

ALFACA II

Improving reception and care for unaccompanied children by structurally increasing the quality and quantity of family based care



COUNTRY REPORT CYPRUS

**State of the art on family based care
for unaccompanied children**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ALFACA II country report on Cyprus emerged from the need to explore and establish innovative ways to improve reception and care for unaccompanied children by structurally increasing the quality and quantity of their family based care.

This report presents the results of desk research conducted by the Research and Development Division at “Hope For Children” CRC Policy Center (HFC), together with interviews held with unaccompanied children, consultations with stakeholders, and analysis of the legal framework for foster care in Cyprus. Aiming to gather both practical knowledge and data on foster care, professionals at the HFC Foster Care Department also actively contributed to the drafting of the report. Providing holistic information and helpful recommendations on how to improve the foster care system in Cyprus, the report addresses a wide range of professionals, including social workers, mentors, behavioural scientists and psychologists as well as policy-makers in the field of reception and care for unaccompanied children.

The Cyprus country report gives the current state of the art on foster care in Cyprus, a SWOT analysis of good practices, weaknesses and opportunities within the foster care programme, recommendations on how to further improve it, and an action plan for achieving a sustainable system in the country. Appendix I describes a two-day ALFACA¹ training programme held in Nicosia, Cyprus on 7 and 8 March 2019, conducted by two professional trainers from the Nidos Foundation in the Netherlands.

Since 2015, the number of unaccompanied children among asylum seekers registered in Cyprus has more than doubled. This has placed an immense burden on the foster care system in the country with regard to the accommodation of these children in families, particularly because the number of eligible foster parents is comparatively low. The State Social Welfare Services (SWS) in Cyprus is still facing problems with the general availability of families that are willing to foster children.

A major development in Cyprus was the placement of 58 unaccompanied children in reception families in 2017 through the ‘Pilot Programme regarding Foster Care for Unaccompanied Minors, Asylum Seekers/Beneficiaries of International Protection’, which was operated for the first time in Cyprus by “Hope For Children” in close collaboration with the SWS. Furthermore, on 11 July 2018 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the State Social Welfare Services and HFC which stipulates the establishment of a foster care programme operated by the latter in close collaboration with the SWS. These steps have been taken in an effort to facilitate the work of the SWS and minimise an overload of cases and roles. They are perceived to improve the overall foster care system in Cyprus and accelerate procedures where possible and necessary.

¹ Within the first ALFACA-project, Nidos (the Netherlands) in cooperation with Minor-Ndako (Belgium), Jugendhilfe Süd-Niedersachsen (Germany), OPU (Czech Republic), the Danish Red Cross and KIJA (Austria) developed training for professionals working with reception families that take care of unaccompanied children. The goal of the project was to further develop and improve the reception of unaccompanied children in families by providing professionals with the tools needed for this and teaching them how to use these tools. The project implementation period was 1 October 2015 to 1 April 2017 and the project was co-funded by the European Commission.

1. STATE OF THE ART ON FAMILY BASED CARE IN CYPRUS

1.1 Current national context

General context

According to the latest Eurostat report from 2018, 225 unaccompanied children applied for asylum in Cyprus in 2017 – marking a slight increase from 2016 (215 registrations).² The unaccompanied children amounted to 32.4 per cent of all asylum applications received in Cyprus. Four per cent of applicants concerned children up to 14 years old. In fact, the overwhelming majority of children now registered as asylum seekers in Cyprus are over 14 years old. Most of the 225 children – 64 per cent – were male. According to Eurostat, almost half of them came from Syria, followed by many from Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.³

In the last couple of years, the number of unaccompanied children among asylum seekers registered in Cyprus has more than doubled when compared with 2015. This is unlike the rest of Europe, where on average the number has fallen. According to Eurostat data, 105 children registered in Cyprus in 2015 and this rose to 215 in 2016 and 225 in 2017. By contrast, the numbers fell by about a third in the rest of the EU.⁴

Reception of unaccompanied children

Authorities are notified the moment an unaccompanied child is traced within the country. This includes the institution exercising legal guardianship: the State Social Welfare Services (SWS). The young asylum seekers are usually traced by the police. If they are found by civilians, they are instructed to present themselves at the nearest police station.

In general, the place of first entry acts as the reception location for unaccompanied children until they turn 18. They are accommodated in state institutions for out-of-home care which look after both Cypriot and non-Cypriot children. Most unaccompanied children are teenagers, so are usually placed in state institutions especially for teenagers (state children's homes are meant for younger children).

Since July 2014, SWS has also been able to accommodate unaccompanied children in specialised reception centres called 'Homes for Hope'. These are run by the international independent humanitarian institution called "Hope For Children" CRC Policy Center (HFC), which is mandated to provide accommodation for boys aged 5 to 18. The organisation opened its first shelter with a capacity of 24 occupants in 2014, followed by a second one nearby for an additional 18 children in 2016. The shelters are located in a 4555 square meter area and offer rehabilitation, integration and durable solution services.

² <https://cyprus-mail.com/2018/05/16/225-unaccompanied-minors-applied-for-asylum-in-2017/>

³ <https://cyprus-mail.com/2018/05/16/225-unaccompanied-minors-applied-for-asylum-in-2017/>

⁴ <https://cyprus-mail.com/2017/05/12/number-unaccompanied-minors-doubled-last-year/>

Besides age, gender is also a relevant factor for placement in a certain type of reception, since the centres are divided according to gender. Their status does not affect where a child will be placed.

A needs assessment is done after placement in a reception facility. However, according to HFC, it is unclear how the best interests of the child are taken into account as part of the placement and the needs assessment. Despite this, it has occasionally been the case that children close to reaching adulthood who did not want to stay in the state institutions have been allowed to live independently.

The government finances operational expenses incurred in the state institutions and 'Homes For Hope', as well as a monthly allowance for minors. Activities organised within the 'Homes For Hope' are also co-funded by the European Refugee Fund and through private sponsorships.

Foster care in general

As stated in the law, SWS is responsible for the foster care of children in Cyprus and has set criteria for reception families. A decision to remove children from the family environment is considered to be the last resort, once all other possible measures have been examined and are not found to be suitable. This happens in cases where the children are subject to serious neglect or abuse, or when the parents are absent. SWS provide multifaceted support to the biological families to enable their child to return to them.

SWS prioritises alternative family based care over placement in reception facilities in cases where it has to remove children from their families. The reasoning is that a family environment or kinship environment is less traumatic for the child and easier for his/her adaptation to the new environment. In Cyprus there are several kinds of foster care: long term (which can last until the child becomes an adult), short term (from one night to several months), emergency (when the child must be immediately placed in a family because he/she cannot stay in a shelter, this usually concerns new-borns), temporary hosting (weekends, public holidays or the summer), kinship, foster care for one to three children, a host family and a foster programme for a group of children aged between four and six. As per the decision of the Cypriot Ministerial Council, SWS also supports reception families financially by granting them an allowance for caring for the child.

Currently, there are 333 children in care, 19.8 per cent of them (66 children) in a special protection centre (children's shelter, young person's shelter and teenager's shelter). 35.2 per cent of the children in care are unaccompanied children (71 children in state institutions and approximately 46 children in the private children's shelters which are operated by HFC in Nicosia). Quite a large number of these children who are in care (45 per cent - 150 children) are placed in approved reception families.⁵ At present, there are 111 approved families and, as the data shows, the number of eligible reception families is lower than the number of children in need of foster care, whether Cypriot children or unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Therefore, SWS is still facing problems with the general availability of reception families that are willing to foster children.

⁵ Presentation by the Social Welfare Services during the Experts Meeting in June 2018, Nicosia, Cyprus.

Foster care of unaccompanied children

A total of 58 unaccompanied children, whose legal guardian is the Director of the Social Welfare Services, were placed in reception families in 2017 through the 'Pilot Programme regarding Foster Care for Unaccompanied Minors, Asylum seekers/Beneficiaries of International Protection' operated by "Hope For Children" CRC Policy Center in close collaboration with the State Social Welfare Services.⁶ It was a ground-breaking and innovative step taken by Cyprus towards the effective protection, care and reinstatement of unaccompanied children who are either asylum seekers or international protection beneficiaries in the framework of the reception family system.

The pilot programme started in December 2016 and was co-funded by the Ministry of Interior's European Funds Unit (Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund) and the Republic of Cyprus, with the aim of recruiting, training, and assessing potential foster parents to undertake the care of unaccompanied children in need of international protection. From December 2016 until December 2017, 80 families in total were evaluated, 64 families were approved as reception families and 58 unaccompanied children were placed in reception families. Afterwards, from December 2017 until May 2018, there was a marked increase in the number of unaccompanied children placed in families (69), whilst the number of approved reception families was 76.⁷ This illustrates the greater need for foster carers, especially since the number of unaccompanied children in the shelter is increasing quite rapidly.

In addition, on 11 July 2018 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the State Social Welfare Services and HFC which stipulates the establishment of a foster care programme in Cyprus operated by the latter in close collaboration with SWS. The HFC Foster Care Department currently deals with foster care cases of both Cypriot children and unaccompanied children. Collaboration with the Social Welfare Services is fundamental, due to SWS's role as legal guardian of unaccompanied children in Cyprus and its responsibility for placing the children in approved reception families. Finally, it is worth noting that the programme team is comprised of specialised professionals, registered psychologists and social workers.

Legal framework with regard to foster care

The Institution of Foster Care has been operating in Cyprus since 1956 when the Children's Law Act, Chapter 352, was passed, which entitles the Director of the Social Welfare Services to take care of children in need of care and protection, either with the consent of the parents or following a judgment of the Court of Justice. A further set of child-related legislation allows the Director of the Social Welfare Services, on the basis of specific circumstances, to take legal care of children:

- Children's Law, Chapter 352
- The Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law of 2000. (119 (I) / 2000 and 2004)
- The Prevention and Combating of Trafficking and Exploitation of Persons and of Victims Protection Law of 2014 (60 (I) / 2014)
- Preventing and Combating Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography Law of 2014 (91 (I) / 2014)
- The Refugees Law of 2000 (6 (I) / 2000)
- The Parents and Children Relations Laws 1990 to 1998 (216/1990)

⁶ <https://cyprus-mail.com/2017/12/06/foster-homes-found-unaccompanied-minors/>

⁷ "Hope For Children" CRC Policy Center

In this specific field, SWS carries out administrative practice in accordance with the services' Organisational and Operational Manual.

A child is considered to be a person under the age of 18, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the Republic of Cyprus with the 1990 Convention on the Rights of the Child (Ratification Law). Under the law, the Director of Social Welfare Services takes care of and protects children (parental care) in cases where parents leave or are unable to fulfil their parental obligations. Also, the Refugees Law of 2000 appoints the Director of the Social Welfare Services as guardian for a child who enters the Republic of Cyprus without a parent or legal guardian and has applied for international protection. However, it is necessary to regulate legislation regarding the foster care system. Specifically, there is a need to propose legislation for foster care which will act as a reference law in relation to any child who is in the care of SWS.

1.2 SWOT analysis

Internal	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good cooperation between HFC and Social Welfare Services (referrals, coordination and allowances) → Memorandum of Understanding signed by HFC and Social Welfare Services for closer collaboration • The unaccompanied child remains at the shelter until HFC is certain about the suitability of the foster parents • A series of training sessions are held for the foster parents • Regular monitoring and follow-up visits to the homes • Reception centre run by HFC so their social workers know exactly what the child needs and can match with the family accordingly • Collaboration of HFC with information centres • Experience with kinship processes – majority are kinship cases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient legislation specialised in the field • Lack of sufficient number of foster parents • Unaccompanied children have specific characteristics and people are selective in their preferences • Lack of awareness of the foster care programme • Evaluation of candidate foster parents • Kinship care → linguistic barriers, cultural background, complicating the role of the HFC officer • Training of candidate parents → insufficient participation of parents as they have professional obligations • Follow-up → delays in payment of foster care allowance • Integration barriers, delays in issue of residence permit in Cyprus, and restricted access to secondary education and medical care
External	
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More campaigns for raising awareness regarding the option of the foster care programme in Cyprus • No other private organisation runs the foster care programme in Cyprus → opportunity for building more bridges for cooperation with other organisations with common values and expertise • More support for foster carers by creating a network • Mix of old reception families with new eligible reception families in the training and information sessions • Prepare children for foster care needs • Trauma based care for foster carers • Training sessions for ethnic/cultural families as interlocutors for new families • Scientific research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residence permit – delays foster children’s access to services • Changing political atmosphere → may have an impact on the integration of unaccompanied children into wider society once they are placed with foster carers • Social unacceptance of unaccompanied children and concept of foster care may threaten the sustainability of the foster care programme

1.3 Good practices in Cyprus

A major boost to alternative family based care in Cyprus was the Experts Meeting held in Nicosia within the framework of the ALFACA II project on 18 and 19 June 2018. This was the first time that all major stakeholders and service providers for foster carers and unaccompanied children had met and discussed the various challenges and weaknesses of the foster care programme in Cyprus as well as its strengths. Importantly, using different experiential activities, all participants were given the opportunity to discuss ways of making the programme more sustainable and efficient. This led to fruitful discussions, during which several useful ideas and good practices were shared on ways to improve the foster care programme in Cyprus.

Another important good practice is the close collaboration between SWS and “Hope For Children” CRC Policy Center in operating and coordinating the foster care programme. This collaboration crystallised and was made official on 11 July 2018, with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two entities which also defines and sets out the roles each have with regard to the programme. This is important as there are clear guidelines on who does what and that avoids any unwarranted incidents which may compromise the smooth conduct and execution of activities. For example, HFC is responsible for the recruitment, assessment, training and monitoring of the foster carers, and SWS is responsible for the unaccompanied children, especially in the monitoring stage of the process. Finally, close cooperation and daily communication between SWS and HFC enables efficient coordination of cases with regard to foster care, especially since the Director of the Social Welfare Services is the legal guardian of unaccompanied children in Cyprus.

In addition, SWS pays a monthly childcare allowance for the care of an unaccompanied child once he/she is placed in a reception family. This includes allowances for personal expenses, transportation, disposable nappies and food for nursery school as well as extraordinary allowances to cover special needs.

HFC carefully follows procedures which support efficient implementation of the programme. For instance, a socio-economic and psychological assessment of candidate foster parents, preparatory sessions to make them fully aware of their future roles and expectations, and a series of training sessions for foster parents on positive parenting. HFC also holds frequent follow-up meetings with candidate foster parents and current foster parents, which enable their officers to closely monitor the child’s situation and prevent negative and unwarranted incidents. All these procedures help to build a relationship of trust between the family and the social worker in charge of the case and, importantly, to create a sense of teamwork where the most important objective is the well-being of the child.

The selection procedure conducted by HFC when considering candidate foster carers is very important, because this is used as the basis for their training and for a final evaluation before they are accepted as a reception family. Reports of the psychosocial and psychological evaluation prepared by HFC give a clear picture of the applicants’ ability to provide foster care, so that officers from the organisation can place the child in that reception family with a greater certainty of success.

Another strong point in the foster care programme is HFC’s collaboration with multiple local entities such as information centres for migrants, intercultural centres, community grocery stores, summer schools and the secondary education authority. In this way, the organisation is fully informed of all possible opportunities to mobilise its social workers in their support for foster carers as well as the unaccompanied children placed in the reception families.

Other positive elements of the foster care programme include: the child remains at the shelter until HFC confirms the suitability of the foster parents; two private shelters for unaccompanied children are operated by HFC, so social workers working for its Foster Care Department are familiar with the needs of the unaccompanied children and can therefore match them with the most suitable family; and finally, the HFC service hotline is available 24/7, so families and children can call the organisation whenever they want and receive appropriate help.

1.4 Difficulties in Cyprus

The President of the Parliamentarian Committee on Human Rights and on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women in Cyprus, Ms Stella Kyriakides, reiterated in May 2018 that a clear legislative framework for foster care should be established. It is indeed necessary to regulate the legislation regarding the foster care system. Specifically, there is a need to propose legislation for the foster care system which will act as a reference law in relation to any child who is in the care of the Social Welfare Services.

Problems are encountered during the recruitment of candidate foster parents. More specifically, during the information campaigns and awareness-raising sessions where not enough people show an interest in becoming foster parents for unaccompanied children, especially as they realise that it is a group of children who have specific characteristics and needs.

Similarly, challenges can be expected during the evaluation of approved foster parents and when scheduling home meetings with a social worker. These problems are especially evident in kinship care cases, due to linguistic barriers (although HFC uses translators), the differences in cultural backgrounds, and feelings of mistrust or potential confusion regarding the HFC officers' roles. In the follow-up evaluations conducted by officers from the Foster Care Department, further challenges are presented regarding the integration process of the unaccompanied children within the reception family. These may include difficulties in establishing a professional relationship between the officer handling the case and the foster carers, delays in the allowance payment for the foster carers, delays in issuing the residence permit to the child, and insufficient provision of support services (education and medical care).

When it comes to education, the number of unaccompanied children that can register for schools is very limited. The children are taught very few subjects (especially at the afternoon school where they are only taught Greek and maths). This is aggravated by the fact that the only districts that have integration classes are Nicosia and Limassol. Teachers have not been trained to teach non-Greek speakers, and foster care professionals have noticed that sometimes some children do nothing at all during the lesson. There is no continuity, in the sense that every year the children repeat the same class because the system is not well structured. Therefore they get bored and end up not going to school at all. Finally, the children do not receive a certificate when they finish school, so they cannot continue their education and there is no proof that they have completed secondary school.

Another important issue is the training sessions for candidate foster parents. In some cases, the attendance of both Cypriot and kinship candidate parents is too low due to professional or family obligations. Foster care professionals may ask these applicants to complete their training by attending the sessions they have missed in another city, but the distance usually prevents them from doing so. If foster care professionals try to provide one-to-one training in these cases, they end up with a huge workload.

There are several important external threats in relation to the implementation of alternative family care in Cyprus. For instance, due to the social unacceptance of unaccompanied children, and the lack

of widespread awareness of the concept of foster care in the country, the unaccompanied child's integration within the reception family, and into Cypriot society in general, is becoming more and more difficult. This has been further aggravated due to changes in the political landscape with regard to migration in Cyprus, where a heightened sense of fear and suspicion of migrants is not creating an atmosphere of acceptance and tolerance towards children with migrant backgrounds. Finally, another major threat to the alternative family care programme is the delay in granting the child a status in Cyprus. The acquisition of refugee status or subsidiary international protection is very important for an unaccompanied child, even if they are placed with foster carers. It gives them access to a range of services and helps them integrate into Cypriot society.

1.5 Practices to be developed in Cyprus

There are a number of pathways to expanding the system of alternative family care, especially as the foster care programme in Cyprus is not widely known. More awareness-raising campaigns could take place, using TV and social media to promote and inform the public about the programme and ways they can help.

Currently, HFC and the Social Welfare Services operate and run the foster care programme. HFC is the only NGO organising this foster care nationwide, but synergies and collaborations could be built with other organisations all over the island. HFC could also collaborate with universities and public entities already providing services to unaccompanied children, in order to build a network of actors who could offer all-encompassing support to foster carers and the children themselves. Collaboration with a university could lead to further scientific research in the field of alternative family care in Cyprus. Assessments and analyses of potential needs could help provide breakthroughs or suggestions for improvements to foster care.

The foster care programme for unaccompanied children in Cyprus is now operating for a third consecutive year. HFC has built up a pool of foster carers and gained vital experience in training and communicating with them. This could be further developed by creating a support network of former and current foster carers, and putting them in touch with new eligible foster carers who need support as well. In other words, a mix of former, current and new foster carers in training and information sessions would provide opportunities for information sharing and support mechanisms. Finally, training using ethnic or cultural families as interlocutors for new eligible families from the same ethnic background could be provided, especially since HFC already works with reception families from various ethnic backgrounds.

1.6 Child participation in the situational analysis

For the situational analysis, HFC interviewed an unaccompanied child who was placed by the HFC pilot foster care programme in a reception family in 2017 and is still living with that family. The interview was conducted at the reception family's house and the child was told that the interviewer did not work in the foster care programme, to make sure the child felt comfortable about speaking freely. As the legal guardian of the child, the Director of the Social Welfare Services gave full consent for the interview to be conducted. It was important and useful to hear an unaccompanied child's point of view on foster care, as well as his thoughts, overall experience and level of satisfaction with the services provided. Crucially, the interview with this child gave an honest account of what a child feels and experiences with regard to foster care and acted as a catalyst for fruitful discussion at the Experts Meeting in June 2018.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Legislative changes*: a clear legislative framework for foster care should be established. Indeed, it is necessary to regulate legislation regarding the foster care system. Specifically, there is a need to propose legislation for the foster care system which will act as a reference law in relation to any child who is in the care of the Social Welfare Services.
2. *Recruitment of more foster parents*: more reception families are needed because the number of unaccompanied children in Cyprus is increasing and is generally higher than the number of eligible and trained foster parents.
3. *Promote and enhance community awareness regarding foster care among the general public*: it is imperative that wider awareness-raising campaigns take place in Cyprus, along with TV spots and social media presence, in order to inform the public about the foster care programme that HFC operates and the foster care system in general. Furthermore, campaigns should take place to raise awareness of the circumstances of unaccompanied children and to contribute to positive attitude and behavioural changes in relation to family based foster care of unaccompanied children.
4. *Accelerate foster procedures*: for instance, by reducing the waiting list of unaccompanied children that need to be placed in reception families and minimising delays in payment of the foster care allowance.
5. *Provide reception families with quality support based on their specific needs* and also motivate them to fully participate in the training provided.
6. *Expand HFC's collaborations*: synergies and collaborations can be built between "Hope For Children" CRC Policy Center and other organisations all over the island, as well as with universities and public entities which provide services to unaccompanied children, in order to build a network of actors who could offer all-encompassing support to the foster carers and the children themselves.
7. *Scientific research in the field*: HFC can establish a research collaboration with several universities that could, in turn, lead to further scientific research in the field of alternative family care in Cyprus. Making assessments and analysing needs could help provide breakthroughs or suggestions for improvements to the foster care system in Cyprus.
8. *Enhancement of peer support for former and current foster parents and eligible foster families*. A mix of experienced and inexperienced foster carers in the training and information sessions could provide opportunities for good practice sharing and support mechanisms.
9. *Further capacity building for care providers*, to equip them to give better care to unaccompanied children and to contribute to enhanced and sustainable communication and other support mechanisms.
10. *Provision of training for ethnic or cultural families to work as interlocutors* with new eligible families from the same ethnic background. This will provide support to the reception families with communication methods specific to their culture, and will enhance their understanding of how the tasks and responsibilities are divided between them and the service providers.

3. ACTION PLAN

Aim	Legislative change: establishing a clear legislative framework for foster care
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating pressure groups to advocate for the change in legislation • Establishing working groups within parliament to propose the changes in legislation
Actors	Social Welfare Services, “Hope For Children” CRC Policy Center (HFC), Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, Commissioner’s Office for Children’s Rights
Level	National level
Timeframe	September 2019 – September 2020

AIM	Recruitment of more foster parents
ACTIVITIES	Organising information sessions, in collaboration with some municipalities, to tell families about foster care: in different multicultural communities and also for a wider audience during festivals such as the Refugee Festival and/or during events that involve different ethnic groups
ACTORS	HFC, other NGOs, municipality of Nicosia, municipality of Aglandjia
LEVEL	Grassroots level, municipality level
TIMEFRAME	September 2019 – February 2020, three information sessions during this period (each lasting one day)

AIM	Promote and enhance community awareness regarding foster care
ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TV spots on national channels • Social media presence on targeted pages/groups that promote the integration and care of unaccompanied children • Articles in widely-read newspapers
ACTORS	Media outlets
LEVEL	National level
TIMEFRAME	March 2019 – October 2019

AIM	Accelerate foster procedures
ACTIVITIES	Establishing working groups of NGOs involved in the foster care programme in Cyprus along with SWS to monitor and develop a new methodology and system to speed up foster procedures
ACTORS	“Hope For Children” CRC Policy Center, SWS
LEVEL	Grassroots level
TIMEFRAME	October 2019 – February 2020

AIM	Provide reception families with quality support based on their specific needs
ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organising world café workshops to receive feedback from former, current and new reception families on what quality support means to them and what they specifically need • Setting up a group of researchers who can study records of foster parents which mention their needs, and are given the opportunity to observe some training sessions, so as to write a report on quality support in Cyprus
ACTORS	HFC, universities
LEVEL	Grassroots level
TIMEFRAME	April 2019 – October 2019

AIM	Expand HFC's collaborations in the field of foster care for unaccompanied children
ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing information and expertise regarding foster care with organisations, universities and public entities to promote a spirit of collaboration and knowledge sharing and establish working relationships with them • Inviting various organisations and service providers to events concerning the integration and care of migrants to create opportunities for different stakeholders to meet
ACTORS	All types of stakeholders nationally
LEVEL	Grassroots level
TIMEFRAME	June 2019 – December 2019

AIM	Scientific research in the field
ACTIVITIES	Establishing a research collaboration of HFC with several universities that could, in turn, lead to further scientific research in the field of alternative family care in Cyprus: making assessments and analysing needs could provide breakthroughs or suggestions for improvement to foster care
ACTORS	NGOs, universities
LEVEL	Grassroots level
TIMEFRAME	November 2019 – November 2020

AIM	Enhancement of peer support for former and current foster parents and eligible foster carers
ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organising training sessions, world cafés and information sessions to provide opportunities for support mechanisms and information sharing between eligible and current reception families • Developing a national network of eligible foster carers and current foster parents
ACTORS	NGOs – HFC, Social Welfare Services
LEVEL	Grassroots level, national level
TIMEFRAME	2019, 2020, 2021 – three times each year

AIM	Further capacity building of care providers
ACTIVITIES	Organising training seminars within the framework of European projects such as ALFACA II to train care providers
ACTORS	All types of organisations, public entities
LEVEL	Grassroots level, national level
TIMEFRAME	Depends on the European project approved

AIM	Provision of training sessions for ethnic or cultural families to become interlocutors between foster care professionals and foster parents
ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organising specific training sessions relevant to the profile of the families and their needs • Using the ALFACA manual during the training • Building working relationships with the interlocutors and NGOs to maintain close contact
ACTORS	All types of organisations
LEVEL	Grassroots level
TIMEFRAME	2019 and 2020 – three times each year

4. DISSEMINATION PLAN

There are two events planned at which the ALFACA II project findings can be disseminated in Cyprus:

- INTEGRA focus groups in April 2019 attended by social workers, psychologists, international organisations, non-governmental organisations that provide different forms of care to unaccompanied children, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ombudsman's Office, the Commissioner for the Rights of the Child and several companies. INTEGRA is a European project which is coordinated by "Hope For Children" CRC Policy Center and aims to provide a multidisciplinary mentorship programme to support the entrepreneurship of children in care and young care leavers. In parallel, it seeks to explore alternative systems of care for unaccompanied children and how these can contribute to the fostering of their independence once they grow out of care. An HFC officer will present the ALFACA II project to the different stakeholders during the focus groups.
- The Chair Conference of the CRC Policy network on 16 and 17 October 2019, where a group of academics from across the world and Cyprus will gather to discuss the current challenges that unaccompanied children face. During this conference, HFC officers will prepare a brief presentation about the findings of the ALFACA II report and the ALFACA manual.

There are three main channels/platforms with which the ALFACA II findings will be disseminated in Cyprus:

- HFC newsletter – a brief report and presentation of the ALFACA II project will be sent to newsletter subscribers (300), upon completion of the project in July 2019.
- Social media / Facebook – a post with a link to information about the project will be created in September 2019.
- HFC Activity Report for the year 2018: information about ALFACA II will be included in the report, which will be readily available to all organisation members and partners.

APPENDIX

Alfaca training in Cyprus

A two-day ALFACA training programme was held in Nicosia, Cyprus on 7 and 8 March 2019, conducted by two professional trainers from the Nidos Foundation. The training was a way to disseminate the ALFACA model, tools and good practices and it provided an opportunity for foster care professionals to incorporate the ALFACA model and tools in their practice for further development of the Cypriot foster care system. Social workers from the Social Welfare Services, representatives from the Asylum Service, the Ombudsman's Office, the Commissioner for Children's Rights, the International Organisation for Migration in Cyprus, Caritas, the Cyprus Red Cross, psychologists from the "Hope For Children" Foster Care Department and academics attended the training.

The training programme was tailored to meet the specific needs of foster care professionals in Cyprus and consisted of the topics below:

Background information on unaccompanied children: development of unaccompanied children; psychological well-being; safety risks; working in an intercultural environment and intercultural communication.

Specific topics related to cultural differences in the unaccompanied child's situation

Specific topics related to cultural differences in the risk of child abuse involving unaccompanied children

The need for guidance: strengthening protective factors for unaccompanied children; guidance for family reunification; self-reliance at 18; guidance on the outcome: return and integration.

Recruiting families: how to recruit; which families to recruit: important characteristics for reception families (ethnic or indigenous reception families).

Requirements and conditions for reception families: the use of ethnic families; working with kinship families; aspects of cultural sensitivity in foster care.

Screening families: who and when to screen; how to screen – screening instruments; the ALFACA screening tool.

Matching a child to a family

Placement: guidance and support during the placements; how to prevent breakdowns; placement in ethnic or indigenous families.

Evaluation forms completed by the training participants indicate that the ALFACA manual is perceived to be well structured with a clear methodology; provides good support for children, families and professionals; is applicable in varied cultural contexts and is fairly compliant with existing legislation and administrative regulations in Cyprus. The participants also considered the training to be an important contribution to further dissemination of the ALFACA model, tools and good practices and it is likely to be incorporated in the Cypriot foster care system.