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CHILD FOR CHILD MANUAL

EDITED BY
ELISABETTA DI GIOVANNI

Contesti Antropologici
Anthropological Contexts



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Contesti Antropologici / Anthropological Contexts - 7

Child for Child Manual
UNIPA Cooperativa 3P

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Children for children wellbeing:
strengthening National Child Care System to guarantee equal rights for all children
European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020)
Agreement number: 785676 – REC-RCHI-PROF-AG-2017
Capacity-building in the area of rights of the child1



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Introduction

The Children for children wellbeing: strengthening National Child Care System to guarantee equal rights for all children (CHILD.FOR.CHILD) project involved Italy and Romania and addressed children in care, care leavers, specialized operators and representatives of public institutions. It had as partners the 3P Social Cooperative Society (Father Pino Puglisi), the University of Palermo, the Union of Municipal and Provincial Departments for Social, Health and Work Policies, Sorageli Trans SRL, Asociatia Centrul De Performanta Before & After School Conil, the Association Hraniti Copii - Feed the Children.

The aim was to strengthen the services currently provided by national and international assistance systems and to improve those aimed at children in care and care leavers, in order to create an innovative and supportive product to improve the conditions they afflict, on the one hand, the minors and young people inserted in the community and, on the other, the operators / authorities who take care of them. There are several similarities and characteristics in the experiences of children welcomed in public structures, apart from some immigrants who reach the host country as unaccompanied asylum seekers, the majority of children hosted in the structures come from problematic families, punctuated by recurrent crises. In many European countries, the awareness that children welcomed in the social-welfare structures have been severely disadvantaged compared to their peers has developed and therefore greater attention has been paid to the needs of children in care.

In the educational sphere, their educational opportunities initially suffer from disrupted schooling and shortcomings in their basic education, for which the school system is not always equipped. This is

often aggravated by the insufficient attention given to the monitoring of school conduct provided by the team of structures, not because of a lack of will, but because the national system as a whole does not consider it a priority like other assistance services deemed indispensable. It follows that these children are less likely to complete their training course with adequate success and therefore a professional figure would be needed to entrust the specific responsibility for monitoring and support during the educational and school path of the minor. In addition to the disadvantages in the educational sector to which children welcomed in communities are subject, other phenomena are recurrent, such as the high possibility of committing crimes or becoming homeless; and high probability of living in conditions of absolute poverty, coming into conflict with the law or being absorbed by organized crime. As the situation is similar throughout Europe, for this reason the European Commission itself has invited states to strengthen and expand the current support systems aimed at minors, promoting the strengthening of respect for children's rights not only within the structures of welcome but also beyond. In particular, the project focused attention on the organizational policy of the public administrations involved in providing the service and planning of the same, of national and international organizations, of the private social sector, but also of the minors themselves, both welcomed in communities and discharged. It aims to illustrate the most modern and effective models of assistance in this field and to establish the standards for this type of service in our state and in other European countries.

Firstly we started with the analysis of the needs of children with disabilities, abandoned by families, away from home, at risk of taking over the spheres of crime, subsequently widening the target based on territorial scope, approaches, partnerships, services and rehabilitation and training courses up to dealing with the transition phase that leads the user to independent life or to the return to the family of origin with the exit from the community. This phase should occur when the care leavers are really ready and not when they reach some institutionalized arrival point, such as the eighteenth year of age or other thresholds regulated by national legislation. To this end, a highly qualified staff has been established and continues to develop and train and develop methods, practices, analysis and know-how,

transferring the latter to all project partners, and in general to all interested parties. The protection of children's rights, in fact, passes first of all from the knowledge of the phenomena, necessary to start reflections, direct policies and identify proposals for improvement. Specifically, the project set itself the objective of implementing dialogue between communities, private operators and professionals with public authorities with a view to institutional recognition of practices deemed to have an impact with regard to strengthening monitoring and respect for children's rights; improve professional assistance figures for the roles of school and employment tutors; ensure the integration of minors, avoid any form of exploitation.

1. Who are children in care and care leavers

di ELISABETTA DI GIOVANNI, CRISTINA GUARDINO*

1.1 Children in care and care leavers: a framework

By children in care, literally minors in care, we mean minors outside the family who are housed in residential structures that offer them protection and support until they reach the age of majority. When we talk about care leavers we mean referring to young boys who have lived part of their childhood and adolescence in the reception paths or foster families and who at the age of 18 are forced to leave these paths, unless there are special measures. The problem felt a lot across Europe is that at 18 you are not ready to become adults with all the responsibilities that this entails, even more if your life is marked by traumas or difficult situations that have not allowed psycho-social development adequate. In addition, the problem of early school leaving and job placement make this transition even more difficult, instead favoring in most cases a return to one's family of origin, where nothing has changed compared to the reasons that led to a departure from it. The project had the main objective of strengthening reception systems and making political decision-makers take action so that interventions on children outside the family aim at achieving greater autonomy, in order to arrive adequately prepared at the moment when they will have to leave, welcome and live an independent life. This phase should occur when the care leavers are really ready and not when they reach some institutionalized arrival point, such as the eighteenth year of age or other thresholds regulated by national legislation. For those who do not have a family to return to, extending their stay in the community up to 21 years of age becomes an essential necessity.

*Elisabetta Di Giovanni is the author of paragraph 1.1; Cristina Guardina is the author of paragraphs 1.2 and 1.3.

The project involved the drafting and representation of the needs regarding the targets of children outside the family (children in care) and of the care leavers that emerged following the study of the documents and the analysis of the data collected during the carrying out of the activities foreseen therein. Specifically, the examination and reflections on the data emerged from the qualitative analysis reports of interviews submitted to the four targets are reported: children in care, care leavers, specialized operators and representatives of public institutions; focus groups conducted both in Italy and Romania; from the collection of information obtained from the analysis of the questionnaires administered to the aforementioned four groups of interested parties.

The needs analysis was carried out using the following tools:

- Semi-structured interview administered to the 4 distinct target groups in Italy and Romania
- Focus groups conducted with the 4 groups in Italy and Romania
- An in-depth questionnaire on the data that emerged.

In particular, the data emerged from the qualitative analysis report obtained from fifty semi-structured interviews, decoded, read and analyzed in their broadest meaning, carried out by trained interviewers who involved the four target audience.

In order to gather useful information to improve services aimed at minors / care leavers, within the scope of its purposes, it was deemed appropriate to administer minors who are within communities, care leavers, specialized operators and representatives of the public administration, a questionnaire on the dynamics of the relationships existing between the four interested targets. Through the questionnaire, a wide response was recorded by the respondents which made it possible to collect 101 responses, with a different degree of participation according to the categories they belong to. In addition, there was a large participation by specialized operators, with as many as 70 responses, representing 69.31% of the participants, the remaining categories instead showed a more modest interest, with 14 responses from minors residing within of communities, 12 of the care leavers and only 5 of the representatives of the public administration.

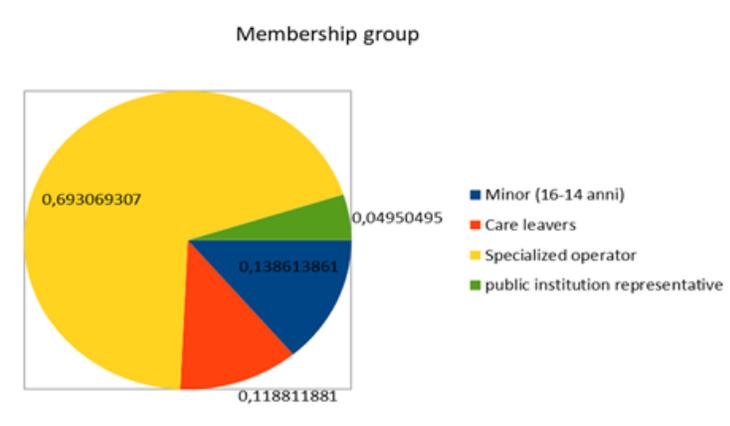


Fig. 1 - Participation for each categories

The chart summarizes the degree of participation of the individual categories of recipients of the questionnaire. In addition, two focus groups were created in Italy. The first performed on 10/23/2019 in which fourteen young people, aged between fourteen and twenty-one, indigenous and foreigners, participated in care courses at the housing communities of the city of Palermo. The same has the aim of tracing any training and aptitude needs of the operators with the general purpose of improving the working and system condition also with reference to the enhancement of services for users. The second, carried out on 15/11/2019, with authorities and structure operators, which investigates the relational experience perceived with users and aims to bring out any gaps in the relationship management, with the hypothesis that communication and relationship may be important starting points for the functioning of the reception and management system, as well as useful in analyzing the need. The Romanian partners have created five focus groups, one for each target and one aimed at care leavers and children in care together. The main objective of the focus group aimed at public authorities is to draw their attention to the situation of minors who are about to come of age and

who, becoming adults, unless there are special provisions, must face life without being actually ready to face this step. The target audience is the city of Bucharest and, in particular the representatives of the public authorities, the members of the commission for the protection of the child, who deal directly or indirectly with the communities for children aged between 14 and 18, which they were in the protection system. It is a number of 10 people including social workers, doctors, teachers and representatives of public institutions. The difference in methodology between Italy and Romania in the realization of the focus groups was due to the fact that the two realities in the first phase of administering the interviews showed differences in the needs that emerged which led to the choice to deepen the data with different approaches. The main objective of the focus group aimed at specialized personnel was to highlight their needs in working with minors and / or care dropouts through a series of questions aimed at researching the fundamental aspects of their work within the structures. residential and relationship with children. The target audience is the territory of the city of Bucharest and, in particular, the residential structures that host children aged between 14 and 18 years. The goal of the focus group aimed at care leavers and children in care is to identify the needs of children in the residential system both in the institution and in the preparation of independent and autonomous life, as well as to ensure support after leaving the institution. The focus group was attended by 12 children, six aged between 14 and 18 years old and six aged between 17 and 21 years old. The focus group aimed at minors involves fifteen children aged between 14 and 16 and underlined fundamental aspects of their life at the center, within the protection system, in order to move on to independent adult life. The focus group aimed at care leavers highlighted how preparation for an independent life is considered very important.

This report provides for the drafting and representation of the needs regarding the targets of children outside the family (children in care) and of the care leavers that emerged following the study of the documents and the analysis of the data collected during the performance of the activities envisaged in WP3. Specifically, the analysis and reflections on the data emerged from the qualitative analysis reports of the interviews submitted to the four targets are reported

here: children in care, care leavers, specialized operators and representatives of Public Institutions; focus groups conducted both in Italy and Romania; from the collection of information obtained from the analysis of the questionnaires administered to the aforementioned four groups of interested parties.

1.2 Children in care

The qualitative analysis of the interviews with children in care shows that almost all of the interviewees maintain relationships with the family of origin. Children tend to think that services favor this bond, even if some difficulties emerge; the strongest request they make to the community is the ability to act as a mediator. This data is confirmed by the subsequent analysis of the question *“How much are the relationships between the family of origin and the community taken into due consideration and properly cared for?”* where for 35.71% of minors the consideration and care of the relationships between family of origin and community are inadequate, for 28.57% they are very adequate, for 21.43% they are quite adequate and finally for the rest 14.29% are a lot. Therefore, both the consideration and the care of the relationships of the communities with the families of origin, for this category of subjects, must be considered sufficiently adequate. Also from the interviews carried out in Romania it emerges that most of the minors maintain relations with the family of origin and that the staff of the center supports and encourages the maintenance of this relationship.

As for the reception and listening area, investigated through the interviews addressed to Italian users, more than half of the children in care report having been prepared for insertion into the structure (only four cases answer that there was no no preparation) from familiar and non-familiar subjects, and all claim to know exactly the reasons for their insertion, even if only in two cases are they able to explain it. Also the analysis of the question *“How much are the reasons why you are temporarily estranged from your family clarified and shared with the young and the community?”* notes that for 42.86% of minors the reasons for the insertion of children into the community and removed from their families are fairly explained, for 21.43% they are little, for

the same percentage of 14.29% they are respectively very and very clarified, while the reasons for the inclusion are not explained at all for the remaining 7.14%. In summary, for this category of subjects, transparency and sharing the reasons for the inclusion of young people in the community are sufficient. The moment of institutionalization for Romanian children occurs at a much lower age than the Italian target. Some of them report that they have not been prepared to enter the system, that they do not know the reasons for their inclusion in the structure; others, finally, have been prepared by social workers, representatives of public or family institutions. From the interviews, it still emerges that everyone is aware of the rules in the community and almost everyone shares them (in three they share only a few and in five they would like to add others).

As emerges from the overall report of the focus groups carried out in Italy, the experience within the community is characterized by aspects of routine consolidated and governed by a system of rules that are often not welcomed by the guests of the structures. The rule is lived as a fixed point of community life, often used as a priority educational reference and parameter to establish “prizes” (incentives), “punishments” (deterrent), exceptions and conventions. All the children (both minors and careleavers) underline, on the occasion of the focus, how the rigor in observing the rules is sometimes intolerable because, they say, the decisions would be dictated from above. The rule element has a strong connotation of control and becomes an element of unease in the conduct of daily life. The perception shared by the children is that there is no real sensitivity towards their needs, there are those who say that “the rules are not made to help or manage, but to control” and propose the following solution “the rules are made sitting together with the kids” (focus group of 23-10-2019). The result is a criticality regarding the encounter between the two worlds, that of children in care and that of educators / authorities, that is, a fracture understood as an emotional, educational and operational distance.

Even Romanian minors are familiar with the provisions of the regulations and the rules that apply in the center and only two would not change any of them; the rest would like to change them to spend more time with the family, to be more involved in choosing the menu

and preparing meals. Some minors would like to change parts of the staff.

Just as children outside the family complain of a lack of attention and care, especially with reference to communication aspects (listening, understanding, meeting with needs, attempts to get closer to delicate moments or critical episodes of their lives), in the same way operators believe they cannot find a key, an access point to enter into a relationship with them. In fact, the need for minors to have an intimate and family relationship with the reference adults is highlighted. The community should be lived as a family, but the distance with the climate and the family atmosphere emerges (focus group of 23-10-2019). However, in general, the children interviewed are considered rather satisfied by the community life they carry out; this is evidently a sign of community work that is appreciated by the minor. Consent noted, also, by the answers to the question *“In general, how satisfied are you with the work done? / From your being in the community?”* where for the same percentage of 28.57% of minors the level of satisfaction with the work done and the way of life in the community is respectively quite and very adequate, for the same percentage equal to 14.39% it is respectively very, very little and for nothing adequate. In summary, the minors interviewed are considered sufficiently satisfied with the work done and the way of living in the community. All the Romanian minors interviewed (except one) say they are quite satisfied with the life at the center; above all, sports and cultural activities organized by the internal staff are generally satisfied.

In cases where a mediocre level of appreciation of community life has been expressed, the minor, called in the interview to indicate what he considers necessary to be fully satisfied, expresses in one case the desire for greater freedom; in another case the same interviewee cannot say what it would take to be more satisfied; in yet another, a more material need is expressed, such as the greater availability of food, clothes and books; finally in the remaining hypotheses aspects related to the experience and the more personal dimension are underlined, a sign of a strong need to be listened to and satisfied in their most intimate needs. Within the focus groups, operators emphasize the lack of enthusiasm and motivation on the part of minors for any proposed initiative. Moreover, even the youngs declare their renouncing attitude in the face of some opportunities: they do not ask

for changes, they do not propose initiatives, they do not carry out a participatory life in the community, they are discouraged by refusals or by the possibility of conflict with reference adults. In addition, minors underline the difficulties in relating to some operators due to the seriousness of the educational burden. The burden of responsibility pervades the operators' mood, preventing them from serenely performing the task. The profile that emerges is that of a tired operator, full of responsibility, intent on solving daily problems and therefore hardly available to listening and understanding and sometimes at risk of burn out.

From the Italian focus groups it also emerges that the children feel the need to interact with educators and leaders but that they experience difficulties in being promoters of initiatives and finding mediation ground with the reference figures, consequently assuming an attitude of resignation. The result is the ineffectiveness perceived by the youngs in an attempt to try to bring about changes. There is a strong need to perceive an educational coherence, a cultural belonging. If the educators are not coordinated, organized, if they come into conflict with the leader or with each other, there is a symptom of generalized organizational discomfort. The minors perceive the inconsistency and the discordance of opinions and this even if involuntarily pushes them to prefer one figure over the other, an educator rather than another. *La percezione di un clima di tensione fra lo staff di educatori è un segno di disorientamento.* The result is a condition of strong asymmetry: on the one hand the children, guests of a structure, on the other the adults: educators and managers who govern the structure. However, it seems that this dynamic is unsatisfactory for children who are demanding a "family atmosphere", listening and understanding "as in a family". Users are very confident in the potential of the structure and believe that a targeted and functional organization is essential for the creation of virtuous paths for inclusion in society. They attribute a lot of responsibility, but also trust to their educators who become models to imitate. The known condition of deprivation and difficulty humanizes the relationship and understanding towards educators. The final perception is that of operators who try to do their best for the well-being of users (focus group of 23-10-2019).

This perception is also confirmed by Romanian children who claim to have a very strong relationship with the staff, feel supported by them, even if, a small part would like educators to be more open in the relationship, more sensitive to their desires.

Except in one case, all the minors interviewed declare that there are moments in the community where they can talk about themselves, express their needs and their reflections or that in any case, if necessary, it is possible to request a meeting with operators and managers to confer with them and express needs. Nonetheless, it must be taken into account that many children in care have great difficulty opening up and sharing their thoughts despite the possibility of doing so. Even in Romania, the children under treatment, although they have references with which they can speak (psychologists, staff, family teachers), declare that they feel heard in particular by the head of the center and by other children; a small part declares that they prefer to keep silent about their problems in a condition of solitude.

From the answers to the question *“How adequate are the tools for listening and welcoming guests within the community?”* it arises that 35.71% of the minors replied that the listening and welcoming tools of the guests who live within the communities are quite adequate, for the same percentage of 21.43% they are very and very much, for the 14.29% are not very adequate, while, for the remaining 7.14% they are not at all. Therefore, it can be assumed that for the minors interviewed the above tools are fully adequate.

This figure is in contradiction with what was expressed during the focus groups. The operators are the figures that most of the minors interviewed turn to if they need to be listened to: a sign of the importance of these professional figures and their listening skills. In light of these reflections we can say that minors feel they can turn to professional figures within the community; however, they do not always feel understood in their needs and in their difficulties, sometimes of a material nature, other times of a more strictly personal nature. It should be noted that, where it is declared that they do not really feel listened to, there is an idea of listening understood as “being loved”. This underlines the need to clarify what the operators’ tasks are, in order to avoid expectations of affection that cannot find the desired answers. About users’ independence, almost all move independently, on foot or by bus, only three minors declare that they are not free. To achieve

a good level of autonomy, most do not know what it would be necessary to do; two consider it important to study and one to be educated. From the analysis of the question *“How much within the community or the services involved are children adequately supported in achieving a good level of autonomy?”* it emerges that for 50% of the minors the evaluation of the support provided by the communities and services involved to the children to achieve sufficient autonomy is quite adequate, for 35.71% it is little and finally for 14.29 % is very adequate. In summary, the commitment provided by the community to achieve sufficient user autonomy for minors can be considered more than sufficient. Romanian children also claim to have sufficient autonomy; depending on age and maturity, they go to school alone, on foot or by public transport. Only a small part of the beneficiaries is not authorized to carry out any type of activity alone. The interviews show an excellent knowledge of the area; this is confirmed by the analysis of the answers to the question *“How functional are helping relationships with the territory currently?”* where 50% of the minors interviewed evaluate the relationships with the territory quite functional, 35.71% not very functional, finally, for the remaining 14.29% they are very functional. In summary, for the children interviewed the above reports are quite functional.

The general perception of community care for the child is high. This element highlights how the community tries to respond promptly and with commitment to the needs of the minor, who in turn has a positive overall perception of this aspect. The dimensions in relation to which improvement actions should be considered are sport, which is the dimension most criticized by young people, as their need for physical movement is not fully satisfied by the community and the cultural dimension in relation to which young people feel a dissatisfaction with their expectations. This assessment is also confirmed by the analysis of the question *“How do you evaluate the various initiatives promoted by the territory aimed at involving minors / care leavers?”* from which it emerges that for 42.86% of minors the territorial initiatives aimed at the participation of minors / care leavers are quite adequate, for 35.71% they are scarce and while for 14.29% they are very adequate, for the remaining 7.14% are not at all. Therefore the aforementioned initiatives are sufficiently adequate for this category of subjects.

Otherwise the Romanian children in care are satisfied with the activities that involve them, such as: trips to the mountains and the sea during

the weekends or during the holidays, participation in fairs, trips to the park, sports activities, participation in various courses, moments for reflection to improve the school situation, recreational activities, as well as various initiatives for the development of independent living skills. They are less so as regards their involvement in the decision-making process that concerns them, since some complain that they are not even consulted, but only informed after the decision has taken place. From the analysis of the answers to the questionnaire to the question *"How much importance is given to the educational and professional orientation of young people within the community?"* it emerges that for 42.86% of minors, the importance of education and professional orientation of children within communities is given, for 28.57% communities give little importance, an equal percentage of 14.29% says instead that communities give a lot of importance and a lot of importance to formation. In other words, it can be said that for the average of the interviewees, the communities devote more than sufficient importance to the training of young people.

From the interview area relating to the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), it emerges that five interviewees do not know what it is, while the others are aware of it because they felt involved in its drafting and reflection on the objectives achieved. Almost everyone knows about the existence of a reference operator and the drafting of a project to leave the community, even those who have never heard of IEP. The need therefore emerges to better inform the users of the community about the official documents that concern them; also because the children are not indifferent to their path in the community, on the contrary they hope for their involvement. From the analysis of the question *"In taking charge of minors / children how much space is given to training / information meetings?"* it emerges that for 42.86% of minors the importance and timing dedicated to training and information meetings in taking charge of minors / care leavers within the communities is quite adequate, for 21.43%, little importance is given, 14.29% are not given at all, while the remaining 7.14% gives a great deal of importance to the aforementioned meetings. Consequently, in a summary evaluation, for minors, training / information meetings are given just enough importance. This degree of satisfaction turns into a more than sufficient evaluation to the question *"How much space, instead, is given to the compilation / understanding of the documents, in taking charge of the minor / young?"* for which, the

same percentage equal to 28.57% of the minors interviewed for the compilation and understanding of the documents while taking care of the minors / care leavers is dedicated a great deal and a great deal of importance, for 21.43% little importance, for the 14.29 enough and finally 7.14% for nothing. Therefore, for respondents, training / information meetings are given more than sufficient importance.

Most Romanian beneficiaries do not know what the individualized education project, the individualized protection plan or the service plan represent. They only know they have signed something but they don't know what it's called or what it represents. From their point of view, these are technical details that do not concern them. Only some of them know that they have a personalized protection plan and service plans for education, health, etc., as they are involved in their development.

A part of the interview, in addition to verifying the relationship of the minor with the family of origin, tends to highlight the role played by minors or volunteers in relation to minors and how they can be help and support in your life plan. The responses reveal a fluctuating attitude, sometimes of hostility and closure, other times of great openness towards these figures outside the community. Certainly, the presence of people capable of giving support would represent a surplus of great importance.

Are there figures outside the community in the life of users?

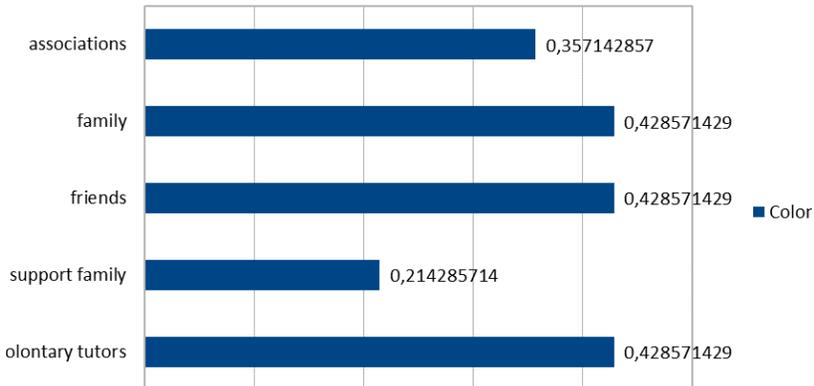


Fig. 2 –Figures outside the community

The question “Are there figures outside the community in the life of users?” proposes and identifies the figures external to the structure that play a role in the lives of children. The same percentage of 42.86% indicated family members, friends and voluntary tutors as figures outside the community and present in their lives, 35.71% indicated associations and finally 21.43% support families. The answers highlight the need to offer better assistance to this category of subjects, certainly more in need of attention than the other users, as none of the external figures indicated exceeds 50%. It improves the position of family members while supportive families and associations remain very little in the lives of minors. Diversamente le figure esterne con le quali i children in care rumeni hanno contatti sono famiglie di sostegno e volontari. I desideri espressi dagli intervistati italiani

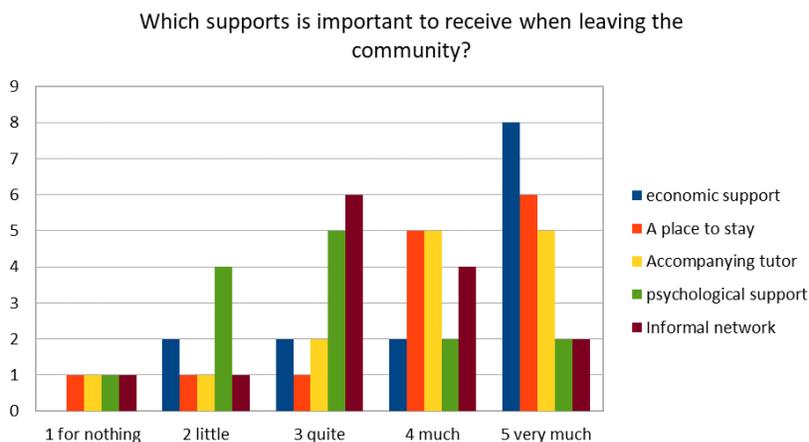


Fig. 3 – Types of support required by minors

Otherwise the external figures with whom the Romanian children in care have contacts are supportive families and volunteers. The wishes expressed by the Italian interviewees concern, in the vast majority, returning home / returning to their country; find work; have a family; feel good; be free. Among the wishes of Romanian children

we mention: going home, having a good profession, owning material goods such as a tablet and a car.

So from the analysis of the answers given during the interview, it is clear that for the users the community represents a phase of temporary transition as it is right. From the analysis of the functional supports offered upon leaving the community *“Which supports is it important to receive / provide when leaving the community?”* it emerges that for minors the most important types of support among the pre-determined ones are financial support and accommodation, followed by an accompanying tutor, by the informal support network and finally by psychological support.

Similarly both community and family seem to support minors in the realization of their desires, therefore, it is essential to take care of the link between the community and families of origin. The professional practice of the community should be oriented more towards the constant weaving of this bond, also in view of reunification. The family of origin, in fact, represents the place where most users want to return. At the end of the interview, however, almost all of the minors express their gratitude towards the community and, indeed, only one explicit the desire to leave.

1.3 Care leavers

From the qualitative analysis of the interviews with migrant and Italian dear leavers, as regards the reception and listening area, a great problem emerges relating to the preparation phase of the young for the new community reality; this is a delicate phase, both in the case that the young comes from a previous community and in the case of the transition from his country and family of origin to the community. The more or less explicit need is to be prepared for insertion; especially for foreign children, who express an information vacuum about the reception process in Italy. Also the analysis of the question *“How much are the reasons why you are temporarily removed from your family clarified and shared with the young and the community?”* notes that for 58.33% of care leavers the reasons for introducing young people into the community and removed from their families are fairly explained, for the same percentage of 16.67% they are respectively little and very

clear, while for the remaining 8.33% the reasons for insertion are not explained at all. In summary, for this category of subjects, transparency and sharing of the reasons why children / young people are removed from the family and placed in the community are sufficient.

From the interviews, it emerges that unlike the Italian care leavers who claim to know exactly the reasons for their inclusion in the community, only a small part of the foreign children can make them explicit. There is a need to be more informed about what concerns one's path, including the reasons for the transfers. In fact, most Romanian care leavers said they had not been prepared for entry into the protection system; only a small part declares to have been informed by the staff of the centers / NGOs. Most of them said that the family knows why they were included in the protection system, except for those who were abandoned at birth. Everyone is aware of the rules in the community and almost all the youngs, both inserted in Italian and Romanian communities, share them. Therefore, we note not only the importance of the rules as pillars of common living, but also the recognition of their assertive role. The rules, therefore, represent an important element on which to focus to improve coexistence in communities, without forgetting the importance of positive reinforcements to those who respect the rules and those who enforce them.

Care leavers perceive listening above all as support and understanding; specifically, for Italian children listening is what allows them to let off steam, to tell projects and not to feel judged; foreign kids talk, instead, about listening understood as feeling important for the other, being able to talk about themselves and have a moment of sharing. Therefore, a subtle difference emerges between Italians and migrants with respect to the sense attributed to listening: listening is understanding and support for everyone, but for Italians it is also a space for relief while for foreigners it is a space in which to check if you are truly welcomed regardless of cultural, linguistic, physical, etc. differences. Finally, the answers to the question "*How adequate are the tools for listening and welcoming guests within the community?*" confirm what has already been said, in fact, it emerges that for 75% of care leavers the tools for listening and welcoming guests living within communities are quite adequate and for the remaining 25% they are very adequate. Therefore, it can be considered that, for this category of participants in the questionnaire, the listening and wel-

coming tools within the community are fully adequate. The young in the focus groups generally complain about the coordination between the operators and the decision making. It seems that their assessment also focuses on the preparation of professionalism “being an educator in the community cannot be a coincidence, one should not accept a job for which one is not competent or not brought”. Once again, personalizing the relationship is important. From the subjective impressions of the youngs, the role of the educator emerged, narrated and described as controversial and who has to perform complex tasks (focus group of 23-10-2019).

The care leavers interviewed are considered rather satisfied by the community life they carry out; this evidently is a sign of community work that is appreciated by the minor, a consensus that is also evident from the analysis of the question “*In general, how satisfied are you with the work done?*” where for 50% of care leavers the level of satisfaction with the work done and the way of life in the community is quite adequate, for 33.33% it is very adequate and for the remaining 8.33% it is very adequate. In summary, the care leavers interviewed are more than satisfied with the work done and the way of living in the community.

Where in the interview the youngs were asked to explain what was necessary to obtain full satisfaction of community life, the Italians express more material needs: food, clothes, more resources from outside, a greater number of operators to improve quality of the service; migrant children, on the other hand, show different needs, material needs are reduced to documents and subscriptions, they declare a desire for greater freedom, affection, a project vision of the community capable of accompanying them beyond their exit. Almost all Italian and Romanian care leavers during the interview declare that there are moments in the community where they can talk about themselves. What emerges, however, is that this possibility is linked to a request from the young and not as a space provided for everyone, regardless of an explicit request. In short, it is clear the need to structure this space to facilitate those who, by character and way of doing, do not turn to anyone asking for listening. Generally, the care leavers interviewed declare that their opinion is not only requested, but counts in the decision-making process, a sign of the importance attributed to everyone as a person consciously recognized by the chil-

dren. This satisfaction is not shared by all the Romanian kids who would like to be more involved and consulted more on the organization of the space in which they live. Many of the interviewees declare that they feel listened to, although some say they have the impression that their opinion is not relevant and sometimes remains unheard.

There are several figures from whom these children feel listened to: friends, social worker, professors, tutors, community leaders, educators; the situation is different for Romanian children who limit their conversations to educators and psychologists. During their stay at the center they came into contact with young people who had left the system, who were able to share their experience by creating a formative and reflective moment together with the care leavers. The latter claim to receive support from the staff of the centers; some from the family; but there is also a small percentage of young people who do not feel supported by anyone. Most believe that financial support is the most important and desirable, followed by support in finding a job. These kids rely heavily on the support of the staff at the centers and have a bank account which they can access when they leave the center. The question "*Are there figures outside the community in the life of users?*" proposes and identifies the figures external to the structure that play a role in the lives of children. As many as 83.33% have indicated as external figures to the community and friends are present in their lives, 66.67% indicate voluntary tutors, 25% indicate associations, follow 16.67% with the families of support and finally there is an 8.33% indicating family members. The responses highlight the importance that friends and volunteer tutors play in the lives of care leavers who live within the communities, while a more residual position is occupied by associations, support families and especially family members. This confirms the result obtained with the general analysis and the need to offer help and assistance to families of origin or support who often fail to provide an adequate contribution for the proper development of loved ones.

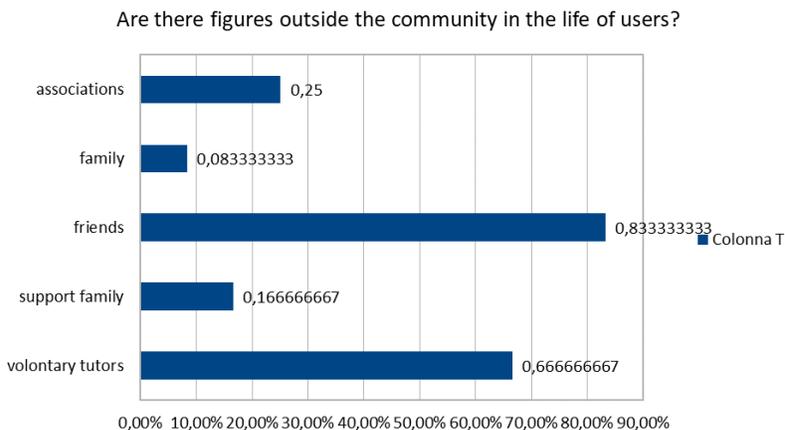


Fig. 4 – Figures outside the community

The analysis of the question “How much are the relationships between the family of origin and the community taken into due consideration and properly cared for?” notes that for the same percentage equal to 41.67% of care leavers the consideration and care of the relationships between family of origin and community are respectively little and quite adequate, while for 16.67% they are very adequate. Therefore, both the consideration and the care of the relationships of the communities with the families of origin, for this category of subjects, must be considered sufficient. While almost all the children in care interviewed maintain relationships with the family of origin, for the care leavers, however, the families of origin do not play any supporting role. During the focuses, the lack of consideration for affectivity, the emotional sphere and the concept of need is highlighted in several voices. It seems that the youngs want to underline the lack of a family atmosphere of mutual and affectionate support, of understanding, of acceptance even before judgment and safeguard. The structure appears to be a non-shared and built place of life, in which rules imposed by the organization must be accepted. From this description the operators appear as emotionally controlled and disinterested figures (focus group of 23-10-2019). The operators are the figures to which most of

the young people interviewed turn to the most difficult moments, a sign of the importance above all of the professional figures who, at this moment of their life, demonstrate their real interest in them. All Romanian care leavers, projecting themselves out of the center, declare that they do not want to give up the friendships and support relationships established in the center, hoping to remain in contact with the staff of the centers. Italian care leavers above all perceive in the community the possibility of having psychological support in times of need, even if everyone, even Romanian and foreign care leavers in general, declare their usefulness.

In light of what emerged from the interviews it is clear that the care leavers feel they can turn to professional figures within the community; not everyone manages to seize this possibility, however, missing moments and structured spaces for listening to everyone. Furthermore, foreign minors are not clear, and in some cases no knowledge, of the possibility of psychological support inside or outside the community.

From the IEP interview area it emerges that only three of the Italian care leavers (out of nine) respond to knowing what an IEP is, the others declare they do not know it, but in all the interviews the questions on the IEP are followed by silences and expressions of uncertainty. This part of the interview reveals a strong lack of respect for the involvement of the young in the drafting of the IEP, the monitoring and evaluation of the same. On the other hand, the young interviewed feel supported by the community in the realization of a life project. The support is perceived in listening and understanding, but also in the material, moral, study and job search aspects. To the question *“How much space, instead, is given to the compilation / understanding of the documents, in taking charge of the minor/young?”* for 41.67% of care leavers, the importance and timing dedicated to the compilation and understanding of documents during the taking charge of minors / care leavers is valued with enough, for 25%, great importance is given to this space, for the same percentage of 16.67% within the communities is given respectively little and a great deal of importance to the aforementioned meetings. Consequently, in a summary evaluation, more than sufficient importance is given for care leavers to the compilation / understanding of documents in taking charge of the minor / young.

As for the Romanian interviews, most young people said they had heard about the personalized intervention plan but did not know what it is, in the sense that they were not consulted and involved in its preparation. Only a small percentage said that the IEP contains the steps to follow and the post-institutionalization monitoring period.

Almost all of them declare that the operators in the community are their reference for the achievement of the objectives of the IEP, even those who have never heard of the Individualized Educational Plan. The need therefore emerges to better inform the users of the community about the official documents that concern them; to involve them more in the drafting of their IEP or, at least, to better understand the involvement actions that are implemented with them, since they are not very aware of them. The need emerges to work better on the formal social network that takes care of the young and thus to transfer the right sense of the network work around him. From the analysis of the question "*In taking charge of minors / children how much space is given to training / information meetings?*" it emerges that for 58.33% of care leavers the assessment of the importance and timing dedicated to training and information meetings in taking care of minors / children within the communities is quite adequate, for 25% it is very adequate, for the same percentage equal to 8.33% within the communities, little and a great deal of importance is given respectively to the aforementioned meetings. Consequently, in a summary evaluation, the care leavers are considered sufficiently satisfied with the training / information meetings carried out in taking charge of the children.

Where the interviewee is asked if more can be done for his life project, the request is for a broader and more responsible vision, involving institutions and the whole community. From the analysis of the development of community life, the textual categories that emerged from the interviews are clearly predominant external references, followed by collaboration in the interior spaces, eating, personal care, studying, using a cell phone and going to work. External activities mainly concern going out with friends, playing sports, going to school, going to the beach, going out with youngfriend / girlfriends, volunteering and going to work. The collaboration of the interior spaces incorporates shifting activities, such as cooking, cleaning and tidying the room. A young reports that community life takes place as in a normal family made up of children who must learn to grow;

another reports that within the community we help each other, understand the needs of others, communicate and reflect together on the problems that arise from time to time. Although the young people interviewed describe a daily life full of interests and activities, a reflection is a must: the need to stimulate everyone and involve them in daily actions important for their growth.

It is appropriate to underline the ability of young people to take stock of their skills, in fact to the question *“How are you working to improve them or to acquire new ones?”* most refer to activities carried out outside the community, through school and study, courses and internships, volunteering and participation in associations. It therefore seems to emerge not only a good fertile ground of skills to work on to build everyone’s future, but also the importance of services outside the community to increase and allow children to experiment. To the question *“How do you evaluate the various initiatives promoted by the territory aimed at involving minors / care leavers?”* it emerges that for 58.33% of care leavers the territorial initiatives aimed at the participation of minors / care leavers are quite adequate, for 25% they are very adequate, while for 16.67% they are not adequate. Therefore the aforementioned initiatives are sufficiently adequate for this category of subjects.

All Romanian respondents said that they participate in activities, in particular sports organized by NGOs or camps, even if a good part already works or goes to school and declares that they no longer have time for this activity.

Regarding users’ independence, almost everyone moves independently, on foot, by bicycle or by bus, to reach the school, the city center, the sea, the station and above all to deal with their documents. Autonomy in the handling of files is acquired with adulthood; the youngs, while doing most of the things themselves, still believe the need to be better informed exists, especially when they are doing something for the first time. Nevertheless, from the analysis of the question *“How much within the community or the services involved are children adequately supported in achieving a good level of autonomy?”* it emerges that for 50% of the care leavers the evaluation of the support provided by the communities and services involved to the children to achieve sufficient autonomy is quite adequate, for 33.34% it is very adequate, for the same percentage equal to 8.33% is poorly and not at

all adequate. In summary, the commitment provided by the community to achieve sufficient user autonomy can be considered more than sufficient for care leavers. Also from the analysis of the answers to the question “How functional are helping relationships with the territory currently?” it can be said that for the average of the care leavers participating in the questionnaire the above reports are quite functional. It is noted, in fact, that for 25% of care leavers, relations with the territory are quite functional, for another 25% they are not very functional, and for the same percentage of 16.67%, aid relationships are highly valued respectively, very much and not at all functional.

The school is attended by four Italians (out of nine) and five migrants (out of ten); only an Italian is currently doing nothing and an immigrant is currently volunteering; all the others are busy with courses and stages (which mostly deal with cooking and information technology, and one with the hairdresser). Most of the Italian young, except one, were accompanied in the choice and had an orientation (basically from the community, from the manager, from the educators, from the social worker, from the family or from other users with whom they live). In the case of migrant children, the situation is different in that only three have received an orientation, two of them at school.

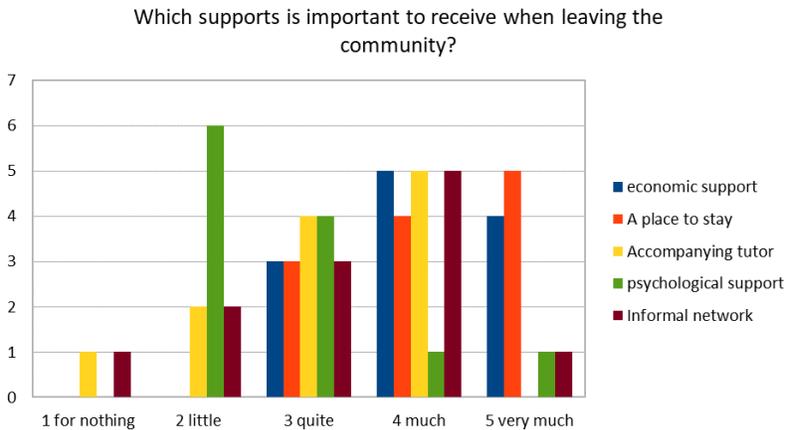


Fig. 5 – Types of support required by minors

The others claim to have thought of it themselves. Therefore, there is a need for greater accompaniment to autonomy and an orientation, especially for migrant children who, according to their statements, are left alone in the choice of what to do and the training path to be undertaken.

Most young Romanians already have a job and therefore already have a degree of independence. In finding a job, young people say they received support from the staff of the centers and that they had no difficulty integrating into the job market. All the young interviewed declare the importance of training on the domestic economy (conveyed by the community on making beds, tidying the room, shopping, cooking, managing pocket money), for their future life, when they will live alone and perform other social roles. In addition to the domestic economy, for the life outside the community, the young also think it is necessary to study, work, self-control, the ability to recognize people and, in general, to become more responsible.

Romanian interviews show that most young people have an idea of what it means to manage their lives on their own, but there are those who say they know nothing and almost nobody knows what the home economy is. Almost everyone is familiar with the idea of self-management, at least theoretically; unanimously agree that preparing for an independent life is very important.

The last part of the interview investigates specifically the preparation and the start towards adult life. From the answers given during the interview, it appears that all the care leavers think about the moment they leave the community, they are aware that "*the community is not forever*"; it is clear that for users, the community represents a phase of temporary transition as it is right. From the analysis of the functional supports offered upon leaving the community "*Which supports is it important to receive / provide when leaving the community?*" it is clear that for the care leavers the most important types of support among the predetermined ones are economic support and accommodation, followed by the informal support network and an accompanying tutor and finally by psychological support.

The idea of leaving the community, according to the analysis of the interviews, arouses conflicting emotions: happiness of going out; regret leaving the community; the fear and anxiety of not being independent enough. It should be noted that migrant children express

greater confidence in the future, probably because in the new context they have found more favorable conditions than their country of origin. The interview allows us to highlight how young people make the commitment of many figures (operators, family members, friends) to facilitate the transition from the community to the outside, especially through education to autonomy, handling procedures, in some cases even the search for work and home. Foreigners, however, rely mainly on the support of friends. Thus, a work emerges from the community aimed at promoting the exit of the young. The support is most felt by Italian young, while foreign youngs feel supported above all by friends, probably a sign of the force exerted by common experience, as a source of informative and emotional support. The young declare to prepare for the exit by engaging in the construction of this autonomy through: study, work or the search for a job, the search for a home. Most of them had the opportunity to confront other young from the community and all (except one) considered this comparison, and the possibility of having it, a positive thing.

The majority of Romanian respondents said they were thinking of leaving the center, a small percentage, however, said they preferred not to think about it. And indeed, some young people are afraid to leave the center, feeling loneliness and uncertainty; on the contrary there are also young people who have a good vision of this moment and have a well-defined plan.

Most young people prepare by learning and accumulating independent life skills, however, there are kids who don't think long-term and make no voluntary effort in this regard. Many have a good opinion of themselves claiming to have learning, listening and organization skills.

The wishes expressed by the Italian interviewees concern above all finding a job and starting a family; migrant children do not have a planning thought about the family, but at the moment only about themselves, they want to find a job, go to university and return to their country of origin. Romanian kids mostly want to finish school, find a job and start a family. From the analysis of the answers to the questionnaire to the question "*How much importance is given to the educational and professional orientation of young people within the community?*" it emerges that for 50% of the care leavers to the educational and professional orientation of the children within the communities,

enough importance is given, for 33.33% the communities give this orientation a lot of importance, an equal percentage of 8.33. On the other hand, they say that on average communities respectively give little and a great deal of importance to the educational and professional orientation of young people. In other words, it can be said that for the average of care leavers, communities dedicate more than sufficient importance to the training of young people.

From the focuses carried out in the Italian communities, all concern emerges for an absolutely uncertain future, a loss especially for foreign children. For those who do not have a home or family to return to, prolonging their stay in the community for up to twenty-one years becomes an essential necessity. From the focuses, in addition to the difficulty that the children are experiencing, the hope of a future to be built on uncertainty is perceived. These young people have high expectations, aim to build their future in the best possible way and intend to become active components of the society in which they live (focus group of 23-10-2019).

Almost all of the users interviewed express their gratitude towards the community, *"of those who take care of them"*. Once again, just like for the previous target, the community proves to be an important pivot in the lives of the young people interviewed.

Although the young perceive a sort of unease caused by a relationship that is at times asymmetrical and that does not fully respond to the needs expressed by them, a sort of justification appears in them, attributable to external facts evidently known as the delay in payments. A sort of affective understanding and recognition by the children of the sacrifices that the profession of educator entails emerges. The affective element is always present in their considerations; the young express the need to perceive an emotionally strong connotation, the affectivity, the warmth of the family, the interest in them, listening and empathy. The known condition of deprivation and difficulty humanizes the relationship and understanding towards educators and partially justifies some educational choices (focus group of 23-10-2019).

2. Italian/Romanian good practices analysis di COOPERATIVA 3P

A part of the project was dedicated to the analysis of good practices through the comparison of the questionnaires addressed to the categories of children in care and careleavers. The swots are divided into four parts: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Firstly we conducted an overall assessment of the results of the cards in Europe, Italy and Romania, and then analyzed and compared the four categories listed above individually.

The first part of the elaboration concerns the comparison and analysis of the swot addressed towards the children in care. The following graph shows the general situation in Europe, Italy and Romania.

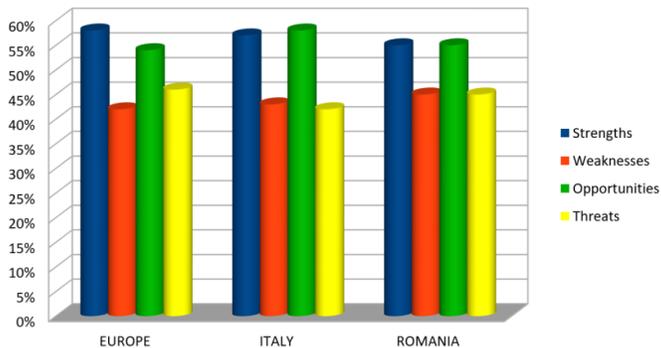


Fig. 1 – Swot analysis children in care.

It is clear that the European situation has greater strengths connected to the opportunities while the weaknesses connected to the threats are less important. This framework reflects the trend of both Italy and Romania, although in Italy the strengths and opportunities are slightly higher than Romania and at the same time the weaknesses and threats are slightly lower as shown below:

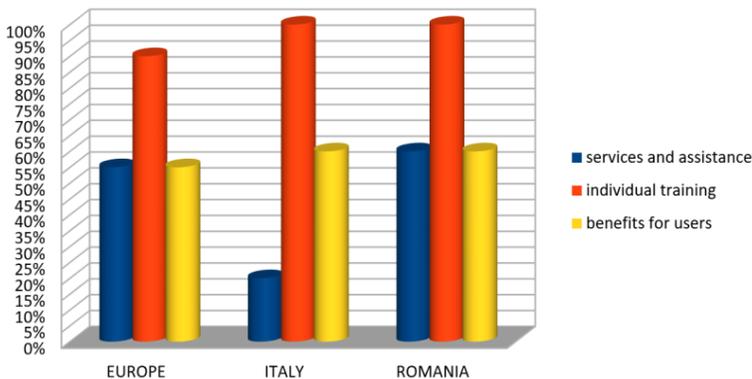


Fig. 2 – Children’s in care strengths

The most frequent strengths in Europe concern the training of the individual and in fact 90% of the forms identify continuous and long-term training as strengths, the existence of methods, practices and analyzes aimed at all interested partners, socio-educational that support autonomy with structured activities and specific descriptions. The services and assistance offered by the institutions and the benefits for users, such as legal protection or the receipt of a monthly allowance by the adoptive parents are equivalent and are equal to 55%. Romania totally follows the European trend, while in Italy the reference to institutions such as strength is significantly lower.

With regards to the children’s in care weaknesses, the most significant points in Europe are the absence of monitoring and evaluation equal to 60% and the cases management difficulties of 55%, while only 15% identified weakness in the service network as weakness. In Italy and Romania, however, the greatest weakness is indicated as difficulty

in case management followed by the absence of monitoring and evaluation, while in both countries there is no lack of network services.

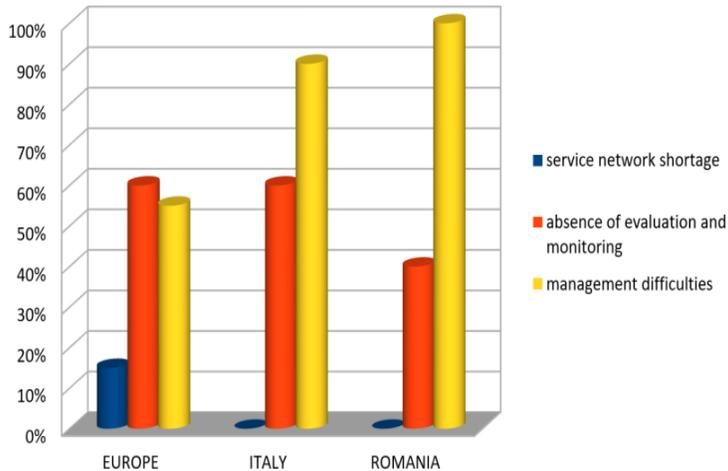


Fig. 3 – Children's in care weaknesses

The opportunities identified in the questionnaires can be divided into two categories: collaboration with the authorities and the strengthening of network work together with the increase of qualified partners.

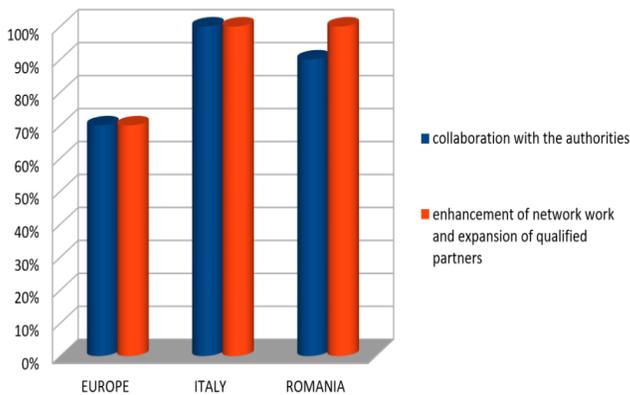


Fig. 4 – Children's in care opportunities

The European situation represents the two types of opportunities at the same level, and indeed in 70% of the cards related to weak and strength points both the collaboration with the authorities and the strengthening of network work and the increase of qualified partners are indicated as opportunities. This situation also reflects the Italian one in which the two categories of opportunities are indicated in 100% of the cards and in the Romanian one for which the collaboration with the authorities is indicated as an opportunity by 90% while the strengthening of network work and the increase of partners qualified by 100% of respondents.

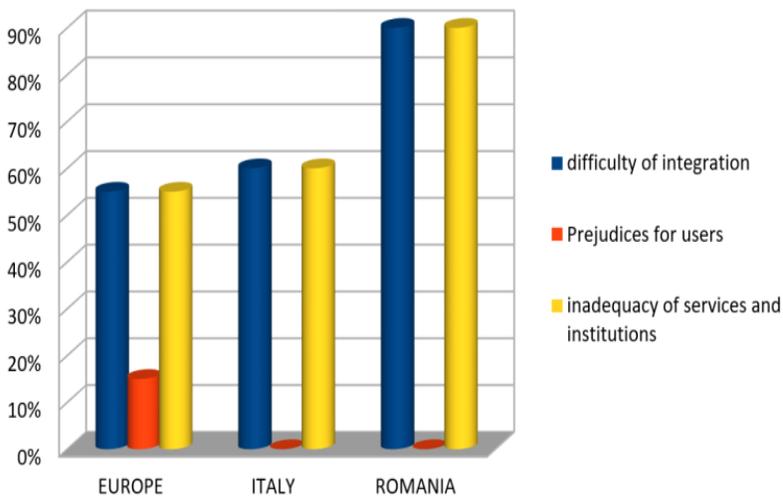


Fig. 5 –Children’s in care threats

The most important threats are the difficulties of integration and the inadequacy of services and institutions, present in 55% of them, while only in 15% of the tests are referred to as threats, other forms of user prejudices, such as lack of awareness on the issue of family custody, the problem of institutionalized children for a long time, school dropouts. The first two forms of threats are the only ones indicated, in an equivalent manner, in Italian and Romanian cards with the difference that in Italy they are indicated by 60% while in Romania 90% of respondents.

The analysis of the careleavers swot highlights that in Europe the strengths connected to the opportunities with respect to the threats related to the threats are more important:

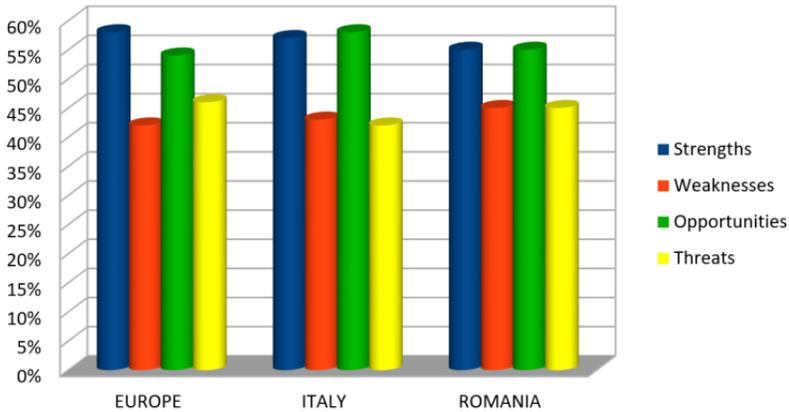


Fig. 6 – Swot analysys about care leavers

Even the situations of Italy and Romania reflect the European trend, leaving more space to strenghts and opportunities that are equivalent to each other compared to the weaknesses and threats also of equal value. With reference to the strenghts the following situation occurs:

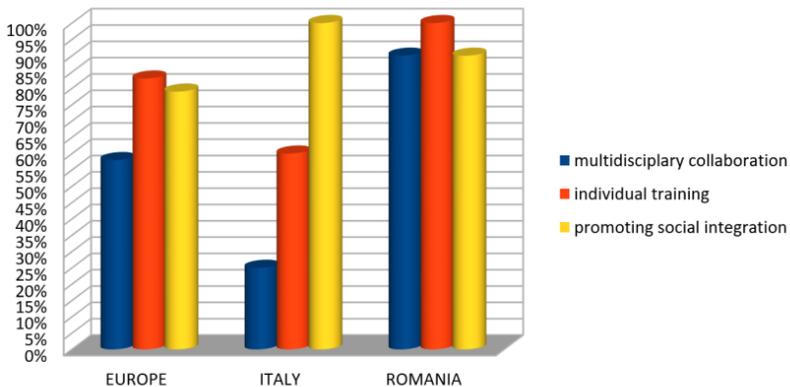


Fig. 7 – Care leavers' strengths

In Europe the greatest strength is represented by individual training, and indeed in 83% of the cards it is reported as strength: the development of autonomy and self-esteem, improve social skills in order to make decisions independently, the promotion of learning of professional subjects, recognition of the individuality of the user. In second place we find the promotion of social integration, present in a percentage equal to 79%, and finally we have the multidisciplinary collaboration reported in 58% of the cards. Romania has a similar situation to the European one, although the percentages of the above described strengths are respectively equal to 100% for individual training and 90% for both social integration and multidisciplinary collaboration. In Italy, on the other hand, the situation is different because in the first place we find the promoting social integration referred to in 100% of the cards, followed by the individual training with 60% and the multidisciplinary collaboration mentioned only in 25% of the questionnaires.

Regarding the weaknesses analysis, the graph shows a majority of difficulty in handling cases, followed by the problem of social exclusion:

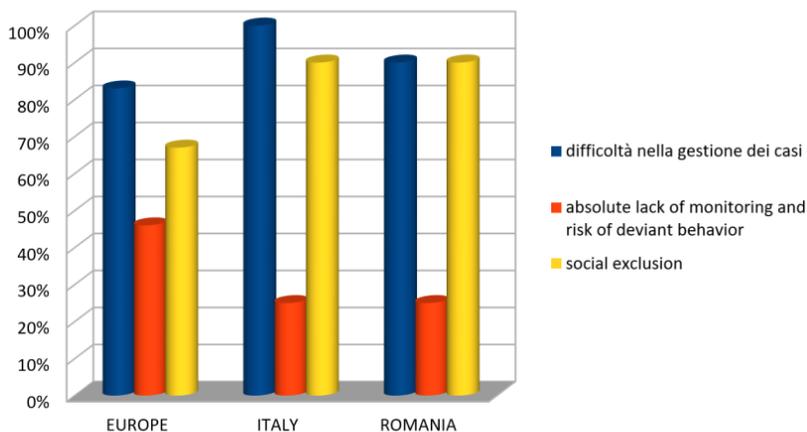


Fig. 8 – Care leavers’s weaknesses

In particular in Europe the most indicated weakness is the difficulty in handling cases, present in 83% of the cards related to weak

and strength points, in second place the social exclusion present in 67% and finally the absolute lack of monitoring and risk of deviant behavior in 46% of the swot. Italy and Romania present almost equal situations with the only difference that in Italy the difficulty in handling cases is reported in 100% of the cards while in Romania in 90%, while the social exclusion and the absolute lack of monitoring and risk of deviant behavior are recalled in both countries respectively in percentages of 90% and 25% of the total questionnaires.

Opportunities are grouped into the categories of development of services, support possibilities and access to employment and network work and multicultural collaboration:

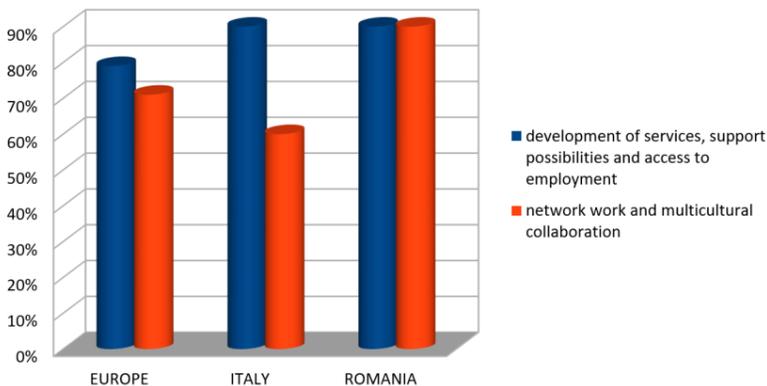


Fig. 9 – Care leavers' opportunities

The European situation sees in the lead the development of services, support and access to employment indicated in 79% of the swot while the network work and multicultural collaboration is present in 71% of the questionnaires. Italy follows the European trend with 90% of respondents indicating opportunities for development of services, support and access to employment and 60% for network work and multicultural collaboration. In Romania both opportunities are present in 90% of swot.

Finally, with reference to the threats we have the following result:

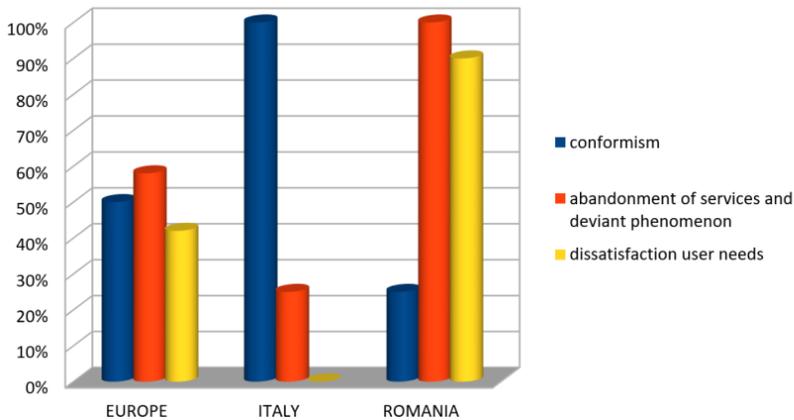


Fig. 10 – Care leavers' threats

In Europe, 58% of respondents identify the threat in the abandonment of services and deviant phenomena, 50% in conformism and 42% in the dissatisfaction user needs. In Italy the greatest threat is the conformism indicated 100% of the cards, followed only by the abandonment of services and deviant phenomenon reported by 25%. In Romania, however, the most significant threat is represented by the abandonment of services and deviant phenomenon reported in 100% of the questionnaires, followed by a short distance dissatisfaction user needs indicated by 90% of respondents and finally the abandonment of services and deviant phenomenon indicated only from 25%. From the legislative point of view, a comparison was made between the Italian and the Romanian legislatures. With reference to the protection of minors, the Italian and Romanian legislative realities are considerably different. This is mainly due to cultural differences and the legislative tradition of the two countries.

Italy over the years, from being a country of emigration has become a country of immigration, while Romania still today is mainly affected by the phenomenon of emigration. This affects the work of the legislator who, in addition to the protection of minors in general, must also deal with the regulation and regulation of entry, in Italy facing the issues related to the identification of individuals, the first

aid and the assistance of the members, sanitary, psychological assistance, refugee support, housing in first reception centers until their transfer to medium-long term care centers, the inclusion of minors in the education system and vocational training. Romanian legislation, on the other hand, is more focused on dictating the basic principles on which the national social assistance system is based and the care of resident minors, especially when they are in a difficult situation because their adult family members have gone away. abroad looking for an employment position.

The legislative tradition of the two countries is certainly different, the Italian Republic since its origin has introduced in its Constitution the fundamental principles aimed at making the substantial equality of individuals one of the pillars of its legal system and indeed art. 3, paragraph 2, states that *“It is up to the Republic to remove the economic and social obstacles which, by limiting the freedom and equality of citizens, prevent the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all the workers to the political, economic and social organization of the country”*. Moreover article 2 expressly states that *“The Republic recognizes and guarantees the inviolable rights of man, both as an individual and in the social formations where his personality takes place, and requires the fulfillment of the mandatory duties of political, economic and social solidarity”*.

These provisions not only demonstrate that it is the duty of the State to take an active part in recognizing and protecting the inviolable rights of men/women (personal freedom, domicile, communication, movement, association, profession of faith, manifestation of one’s own thought), in all expressions of his personality, but unequivocally clarifies how our country is a social state in which everyone has the specific obligation to fulfill duties of solidarity, political, economic and social in order to make the most effective substantial equality among all individuals.

Furthermore, the principles that *“the Italian legal system conforms to the generally recognized norms of international law are enshrined in the Constitutional Charter. The legal status of the foreigner is regulated by law in accordance with international norms and treaties. The foreigner, who is prevented in his country from the effective exercise of democratic freedoms guaranteed by the Italian Constitution, has the right to asylum in the territory of the Republic, according to the conditions established by law. The*

extradition of the foreigner for political crimes is not permitted” (Article 10) and “Italy repudiates war as an instrument of offense against the freedom of other peoples and as a means of resolving international disputes; allows, on an equal footing with other States, the limitations of sovereignty necessary for an order that ensures peace and justice among nations; promotes and favors international organizations aimed at this purpose” (Article 11).

These principles show how our Republic since 1946 recognizes as fundamental the protection of all citizens and foreigners and the importance of international collaboration to ensure peace and justice between nations. In compliance with these principles, in 1950 Italy signed the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) in which the Contracting Nations recognize to every person subject to their jurisdiction the rights and liberties fundamental principles of every individual.

The importance of collaboration between States to guarantee the protection of individuals, and in particular of minors, is shared by both Italy and Romania and in fact both States have ratified the 1989 New York Convention on the Rights of the Child in which the principle of the best interests of the child and the principle of non-discrimination are expressed. The New York Convention gave inspiration to the European Union for the formation in 1992 of the European Charter of the Rights of the Child and to a series of European directives and regulations (e.g. EC regulation 2201/2003 of 27 November 2003 on parental responsibility) which are more binding on the Member States. This led the Italian state to adopt measures for the implementation of internal law, to which Romania began to provide only afterwards, given its accession to the European Union on January 1, 2007.

Nevertheless, it is important to underline that the first significant steps in the matter of children’s rights have been made by the EU. only starting in 2010 with the Charter of Fundamental Rights adopted on 19 October 2010 and subsequent regulations (e.g. Directive 2013/33 / EU) and therefore efforts to adapt their national legislation to that of Europe see equally involved both the countries.

The phenomenon of immigration has led the Italian legislator to adopt the Consolidated Law on Immigration (Legislative Decree No. 286/1998) since 1998 and subsequently to incorporate the provisions contained in the Legislative Decree into Italian law. n. 142/2015 so-called welcome decree up to the important rules contained in the Law

n. 47/2017 with which we tried to give full and correct implementation to the fundamental principles and rights already established at European level. Precisely for this purpose, the transfer of important functional skills from politicized bodies such as the Ministry to a jurisdictional body has been envisaged, and as such third and impartial, as well as collegial as the Juvenile Court.

In Romania, vice versa, we witness a regulatory system aimed at defining and articulating the national social assistance system and guaranteeing the protection of fundamental human rights, more nationalistic, without witnessing the presence of a capillary network of rules aimed at dictating a specific discipline for the different categories of beneficiaries. Finally, from a more substantial point of view, there are differences regarding the involvement of the various public spheres and operators in the sector in implementing and implementing the various regulatory provisions.

And indeed in Italy there is a dense network of operators who work organically and start from the central organs of the State (Government, individual Ministries) to the peripheral Authorities Regions, Provinces and Municipalities, who find themselves collaborating and dialoguing with other public bodies and individuals, all committed, according to a framework of skills and functions, to ensure the protection and respect of the fundamental rights of minors, within the limits of the professional and economic resources available. Romania, on the other hand, is characterized by a smaller number of rules that at the central level dictate framework rules and guidelines on social assistance, leaving then that local authorities act in their own autonomy.

3. Highlights of the project experience

di COOPERATIVA 3P

Introduction

One of the main highlights of the project was to strengthen the services currently provided by national and international assistance systems and to improve those aimed at children out of the family and care leavers. In fact there are various analogies and characteristics in the experiences of minors accepted in public structures; apart from some immigrants who reach the host country as unaccompanied asylum seekers, most of the children hosted in the structures come from problematic families, punctuated by recurrent crises. In many European countries, the awareness that minors admitted to social-welfare structures have now been severely disadvantaged compared to their peers has developed and therefore greater attention has been paid to the needs of the so-called children in care.

In the educational sphere, for example, their educational opportunities initially suffer from disrupted schooling and shortcomings in their basic education, for which the school system does not always have the opportunity and the appropriate tools to fill these gaps. This is often aggravated by the insufficient attention given to the monitoring of school conduct provided by the team of structures, not because of a lack of will, but because the national system as a whole does not consider it a priority like other assistance services deemed indispensable. It follows that these children are less likely to progress and complete their training course with adequate success and therefore a professional figure would be needed to entrust the specific responsibility for monitoring and support during the educational and school path of the minor.

In many European countries, the awareness that minors admitted to social-welfare structures have now been severely disadvantaged compared to their peers has developed and therefore greater attention has been paid to the needs of the so-called children in care. In addition to the disadvantages in the educational sector to which children welcomed in communities are subject, other phenomena are recurrent, such as: high probability of committing crimes or becoming homeless and high probability of living in conditions of absolute poverty and conflict with the law or be absorbed by organized crime. Due the situation is similar in Europe, the European Commission invites Member States to strengthen and expand the current support systems aimed at minors, promoting the strengthening of respect for children's rights not only within the reception structures but also beyond.

In this perspective, the project aimed to illustrate the most modern and effective models of assistance in this field and to establish the standards for this type of service in Italy and in other European countries. We start with the analysis of the needs of needy children, with disabilities, abandoned by families, away from home, at risk of taking over the spheres of crime, later widening the target based on territorial scope, approaches, partnerships, services and rehabilitation and training courses up to dealing with the transition phase that leads the user to independent life or to the return to the family of origin with the exit from the community. This phase should occur when the care leavers are really ready and not when they reach some institutionalized arrival point, such as the eighteenth year of age or other thresholds regulated by national legislation.

To this end, a highly qualified staff has been established and continues to develop and train and develop methods, practices, analyzes and know-how, transferring the latter to all project partners, and in general to all interested parties. The protection of children's rights, in fact, passes first of all from the knowledge of the phenomena, necessary to start reflections, direct policies and identify proposals for improvement.

Another highlight of the project, specifically, was to implement the dialogue between communities, private operators and professionals with public authorities with a view to institutional recognition of practices deemed to have an impact as regards strengthening

monitoring and respect for children's rights; improve professional assistance figures for the roles of school and employment tutors; ensure the integration of minors, avoid any form of exploitation and guarantee respect for children's rights.

This part of the project is aimed at comparing the documents produced so far by the Italian and Romanian partners, in order to find more (quantitative analysis) and better (qualitative analysis) data in order to conceive, with this elaborate, an innovative product and support to the improvement of the conditions afflicting on the one hand the children inserted in the community and on the other the operators / authorities who take care of them.

The needs analysis was carried out using the following tools:

- Semi-structured interview administered to the 4 distinct target groups in Italy and Romania
- Focus groups conducted with the 4 groups in Italy and Romania
- An in-depth questionnaire on the data that emerged

In particular, the data emerged from the qualitative analysis report drawn from fifty semi-structured interviews, decoded, read and analyzed in their broadest meaning, carried out by trained interviewers who involved the four reference targets will be reported here.

In order to gather useful information to improve services aimed at minors / care leavers, within the scope of its purposes, it was deemed appropriate to administer minors who are within communities, care leavers, specialized operators and representatives of the Public Administration, a questionnaire on the dynamics of the relationships existing between the four interested targets.

Through the questionnaire, a wide response was recorded by the respondents, which made it possible to collect 101 responses, with a different degree of participation according to the categories they belong to. There was a large participation by specialized operators, with as many as 70 responses, representing 69.31% of the participants, the remaining categories instead showed a more modest interest, with 14 responses from the minor residents within communities, 12 of the care leavers and only 5 of the representatives of the public administration. In the chart below it is possible to summarize the degree of participation of the individual categories of recipients of the questionnaire.

Membership group

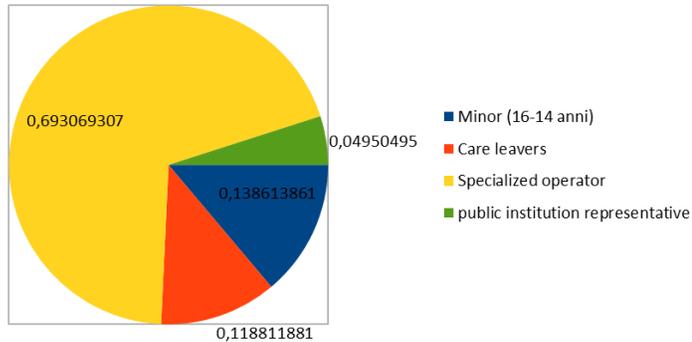


Fig. 1 - Participation for each categories.

Furthermore, two focus groups were created within the framework of the project in Italy. The first performed on 10/23/2019 in which fourteen young people, aged between fourteen and twenty-one, indigenous and foreigners, participated in care courses at the housing communities of the city of Palermo. The same has the aim of tracing any training and aptitude needs of the operators with the general purpose of improving the working and system condition also with reference to the enhancement of services for users. The second, carried out on 15/11/2019, with authorities and structure operators, which investigates the experience of relationships perceived with users and aims to reveal any gaps in the management of the relationship, with the hypothesis that communication and relationship can be important starting points for the functioning of the reception and management system, as well as useful in analyzing the need.

The Romanian partners have created five focus groups, one for each target and one aimed at care leavers and children in care together. The main objective of the focus group aimed at public authorities is to draw their attention to the situation of minors who are about to come of age and who, becoming adults, unless there are special provisions, must face life without being actually ready to face this step. The target audience is the city of Bucharest and, in particular the rep-

representatives of the public authorities, the members of the commission for the protection of the child, who deal directly or indirectly with the communities for children aged between 14 and 18, which they were in the protection system. It is a number of 10 people including social workers, doctors, teachers and representatives of public institutions. The difference in methodology between Italy and Romania in the realization of the focus groups was due to the fact that the two realities in the first phase of administering the interviews showed differences in the needs that emerged which led to the choice to deepen the data with different approaches.

The main objective of the focus group aimed at specialized personnel was to highlight their needs in working with minors and / or care dropouts through a series of questions aimed at researching the fundamental aspects of their work within the structures. residential and relationship with children. The target audience is the territory of the city of Bucharest and, in particular, the residential structures that host children aged between 14 and 18 years. The aim of the focus group aimed at care leavers and children in care is to identify the needs of children in the residential system both in the institution and in the preparation of independent and autonomous life, as well as to ensure support after leaving the institution. The focus group was attended by 12 children, six between the ages of 14 and 18 and six between the ages of 17 and 21. The focus group aimed at minors involves fifteen children aged between 14 and 16 and underlined fundamental aspects of their life at the center, within the protection system, in order to move on to independent adult life. The focus group aimed at care leavers highlighted how preparation for an independent life is considered very important.

Community workers

From the qualitative analysis of the interviews with community operators, the perception of the interviewees with respect to their professional self emerges. Educators are called to indicate which tasks they carry out and cover, how much the tasks performed are appropriate for their role. Among the tasks listed by the interviewees there are those who emphasize the educational aspect, those the tasks related to the daily management of the children and those who

indicate tasks apparently far from their role, but related to the listening dimension and action responding to the needs of children in the community. Only two cases refer to tasks related to networking, a sign of less attention to what is outside the community. In general, a fragmented rather than comprehensive vision of all the tasks related to one's role emerges, as well as an underestimation of the tasks connected to the relationship between the community and the external context. This recalls the sense of inadequacy with respect to the role. From the operators' responses, a considerable degree of difficulty in expressing themselves emerges, confirmed by frequent silences during the interview. Some educators have conflicting views regarding carrying out daily tasks with the children, there are those who consider it a channel for establishing relationships with them and those who, on the other hand, believe it is not appropriate or adequate for the role they play; there are those who say that the sense of inadequacy is fueled by negative feedback from children who do not listen and do not respect educators; only in one case (out of ten) was the inadequacy linked to the feeling of not doing enough for users.

Therefore, there is a need to train operators with greater clarity on the professional self, also to contain negative experiences of inadequacy and the difficulties related to the role: manage the physical aggressiveness of users; stem their insistent requests; manage conflicts in a broader sense, even with colleagues. A wide-ranging training on the role: definition of the tasks, objectives, skills required (relational and communicative), with a user that operators define as "having a difficult experience". From the analysis of the answers to the questionnaire to the question "*How much importance is given to the educational and professional orientation of young people within the community?*" 35.71% of the specialized operators believe that the educational and professional orientation of the children within the communities is given little importance, for the 31.43% communities give enough importance, for 17.14% a lot of importance is given, for 10% a lot and finally for 5.71% no importance is given. In other words, it can be said that for the average of the interviewees, the communities dedicate sufficient importance to the training of young people. Sufficient assessment also confirmed to the question "*In taking charge of minors / children how much space is given to training / information meetings?*" it emerges that for 44.29% of the operators interviewed the importance

and timing dedicated to training and information meetings in taking care of minors / care leavers within the communities is valued with enough, for 35.71% it is given little importance, for 12.86% much is given, for 4.29% no one is given and finally for the remaining 2.86% a great deal of importance is given to the aforementioned meetings. Consequently, in a summary evaluation, the operators give training / information meetings sufficient importance. Degree of satisfaction that increases with the question *“How much space, instead, is given to the compilation / understanding of the documents, in taking charge of the minor / boy?”* where 34.29% of the operators interviewed believe that enough attention is paid to the compilation and understanding of documents during the taking care of minors / care leavers, for 25.71% little is dedicated, for 22.86 a lot, for 11.43 a lot and finally for 5.71% no attention is paid. Consequently, in a summary assessment, more than sufficient importance is given to the training / information meetings for the interviewees.

As for the creativity and autonomy that everyone perceives within their professional space-time, creativity does not seem to have a central place in the activity of the operators; they speak of their proposals without any momentum, perhaps conditioned by the poor motivation they find in the listener. Only one case complains about the lack of resources as an obstacle to the creativity of educators. Most of the interviewees feel autonomous in their work; those who emphasize the limits to their autonomy do so only to highlight the importance of teamwork with which to deal with the actions to be taken. To the questionnaire question *“In general, how satisfied are you with the work done? / From your being in community?”* 35.71% of the operators interviewed believe that the level of satisfaction with the work done and the way of life in the community is respectively quite adequate, for 30% it is very adequate, for 18.57% it is very poor, for the 8.57% is a lot, and finally 7.14% is not at all adequate. In summary, the operators interviewed are fully satisfied with the work done and the way of living in the community.

Participants in the focus groups held in Bucharest said that creative activity can be a resource in working with users. Educators believe they are independent only when it comes to proposing creative activities. As for team work, operators perceive their usefulness as an essential professional comparison to work well, suitable for learning

to organize and distribute the tasks to be performed, as well as space to metabolize the difficulties encountered in everyday life. Therefore moment of growth, also crucial to connote the relationship with the boys. For these reasons, training should enhance the skills of teamwork. Some interviewees, by contrast, also tell of teams characterized by contrasts and non-professionalism.

From the Romanian focus groups it emerges that in the vast majority there are no staff training activities to increase quality standards; those who attended training courses received more information on how to work with children / care leavers in counseling courses and workshops.

Starting from the reflection of an operator who affirms how a good team work allows to lay the foundations for a correct relationship with the children, the data related to this relationship are represented below: in most cases, the relationship with the users are perceived as good, despite misunderstandings and tensions; an operator tends to specify that, although there are manifestations of affection and esteem, it is not about entanglement. However, in some cases, this relationship is loaded with emotional and unprofessional experiences: some tend to identify themselves with parental figures and relationships are considered good because the "girls are good" or the "non-relationship" is limited to being attributed to the characteristics of "closed kids" users.

In short, questionable skills emerge regarding relationship methods and their boundaries, which need, as mentioned, more attention and training. Positive relationship methods, operators confirm, activate relationship openings. The differentiation made between Italian and foreign children is interesting: according to an operator, the former would need an affective figure while foreigners would need an accompaniment towards autonomy. An excessive distinction, if we take into account that in both cases we have to deal with kids in difficulty and that the operator does not have the task of standing as an affective figure.

Six of the ten communities, in which the operators involved work, offer supervision as a listening and comparison space, four do not provide this space, in one case the operator is not aware of it. The frequency of the meetings, where present, is once a month. This is an interesting fact to understand the well-being of the operators; in fact,

supervision is a tool for containment, continuous training, support and, therefore, a tool for preventing burnout and improving the quality of personal services. The fact that not all communities think of this setting indicates that the gaze is only focused in an unfocused way on improving the quality of life and well-being of the operator. This is why team supervision in educational communities should become central practice and methodology. Despite this, to the question *“How adequate are the tools for listening and welcoming guests within the community?”* 38.57% of the operators the tools for listening and welcoming guests living within the communities replied that they are quite adequate, 34.29% are not very adequate, for 18.57 they are very adequate, for the 5.71% are not at all adequate, while for the remaining 2.86% they are very much. Therefore it can be assumed that the aforementioned tools are adequate for the operators interviewed.

The focus groups carried out in Italy give us a profile relating to operators at risk of work-related stress, with a strong need for support and supervision to share the weight of responsibilities and decisions; with great need to refine the soft skills of communication, listening and stress and conflict management, so as to be able to develop greater and better skills in managing the educational relationship in problematic contexts (focus group of 15-11-2019). What makes the difference are the personal attitudes that each of them brings with them: ability to manage stress, problem solving skills and negotiation, are just some of the transversal skills necessary to perform the job of specialized operator at best.

The interview shows, where supervision is present, that often it is not a figure with the specific skills that the role of supervisor requires. In most cases it is the same community manager who, once a month, prepares a listening setting for the operators. Romanian focus groups show how team work helps educators learn new working techniques with users and share and compare ideas. Team meetings take place approximately every 6 months. Supervision is attended by superiors who conduct discussions and meetings. Supervision is organized in principle over a period of 1 to 6 months. Most of the participants are educators and fulfill their tasks according to the job description made during the meetings. Generally, the daily organization of the community in which you work is perceived, by those who do not refrain from responding to interviews, in multiple ways: positive, chaotic,

free of networks, there are those who emphasize the presence of rules and ability to be flexible and who, otherwise, highlights the need to offer more training and recreational activities to children. Romanian operators say that the daily organization of Community activity is partially good. The relationships with the host children are good, and this thanks to the relationships established within the community, in which common interests and bonds between users and operators are established. The main difficulties encountered daily are those related to users' reluctance to the proper functioning of the community, to the distrust of operators, but also to the presence of new people.

Interesting is what emerges about the community's relations with the territory and with the families of origin. According to the educators, the children are informed and involved in activities proposed by the area; this is confirmed by the analysis of the answers to the question "*How functional are helping relationships with the territory currently?*" from which it emerges that for 42.86% of specialized operators, relations with the territory are not very functional, for 35.71% they are quite functional, for an equal percentage of 8.57% they are respectively very and very functional, while the remaining 4.29% are not functional at all. In summary, for the operators interviewed the above reports are quite functional. Vice versa, to the question "*How do you evaluate the various initiatives promoted by the territory aimed at involving minors / care leavers?*"

Emerges that for 48.57% of the specialized operators the territorial initiatives aimed at the participation of minors / care leavers are not adequate, for 31.43% they are enough, for 10% they are very adequate, for 7.14% not at all, while only 2.86% are very adequate. Therefore the aforementioned initiatives are scarcely adequate for this category of subjects. In the relationship with the family of origin, however, there seem to be gaps, which should be addressed, since contacts, when there are, take place only by telephone. Otherwise, in Romania, relations with families of origin are generally considered good by operators. