the state of research June 2001
- Three country reports on the methodology September 2001
- Three reports on the updated country situation and interview analysis in Finnish, German and Italian December 2001
- English translations of individual country reports; published as working papers at “Edition Parabolis”; February 2002
- Comparative analysis in English; published as a working paper at “Edition Parabolis”; February 2002