



*asyl*koordination  
österreich



# Challenges for Separated Children in Austria, Denmark, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia

A Compilation Report gathering the findings of desk studies  
carried out by the partners in the Daphne project;  
“Better Integration of Separated Children”

With financial support from the EC Daphne III Programme



## 1) Background for the report

*H.: I try. I would like to be a role model. So that Austria says at some point, "We're proud of you. That you came here. Even though you're a foreigner, you've done a lot for Austria." For example, when I was in Germany for the World Championships, there were players from 92 countries, and I stood on the stage for Austria. That was really great - a very good feeling!*

This report is part of a project entitled "Better Integration of Separated Children" carried out under the auspices of the EU Commission. The project aims to strengthen the integration of separated children through national networks of professionals working with separated children after they have been granted residence in the member states. The project includes Slovenia, Slovakia, Poland, Austria and Denmark. Save the Children Denmark is coordinating the European project.

The work in the national network is based on an investigation of the most significant challenges relating to the integration of separated children in the individual countries. Desk studies have therefore been carried out for each country, which cast light on the challenges confronting the children and professionals in each country. The issues that have been uncovered in the individual countries will form the basis for the establishment of national networks aimed at documenting the best practices in the related areas. The networks will be formed in the autumn of 2010 and will consist of conventional meetings supplemented by Internet-based exchanges. A European network will also be part of the project.

This report gathers the challenges confronting separated children in the five countries in a single report in order to outline a sense of the challenges facing separated children and the professionals working with them in the process immediately following the granting of residence permit in the country they have arrived in. The report is intended to contribute to facilitating the exchange of knowledge among the professionals on the European level and ensure that the exchange of knowledge and experience is directed towards the actual challenges facing the separated children and professionals. It is thus hoped that the project will possibly contribute to gathering the best experiences in Europe and thereby contributing to the development of new, better practices.

## 2) Foundation: the rights of separated children

The partners in the current project are participating in a European programme entitled *Separated Children in Europe Programme* (SCEP), which primarily deals with separated children who find themselves in the process of applying for asylum. The SCEP vision is for every separated child in Europe to feel safe, secure and loved.

When speaking together with guardians, separated children and professionals working with separated children, our conversations have repeatedly brought us back to this vision.

It is not particularly common to see the word 'love' incorporated in a vision for a rights-based project; because rights are not directly about love. But children's rights are first and foremost about establishing a framework of rights capable of guaranteeing that a state and society protect and ensure a child's development; including the areas in which a father and mother might not be able to do so. That all children are assured their right to grow up in a family environment in an atmosphere marked by happiness, love and understanding – as formulated in the preamble to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

When discussing the conditions and challenges for separated children and youth, we must constantly remain aware that it is not possible to ensure children's rights in the absence of warm social relations that contribute to creating some semblance of a home; a living environment in which the child feels safe and sound.

In 2008, Save the Children Denmark asked a number of separated children to sketch their social relations, placing themselves in a circle in the middle and drawing lines to the various persons they thought of as those who formed their network in Denmark. Obviously, the number of lines was least in the cases of children who had just arrived in Denmark – particularly for UN refugee children coming directly to Denmark as quota refugees. The number of lines quickly increases for the younger children, who are placed in receiving classes and elementary schools. But some of the separated children who had been in Denmark for more than a year drew as few as three lines – which included personnel from the municipality or Immigration Service employees.

Rights are obviously more practical and concrete than love and social relations.

The Child Rights Convention has a particular focus on separated children due to the special need these children have for state protection. This need for protection is partly due to the need for international protection as asylum seekers and partly because they are without their parents present and/or placed children.

The rights of separated children include the right to correct and appropriate counsel, advice, support and care in the country they have arrived in. For example, all children have the right to a guardian who they can turn to. The guardian is to assume responsibility for the child and ensure that the child's best interest is considered in all actions and decisions that are of concern to the child.

Separated children have the right to be treated as children. They should not be made to undergo the same administrative procedures as adult immigrants.

Children must be treated with respect; as unique individuals. Their opinions and needs are to be considered when decisions are made that are of concern to their lives. The rights and needs of separated children must be respected and protected. All separated children have the right to have their

experiences acknowledged. The social, developmental and emotional needs of these children must be considered in a holistic manner – it is important to never forget that we are dealing with a child.

When the decision is finally made to allow the child to remain in the receiving country, it is important that an investigation be carried out regarding the child's situation, needs and which special services the child must be offered in order to ensure their continued development. Separated children have the same rights as any other child that is permanently or temporarily cut off from their family environment, regardless of why this is the case – in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (art. 22).

### 3) Characteristics of the separated children in the five countries

Separated children are children under 18 years of age who find themselves outside of their home country and have been separated from both of their parents or their primary caregivers.

Separated children can have many different backgrounds and reasons for fleeing to Europe; that which they all share in common is that they are in a foreign country without their parents or caregivers. That which all of the separated children share in common is that they are particularly occupied by the fact that they are missing or have possibly lost their family.

Children flee from their home countries for many different and complicated reasons. Some flee due to the risk of military service, female circumcision, the risk of persecution due to their ethnic background or their parents' political affiliations. Others come from countries plagued by warfare, while yet others have been sent to Europe by family members in the hope of achieving a more tolerable future.<sup>1</sup>

These children have often been subjected to traumatic events in the course of their flight or already within their country of origin. Their journey has possibly lasted just a few days – or it might have been drawn out over months or years and involved extreme dangers either related to the means of transportation or because the children have been subject to abuse and exploitation. The children often have little or no idea about the country that is the destination of their journey or how they actually arrived there.<sup>2</sup>

*H: Sure, I came with smugglers from Afghanistan to Austria. At that time there was only one way. I went through Russia and Iran. I don't know the exact route, often I didn't know which country I was in. You're passed from smuggler to smuggler until you reach your destination. When I got to Austria, I didn't know I was in Austria. It's a small country, and many people in Afghanistan don't know Austria.*

<sup>1</sup> Da  
Ayot

<sup>2</sup> Sep *My journey took about two months, and it was horrible. You don't know what's going to happen in one hour, in two hours. We had to swim through rivers, ride in a small boat. That was really dangerous. I was travelling with three families with small children. My biggest fear was what would happen if the boat capsized. What about the family? Maybe at the time I didn't see how dangerous it really was. Now, I think about all the things I've experienced.*

Afghan boys aged 15-17 comprise the largest group of separated children in total in the five countries studied here (with national exceptions), as they do in the rest of the European countries in 2009. Many of these young people have known war and chaos their entire lives and have often received little or no schooling. Many of them began working as early as age 12 after completing primary school. However, many compensate for these educational shortcomings with their ambition, motivation and commitment.

These children generally arrive late in their childhood, and they must compensate for a lot – not least in terms of education – in a very short period of time.

