



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES
INTERNATIONAL

I MATTER

INTERIM EVALUATION REPORT

FACTS AND FIGURES THAT MATTER
I MATTER CAMPAIGN
JANUARY 2009 - JULY 2010

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PREFACE

THE I MATTER CAMPAIGN HAS REACHED A MILESTONE. HAVING MADE IT THROUGH THE FIRST YEAR AND A HALF, IT IS IMPORTANT NOW TO STOP AND TAKE STOCK OF THE CAMPAIGN'S PROGRESS, ITS ACHIEVEMENTS AND FAILURES, AND ABOVE ALL THE LESSONS IT HAS TAUGHT US.



Progress towards reaching all three of the main campaign objectives has been good. It has been especially good, however, for the objective of gathering and disseminating information on leaving care. When the campaign started, the information regarding young people ageing out of care and the leaving care process was weak to say the least. As a result, in order to raise awareness on the issues and call for changes, it has been absolutely crucial to gather information and get it out to stakeholders. In 12 of the 15 countries participating in the campaign, a national situation analysis of young people ageing out of care was conducted. Two briefing papers were also published, as well as youth-friendly informational material. But perhaps one of the most important accomplishments in this area has been the various international and national conferences and workshops held. Events have been held in 8 countries, in each case bringing together a variety of stakeholders, including young people with care experience, to debate, discuss and find common solutions to the challenges facing young people ageing out of care.

Undoubtedly, progress has been the slowest in reaching the objective of improving legislation and practice of leaving care. Even though, in several countries valuable efforts have been made to bring the issue of leaving care to the political agenda and national initiatives to change legislation have been started, the nature of politics and decision-making has made this objective more difficult to realize.

The achievement that we are most proud of has been the progress made in reaching the second objective: to promote and support youth participation in the debate on leaving care. Youth participation has been central to the I Matter campaign, setting a special tone. Young people with care experience have been actively involved

in the management of the campaign since its inception. One young person is a member of the international steering group of the campaign, and in each country at least one young person with care experience is involved in national teams. All in all, 35 young people are involved in the campaign management. In addition, young people are also involved in the campaign's international activities. A youth council was created, consisting of 26 young people, two from each participating country. Their aim is to form a coalition of young people and non-governmental organisations, in order to lobby the improvement of leaving care services. Young people with care experience have also been part of numerous national and international conferences and workshops, presenting the campaign and sharing their views not only on the challenges of leaving care, but on how to better the situation. The exchange that the young people have had with other young people ageing out of care and with the main stakeholders has been a source of great motivation and mutual inspiration. Young people have formed national and international networks and developed powerful communication tools and strategies to help them implement their ideas made by young people ageing out of care have been incorporated into practically all of the material resulting from the various campaign initiatives. Of course there have been considerable challenges in the first half of the campaign, but the great resonance we have created and the feedback we have received, prove that leaving care is a part of the care process that urgently needs to be tackled. In the second half of the campaign, our achievements in generating valuable information and in promoting youth participation will surely push forward the changes in policy and practise that we seek.

**HELMUT KUTIN,
PRESIDENT, SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES**

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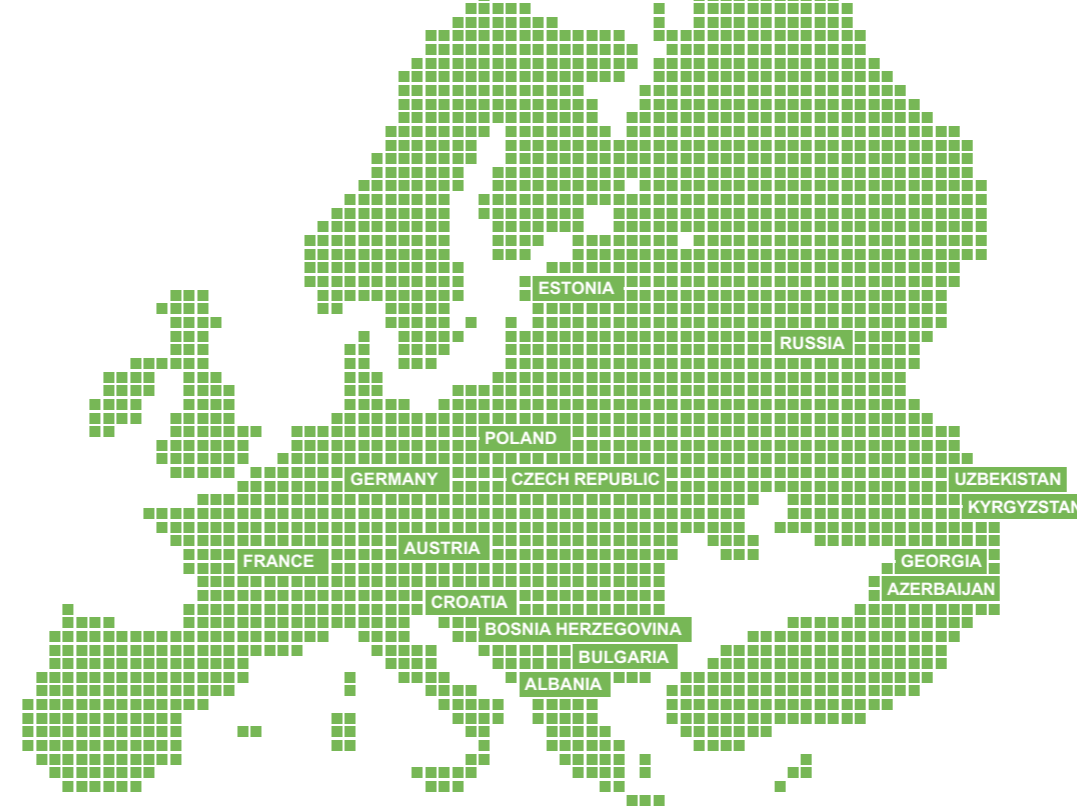
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INTERIM EVALUATION REPORT

THIS REPORT IS A SUMMARY OF ALL INTERIM RESULTS FROM JANUARY 2009 TO JULY 2010, AND SIGNIFICANT FACTS AND FIGURES OF THE *I MATTER* CAMPAIGN.



SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES – OUR COMMITMENT TO A GOOD LEAVING CARE PROCESS

Leaving care is one of the most challenging aspects of an alternative care system. Young people leaving care are expected to start living independently at a very early age, considerably younger than their peers who grew up in the care of their families of origin. Additionally, youth ageing out of care generally face many more challenges in making the transition to adulthood than other young people.

Leaving care is an aspect of the care process that has often been neglected. It has not been an issue ranked very high on the agenda of organisations and entities working on alternative care. In most countries, resources allocated towards supporting young people leaving care, as a proportion of the cost of operating alternative care, are minimal. Only a handful of European countries have taken specific measures to improve the situation of young people leaving care.

Together with like-minded organisations, SOS Children's Villages plays an important role in advocating for better conditions and standards of leaving care. As a care provider, for decades SOS Children's Villages has dedicated resources and expertise to leaving care, gathering experience in preparing young people for an independent life and providing after-care services. By identifying strengths, cultivating talents, supporting independent living, and creating a functional network to fall back on, preparing young people for independent living has become a guiding principle for our work.

A good leaving care process is a sign of quality alternative care; thus advocating for better leaving care conditions goes hand in hand with advocating for quality standards in alternative care. We advocate from a specific angle, using the organisation's expertise and the strength of the SOS child care model.

I MATTER CAMPAIGN: OUR OBJECTIVES

In 2009, SOS Children's Villages began a three-year campaign aimed at providing young people in alternative care in Europe and Central Asia with appropriate preparation for leaving care, as well as access continued after care support, according to their individual needs.

The campaign is taking place in 15 countries in Europe and Central Asia: Albania, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Kyrgyzstan, Poland, Russia and Uzbekistan.

Internationally, the *I Matter* campaign is coordinated by a project manager and supervised by a steering group consisting of one young person and 6 staff, who work at the national or international level. The steering group has already had 20 virtual meetings and

THE THREE INTERLINKED OBJECTIVES OF THE *I MATTER* CAMPAIGN REINFORCE EACH OTHER:

OBJECTIVE 1: UNDERSTANDING OF LEAVING CARE ISSUES IS IMPROVED AND SHARED WITH DUTY BEARERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Sub-objective 1: Information on legislation and practice of leaving care at the national and European levels is gathered and analysed

Sub-objective 2: Duty-bearers and stakeholders share experiences and knowledge on leaving care practice and discuss improvements based on good practices and recommendations

OBJECTIVE 2: YOUTH PARTICIPATION IS PROMOTED AND SUPPORTED IN THE DEBATE SURROUNDING LEAVING CARE

Sub-objective 1: Young people participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of this project

Sub-objective 2: Young people in care, or with care experience, are supported to create and manage networks to better represent the interests of young people in alternative care

Sub-objective 3: Opinions and recommendations of young people with care experience are actively sought

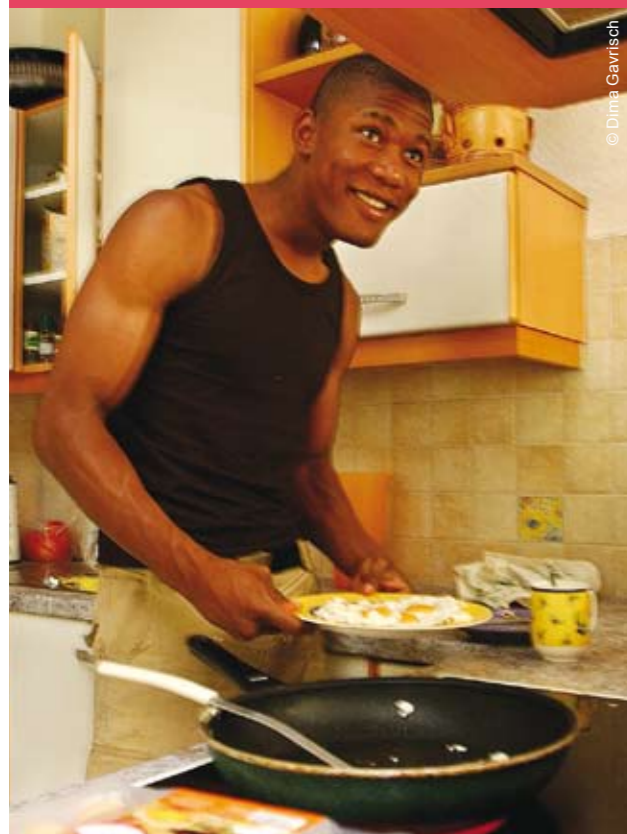
OBJECTIVE 3: NATIONAL LEGISLATION AND PRACTICE ON ISSUES RELATED TO LEAVING CARE ARE IMPROVED AND BUDGETS ARE ALLOCATED TO THE PROPER IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGISLATION

Sub-objective 1: The concerns and opinions of young people are actively sought and appropriately represented in drafted national legislation and leaving care practice

Sub-objective 2: National campaigns are used to raise awareness at the EU, Council of Europe, and UN, on issues related to leaving care

two face-to-face meetings. In each country there is a national steering group, a national focal point and a national project team.

OBJECTIVE 1 INFORMATION THAT MATTERS



1.1 NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SITUATION ANALYSES OF YOUNG PEOPLE AGEING OUT OF CARE

Good preparation for leaving care and appropriate after care support are signs of a “healthy” child care system and are essential preconditions for the social inclusion of young people ageing out care. Despite its importance, in many countries a low priority on political agendas has led to a poor legal regulation of after care. In order to understand the circumstances of young people ageing out of care, SOS Children’s Villages conducted national situation analyses in 12 countries¹.

The reports were shared with national stakeholders and so far, they have proven to be a helpful source of information. For instance, a recent report of Amnesty International Albania, “In Search of Shelter – Leaving social care in Albania”² (May 2010), refers to the national situation analysis from Albania (see Annex 3).

The analyses have also proven a valuable working tool. Using the recommendations of the Russian report, SOS Children’s Villages Russia successfully applied for a public grant, which will finance the dissemination of the analysis and production of a brochure on the rights of young people with care experience.

The national situation analyses were subsequently compiled and trends were outlined in an International Situation Analysis, which will be published in October 2010. This study shows that it is difficult to esti-

mate the real extent of the challenges faced by young people leaving care, as there is a lack of official information about their situation.

1.2 BRIEFING PAPERS & TECHNICAL PUBLICATIONS

To cover the deficit of information in the area of leaving care, SOS Children’s Villages published two briefing papers; the first in October 2009³, and the second in May 2010⁴. The briefing papers bring together articles, interviews, and examples of good practices, which illustrate not only the challenges of leaving care but also the successes of individuals and organisations. The first Briefing Paper was also translated in: Czech⁵, French and Bosnian⁶. In France, SOS Children’s Villages will dedicate the September edition of their publication “Cahier” to the topic of leaving care. The publication is intended for experts in the child care sector. The “Cahier” number 5 will bring together experience and research.

1.3 YOUTH-FRIENDLY PUBLICATIONS

Much of the informational material of the *I Matter* campaign has also been written in a youth-friendly language. Youth-friendly versions of the campaign’s objectives, documentation and presentations in Albanian and Bosnian have been made available. In Albania, a newsletter for young people in care was initiated and its first edition was distributed both to young people and to civil society. The idea is to distribute the newsletter regularly to young people in public residential care facilities.

1.4 INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

One of the main objectives of this campaign is to create opportunities for individuals, organisations, and other main stakeholders in the child care sector to meet. In a variety of different meetings, stakeholders were able to exchange information, debate issues, and define plans for common intervention.

“Keeping the door open - Support to Young People Leaving Care”, Vilnius, Lithuania, October 7-8, 2009

Hosted by the Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labour and the Council of the Baltic Sea States in partnership with the Council of Europe, UNICEF and SOS Children’s Villages, the conference was aimed at improving the services provided to young people leaving alternative care. During the conference young people with care experience, care providers, representatives of NGOs social services and governments from across Europe shared experiences and ideas on increasing the quality and efficiency of support to young people ageing out of care, with a focus on four areas: emotional stability and well-being, employment, education, and housing.

Most of the participants agreed that the assessment of the current situation and the development of new projects are a priority for their countries. The emphasis was placed on prolonging support for young people over the age of 18. Experiences and initiatives from different countries illustrated possible ways of ensuring longer and better support. The recommendations from the conference were shared with the relevant ministries in the region covered by the Council of Baltic Sea States and the Lithuanian presidency took them up in a note for the Heads of Government.

As a co-organiser, SOS Children’s Villages’ aim was to ensure meaningful involvement of young people and coordinated a workshop for young people with care experience. Fifteen young people from 13 countries, between the ages of 15 to 22 took part in this 3-day meeting and the wider conference. They delivered key-note speeches, presentations and the closing speech, as well as facilitated the working groups of the conference. The young participants also produced video messages⁸.

The child care system has been studied from many different angles. Surprisingly enough, there is very little information on the leaving care process, be it the preparation to leave care or the period after care. Few studies focus on the knowledge, abilities and competencies children and young people should have when ageing out of care, rather than on problems that children bring with them when entering care. Therefore, it was imperative to fill the information gap regarding leaving care.



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YOUNG PEOPLE'S MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING LEAVING CARE:

1. EDUCATION

- Young people leaving care need better financial support to finance their studies
- While they are studying, young people need accommodation or housing benefits

2. EMPLOYMENT

- The State should provide adequate training for job seekers (e.g. interview skills, how to write a cover letter and a CV)
- Potential employers should be encouraged, or even subsidised, to give jobs to young people leaving care
- Young people should not be discriminated against in the job market because of their care history

3. HOUSING

- Minimum standards for housing should be respected
- Government housing should be better financed
- Strong legislation should be backed up with a sound implementation to ensure its effectiveness

Leaving Care Seminar, Tallinn, Estonia, May 2009

SOS Children's Villages organised the first ever seminar on leaving care in Estonia. International speakers from Austria, the United Kingdom and Norway shared their experiences in providing quality leaving care services. The seminar was also used to launch the national situation analysis on young people ageing out of care; and the findings and key recommendations of the report were presented. Around 40 representatives of the government, local authorities and care providers were in attendance.

"Perspectives on Leaving Care in the Context of Alternative Care for Children", Prague, Czech Republic, June 2009

This international conference offered a great opportunity to exchange examples of good practices and explore the potential for future actions⁹. It was organised by SOS Children's Villages, in partnership with the Department of Social Work of the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts (Charles University in Prague) and the NGO Člověk hledá člověka. The focus of the conference was on leaving care and the transition to independent living from different forms of alternative care. About 160 participants attended the conference, including representatives of Ministries, employees of alternative care facilities, child care NGOs, foster parents, and young people with care experience.

As a follow-up to the conference, in October 2009 SOS Children's Villages organised a meeting of 12 NGOs working in the field of leaving care, with the participation of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. The main objective of the meeting was to share knowledge, identify challenges and create an informal network of NGOs that will be in permanent contact to exchange examples of good practice.

Round tables and Forum on Leaving Care, Tirana, Albania, June 2009

SOS Children's Villages and International Social Service organised a round table to present the results of the national situation analysis of young people ageing out of care and at the same time initiate a coalition of policy makers and service providers to improve leaving care policy and practice in Al-

bania. The meeting was followed by another round table with representatives of civil society, services providers and young people in October 2009. In December 2009, SOS Children's Villages Albania organised a forum on leaving care to raise awareness on the situation of young people ageing out of care. The audience was diverse, including representatives of Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the municipality, local government, and of the delegation of the European Commission in Albania, as well as representatives of civil society, young people from different forms of care, young people from universities and high schools, and the media. A video explaining the situation of young people ageing out of care in Albania was shown. A panel discussion involving 5 young people with care experience created a good opportunity for in-depth discussions and recommendations on how to approach the issue. Following the forum, a painting exhibition was organised, where 20 paintings created by young people in care were offered for sale at the National Museum of Albania.

National round table on leaving care, Baku, Azerbaijan, 2009

SOS Children's Villages invited stakeholders of the child care sector in Azerbaijan to share their knowledge and cooperate in the provision of leaving care services. As a result of the meeting, a network of young people who are either leaving or have left care was established (see the information about the "Youth Reliance Bridge" network in Azerbaijan in section 4.3.).

Introductory round table on Leaving care, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, June 2009

SOS Children's Villages launched the *I Matter* campaign in Kyrgyzstan, the organisation, hosted a round table of 25 participants from different ministries and NGOs active in the child care field in cooperation with the State Child Protection Department. They expressed the need to improve existing social services and legislation on leaving care, and made recommendations for future action. As a result of the meeting, the State Child Protection Department initiated a working group of representatives from the Ministries of Labour, Education, and Finance; and the Agencies on Self Governance, and on Vocational Education.



