

Protected reception of unaccompanied children in the Netherlands
Study visit: No Longer Alone Project
11 - 12 January 2016



Visit to the Jade College



Acknowledgment

This study visit report was written by Liedewij de Ruijter de Wildt, policy officer at Nidos.

Nidos would like to thank the 17 participants of the European delegation for their participation in the study visit and their interest in the Dutch guardianship system and reception model for unaccompanied children. We also would like to thank all the speakers and the professionals working at the Jade College and the protected shelter who shared their knowledge and experiences.

Last but not least we would like to thank the children who were prepared to talk about their experiences and dreams during our visit to Jade College.

List of abbreviations

COA	Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers , the organization responsible for the reception of asylum seekers coming to the Netherlands
IND	Immigration- and Naturalisation Service



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Presentation of the study visit

The study visit was part of a series of study visits for European state officials, decisions makers and other experts involved in the protection and integration of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers and refugees, as part of the project, “No Longer Alone: Advancing Reception Standards for Unaccompanied Children”. The project was co-funded by the European Union (DG Home affairs Directorate) and aimed to contribute to the improvement of reception standards for unaccompanied children and to ensure that when designing accommodation and reception conditions the needs of unaccompanied children are properly taken into account. This was done through creating a space for discussion and information sharing amongst policy makers, practitioners and service providers dealing with unaccompanied children. In order to help Member States develop and implement good reception practices, it is important to provide them with the possibility to directly exchange experience and information on the application of existing practices and concrete ways to adapt them in their national contexts.

In order to attain its objectives, the project carried out the following activities in five selected countries:

- Five case studies (France, Sweden, the Netherlands, Hungary, Scotland)
- Five study visits (France, Sweden, the Netherlands, Hungary, Scotland)
- Two youth participation workshops in Sweden
- A roundtable for local and national actors in Belgium

The specific aims of the case studies were to conduct an in-depth study of five reception models/practices as listed below and to underline key challenges and solutions for improvement.

- Dedicated facilities for trafficked children (the Netherlands)
- Dedicated reception centre with a range of integrated services (Hungary)
- Reception and durable solutions through apprenticeship (France)
- Role of the guardians in ensuring appropriate reception (Scotland)
- Youth empowerment in relation to reception conditions (Sweden)

The study visits were an important output of the project as they targeted the main beneficiaries of the project: authorities from EU Member States and others working on the reception of unaccompanied children, both at national and at local level. In addition, the study visits were an opportunity for participants to visit specific sites and directly interact with the different stakeholders involved. The study visits directly involved approximately 65 Member State representatives.

A compendium of selected practices (including the case studies and the reports from the study visits) and a tool on organising Meeting Places and on youth participation in the reception process has also been put together.

The project was coordinated by ECRE, in partnership with Nidos in the Netherlands, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Save the Children Sweden, the Scottish Refugee Council in cooperation with the Scottish government, France Terre d’Asile in cooperation with the Directorate for Juvenile Justice Protection of the French Ministry of Justice and the *Groupeement d'intérêt public 'Justice Coopération International'* (GIP JCI).



Aim of the study visit

The study visit to the Netherlands, organized by Nidos, took place on 11 and 12 January 2016. It focused on protected reception that is offered to unaccompanied children who are (possible) victims of human trafficking. The practice and the legal framework (such as the Dutch guardianship system) in which this shelter functions were also studied in the framework of this study visit.

In particular, the study visit was designed to facilitate conversations and mutual learning between the participants who came from 15 EU Member States and are all working on the protection and reception of unaccompanied children, both at a national and a local level.

The objectives of the study visit were to:

- Provide the participants with a proper understanding of the 'playing field' of dealing with human trafficking in the Netherlands. Several organizations connected to human trafficking in general and to unaccompanied children and protected reception in particular, explained about their work during the first day of the visit.
- Provide a general understanding of the position of unaccompanied children in the Netherlands and the way they are taken care of by Nidos as their guardian.
- Visit Jade College, a school specially developed for the children who stay in protected reception in order to gain an understanding of the functioning of this school.
- Visit the protected shelter and learn about the methodology used and the services provided, particularly concerning social work, care planning, accommodation, education, and health services.

Brief introduction to the protected shelter

The disappearance of unaccompanied children became a public issue between autumn 2004 and autumn 2005. During 2006, a number of measures were implemented to prevent future disappearances, one of which was the tightening of security on the campuses.

Following the disappearance of Nigerian unaccompanied children, a criminal investigation was launched and Nidos (responsible for guardianship) and Jade Zorggroep (taking care of reception) started taking care of unaccompanied children at risk of trafficking in protected shelters from November 2006.

After an official pilot that started in January 2008 protected shelters became a regular part of the Dutch reception system for unaccompanied children at the end of 2010. Unaccompanied children who are 13 years or older and belong to the 'risk category' of children that are greatly at risk of disappearing because of human trafficking, have been received in a protected shelter ever since.

There are three sites in Veenhuizen, Rolde and Vries (the latter was visited by the EU delegation) with a total capacity of 66 places that receive the support of four guardians from Nidos. A fourth location opened in January 2016 in the south of the Netherlands and its 24 places have been deducted from the other three locations in the north.

The locations are run by specialized youth care institutions Jade Zorggroep and Xonar that are contracted by COA. The staff work according to a special methodology that was developed by COA. All employees of COA also work according to this methodology and moreover have been trained on signals of human trafficking. The plan that Nidos develops for the child together with the plan set up by Jade



Zorggroep looks at what has to be done in the best interest of the child. The practical guidance works well because of this.

The children are 'strictly supervised' in the protected shelter in their best interests¹. In 2015, 24 children out of 150 fled from the shelter, of whom 19 were Vietnamese.

Day 1 of the study visit: 11 January 2016

Roundtable on guardianship and reception in the protected shelter

During the first day, presentations were given by:

- Mr. Tin Verstegen, director of Nidos, the Dutch national guardianship institution for unaccompanied children
- Mr. Otto Schuurman, Jade Zorggroep, the organisation responsible for protected reception
- Mr. Frank Noteboom, Dutch National Rapporteur Human Trafficking
- Mr. Kees Arendz, Dutch National Center of Expertise on Honor Based Violence
- Mr. Gert Buist, Dutch Expertise Center Human Smuggling / Trafficking



The delegation on day 1

¹ More information can be found in the remarks on the presentation on Jade Zorggroep below.



Nidos

Firstly, to make participants understand the general position of unaccompanied children in the Netherlands, Mr. Tin Verstegen, director of Nidos, the Dutch national guardianship institution for unaccompanied children, explained the way Nidos takes care of unaccompanied children under its responsibility.

Guardianship is carried out by law², by professional social workers (bachelor degree social work) who are responsible for both care and legal representation. Nidos has the same power and mandates as parents. This means that Nidos is responsible and accountable for a child³. Nidos' mission is to take care of the child in his or her best interest and to make sure the child will be self-dependent at 18. Guardianship by Nidos ends at the age of 18 and children will be on their own from then on.

Youth care in general is the responsibility of the local government in the Netherlands, except for care for unaccompanied children, which is the responsibility of Nidos. This is a national responsibility: Nidos is an NGO and is paid for this work by the Dutch Ministry of Justice.

In October 2015 Nidos was responsible for 4,700 children, whereas six months earlier there were only 2,600. By March 2016 the number was over 6,000: Nidos had witnessed an influx of 120% in six months, with most of the children coming from Syria and Eritrea. All children had applied for asylum in the Netherlands.

The moment a child arrives in the Netherlands and it becomes clear that the child is unaccompanied, Nidos will act as guardian. To be able to do this, Nidos is present at the application centre at Ter Apel where they have to ask for asylum. Guardians at the application centre are trained to see signals of unsafety and decide whether a child will go to:

- a Process Reception Location (POL);
- specialized host families from the same culture as the children;
- a small living group, 12 children, guidance for 24 hours a day, seven days a week;
- small living units, four children, guidance 28 hours a week (16-17 years olds);
- protected shelter for trafficked children

Jade Zorggroep

Mr. Otto Schuurman gave a presentation about Jade Zorggroep, the organisation that has been contracted by COA to run protected shelter in practice.

Jade Zorggroep works according to a methodology that was developed in cooperation with COA in 2009 and implemented in 2010. The methodology was evaluated and updated in 2013. The methodology consists of three phases of three months each.

- The first phase sees the children getting used to the new situation of being in the shelter. The children are 'strictly supervised' in their best interests. Particularly during the first two weeks after arrival, when they are only allowed to leave the premises with prior permission or a staff escort. The children receive intensive coaching by specialized mentors, attend a special school, and have access to specialist psychiatric care by trans-cultural psychiatrists.

² Art 1:302 Dutch Civil Code

³ Nidos has also been offering reception and living in families (RLF) for many years and since 1 January 2016, Nidos is responsible for reception of children with a permit to stay as well. Nidos has contracted youth care organizations to provide this.



- During the second phase, called 'living', the children are allowed to move more freely and learn to take responsibility themselves and to take care of themselves.
- The last phase, called 'leaving', prepares the child upon leaving the protected shelter and living somewhere else, for example in an asylum seekers' center, a safe house for adult victims of trafficking, in their home country or on their own.

The whole methodology aims at making the children stronger, teaching them to speak out and not to depend on other people. All referrals to protected reception are made by Nidos staff at the application centre. They identify possible and/or potential victims during the intake and inquire with the aliens' police and the IND if they have also seen any indications that would suggest referral to the protected shelter. The findings of these two organizations are added to the notice that is sent to the protected shelter and the guardians who work there. A feedback loop system is in place, whereby every month the mentors working in the protected shelter inform Nidos guardians working at the application center to what extent they believe the initial indication was correct or not.

National Rapporteur Human Trafficking

Mr. Frank Noteboom, researcher at the office of the National Rapporteur Human Trafficking⁴, gave a presentation about what has to be done according to the National Rapporteur to develop a child sensitive protection system for unaccompanied children⁵. The National Rapporteur undertook research on this issue from 2012-2015, taking a closer look at how effective the Dutch policy is regarding:

- detecting possible victims of trafficking,
- offering psycho-social protection,
- offering protection after the protected shelter,
- investigation and prosecution,
- residential permits and protection.

The study found that hardly any of the residence permits provided were based on being a victim of trafficking (only around 20% of the children used this arrangement), almost nobody received a reflection period⁶ and the deflected path has not been used at all. The latter applies to children that are not capable of telling their story and cooperate with the police and means they are provided with a residence permit for a year if there is a serious threat against them.

Other findings were that only 10-15 children made a declaration to the police (pressed charges) each year of the study, no prosecutions took place during 2008-2012, and that better cooperation is needed (both in the detection phase and in the risk analysis). The final finding was that the two procedures (asylum and victims of trafficking) lead to stress and insecurity. The children have to choose which procedure they will base their application for a residence permit upon, which is a hard decision to make. On top of this, there are also a lot of insecure moments during both procedures.

Because of these findings, the National Rapporteur would like the system to be changed as follows:

⁴ The first rapporteur on trafficking in human beings was appointed in 2000 and the mandate was expanded to include child pornography in 2009. Since 2012 it has also encompassed sexual violence against children.

⁵ Integrated child protection systems are defined as the way in which all duty-bearers (namely the state authorities represented by law enforcement, judicial authorities, social services, child protection agencies, etc.) and system components (e.g. laws, policies, resources, procedures, processes, sub-systems) work together across sectors and agencies sharing responsibilities to form a protective and empowering environment for all children.

⁶ According to the procedure based on being a victim of trafficking, the victim has the right to a reflection period of 3 months in order to decide whether he will press charges or not.



- 1) Identification as to whether the child is a possible victim of human trafficking should be done during the registration procedure at the application centre. If the child is not a possible victim, the regular asylum procedure will be applied whilst possible victims will be referred to the protected shelter.
- 2) A multidisciplinary risk analysis should be done at the protected shelter during the three month reflection period. Different actors/partners should work closely together on this.
- 3) If the child is capable of telling his/her story the child should only have to tell it once.
- 4) The decision-making period should be limited to one year.

Nordic Centre of Expertise for Honour-Based Violence

Mr. Kees Arendz, police inspector and team leader at the Nordic Centre of Expertise for Honour-Based Violence (HBV), informed the participants about the benefits and necessity of police attention for HBV and explained how the HBV team works when they receive a case.

Dutch Expertise Centre Human Smuggling / Trafficking

Mr. Gert Buist explained the role of the Dutch Expertise Centre Human Smuggling / Trafficking, a national police unit that is a collaboration between four different services: the police, the border police, the IND and the Inspectorate of Labour. The Centre functions as a central counter where knowledge and experience in the field of human trafficking and smuggling of people is being collected, processed and delivered for several purposes.

Several questions were raised during the presentations. The participants were very interested in the different reception facilities for unaccompanied children in the Netherlands and the way Nidos had succeeded in convincing others in the system to organize the reception of unaccompanied children in small scale facilities. The information in the legal presentation on how to recognize specific circumstances of (possible) victims of human trafficking was also helpful, as was the information on how to strengthen cooperation between chain partners by sharing information, the information on HBV and the importance of a central expertise centre.

The main question from participants was how the organisations responsible for the protected shelter got the Dutch government to allocate money to the protected shelter. The concluding remark was that the main reason for this is that human trafficking has high priority for the Dutch government, just like terrorism.

The fact that protecting unaccompanied children from trafficking is not just a Dutch problem was also discussed. The traffickers and their routes constantly change. Nidos has tried to build up a network of guardians called the European Network of Guardianship Institutions called ENGI⁷. The goal is to explain the way Nidos is working in the Netherlands and to exchange experiences with others. It is important to talk about responsibility and accountability and to know which organization is responsible for a child. It is also important to talk about mandates and resources. The network tries to develop policies and methodologies, both top-down and bottom-up, always putting the needs of the child at the centre.

⁷ www.engi.eu

Day 2 of the study visit: 12th January 2016
Visit to Jade College and the protected shelter in Vries

The second day started with a visit to Jade College, a school specially developed for the children who stay in the protected shelter. Afterwards, the school bus took the delegation to the protected shelter for girls and teenage-mums in Vries.

Jade College

The children go to a special school that was developed for them five years ago. They go there by a bus that picks them up at the protected shelter in the morning and brings them home again in the afternoon. The school is situated in a residential area and not known to be a school for children that are being protected. There is one guard, responsible for the protection of the children within the school premises. The children are not allowed to go out alone. When they have to go to meetings, they are brought there, for example by their guardian. The children are in class for 28 hours a week, learning Dutch and English, mathematics, geography and biology amongst other things. The children can continue to attend the school after they turn 18 and have left the protected shelter. Several children were present during the presentation given by the principal. They shared their experiences and talked about their aims for the future.

The school is looking for possibilities to connect more with the regular education system. This is not an easy task. The level of the children differs enormously and many of them do not easily fit into the Dutch education system.



One of the protected shelters



Protected shelter in Vries

The visit to the protected shelter started with a short presentation on COA, the organisation responsible for the reception of asylum seekers in the Netherlands until they receive a permit to stay, except for the reception of unaccompanied minors in families, which is the responsibility of Nidos. Once asylum seekers have a permit to stay, the municipalities will be responsible for housing adults and Nidos will be responsible for housing unaccompanied children. Those asylum seekers who do not receive a permit to stay will also be housed by COA until the moment they leave the Netherlands.