Some separated children have an idea of what has happened to them and their families or where they are – others do not. Some still have contact with their families, speak with them on the telephone and send money home, while others have lost their families entirely.<sup>3</sup> Among these children, the worries for their parents and other family members is something that occupies them intensely.

*“I miss my family, I’d like to see where my family is.” (T14,84f).*

*“... can stay here, but don’t know, how I can without family.” (T1,296).*

*“... Austria is also good, to stay in Austria. But you are alone so long, I miss my family - would like to see where my family is.” (T14,84f)*

*“When I came here, the police asked: ‘What’s your name?’ Then the interpreter came. He asked, ‘Where are you going? What do you want to do here?’ I said I was looking for my brother. I wanted to know if he was here, whether he was dead or not. That’s all I want to know! He said if my brother is in Europe, I can find him. I said, ‘Ok, I’ll wait here three days. If you can find my brother, then I’ll stay here, or go where he is.’ After three days, suddenly my brother was here! I would have never thought that my brother was here. I haven’t seen him for eight years.”*

Separated children often have very few relations in the new country; and the relations they have to adults are often in the form of persons of authority or social workers. Care is no longer provided to these children by parents or close family members, but rather by social workers and contact persons; and in some cases, there can be considerable turnaround among these persons.

---

<sup>3</sup> Separated Children, Exile and Home-Country Links: The Example of Somali Children in the Nordic Countries, Save the Children, 2002

Separated children are therefore in a very unique situation. They have often endured special, refugee-related losses and traumas. And the support received from social workers is often hampered by language and cultural differences. They also distinguish themselves as a group from other groups of vulnerable children who have been placed in childcare institutions in order to ensure their wellbeing.

At the same time, separated children are naturally entirely different from one another. They all have unique potential and personal resources. It can therefore be problematic to focus on them as a special group. Doing so can keep them trapped in a category that can be difficult for them to escape from. At times, the separated children themselves do not wish to be trapped in an identity as a separated child; many prefer to look ahead rather than looking back.

It is important to remain aware that ensuring the care for and wellbeing of separated children requires a particular pedagogical and therapeutic awareness and focus. Failure to remain aware of this fact can result in the loss of citizens with an enormous potential for integration. We are of the opinion that such an awareness and focus on the group has been missing for a number of years.

This report is therefore devoted to the unique challenges facing separated children.

#### 4) Method

This report represents a compilation of the findings in studies from Austria, Denmark, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. These reports are ‘desk studies’, which are based on the available literature and information, interviews with separated children seeking asylum and separated children granted protection, guardians and background knowledge received from various relevant authorities and professionals.

Unfortunately, the body of literature on separated children in the five countries is limited. However, the awareness regarding this group has increased along with the remarkable increase in the number of separated children that again began arriving in Europe in recent years. Recent reports have also been made by other European countries and European/international organizations about the flight of separated children to Europe. However, it is our sense that there has yet to form any considerable focus on separated children after they have received a residence permit in Europe.

#### 5) Statistics and facts relating to the separated children who receive a residence permit in the five countries

Every year, all five of the countries examined receive a number of separated children seeking asylum. Not all of these countries keep official statistics on the number of children seeking international protection:

**Figure 1: Arrivals of separated children seeking asylum**

Country	Year	Separated children seeking asylum	Source of information

<b>Austria</b>	2009	1062 <sup>4</sup>	Federal Ministry of Interior
<b>Denmark</b>	2009	542	The Danish Immigration Service
<b>Poland</b>	2009	Estimated 362	Office for Foreigners
<b>Slovakia<sup>5</sup></b>	2009	28	Migration Office – Ministry of Interior Affairs
<b>Slovenia<sup>6</sup></b>	2009	25	Ministry of the Interior

This project, “Better Integration of Separated Children”, focuses on the children who have been allowed to remain in the five countries in question.

It has been difficult to ascertain official figures for the number of separated children who have received residence permit in each country.

In Denmark and Slovenia, official data is provided for the number of separated children receiving protection and being admitted to the integration process. In Denmark, however, there are only figures for the separated children who seek asylum spontaneously who receive residence permits; but not the separated children who receive residence permits as UN quota refugees. However, the vast majority of separated children who have received residence permits in Denmark have sought asylum spontaneously. There are no official statistics in Austria for the number of separated children being granted subsidiary protection or asylum. In connection with this project, investigation has therefore been carried out regarding the number of children in the housing facilities for separated children who have received residence permit in Austria in the course of 2009 – and the grounds upon which they have received this permission. In Poland, data regarding children is collected by the Office for Foreigners who is processing all applications for refugee status and pools together all underage foreigners whose application is being considered individually. This thus includes children born within the territory of Poland in the course of their parents’ refugee status determination procedure<sup>7</sup>. It cannot be determined how many of the children mentioned above were separated children. In Slovakia, very few separated children initially apply for asylum, as Slovakia is generally a transit country – a country the children must pass through in order to get to their ultimate destination. However, some children are caught in Slovakia and found to be lacking the necessary travel documents. Upon being identified as children, they are placed in the special facility for separated children. These children are granted some form of protection until turning 18.

The following figures are therefore compiled on the basis of very different sources, but nevertheless provide a sense of the number of children granted residence permit in these countries in 2009 (or in a period of years including 2009). These figures reflect the children in the integration process in the five countries.

---

<sup>4</sup> The number does not include the children who the authorities claimed were over 18.

<sup>5</sup> Separated Children in Europe Programme, newsletter No. 33, Spring 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Separated Children in Europe Programme, newsletter No. 33, Spring 2010.

Figure 2: Children with residence permit

Country	Year	Total	Age	Males	Females	Protection	Main countries of origin	Source
<b>Austria</b>	2009	159		143	16	Subsidiary protection:142 (m:136, f:6)  Refugee status/Asylum: 17 (m:7,f:10)	Afghanistan (114)	Survey carried out for this report <sup>7</sup>
<b>Denmark</b>	2009	114	15-17 years old:87	100	14	Refugee status/Asylum:86  Subsidiary protection: 22  Other kind: 6	Afghanistan (74)  Iraq (16)  Iran (11)	The Danish Immigration Service
<b>Poland *</b>	2009	20? <sup>*</sup>	Majority 15-17 years old	2/3 Males	1/3 Females	? see *	Considerable majority from Chechnya*	Variety of sources*
<b>Slovakia**</b>	2010 (June)	12**	8-17	10	2	Subsidiary Protection:8 Tolerated residence permit: 5 Tolerated due to non-refoulement principle: 1	Afghanistan (6)  Chechnya (3)  Iran, Vietnam and Bangladesh	Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in Trenčín
<b>Slovenia***<sup>8</sup></b>	2009	4	16-17	3	1	Subsidiary protection: 4	Afghanistan (3) Kosovo (1)	Ministry of the Interior

**\* Statistics regarding Poland:** In Poland, there is no nationwide body of statistical data regarding the separated children living in the country. For the sake of this project, the scope of this problem has been estimated based on the information gathered by a number of different institutions for their own use. However, there would appear to be discrepancies in the data from these sources.

<sup>7</sup> Official statistics concerning the apportionment of subsidiary protection and asylum to separated children are not available. The numbers are based on a survey of housing facilities for separated children carried out for this report. See the report from Austria, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> In Slovenia in the period 2001-2009, 16 have been granted residence permits, of which only two separated children have received refugee status. In 2009, four residence permits were granted to separated children, all four as subsidiary protection.

- Data from the Polish Office for Foreigners – which processes all applications for refugee status – pools together all aliens who are children (under age 18), whose applications are being considered individually<sup>9</sup>. It is unclear how many of these children are separated children.

A total of 176 children were granted international protection in 2009. 102 of these children were boys, 74 were girls. Of these children, 21 were granted refugee status (11 boys, 10 girls), while 155 children were granted subsidiary protection (91 boys, 64 girls). One girl received a so-called ‘tolerated stay’ permit.

Of the 176 children, 172 were under age 14.

- The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy collects statistics regarding the number of foreign children placed in substitute care in 2009 who are granted some form of legal stay. These numbers also include children arriving in Poland with their parents but for various reasons are placed in substitute care by court order (e.g. due to abandonment or limitations placed on the parental authority).

This statistic shows that there were 15 minors in substitute care (five children under subsidiary protection, four children with refugee status, five children with permits for tolerated stay, and one child whose application for refugee status was being processed).

- In addition to these statistics, all separated children applying for refugee status are placed in a dedicated peer group within Children’s Home No. 9 in Warsaw in accordance with an agreement between the City of Warsaw and the Office for Foreigners.

According to data provided by the Office for Foreigners, the facility was home to 20 separated children in 2009. A considerable majority of the separated children come from Chechnya<sup>10</sup>. Two-thirds are boys, most of whom are age 15-17.

It is most likely that less than 20 children were granted some form of protection in Poland in 2009. The first statistic does not match the general picture of separated children coming to Europe (and the experience in the children’s home for separated children in Warsaw). The children are almost all under age 14, which indicates they belong to the group in Poland with family. The last statistic includes only children whose applications are pending. But it still gives some idea about the number of children, since most children receive some form of protection. And the figure from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy shows children who are placed in substitute care, including children who have family on Polish territory but who are not living with their family.

**\*\* Statistics regarding Slovakia:** The number of minors seeking asylum in Slovakia or for whom Slovakia is the target country is very low; Slovakia is merely a transit country on the way to western Europe. According to the professionals from institutions dealing with unaccompanied minors, the escape from the accommodation facility is the most common reason for not beginning the integration

---

<sup>9</sup> Including children born within the territory of Poland while their parents’ applications for asylum are pending.

<sup>10</sup> Countries of origin also include Sudan, Morocco, Bangladesh, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Ghana, Nigeria, Georgia and Serbia.

process. After the minors are found illegally in Slovakian territory and identified as minors, they are placed in the special facility for unaccompanied children in Horné Orechové. 31 children were placed in the specialized facility in the course of 2010<sup>11</sup>. 30 of these children have left the facility; only one child has been involved in the integration procedure.

The 12 children in the table are therefore all of the children who have joined the integration process (they have arrived in recent years). There are currently 12 unaccompanied children who have been included in the integration process (those with granted status). All of these children reside in the specialized facility mentioned above.

### **\* \* \* Statistics regarding Slovenia:**

According to the data from the Ministry of the Interior, the number of separated children in the integration process in Slovenia in the 2000-2010 period totals 16 children. In the last five years, nearly all of these children were boys from Afghanistan who were accorded subsidiary protection.

#### **6) Residence permit**

As indicated in the tables above, not all of the separated children seeking permission to stay in the European country they have arrived in ultimately receive such permission.

Separated children can be granted refugee status, subsidiary protection or tolerated residence permit. Not all three kinds of protection are used in the five countries in this project, but there are different variations. The duration of each residence permit also differs from country to country:

1. Refugee status on the grounds of the Geneva Convention regulating the Status of Refugees and its protocol. In Slovenia, for instance, a child granted refugee status immediately obtains a permanent residence permit. In Poland a residence card (a sort of identity card) for 3 years is granted and has to be renewed, but the person under protection is allowed to reside permanently in Poland unless the protection is withdrawn for some reason. In most of the countries, the child must apply for a permanent residence permit after several years. In Poland, for example, a foreign citizen who has resided continuously within the territory of the Republic of Poland for no less than five years on the basis of refugee status or subsidiary protection status can apply for a settlement permit. After holding such a settlement permit for five years, the foreigner is allowed to apply for Polish citizenship.

2. Subsidiary protection: Subsidiary protection is granted to an applicant to whom asylum has not been granted if there is reason to believe that the individual would face a genuine threat of unjust treatment upon return to their country of origin. In Denmark, the subsidiary status for separated children is defined in a slightly broader manner. Here, there are two other kinds of temporary residence permits: If the child is deemed to be lacking the maturity to undergo the asylum procedure, they are granted a temporary residence permit; otherwise the child can receive a temporary residence permit if they risk being placed in a genuine emergency situation upon return to their country of origin. The residence permits are temporary. In most of the cases, the subsidiary protection must be extended continuously.

---

<sup>11</sup> Until June 2010.

In Slovakia, for instance, subsidiary protection is granted for one year with an option for repeated one-year extensions. In Slovenia, a child receiving subsidiary protection obtains a three-year residence permit which can be extended if warranted. In Denmark, the temporary residence permit is granted for two years and can then be renewed. In Austria, the renewing of subsidiary status is generally provided for a one-year period; in practice, however, there are considerable regional discrepancies.

In some countries – for instance in Austria – the child risks losing their protected status after turning 18. This is not because their status changes upon turning eighteen, but rather because their subsidiary protection must continuously be extended, and it is not uncommon for the child to lose their residence permit after turning 18.

3. Tolerated status: Is applied in Slovakia and in Poland. In Slovakia, tolerated status is applied, because all separated children have the right to remain in the country with tolerated status. They are entitled to this status until age 18, since the non-refoulement principle is fully applicable to them. In Poland, a foreigner who has resided continuously within the territory of the Republic of Poland for no less than 10 years with tolerated status may apply for a settlement permit. After holding the settlement permit for five years, the foreigner is able to apply for Polish citizenship.

## **7) The protection of separated children in the five countries**

The status of separated children in the five countries under investigation is different. When comparing the five countries, Denmark is the only country in which most of the separated children in 2009 received convention status/refugee status. This is a new development in Denmark as opposed to previous years, where most such children merely received subsidiary protection. The children receiving refugee status in Denmark primarily come from Afghanistan. In the other four countries, subsidiary protection is the most common.

Three conclusions can be made when scrutinizing the Austrian data:

1. While the total population of asylum seekers is granted asylum more often than subsidiary protection, the results are the exact opposite in the case of separated children.
2. Girls appear to have a considerably greater chance of receiving asylum than boys.
3. The country of origin is the most important factor when granting asylum or subsidiary protection.

## **8) Gaps and challenges**

On the background of the five analyses of the practices regarding separated children after receiving permission to remain, the most significant challenges confronting separated children in relation to being given a good start in the country they find themselves in are described below (not in a prioritized order):

1. Lack of statistics on separated children with residence permits (Austria , Denmark, Poland and Slovakia)

As indicated in the section on ‘Statistics and facts relating to separated children’ in this report, there is a lack of comprehensive, authoritative statistics in four of the five countries in relation to the children receiving residence permits. This is the case in relation to basic features such as number, gender, age and grounds for residence.

2. The asylum procedure is affecting separated children in a negative manner (Slovenia)

An extended application process for asylum has a particular impact on children and can become one of the main obstacles for the future integration of separated children. Teachers and peers not only become the agents of socialization for the separated children attending schools in the receiving country, but also structure their first encounters with the greater society. In Slovenia, separated children in the asylum procedure may engage in an informal or formal form of Slovenian language training, yet in practice very few decide to take part in it. This means that the transfer from one procedure to another can be very stressful and sets obstacles for efforts aimed at integration in the future. In Slovenia, difficulties associated with learning when a child with international protection status enrolls in school are directly related to protracted inactivity during the asylum procedure, as no integration programmes are offered to children during this period. The ability to communicate in Slovenian and schooling itself plays a central role in the social integration and adjustment of separated children. Professionals in Slovenia often encounter language barriers when talking with children, and it is sometimes challenging to motivate separated children to learn the local language.

3. Best interest of the child is not always the primary consideration when separated children are supported (Austria and Denmark)

*“You are doing great work. And spending a lot of money on separated children”* – as compared with his own country. (Separated child in Denmark, 2008)

*“Many people did everything they could to help me”, and “the municipality always came if there were problems.”*  
(Separated child in Denmark, 2008)

While some separated children express considerable gratitude, the report from Austria, for example, highlights how the well-being of separated children is often not considered sufficiently in the decision-making process. It is a major problem that the collaborative thinking and action is inadequate. This is partly due to financial considerations, since it is often of primary importance for the Federal Care provision that the costs for accommodation and care will be assumed by social welfare or the youth welfare agency/service as quickly as possible. In turn, for financial reasons, social welfare urges separated children to quickly find employment. Moreover, after the child reaches the legal age of consent, the youth welfare agency is often not ready to assume the costs of continued education.

According to the report from Austria, that which is overlooked is that a sound education provides better chances on the employment market.

The report from Denmark also indicates a lack of focus on the best interest of the child in the decision-making process. It does not appear as though the greatest reason for this is that primary consideration is paid to the financial costs of the care and support for the child (since the costs for the municipalities are at least partly refunded by the state). Rather, it is a matter of the mandate to make decisions in relations pertaining to the child not being clearly placed in the law or in procedures. This means that the child's situation and needs are not always studied as called for by the Act of Social Service. For this reason, a plan of action is not always drafted for the separated child. This likely has consequences for the services offered to the children in relation to housing, contact persons, education, the involvement of a guardian, recreational opportunities, aftercare opportunities etc.

#### 4. Separated children are referred to municipalities in the entire country (Austria and Denmark)

Separated children are referred to municipalities in the entire country. This means that municipalities receive relatively limited numbers of separated children and that extended periods of time can pass between the separated children they receive. This can mean that caseworkers are not familiar with the particular challenges facing separated children, that refugee-related child skills are not accumulated in the municipality, that the municipalities fail to develop special services in relation to the housing, education opportunities, trauma treatment, mother tongue language classes, recreational opportunities etc. or that they are not familiar with where such special services are located for the children requiring them.

In both Austria and Denmark, this means that practices develop differently in different areas of the respective countries and that separated children are not guaranteed equal treatment.

#### 5. Separated children are often regarded and treated like de facto adults (Denmark)

On the basis of an interest in respecting children as almost-adults and respecting their array of experiences, caseworkers often neglect the fact that children have special rights because they are children.

The legislation pertaining to the services offered to separated children after they have been granted a residence permit in Denmark are unclear, and there is a lack of standard procedures for dealing with these children.

These two factors contribute to separated children not receiving adequate care and support in relation to a considerable number of areas and that there is not always a clear focus on the best interest of the child when dealing with separated children.

6. Separated children are not always offered suitable integration programmes (Denmark, Poland and Slovenia)

Separated children are not always offered special integration programmes intended for children. The integration programmes are not always tailored to the child's individual needs, age and specific characteristics. In Denmark and Slovenia, for instance, they can be following the same programmes as adults. In Denmark, there is a lack of legal clarity and guiding instructions contributing to this situation.

In Slovenia as well, the legislation does not specifically regulate the access to specific integration programmes for separated children – the integration of separated children follows the same guidelines as that of adult persons with international protection in general – professionals face a range of difficulties and enormous challenges when grappling with the existing system in order to provide children with the suitable support and to safeguard their interests.

There is no system in Slovenia for dealing with separated children in the integration process. The integration process formally begins when a person is granted international protection, but professionals stress that it is crucial for separated children to be provided with a sufficient integration programme immediately after they apply for asylum so that their integration in society is well underway when they are granted international protection. Actors working with separated children are also emphasizing the need for special integration programmes that are tailored to the individual child's needs, age and specific characteristics.

In Poland, measures taken to support separated foreign children can hardly be perceived as an integration system, as such. Its function is performed by a set of institutions that are not always aware of each other's responsibilities and capacities toward separated children. Insufficient communication takes place between schools, child care institutions and local family assistance centres.

According to the Polish report, it is commonly believed that separated children receive sufficient integration assistance within the care facility and school, while the programme is mainly addressed to adults trying to learn the ropes of the job market and gain financial independence. The application for programme participation should be submitted within 60 days of receiving the decision granting refugee status or subsidiary protection. While efforts are made to avoid this kind of situation, children who are granted protection before turning 18 might miss this submission deadline.

Their right to programme participation is not restored after reaching legal age; moreover, assistance received following a lengthy period of residence in Poland can hardly be considered 'integration assistance'. Applying for integration assistance in the case of separated children is further complicated by the fact that – more often than not – such children do not have a legal guardian able to represent them in the course of the decision-making procedure and supervise their performance of obligations under the programme. For the minor to be able to submit an application for programme participation, the Family Court must appoint a legal representative (curator) representing the minor for the duration of the programme.