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Children's Week, Sarajevo and Medjugorje, Bosnia and Herzegovina, October 2009

SOS Children's Villages organised a national and a local conference in Sarajevo and Medjugorje, respectively. The conferences brought together more than 100 state duty bearers, NGOs and media. The "Children's Week" was followed by the presentation of the campaign to representatives of ministries and centres for social work from different regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Round table, Valenciennes, France, May 20, 2010

Maison Claire Morandat¹⁰ organised an open door event to exchange with partners and local organisations on leaving care. 37 young people between 16 and 21 years receive social and educative support in this semi-independent living programme run by SOS Children's Villages France. The main question of the day was: what are the challenges of facilitating a young person's transition to adulthood and what solutions can be found? During the event, round tables were organised on the topics of education, employment and well-being. Young people from the Maison Claire Morandat were present during the event and held presentations during the round tables.

Panel discussion, Warsaw, Poland, June 9, 2010

SOS Children's Villages and the Robinson Crusoe Foundation organised a panel discussion called "social and economical costs of mismanaged leaving care". The event brought together representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Education, and District Centres for Family Support, as well as social workers from the District Centres for Family Support and from residential forms of alternative care, and leaders of child care NGOs. Participants agreed to create a coalition that will further work on leaving care issues.

1.5 RAISING AWARENESS AND INVOLVING THE GENERAL PUBLIC

The *I Matter* campaign is on Facebook. The “Preparation for independent living” platform aims at raising awareness on the topic within a broader international audience, as well as facilitating the exchange of knowledge and good practices. As of July 2010, more than 430 fans from 20 countries have made use of this communication tool, with over 100 hits per week.



BECOME A FAN OF THE CAMPAIGN ON FACEBOOK. LOOK FOR “I MATTER - PREPARATION FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

I Matter Newsletters

Periodically, the *I Matter* Newsletter is released, containing information about the major development in the area of leaving care at a national and international level. By July 2010, the six issues of the Newsletter were distributed to more than 190 subscribers.

Podcast

Since July 2010, the SOS Children’s Villages podcast features the *I Matter* series, including interviews with people involved in the *I Matter* campaign. In the August edition, Taali and Teona, two young people from the International Youth Council talked about their engagement in the campaign¹¹.

Journalism Competition in Azerbaijan

In July 2009, SOS Children’s Villages Azerbaijan initiated a three-month long journalism competition, with the intention of raising public awareness of the *I Matter* campaign. The competition awarded pieces on the topic of leaving care in two categories: newsprint and internet articles, and TV and radio spots. Youth participation in the preparation of the pieces was also encouraged. All in all, 27 pieces were submitted and 3 journalists were recognised in each category. The competition was not only a great tool for awareness raising, but also for youth participation as young people participated in the inception of the competition, the orientation of the journalists, and the evaluation of the pieces.

OBJECTIVE 2 YOUNG PEOPLE MATTER!



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is involved in the steering group and in the national team. All in all, over 35 young people are members of steering groups and teams managing the *I Matter* campaign. In November 2009, a meeting of young people leaving care was organized in Karlovy Vary, the Czech Republic. The recommendations made by the young people at that meeting were considered in the advocacy messages and the implementation of the *I Matter* campaign.

2.2 THE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL

At the end of 2009, the International Youth Council was officially founded with the aim of involving young people more in the campaign’s international activities. It consists of two young people from each of the participating countries and currently has 26 members.

In March 2010, the International Youth Council came together for the first time, at the SOS Children’s Villages vocational training centre in Berlin. The 23 young participants, ranging in age from 15 to 26, each with care experience, met to discuss how they envision their involvement and to share their experiences with the campaign.

During the course of the meeting, the Council defined three teams: communications, events, and policy. Each team was then tasked with the development of an action plan defining concrete next steps. They also prepared a statement on how they see their role in the campaign and what they want to achieve.

Far more than simple rhetoric, youth participation is central to the *I Matter* campaign and has determined the culture of the entire campaign. It is a principle objective, and also part of the campaign methodology. Young people with care experience have been actively involved in the planning and implementation of the campaign since its inception.

2.1 INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The design of the campaign at both the national and international levels was carried out with the active participation of young people with care experience. One young person is a member of the international steering group of the campaign and in every country, at least one young person with care experience

¹ For the list of the national situation analyses of young people ageing out of care see Annex 3

² <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR11/004/2010/en>

³ <http://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/Focus-areas/Child-rights/Child-rights-issues/Pages/Briefing-paper-on-leaving-care-2.aspx>

⁴ <http://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/Focus-areas/Child-rights/Child-rights-issues/Pages/Leaving-2-nd-Briefing-Paper.aspx>

⁵ <http://sos-vesnický.cz/projekty/odchazeni-z-nahradni-pece/na-mne-zalezí/>

⁶ www.sos-ds.ba

⁷ <http://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/Focus-areas/Child-rights/Child-rights-issues/Pages/Keeping-the-door-open-2.aspx>

⁸ The video messages can be viewed at: http://www.coe.int/t/transversalprojects/children/events/vilnius/keepingthedooropen_EN.asp

⁹ For presentations during the conference, see <http://www.sos-vesnický.cz> (in Czech)

¹⁰ http://www.sosve.org/20-decouvrir/30-30_Accueil_jeune.asp

¹¹ <http://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/Explore-SOS/Podcast/Pages/default.aspx>



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“We stand for future opportunities for youngsters who leave care to be able to develop their capacities, accomplish their goals, realize their dreams, be independent, and be contributing members of society. Our purpose is to ensure that youngsters who leave care have the same opportunities as other youngsters who grow up with their families of origin. We all come from different alternative care backgrounds, and consequently we know what and how to change the situation of youngsters leaving care. We want to create a coalition/union of youngsters and international non-governmental organisations in order to lobby local governments and other organizations to improve the caring approach, care quality and leaving care services. In addition, we want to motivate more youngsters to join our campaign so that they are better informed about their rights and possibilities and to ensure they participate in decision-making about their futures.”

Statement by young people at the meeting of the International Youth Council, Berlin, 2010

To facilitate communication, the members of the International Youth Council created a virtual group on Facebook. The International Youth Council is represented by a young person in the international steering group of the *I Matter* campaign. The second meeting of the International Youth Council will be organised in 2011 by its Polish members, with support from SOS Children’s Villages Poland.

2.3 NATIONAL YOUTH NETWORKS AND FORUMS

Youth Group, Albania

As of June 2009, SOS Children’s Villages has been hosting regular meetings of young people with care experience in Tirana, Albania. Originally initiated by young people from SOS Children’s Villages Albania, very soon the meetings attracted young people from two youth organisations: “Rinia Aktive” and “Tamam”. The young people decided on the activities they would like to co-organise and developed an action plan for 2009 – 2010. Youth-friendly informative materials regarding services available in Albania, as well as the Albanian version of the booklet “Children and young people in care – Discover your rights!”¹², will be distributed to young people in care in autumn 2010.

Between November 2009 and February 2010, 4 training sessions were conducted with young people engaged in the *I Matter* campaign. They were focused on issues such as: youth participation, emotional stability, non-discrimination, tolerance, and conflict resolution.

A Facebook page named “UNE VLEJ” was created to enhance communication among young people and to raise awareness on the issue of leaving care, as well as to inform about the *I Matter* campaign. Furthermore, the members of the youth group created a short video about the situation of young people leaving care in Albania, which is regularly shown during the activities of the *I Matter* campaign and is posted on the Facebook page.

“Youth Reliance Bridge”, Azerbaijan

The “Youth Reliance Bridge” is a network established by and for young people who are in care or have aged

out of care. The idea was initiated by SOS Children’s Villages and got the support of the Ministry of Youth and Sport and the Council of State Support to NGOs. After identifying its mission, goals and tasks, the Network was formally established in February 2009. The network has working groups on housing, education, employment and emotional stability. At the moment, the network has 80 members. Recently the Youth Reliance Bridge hosted an event showing movies made by children and young people in care, depicting the similarities in the young people’s opinions regardless their social origin. The event attracted the interest of media, state duty bearers and of international and national NGOs.

Plans for an NGO of young people with care experience, Bosnia and Herzegovina

A meeting of young people under the care of SOS Children’s Villages brought together 129 young people. The young people are now planning to form their own NGO of young people who left the care of SOS Children’s Villages. The organisation aims to offer after care support and promote the rights of young people leaving care.

Working group of young people from SOS Children’s Villages, Estonia

The group is led by the Good Deed Foundation and brings together 12 young people either under the care or who have aged out of the care of SOS Children’s Villages. The group will eventually be enlarged to include young people with experience in other types of alternative care.

National Youth Forum, France

Thirteen young people over the age of 14 under the care of SOS Children’s Villages programmes in France were elected to represent all programmes of the organisation in a youth forum. They met for the first time in May 2010.

“Young Partners”, Georgia

The association “Young Partners” was founded in February 2010 by four young people leaving the care of SOS Children’s Villages Georgia. The association aims to ensure the social inclusion of young people leaving care by supporting them to receive an educa-

tion and find employment, and by strengthening their emotional stability and providing them with necessary counselling they need to cope with their situation.

Care Leavers’ Network, Kyrgyzstan

SOS Children’s Villages is supporting the creation of a network of care leavers in Kyrgyzstan. As a first step, information is being gathered on children between the ages of 15 to 18 who reside in residential care facilities, as well as young people who have aged out of care.

2.4 YOUNG PEOPLE’S PARTICIPATION AT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

SOS Children’s Villages successfully supported the participation of 31 young people with care experience as key speakers at different national and international events.

Young people talked about leaving care and presented the *I Matter* campaign in several international meetings, including:

- Fédération Internationale des Communautés Educatives, Helsinki, Finland, June 2008
- International Foster Care Organisation, Dublin, Ireland, July 2009
- “Keeping the door open - Support to young people leaving care”, Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labour, and the Council of the Baltic Sea States in partnership with the Council of Europe, UNICEF and SOS Children’s Villages, Vilnius, Lithuania, October 2009.
- “Perspectives on Leaving Care in the Context of Alternative Care for Children”, SOS Children’s Villages Prague, Czech Republic, 2009
- Forum on Leaving Care, SOS Children’s Villages Tirana, December Albania, 2009
- „IFCO European Regional Training Seminar 2010 – Transforming children’s lives through fostering“, International Foster Care Organisation, Brighton, UK, July 2010. The International Youth Council led a workshop on leaving care and independent living which gathered around 40 participants.

- “Social and economical costs of mismanaged leaving care”, organised SOS Children’s Villages and Robinson Crusoe Foundation, Warsaw, Poland, June 2010

Members of the International Youth Council are also part of the planning committee of the international conference “Quality in Alternative Care” which is going to be organised by SOS Children’s Villages and partners¹³ in Prague, in April 2011. During the conference, young people with care experience will facilitate workshops, lead discussions and learn about fundraising.

It is also worth mentioning that during all the international conferences and workshops where young people were present, psychological support was made available for the young people. One specialised youth care co-worker from SOS Children’s Villages was available around the clock.

2.5 CREATION OF NEW SERVICES AND NETWORKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH CARE EXPERIENCE

Resource Centre for Young People Leaving Care, Azerbaijan

In Azerbaijan, SOS Children’s Villages established a resource centre for young people who are leaving or who have already left care. The resource centre, financed through a public grant awarded by the Ministry of Youth and Sport, aims at increasing the social abilities of young people with care experience. For example, the centre provides psychological and social services, material and technical resources, and serves as a meeting place for young people leaving care. Raising the public awareness on the needs of care leavers is also an objective of the resource centre.

In the last year and a half, the Resource Centre has put together various courses such as communication skills, effective job hunting, and labour rights, and thanks to an agreement between SOS Children’s Villages and a local company, G&R Business Services LLC (GRBS®), young people with care experience attended 72 other vocational training courses (e.g. languages courses, preparation for international ex-

ams, etc). Additionally, English classes and computer courses have been provided by World Hope International Azerbaijan. Also, the UN Department of Public Information and UN Population Fund organised round tables on the rights of care leavers at the centre.

Through the centre, young people get support from medical doctors, business people, psychologists, journalists, and lawyers, who are providing their services free of charge. In 2009, 12 young people have found a job thanks to the support received at the centre.

In addition, the Centre has arranged meetings with state authorities, government bodies, NGOs and youth organisations in four regions of Azerbaijan: Ganja, Sheki, Lenkaran and Guba.

Out of 276 NGO projects, the Resource Centre was declared “The Best NGO Project of the Year” in 2009 by the State NGO Support Council.

Support structure for young people leaving care, Russia

SOS Children’s Villages Russia received financial aid from the Pan-Russian public fund “National Charity Fund” to create a supportive structure for young people leaving care. With the grant, young people between the ages of 16 and 23 who are ageing out of the care of SOS Children’s Villages receive social and psychological support on their way to independent living. The project runs from December 2009 to November 2010.

Manual for care leavers and social workers, Poland

In June 2010, SOS Children’s Villages and the Robinson Crusoe Foundation launched an interactive, youth-friendly manual for care leavers and the social workers who work with them¹⁴. The manual offers concrete, up-to-date information on the legal framework that underpins the preparation to leave care and after care services. The user-friendly manual guides young people through all the services available in Poland for young people leaving care in the areas of housing, education, social services, and emotional support, among others.

2.6 RESEARCHING YOUNG PEOPLE

During the *I Matter* campaign, SOS Children’s Villages has dedicated time to exploring the personal stories of care leavers and to draft recommendations based on these stories. A concrete example is the “peer research” project from Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is based on interviews with young people

with care experience. A similar project is being run in Estonia with the support of the Estonian Ministry for Social Affairs. It is an innovative project in Estonia and involves a representative number of young people from all over the country. The methodology of the project has been finalised and field research will start in August 2010.

¹² <http://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/Publications/Guidelines-Policies-Papers/Pages/Children-and-young-people-in-care-copy.aspx>

¹³ SOS Children’s Villages will organise an international conference in Prague, April 4-6, 2011 on “quality in alternative care” in partnership with: International Social Service, the Charles University in Prague, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, Fédération Internationale des Communautés Educatives, the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the International Research Network on Transitions to Adulthood from Care, the Better Care Network, Eurochild, the Council of Europe, the Palacký University and the European Scientific Association on Residential and Foster Care for Children and Adolescents

¹⁴ http://www.wioskisos.org/przewodnik_usamodzielnienia

OBJECTIVE 3 RIGHTS MATTER!



3.1 CREATING A TOPIC ON THE POLITICAL AGENDA

Estonia

In 2009, SOS Children's Villages was the first organisation to put together a nationwide gathering to discuss the challenges that young people face when leaving care. Representatives of the government were present and expressed their commitment to addressing the topic and looking for adequate solutions. It is noteworthy that recently the Ministry of Social Affairs explicitly addressed the employment of young people with care experience.

Azerbaijan

The Child Protection Network in Azerbaijan took the leaving care topic onto their agenda. Amendments to the national child care legislation have been submitted to the Parliament and are on a waiting list to be considered for discussion.

3.2 NATIONAL INITIATIVES TO CHANGE LEGISLATION AND COMMON PRACTICE

Formation of an Inter-ministerial Working Group, Kyrgyzstan

Following the initiative of SOS Children's Villages, the State Child Protection Department of Kyrgyzstan initiated a working group, consisting of representatives of the Ministries of Labour, Education, and Finance; and the Agencies of Self Governance and Vocational Education, among others. The working group is expected to create amendments to the existing national child care legislation, allowing for better preparation for leaving care and after care services. Unfortunately, the extremely unstable political situation of Kyrgyzstan has caused serious delays to the plans of the working group, as well as changes of the group's members. Two young people from SOS Children's Villages will participate, together with other young people, in the discussions of the working group.

Coalition of child rights NGOs, Estonia

In March 2010, 15 child rights NGOs established a coalition aimed at improving the situation of

children in Estonia. SOS Children's Villages supports the coalition's work on children in alternative care and has emphasized the need for preparation for leaving care and after care support. The coalition will make concrete proposals to improve the quality of the leaving care services and calls for adequate after care services.

Amendment to the law on social-legal protection of children (Act 359/1999), Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, SOS Children's Villages calls for equal conditions for all alternative care settings: residential care and family-based care. At the moment, residential care programmes can legally access significant financial resources for the services they provide. In contrast, family-based care programmes and foster families have difficulties in securing their funding, resulting in inadequate funding for leaving care. SOS Children's Villages drafted an amendment to the law on social-legal protection of children that was subsequently proposed by the Social Democratic Party in parliament. It was discussed by the Chamber of Deputies in December 2009. The recent political crisis in Czech Republic caused a delay in the approval of the amendment.

Recommendations to improve preparation for leaving care and after care support, France

In 2008, SOS Children's Villages brought the issues facing young people leaving care in France to the attention of the Observatoire National de l'Enfance en Danger (ONED). After initial discussions, ONED established a multi-disciplinary working group, gathering representatives of both local and national, child protection authorities, NGOs and researchers. After one year of cooperation, the working group published a national report on the preparation for leaving care and after care. The report includes a review of literature, an analysis of the situation, and recommendations. The official launch of the report took place on the 11th of December 2009, during a conference organised in Paris. The project manager of the *I Matter* campaign, made a presentation on the engagement of young people in the campaign.

The Law of Chances ("Chancengesetz"), Austria

Over the last years, SOS Children's Village Austria has been involved in a national debate on the reformation of the child care sector in the country. The organisation drafted a position paper calling for a new and more modern child and youth welfare law. One of the main objectives presented in the position paper is that the period during which the public youth welfare system is responsible for young people in care be extended until they reach the age of 27. Thirty-two national partners (among them many NGOs and Ombudsmen for children) have backed the position paper. The network of partners also provided input to the child and youth welfare draft law, called "The Law of Chances". The initial draft was discussed already by members of the Austrian parliament and relevant ministries, but progress has been slow. At the moment, the network is holding focused discussions with individual politicians, regional governments and parliaments to promote the adoption of the law.

Calls to state duty bearers

SOS Children's Villages has sent several drafted letters to state duty bearers calling for concrete measures to improve the social inclusion of young people leaving care.

Bosnia and Herzegovina – a letter was sent to 11 relevant ministries, calling for better use of provisions made in existing laws regarding the education of young people leaving care.

Albania – on behalf of young people in care and organisations supporting the *I Matter* campaign, SOS Children's Villages sent a letter to a large number of duty-bearers, including the Prime Minister, relevant ministries, the Ombudsman for Civil Society and UN Agencies, calling for immediate action.

Bulgaria - within the framework of debates on the development of the Bulgarian Annual Operation Programme of the State Agency for Child Protection for 2010, SOS Children's Villages has called for changes in legislation. Amendments to legislation should give care leavers a status as a social group, thereby ensuring an adequate duration and continuity of leaving and after care services.

3.3 INTERNATIONAL MECHANISMS TO SUPPORT NATIONAL INITIATIVES

Several countries made use of their national Universal Period Review (UPR) to inform the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) on the situation of young people leaving care in their countries.

Albania (2009) Emphasis was placed on the need to develop a well functioning child protection and care system that offers sound preparation for independent living, and the extension of the government responsibility to provide alternative care to all children younger than 18¹⁵. During the UPR session, the government of Albania accepted all the recommendations concerning children in alternative care. Although these recommendations are not binding, they express a voluntary commitment of the Albanian government to take concrete measures to improve child care in the country, including conditions for young people ageing out of care. SOS Children's Villages will support the government and follow up on its efforts in this regard.

Azerbaijan (2008) In the submission of SOS Children's Villages to the HRC regarding Azerbaijan, the organisation recommended the development of suitable accommodation for children preparing to leave care.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (2009) SOS Children's Villages wrote a joint submission together with UNICEF, Hope and Homes for Children, World Vision, Save the Children UK and Save the Children Norway. One of the recommendations in the submission stressed the importance of proper support for leaving care. The same recommendations were also submitted to the European Commission during the drafting of the EC Delegation Report on Child Rights Issues (for 2009 and 2010).

Bulgaria (2010) The submission to the HRC was put forward by the National Network for Children, a network SOS Children's Villages is a member of. SOS Children's Villages contributed to the submission by making concrete recommendations for improving the situation of care leavers in Bulgaria.

SOS Children's Villages also contributed to the drafting of Alternative Reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in the following countries:

Kyrgyzstan (2010) Together with a coalition of NGOs, SOS Children's Villages asked a group of children above the age of 10 about their opinion on how their rights are respected. Their recommendations were included in the Alternative Report.

Czech Republic (2010) SOS Children's Villages edited the chapter of the Alternative Report on alternative care and included recommendations on the need to improve leaving care services and make after care services available.

Furthermore, in **Albania**, SOS Children's Villages organised several meetings with representatives of the European Commission. The goal was to inform the European Commission about the situation of young people leaving care in the country and to motivate them to follow up on this topic and support the Government of Albania in improving its child care policy and practice. Subsequently, the European Commission consulted SOS Children's Villages regarding the issue of leaving care with the intention of considering the recommendations made by the organisation in the drafting the European Union pre-accession questionnaire directed to the Albanian government.

THE LESSONS WE LEARNED, THE ACTIONS WE TAKE



Young people's participation

Young people with care experience have the capacity and the knowledge to make recommendations on improving preparation for leaving care and independent living. The exchange with other young people with similar backgrounds within national and international networks helped them to develop powerful communication tools and strategies for implementing their ideas. Furthermore a well-functioning international network motivated the creation of national networks of youth in care. Through the *I Matter* campaign, young people with care experience got opportunities to speak up for themselves and their peers with care experience.

Intensive exchanges among stakeholders

Improvements in the legislation and practice of leaving care demand accurate knowledge, intensive exchange among stakeholders and decision makers, access to examples of good practices, the commitment of decision makers, and sound consultations with young people with care experience and care-providing organisations. This has proved to be a time intensive, long-term process. Particularly in countries with inappropriate child care legislation and social protection systems, advocacy for improving policy and practice of leaving care becomes even more difficult.

Partnerships

Working in partnership massively raises the chances of success of the *I Matter* campaign. Partners

After one and a half years of actively promoting the need for a quality leaving care process, we can draw several major conclusions:

Situation analysis

The situation analyses carried out by SOS Children's Villages have made a valuable contribution to the national and international knowledge and understanding of the challenges faced by young people when leaving care. This helped us to develop clear and well targeted recommendations for policy makers and service providers.

¹⁵ At the moment, the Albanian child care legislation recognises the obligation of the State to provide alternative care for children who are younger than 14 (On the status of orphan, Law no.8153, dated 31.10.1996).

bring in precious experiences and knowledge, and ensure a broader impact of activities.

Flexibility

The political framework of the *I Matter* campaign is marked by frequent and unexpected changes. Therefore, action plans must constantly be redefined and methods to approach state duty bearers constantly adapted.

Use the synergies

The national and international activities of *I Matter* campaign reinforce each other. Synergies must be used effectively. Examples from different countries become a valuable source of inspiration. Any efforts at the international level should support and strengthen national intervention and vice-versa.

Inspiring like-minded organisations

The *I Matter* campaign proved to be a very inspiring and supportive platform for national initiatives. Some national partners were inspired by the successes of the campaign and decided to join efforts at a later phase of the process.

Impact on our programmes

Advocacy led to improvement in our own practice of leaving care. By learning more about the policy and practice of leaving care and by exchanging with young people, partner organisations, and decision makers, we got ideas on how to improve our own practice in providing sound preparation for leaving care and adequate after care services.

WHAT ACTIONS WE PLAN TO TAKE IN THE NEXT PHASE OF THE CAMPAIGN:

→ We will open up the campaign to new countries in Europe and Central Asia. For those countries entering the project at a later stage, experience gathered in the first years of the project will be used to accelerating developments and avoid duplication.

- We will build on our experience in working with young people to strengthen their involvement in decision making processes within the campaign; and we will seek more cooperation with youth organisations.
- We will strengthen the young people's participation in national networks by: creating criteria for admission and participation, developing orientation and induction procedures, drafting codes of conduct, supporting the development of working plans for the networks, and introducing clear criteria for balanced participation.
- We will keep opening different activities within the campaign to relevant, like-minded partners.
- We will better explore and make use of available sources of funding at both the national and international level.
- We will look into the possibility of getting the corporate sector involved. We will offer them attractive partnerships and motivate them by sharing the intermediate outcomes of the campaign.
- We will improve the monitoring and evaluation processes and develop a participative approach to assess the impact of the campaign.
- We acknowledge that progress with Objectives 1 (knowledge sharing) and 2 (youth participation) has been more significant. We will build on the successes of the campaign in these two objectives to accelerate implementation of activities planned under Objective 3 (changes in policy and practice of leaving care).
- We will try to maintain the enthusiasm created through the campaign and extend the time frame to 2013.

ANNEX 1 PARTNERS THAT HELP US MAKE A DIFFERENCE

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

Professor Mike Stein
Council of Europe ("Building a Europe for and with children" Programme)
Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS)

ALBANIA

ACAT Coalition (All Together Against Child Trafficking)
Amnesty International
Another Vison Elbasan
Hopes and Homes
International Social Services
Maddonina Shkoder
TAMAM

AZERBAIJAN

Child Protection Network
Ministry of Youth and Sport
G&R Business Services LLC GRBS@
"Caspi" Education courses
BESTAR Tourism Agency

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

UNICEF
Hope and Homes for Children
Save the Children UK
Save the Children Norway
World Vision
Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees
Ministry for Labour and Social Work of the Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina

BULGARIA

Agapedia
Step for Bulgaria

CZECH REPUBLIC

Charles University - Department of Social Work of the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts
Člověk hledá člověka
Marriott

CROATIA

Forum for Quality Foster Care
Ministry for Health and Social Care - Office for Social Care
MAP Savjetovanja Consultancy Agency

ESTONIA

Good Deed Foundation
The Ministry of Social Affairs

GEORGIA

Children of Georgia
Everychild Georgia
Witsipedia

KYRGYZSTAN

Youth Human Rights Group

POLAND

Robinson Crusoe Foundation

RUSSIA

Ombudsman on Children's Rights under the President of the Russian Federation
Public Chamber of Russian Federation
Ministry of Education in Moscow Region
Everychild Russia
Women and Children First
Youth centres of aftercare in Murmansk Region
Department of Education in Vologda Regions

ANNEX 2 I MATTER CAMPAIGN IN THE MEDIA

The *I Matter* campaign and the topic of leaving care have been the subject of several articles in international and national newspapers, magazines, professional publications, and websites.

ALBANIA

- „Koha Jone - SOS Jetimet te braktisur nga ligji” (articles regarding the roundtable and the forum), December 4, 2009
- “In Search of Shelter – Leaving social care in Albania”, Amnesty International, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR11/004/2010/en>, 2010. The report uses data and recommendations of the Situation Analysis of Young People Ageing out of Care in Albania, published by SOS Children’s Villages and the National Albanian Centre for Social Studies in 2009.
- TV documentation on children without parental care and leaving care for TV Media, TV Klan and Vizion+, 2010 in SOS Children’s Villages Albania’s contribution regarding the rights of children ageing out of care is based on the information in the situation analysis.

ARGENTINA

- The *I Matter* campaign was mentioned as an example of good practice in Argentina by “Amartya”, an organisation promoting networking in the social field.
http://www.amartya-ar.net/english/e_proyectos.htm

AUSTRIA

- Radio report on Ö1, ORF, Morgenjournal, Barbara Gansfuss, November 13, 2009
- Radio report on Ö1, ORF, Mittagsjournal, Barbara Gansfuss, February 19, 2010
- TV Interview on ORF, ZIB 2, February 19, 2010
- Newspaper article “Jugendwohlfahrt - Ein Spielplatz zum Leidwesen der Kinder” in Der Standard, February 23, 2010
- Newspaper article “Es gibt eine zu kleine Lobby für diesen Bereich” in Die Furche, February 25, 2010
- Newspaper article „Fehlende Fürsorge: „Zum zweiten Mal verlassen“ in Die Presse, June 26, 2010
<http://diepresse.com/home/panorama/welt/576810/index.do>

AZERBAIJAN

- “The people became closer” in Euroxber (Euronews), by Novruz Novruzov, winner of the journalists’ competition, 2009
<http://avesta.azersayt.com>

BULGARIA

- “Twenty opinions on the implementation of child protection and well-being policies in Bulgaria”, 2009, Sofia. The chapter “Standard of living”, which includes detailed information on the integration challenges faced by young people leaving care, was prepared by SOS Children’s Villages.

CZECH REPUBLIC

- Newspaper article “Too many children in institutional care!” in Prague Daily Monitor:<http://www.praguemonitor.com/2010/05/27/experts-too-many-children-institutional-care>

FRANCE

- Article “Quel devenir pour les jeunes adultes?” in Le Magazine, Actualités Sociales Hebdomadaires, April 30, 2010, No. 2657
- Article “After a Long-Term Placement: Investigating Educational Achievement, Behaviours, and Transition to Independent Living”, Annick Dumaret, Pascale Donati, Monique Crost, in Société et jeunesse en difficulté, N°8, 2009. The study describes the transition towards independent living of 123 young people who were fostered for a long period in programmes run by SOS Children’s Villages France.

KYRGYZSTAN

- Newspaper article „Care Leavers need to further rehabilitation” in Reporter-Bishkek, June 26, 2009
- Article „Out of orphanage”, in Bulletin of NGO Advocacy Network for children, July 2010

POLAND

- “Raport Krajowy Polskiej Koalicji Social Watch, Rozwoj społeczny” 2009 (National Polish Report of Social Watch Coalition in Poland, Social development, 2009). The report was launched in February, 2010. SOS Children’s Villages drafted the chapter on housing challenges faced by young people leaving care.

UNITED KINGDOM

- Notes from the Care Leavers National Day, National Care Advisory Service (NCAS), <http://www.leavingcare.org/data/tmp/5771-11918.pdf>

ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTERS

- “I Matter: An international campaign is launched by SOS Children’s Villages on Leaving Care”, International Social Services Monthly Review no 11-12/2009, www.iss-ssi.org

ANNEX 3 LIST OF NATIONAL SITUATION ANALYSES OF YOUNG PEOPLE AGEING OUT OF CARE

Situation Analysis of Young People Ageing out of Care in Albania, Mirela Muca, Vilma Kolpeja, Almandina Guma, Alketa Berzani, Elsa Osmani, 2008

Situation Analysis of Young People Ageing out of Care in Azerbaijan, Nabil Seyidov (with the contribution of Fargana Mammadove, Halima Aliyeva), 2008

Situation Analysis of Young People Ageing out of Care in Bulgaria, Radostina Paneva, 2010
www.sosbg.org

Situation Analysis of Young People Ageing out of Care in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Natalia Lyalina and Jasna Sofovic, 2008,
www.sos-ds.ba

Situation Analysis of Young People Ageing out of Care in Czech Republic, Jan Folda (editor), Oldrich Matousek, Hana Pazlarova, Anna Sabatova, Veduna Bubleova, Alna Vavrova, Martina Vanca-kova, Jana Frantikova, Rena Janickova, 2009
<http://sos-vesnický.cz/res/data/002/000503.pdf>

Situation Analysis of Young People Ageing out of Care in Croatia, Nataša Škrbić, 2009

Situation Analysis of Young People Ageing out of Care in Estonia, Kadri Soova, 2009
<http://www.sos-lastekyla.ee/lapseoigused/uuringud>

Situation Analysis of Young People Ageing out of Care in Georgia, Nino Partskhaladze, 2008

Situation Analysis of Young People Ageing out of Care in Kyrgyzstan, Bolot Dyikanov and Sheradil Baktygulov, 2008,
http://www.soskyrgyzstan.kg/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=21&Itemid=49&lang=en

Situation Analysis of Young People Ageing out of Care in Poland, Beata Jasko, 2009

Situation Analysis of Young People Ageing out of Care in Russia, G.V. Semia and Svetlana Zakharova, 2009,
www.sos-dd.ru

Situation Analysis of Young People Ageing out of Care in Uzbekistan, Ulughbek Rahimov, Dilorom Usmanova, Matluba Umurzakova and Lola Yusupova, 2008

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