COA contracted Jade Zorggroep to take care of reception in the protected shelter in practice⁸. COA receives 130,000 Euro per child in the protected shelter per year from the Ministry of Security and Justice and pays Jade 60,000 Euro per child in the protected shelter per year. The protected shelter is a very expensive form of reception, in comparison COA receives 50,000 Euro per asylum seeker to provide general reception places. The children themselves receive 12 euro pocket money per week.

Jade Zorggroep also gave a presentation. The organization provides a unique concept in the protected shelter, based on providing shelter, coaching /guiding and attending the Jade College. The methodology that is being used has been written for the protected shelter and has a focus on empowerment, presence of care and a competence model. It aims to solve problems that occur inside the protected shelter to prevent children from trying to force a transfer to another type of reception. Communication and talking to find solutions is very important because there are no alternatives. The guidance is very intensive to be able to build up trust with the children.

The protected shelter provides a variety of services, for example specialized mental/physical health care and a family doctor. Indoor and outdoor activities are organized and the children go to Jade College during the week. It is very important to keep the children active to prevent them from having negative thoughts. Mentors assist with homework and guide the children in learning to cook, to clean and to know how to act on roads and in traffic.

The situation of the children placed in the shelter is discussed by the guardian, the mentor and the child on regular basis. In addition the mentors meet for a team meeting every two weeks. The staff is always qualified in social work and receives training on a regular basis.

The participants had a lot of questions on the methodology used in the school and in the protected shelter and on daily practice at the premises. The director of the school and the mentors working at the protected shelter gave information during a tour and experiences were exchanged during lunch at the protected shelter. During the visit to Jade College, participants also had the opportunity to talk to several children, who shared their experiences and dreams.

⁸ Since the first of January 2016, COA also contracted a second organization called Xonar to offer protected shelter in the south of the Netherlands.



Lunch at the protected shelter

Findings and conclusions

The participants in the study visit referred to the model as being good practice that they would consider using in their countries as well. However, they foresaw the following challenges in enabling the use of this model :

- the model would be too expensive to apply in other countries
- the employees of Nidos are social workers who are extra trained in this field. Unfortunately, other countries often deal with untrained or inexperienced staff without the proper professional background
- it would require a change in primary legislation, for example in the UK
- It is not possible to fully apply this in France because of the fact that the 'competition' for public funding that exists between organizations has led to a decrease in the budget, meaning that shelters would not have the budget to provide each teenager with a mentor. Moreover, preventing trafficking is not a priority in France right now and there is not the will to create specialised shelters for minors who are victims of trafficking

Based on the information provided in this report and the evaluation forms filled in by the participants, the following can be concluded regarding the visit itself:



- It was important to the participants to gain a general picture of the Dutch guardianship system to start with. This enabled them to understand the reception system in place and the role the guardian and the protected shelters play in it. To quote one of the participants: *“the information on legal presentation and how to tailor a work programme for the specific circumstances of (possible) victims of human trafficking is crucial in my work”*.
- Listening to presentations by people working in the field and actually visiting one of the protected shelters and the school and getting familiar with the methodology used there were also reported to be very helpful. Participants reported to have received new ideas on child protection, on how to deal with unaccompanied children in reception centres in general and with victims of human trafficking specifically. One participant who is responsible for a shelter said: *“I want to implement practical tools to increase the level of awareness on human trafficking among my staff and raise the level of security for the teenagers I protect in my shelter”*
- Finally, the possibility to discuss issues with other actors and compare this model with their own personal experiences was said to be inspiring. The participants also said they had received interesting information on how to strengthen cooperation and good chain management for human trafficking. Last but not least, people said they had made some very useful contacts.

New ideas gained from this visit that are useful for the work of the participants were reported to be:

- the importance of guardianship
- the importance of establishing a protected facility
- to establish an applicant unit/centre;
- to look closer at signs of potential trafficking when children first arrive (early screening)
- to consider the possibility of housing unaccompanied children in foster families, including the concept of their family members becoming official foster carers
- to ask unaccompanied children when they arrive how they are doing and if their parents know that they arrived okay
- to fight even more for the equal treatment of unaccompanied children
- to look for funding arrangements and organize a project
- to look at education/schooling opportunities (including the A/B/C-level system of Jade College)
- the impact of honour based violence
- the importance of chain management and meetings with chain partners to discuss the needs of a child
- the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to the assessment process and solving problems
- the importance of good guidelines and handbooks such as the three-steps methodology and the stress thermometer used in the protected shelters
- the different procedures for asylum and for victims of trafficking
- the red flags and signals used to detect people at risk of being trafficked
- to organize special trainings for staff working on the borders, at the airport and at reception centres (including supervision, intervention and coordination with partners).



Appendix 1: Programme study visit

Monday 11 January 2016

09.00	Word of welcome and tour de table
09:30	Presentation on guardianship and protected reception by Mr Tin Verstegen, Director Nidos
10.30	Presentation Dutch National Rapporteur Human Trafficking by Mr Frank Noteboom
11.30	Presentation Dutch national center of expertise on honor based violence by Mr Kees Arendz
12.30	Lunch in the restaurant of the Hotel de Jonge
14.00	Presentation Jade Zorggroep (responsible for reception in the protected shelter) and the Dutch Expertise center Human Trafficking (EMM) by Mr Otto Schuurman (Jade) and Mr Gert Buist (EMM)
15.30	Discussion
17.00	End of the official programme
18.30	Dinner in the restaurant of the Hotel de Jonge

Tuesday 12 January 2016

(Visit protected shelter)

09.00	Pick-up at the Hotel de Jonge and journey to Vries
09.30	Arrival at the protected shelter in Vries
10.00	Introduction and tour of the premises
12.00	Lunch and discussion
14.00	End of the visit and transfer to Assen train station
15.02	Train to Schiphol airport



Appendix 2: Participants list

Country	Organisation	Position	Name
Austria	Land Tirol	Guardian	Lorenz Paumgarten
Belgium	Fedasil	Policy Officer	Martine Hendrickx
Belgium	ECRE	Policy Officer (project coordinator)	Elona Bokshi
Croatia	Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, Sector for social policy and policies for children, youth and family	Head of Sector	Dubravka Marusic
Cyprus	"Hope For Children" UNCRC Policy Centre	Policy and Advocacy Officer	Vaggelis Gettos
Finland	Finnish Red Cross, Turku Reception Centre	Director	Jaana Sikio
France	Ministry of Justice, Headquarters of judicial juvenile protection, office for unaccompanied minors	Policy Officer	Anne Duval
France	France Terre d'Asile	Policy Officer (project partner)	Camille Thomas
Greece	Ministry of Justice	Clinical Psychologist	Christine Maerkl
Hungary	Children's Home for Unaccompanied Minors	Head of the Children's Home	Zsafia Roszik
Malta	Ministry for the family and social solidarity, Department for Social Welfare Standards	Director	Carmen Buttigieg
NL	Nidos	Policy Officer (project partner)	Liedewij de Ruijter de Wildt
Poland	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Family Policy Department	Policy Officer	Aleksandra Kowalczyk
Romania	Ministry of Internal Affairs, Timisoara Regional Reception and Asylum Procedure Center	Director	Filimon Pitea
Slovakia	Department of Social and Legal Protection of Children and Social Curatorship, Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	Policy Officer	Simona Majernikova
Sweden	County Administrative Board of Stockholm	Development manager	Amir Hashemi-Nik
Sweden	Save the Children	Policy Officer (project partner)	Michaela Hagan
UK	West Kent Specialist Children's Services	Assistant Area Director responsible for reception of UMAs	Sarah Hammond