Due to the current practice, separated children in Poland have difficulty accessing individual integration programmes for foreigners granted international protection, although there are no explicit legal

restrictions. Foreign separated children can currently benefit from the programme after coming of age, but the assistance offered in the programme framework could be adjusted to the needs of these children and significantly support the initial stage of the integration process. Moreover, the quality of assistance provided in the programme framework is not always sufficient and depends largely on the experience of the local centre for family assistance. It is also pointed out that the programme is too short and thus unable to lead to full self-reliance and the integration of its beneficiaries.

7. Inadequate long-term solutions for separated children have a negative impact on the children (Austria, Denmark, Slovakia)

The uncertainty surrounding the right to stay for children with a temporary residence permit allows for the missing regulation of a long-term solution for separated children. This is seen as one of the most important challenges facing separated children. All of the integration measures lose meaning without a long-term solution for separated children.

In Slovakia, for instance, there is a major gap regarding the long-term solutions for separated children. After turning 18 and not being granted asylum or subsidiary protection, there are few possibilities for them to remain in Slovakia.

Separated children who are not granted asylum or subsidiary protection are obliged to leave Slovakia after turning 18. The Slovakian legal system does not offer children a permanent solution. This has repeatedly been criticized by professionals. The solution to a long-term stay in Slovakia for unaccompanied children is foreseen in the Act on Citizenship, Section 7 Subsection 2, which grants the opportunity to apply for citizenship to a child who has continuously resided in Slovakia for at least two years immediately prior to filling out the application for citizenship. The presumption for this is that the child is represented by a tutor. Because guardians (not tutors) are nominated in Slovakia, separated children do not fulfil these conditions. For a long-term solution, it is important to start nominating tutors instead of guardians. Separated children would have better opportunity to apply for citizenship and to remain in Slovakia for an unlimited period of time.

In Austria, subsidiary protection is generally awarded for one year with the option for a one-year extension. As it is uncertain whether an extension will be granted, making long-term plans for the future is complicated. The separated child is typically nervous and anxious for weeks prior to the extension date. In some cases, they are summoned by the authorities to appear for an interview which can be extremely stressful.

8. Not all separated children receives a guardian (Austria , Denmark, Poland, Slovakia)

*“If I need something, or if I just have to ask about something, then I can always just ask her or give her a call (the guardian, ed.). She is the person I have. She is the only person I have in Denmark. She is just like a mother to me.”* (Separated child in Denmark, 2010)

*“It’s a good day, if a young person listens to someone. If you don’t listen, then you get in trouble and you ruin your life, right? I can’t get in trouble, because if I get in trouble, then my Mom (the guardian, ed.) will get upset with me and then I will be really sad. You understand?”* (Separated child in Denmark, 2010)

*“I think it’s important that the guardians are professionals and have expertise about young people. I mean, my guardian knew a lot about me – it’s not that. She also listened about all of the things I have gone through when I was being interviewed and that kind of thing ... I think it’s a good idea if they (the guardian, ed.) were a ... someone who had a good feeling for what children go through. (The most important thing for a guardian to do, ed.) must be to ask the young person how he is doing and help him so that children don’t develop psychological problems – that’s what I would do (if I was a guardian, ed.).”* (Separated child in Denmark, 2010)

The most important thing a guardian can do *“... when a young person is sad, it’s important to know how to entertain them. They have to know why they get sad, what their problems are. Everything there is to know about psychological problems. If I tell my guardian, ‘I really miss my parents and I don’t know what to do’. So my guardian isn’t educated and she doesn’t know what she’s supposed to say, you know? So maybe she says, ‘It will all work out’ and that kind of thing ...”* (Separated child in Denmark, 2010)

A guardian is an important supporting actor in a child’s life and integration in the society.

In Austria, the legal guardian is responsible for providing for the well-being of separated children throughout the integration process. In practice, however, personal contact between the separated children and the guardians is often practically non-existent, even though there are definitely also positive exceptions. The results of an Austrian survey of the housing facilities for separated children showed that providing subsidiary protection changed nothing, or very little, regarding the form and organization of the guardianship. Regular personal contact actually led to active involvement/participation in favour of the child’s wellbeing in very few cases.

There is also a need for a clearer description of the duties of the legal guardians during the integration process.

In Denmark, not all separated children are allocated a guardian after they have received a residence permit. Nor are there clear guidelines for the function of the guardian in the integration process, and there is not always a mutual understanding between the guardian and caseworkers as to the distinction between their roles.

The issue of legal guardianship for separated children residing in Poland remains unclear. Under the legislation pertaining to the protection of aliens within the territory of the Republic of Poland, the Border Guard division receiving the application for refugee status submitted by separated children shall immediately apply to the family court with the jurisdiction for the child’s place of residence for appointing a legal representative (curator) to represent the minor in the course of proceedings regarding their refugee status and placing the minor in a residential childcare facility. The mission of the legal representative (curator) is completed when the child’s legal status becomes clarified. While a legal representative (curator) only represents the child in the course of particular administrative procedure, the legal guardian – pursuant to the Family and Guardianship Code – may represent a child in all issues

related to the child. Legal guardianship is appointed if none of the parents have full parental rights (e.g. they were revoked or suspended) or the parents remain unknown. In practice, it is assumed that it is impossible under Polish law to appoint a guardian to a foreign child whose parents are known and who is only deprived of parental care because the child and their parents are in different countries. Unless Family Court decides otherwise, the obligation and right to provide care and to raise a child placed in residential child care institution, as well as the right to represent them in topics related to ongoing care, shall be carried out by the residential child care institution. Decisions related to other topics must be made by the child's parents or legal guardian. In the case of separated children, there are no individuals acting in this capacity.

The fact that, in practice, legal guardians are not appointed to separated children is alarming, especially in the situation of the children who are not under special care in Children's Home No. 9. This might have an impact on the quality of decisions regarding the child's best interest or merely make it more difficult to put them into practice. While appointing a legal guardian is a standard procedure applied by the Family Court when a Polish child whose parents have their parental rights revoked or suspended is concerned, acting in the same manner toward separated children raises many concerns.

In Slovakia, all separated children should be granted a 'tutor' as opposed to a guardian according to the law. In practice just guardians are designated, which has often been criticised by professionals. There is a major difference between guardians and tutors. The tutor exercises parental rights and duties, manages the property of the minor, and is responsible for their education over the long term; they need not take care of the child personally. The guardian exercises only certain legal functions in the scope as laid down in the court decision, and their responsibilities end after accomplishing the purpose established upon being nominated as the child's guardian. In practice, guardians are empowered by the court decision to act in the name of a child in all legal matters. This practise has often been criticized by professionals. The nomination of a tutor is a legal presumption of obtaining Slovakian citizenship under advantageous conditions.

Pursuant to Slovenian legislation, all separated children are allocated a guardian. The guardian is then responsible for ensuring that the child receives suitable care, accommodations, education, language support etc. The function of the guardian is full of responsibilities, and while it is an honourable task, it remains voluntary, and it is difficult to find volunteers to perform it. In practice, the guardians in most cases are persons employed in *Slovene Philanthropy*, which provides guardians for separated children. In Slovenia, only the non-governmental organization Slovene Philanthropy organizes educational training for those who are or would like to become a guardian to a separated child. There are no such trainings organized by the governmental institutions. The guardians consider training to be of great importance and a tool for providing adequate support and advice to the children and to address the principle of the best interest of the child in a greater extent.

The problem of recruiting enough guardians is a problem in more than one country.

#### 9. Separated children lack sufficient financial resources (Austria, Denmark, Slovenia)

In Austria, children granted subsidiary protection are confronted to some degree by the problem of not being allowed to keep their entire income. This is because federal care support is only granted to those requiring assistance (§ 2 Abs.1 Z 2 GVG – B). The concrete implementation of the policies in the provinces varies widely. In Upper Austria, the children can only keep € 100 from their entire income. Other provinces are less strict. The income exceeding the accepted amount is accrued (partially or entirely) from guardians and issued to the separated children upon turning 18. The separated children then have the start capital that is desperately needed to establish independence, such as being able to put down a deposit and pay the commission for the rental of an apartment or to make necessary investments.

Some separated children in Denmark do not have any contact with the Child and Youth Services, possibly because they have been offered an introduction programme for adults. They are therefore offered financial ‘start help’ or the introductory payment that is offered to immigrants to Denmark. Thereafter, they are responsible for the payment of large parts of their lives having only received a payment that even adults have great difficulty maintaining an active life for.

In Slovenia, separated children have the chance to receive financial support - financial compensation for private accommodations, social assistance payments and scholarships, which might help them get along in difficult material circumstances. In practice, the low social assistance payments that separated children receive for the current month, about € 220, is usually not sufficient for covering the costs of living in Slovenia. In addition to attending school, separated children therefore find part-time work. Together with their obligations in school and making every effort to succeed in school, these children have a very full daily schedule, which has an impact on their integration into community. Due to the integration policy, many of the separated children in Slovenia are forced to interrupt their school education to work low paid jobs. Professionals encounter challenges when supporting the children to attend school and motivate them to learn Slovenian for the sake of better social, economic and cultural integration.

#### 10. Separated children are not guaranteed placement in home facilities which support their development (Denmark, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia)

In Denmark, separated children are not always offered opportunity to live in a supervised collective arrangement or other appropriate housing accommodations (home facilities) for children over age 16 who are to be placed. To the contrary, they can be made to live on their own – perhaps with a weekly visit from a contact person from the municipality – whether or not this is what they want. The children who are placed risk being placed together with children who have been removed from their homes. This is not a good solution in keeping with the best interest of the child. Separated children are vulnerable, but their vulnerability is often of a different character than that of children who have been removed from their homes, and these children will often be unable to contribute to a positive development in one another’s lives.

In Poland, there are no regulations or established practices regarding the transfer of minors to a different child care facility. Children can thus be placed in a variety of institutions, differing in terms of their ability to accommodate foreign children and meet their needs. Moving to a different facility also

means entering a new peer group and school, which can possibly disturb the child's sense of stability and security; and in some cases hamper integration efforts. Their situation largely depends on the knowledge and dedication of the employees in the institutions they are placed in.

While the application for asylum is being processed for separated children in Slovakia the children are placed in the same facilities as adults. This does not have a beneficial impact on their behaviour. Additionally, the facilities of the Ministry of the Interior do not provide socio-legal protection for children nor do they provide all of the necessary measures required to provide proper care to these children. The moving of the children while their applications for asylum are being processed usually interferes with integration. After receiving a permit to stay, separated children have until recently been returned to the special children's home for separated children, where the integration process begins. A new practice has lately been established where separated children are placed with other children placed outside their home. The purpose for this is to achieve a better integration of separated children into the society.

Until recently in Slovenia, separated children who were close to turning 18 have been accommodated in private housing, whereas younger children were placed in a group home for children with behavioural or personal problems. Now, however, separated children are housed in an apartment in an Integration House after their case has been completed. Accommodations which assure interaction with the receiving community are of great importance to separated children, since they have an impact on their further integration and provide them with contact with their peers. This would provide opportunity for the children to practice speaking Slovenian on a daily basis. Integration House does not provide this kind of interaction. Separated children live alone in the Integration House or share an apartment. There, they are left on their own without any suitable support; there can be periods of time in which they only receive visits from an integration counsellor or their guardian. Because there are no suitable accommodation facilities for them, they are forced to become more independent in than their peers.

11. Separated children are not guaranteed extended care after turning 18 if they need it (Austria, Denmark, Slovakia)

Separated children will often require support after turning 18. Particularly because they have had traumatic experiences and their strength and 'façade' often first crack after a couple of years.

In Austria, after turning 18, little further assistance is provided to the separated children. Even though residential facilities for separated children attempt to prepare the youngsters for adulthood, the transition from the facility to private/alternative housing often proves difficult. Moreover, these youth are often overwhelmed by/unable to cope with the 'bureaucratic maze' (federal care provision, social welfare etc.).

In Denmark, it is often only if children has been placed in a group home that some kind of aftercare has been planned as part of the course of events. Not all separated children are offered housing in an institution and will therefore often not be offered aftercare.

The lack of aftercare can also be a problem for separated children in Slovakia. Only children with status are in institutional care and it will only be prolonged if the children apply for it.

12. Many separated children require further support for education and or an apprenticeship so that they can realize their full potential in order to match the national labour market (Austria, Denmark, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia)

*“It is important to speak Danish – (employee at a group home, ed.) taught me a lot ... when I arrived (to the city, ed.), I spoke Danish during the day in school and together with my classmates. And when I came home, I spoke Danish with (the principal and his wife, ed.). So I have never spoken better Danish than when I left ... And now I speak worse than I ever have!”* (separated child, spontaneous asylum seeker, Denmark 2008).

Separated children *“should go to school. That is very important. And they should learn about Denmark. When you learn the language, it is more difficult to be misunderstood.”* (Girl, separated child, quota refugee, Denmark 2008).

*“It’s hard not to be able to speak Danish. They don’t talk to me. In the beginning, everyone was so nice and curious in school. But then they started to tease or just disappear – like at the school parties. Then I got scared and sad. Then I go home and want to be alone. The teacher has spoken with the pupils now. So now it has gotten better. Now they talk to me again. The boys, too.”* (Girl, 16 years, UN quota refugee, 2008)

*“I also think most about what kind of work I can do ... I would like to work with old people or in a kindergarten. But I don’t know if I can get into the education.”* (Girl, UN quota refugee, Denmark 2008).

*“I don’t know if I can get by on my own when I become an adult. I think it’s hard to read signs! How should I then learn how to drive a car?”* (Girl, 14 years, UN quota refugee, 2008)

*“I think I can do it!”* (Girl, 12 years, UN quota refugee, Denmark 2008)

*“I dream about big things! My dream is to open a restaurant ... Yeah, I believe in myself”* (Boy, spontaneous asylum seeker, Denmark 2008)

*“Yeah, the hardest has been to do the same again and again. I have a high academic level, but language like a kid in kindergarten”* (Boy, spontaneous asylum seeker, 2008).

*“If I could read and write, I would like to have attended technical school. I have been a little sad that I couldn’t do so.”* (Boy, now young man, spontaneous asylum seeker, 2008)

*“I don’t know ... I think I came here too late in relation to learning the language.”* (Girl, 16 years, UN quota refugee, 2008).

*“My daughter has to learn to speak better Danish than I do!”* (Boy, spontaneous asylum seeker, 2008).

Education is a vital factor for integration, and most separated children place a high priority on education. The absence of preparation school programmes that are adjusted to the children’s needs and language skills is a big challenge for separated children and produces considerable levels of insecurity and anxiety. It is therefore important to create structures and promote successful academic and/or work-related integration. The cooperation of all of the relevant actors in this area is essential.

In Austria, for instance, separated children consistently have difficulties with continuing their schooling after receiving asylum or subsidiary protection.

The report from Denmark indicates a need for the better screening of competencies and opportunities upon arrival in the municipalities, and there is a need for tailored offers to the children in question, offers which take into account that some of the separated children will not be able to complete an academic education. There is also a need for particularly intensive support measures for the youth who might have opportunity to complete a more typical education programme.

The same problem exists in Poland, where foreign children are expected to enter the education system as quickly as possible. At the same time, there are no interim periods of education foreseen to allow a smooth transition to mainstream education at the next stage. For many separated children who arrive in Poland with serious educational shortcomings, the current provisions regarding additional Polish language classes and other subjects are inadequate and render it practically impossible for the children to ever reach the level of their peers. Insufficient Polish language skills mean that the minors enter school unable to understand and communicate well enough to make progress. Consequently, they become frustrated and tend to lose interest and drop out of school instead of becoming further integrated and adapting to the school environment.

Another challenge in relation to education for separated children in Poland is that practitioners often feel unable to efficiently motivate minors to attend school and pursue further education. Foreign separated children do not usually proceed further than lower secondary school. One of the common explanations is that the children, especially those with Chechnyan roots, do not perceive education as a means for improving their prospects for the future. In their culture, being in their late teens brings more adult responsibilities and privileges as compared to Polish teenagers. They see themselves as adults and are therefore reluctant to accept the role of a person being cared for in school and by a child care institution. Above all, there are educational shortcomings that are hardly possible to overcome within the framework of the existing system.

The situation for separated children when starting school is also more difficult than that of national children in Slovakia. Although the legal system ensures conditions for education for all children, problems often arise from insufficient Slovakian language skills or the inability to document their former education. Still, there are problems including placing these children in their age-appropriate grade in primary school. Another problem is that many of the children are uninterested in continuing their education after ageing out of the facility upon turning 18.

In Slovenia, the separated children are not provided with intensive language training immediately after being granted international protection status; instead, they might need to wait for months before the Ministry of the Interior makes the necessary arrangements with the language school for them to begin the appropriate course. Practice also shows that these courses are generally too short, and the children do not have the language skills to cope after finishing the course. It is possible that the children are placed in language courses together with adults with international protection status. It is not common practice for separated children to start Slovenian language classes before beginning school. With regards to schooling, separated children have the opportunity to start or continue with their schooling and have the same rights in accessing the educational system as Slovenian children. However, children

are incorporated into the normal school system without any preparation programmes and/or do not follow any special school that would be adjusted to their needs and specific situation due to the fact that such schools do not exist in Slovenia. In practice, some of the separated children with refugee and subsidiary protection attend a secondary school for adults which is not tailored to the children's knowledge and specific needs.

13. Some separated children are not provided with sufficient physical health care – many children require help to deal with traumas and psychological difficulties (Denmark, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia)

The report from Denmark indicates that separated children are not guaranteed help dealing with traumatic experiences after they have received permission to stay. The professionals would appear to be anxious as regards working with separated children and the losses and traumas that they must deal with. As a result, they possibly do not receive the support they need while still children and that psychological reactions can first manifest themselves in their adult life.

In Poland, some of the professionals mention that they find it overwhelming to deal with the psychological difficulties caused by the previous experiences endured by the separated children. Traumatic experiences, violence and neglect have a significant impact on the general well-being of the children and their ability to integrate and accept the expected norms for behaviour. Most of all, it makes it difficult for the children to establish a positive, trust-based relationship to the caregivers. In general, the professionals do not have the sufficient knowledge or skills to diagnose psychological difficulties and provide support to foreign children. First of all, they have limited information on the background of the child and their previous experiences. Again, cultural differences can cause problems. At the same time, the children are not eager to seek assistance, even though there are psychologists and social workers employed in the schools and child care institutions. Separated children would probably benefit from broader placement options providing psychological assistance outside of their everyday environment.

This issue is also a challenge in Slovenia. According to the data gained in the interviews with actors working with separated children, the absence of specialized programmes for traumatized separated children in Slovenia is a major shortcoming in the provision of care for these children. Here again, no special treatment is provided for separated children, especially for traumatized children who require special support, nor is the staff qualified to work with them.

In Slovakia, it is a challenge that differences in health provision exist, depending on the placement and status of the children; it is important to guarantee the same health coverage to every child, as guaranteed by law. Children whose applications for asylum are pending are only provided with acute health care; children with subsidiary protection are provided with the same health care as other children, but they do not have public health insurance (financing is provided through reimbursement from the Ministry of the Interior), and other children placed in the facility for separated children have general public health insurance. Because the same health care ought to be guaranteed to all children according to the law, it is a good question why all of the children in Slovakia are not automatically public insured.

14. Some separated children are lonely and want more contact with adults and other children – including children from the country they find themselves in (Denmark, Slovenia)

*A.M.: First, my brother and then my foster family/ sponsor family - they are really important for me. It's unbelievable when I visit them, because I forget about everything. We have fun, we go to the cinema, we play sports... (Separated child, Austria).*

*"The best I experienced was the meeting with (the staff at the group home, ed.) upon arriving in Denmark ... they ... have ... meant a lot to me. They have been like a mom and dad to me. They ... have been like a family for me. They also visited me when I had my daughter ... we often speak together on the telephone."*

(Spontaneous asylum seeker, boy, 2008)

The hardest part of living (without parents) in Denmark is *"being lonely ... there isn't anybody taking care of you. You are all alone in the world. The first year was bad, but then I got used to it."* (Manager of the children's house, ed.) ... *"was great ... when I got home from school, she was always home and could explain what the words (I did not understand, ed.) meant."* (Boy, spontaneous asylum seeker, 2008).

I missed *"... people – didn't know anyone here. I live alone ... parents ... contact to adults"* (Boy, UN quota refugee, 2008).

Separated children who are left on their own (either because they live alone, have sporadic visits from contact persons, participate in introduction programmes with adults, do not have a guardian and because they are fundamentally alone) are not guaranteed assistance to help form social relations (contact families, recreational opportunities, cultural or religious networks etc.). Some of the children indicate that they are lonely. They would like to have contact to adults and other children – also people from their country of residence. But they find that it is difficult to establish such contact.

15. Separated children do not receive enough support to find their families, have contact with them and become reunited with them (Austria, Denmark, Slovenia)

*"I only missed my family ... imagine not being able to visit your family."* (Boy, spontaneous asylum seeker, Denmark 2008)

Separated children granted asylum or subsidiary protection in Austria can request assistance from the Austrian Red Cross to find family members and with respect to family reunification. Experience shows that although separated children are legally entitled to being reunited with their families, the process is becoming more difficult. In some cases it takes more than a year to undergo the process, and the costs of DNA analysis, age assessments and travel expenses pose a problem for these children.

In Denmark, for various reasons, separated children do not always receive the support and financial assistance necessary to find their parents and maintain contact with them. Moreover, separated children

rarely have the opportunity to receive visits from their parents and they do not have the possibility of bringing them to Denmark via family reunification. Separated children with refugee status are not allowed to visit their parents in their home country until they have resided in Denmark for ten years unless they return to their home country for the purpose of repatriation.

In Slovenia, family reunification rights are limited to core family members, despite the fact that extended family links can be very strong in other cultures. The possibility of being reunited with one's family is of vital importance to the integration process.

#### 16. Children with subsidiary protection have limited freedom of movement (Austria, Slovenia)

*B: "The worst thing for me was not being allowed to travel. I've wanted to go to the Homeless World Cup. The cup took place in Australia. I wanted to go there, but I didn't get an alien's pass. I also couldn't get a passport for Milan. This year, the Cup is in Brazil, I hope it works this year! ... Besides that, things are actually pretty good. My main problem is that I can't travel. I can travel to Bregenz and from there to Burgenland. Then I have to come back. I've been in all nine provinces. After a while, you get used to not being allowed to travel. Once I went illegally to Germany, one time to Slovakia. I would really like to go to England. Australia would also not be bad. I've been used to travelling since I was young. In Austria, it came to a stop. I've been to Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Kiev.*

*Personally, it's hard for me, I'm still not used to it, because my mom is in Canada and she is sick. Together with asylkoordination österreich I'm trying to see whether we can maybe visit her. But with subsidiary protection, it's not possible ... I've applied for an alien's passport. ... The official thought it would take three months. I said my mom was sick. I have to go visit her! He told me that I should come back in two weeks, because he was going on holiday. I was really freaked out. I thought that there were other police officers who could take care of it. He then went on vacation and decided negatively. I then went back and asked him why he wanted to make life difficult for me.*

With few exceptions, separated children in Austria who have been granted subsidiary protection are generally only permitted to travel within the borders of Austria. This restriction makes developing a social life difficult. In practice, this for instance means that a separated child with subsidiary protection only can visit his mother, who has received asylum in Germany, if she is gravely ill and this illness can be documented. A sister's wedding, on the other hand, is not a valid excuse for the Austrian authorities to warrant issuing a passport to an alien. A similar problem arises when a child is a member of a sports club and scheduled to participate in an athletic event abroad. In most cases, they will not be issued the necessary travel documents for this purpose.

In Slovenia, separated children with subsidiary protection have little possibility to be granted a passport. Only persons with refugee status can obtain a refugee passport. The validity of the passport is for no more than one year. The validity of the passport can be extended on the basis of submitting an application. A person with subsidiary protection needs their own national passport when travelling. In circumstances where the individual does not have their national passport and humanitarian reasons require their presence in another country, a passport can be issued in accordance with the legislation governing the area of aliens. The International Protection Act does not provide any explanation as to what constitutes a humanitarian reason for which a person could be issued an alien's passport.

17. There is a lack of knowledge regarding separated children, their cultural background, experiences etc. among professionals and a need for more cooperation and the exchange of experiences (Denmark, Poland, Slovenia)

In Denmark, professionals especially felt they knew too little with regards to the traumas involved, but there is a general interest among professionals to share knowledge and learn more from each other's experiences.

In Poland, many professionals, teachers in particular, indicated that they felt they do not know enough about the cultural background of the foreign children they work with. A lack of information about certain culturally determined behaviours renders it more difficult to understand the child and establish a rapport. Additionally, the Polish pupils and their parents do not always accept foreign newcomers, different customs and religions. In order to make a difference, additional work with the school community is required. The frustrations among these teachers stem from the fact that they feel delegated to deal with all of the matters related to the integration of foreign children and yet do not receive adequate support. Some professionals do not understand the factors determining separated minors behavior and attitude, as well as their needs and priorities and tend to perceive them in the light of typical features of their ethnicity rather than focus on their young age and separation from the family.

In Slovenia, various actors are working with the separated children, but there is a lack of cooperation amongst them, since there is no system for handling separated children in the integration process. The establishment of the system is seen as a crucial agent to effective integration. Where there is no system, 'every separated child in the integration process represents a new challenge', was the remark from professionals.

**9) References:**

Fronek, H: Desk study: Practices and Challenges Confronting Separated Children and Professionals in Austria, Asylkoordination Österreich, 2010.

Gabaj, Ž: Desk study: Practices and Challenges Confronting Separated Children and Professionals in Slovenia, Slovene Philantropy, 2010.

Gajewska, D: Desk study: Practices and Challenges Confronting Separated Children and Professionals in Poland, The Nobody's Children Foundation, 2010.

Neufeld, I: Desk study: Practices and Challenges Confronting Separated Children and Professionals in Denmark, Save the Children Denmark, 2010.

Vargová, J: Desk study: Practices and Challenges Confronting Separated Children and Professionals in Slovakia, Slovak Humanitarian Council, 2010.

Separated Children in Europe Programme, newsletter No. 33, Spring 2010.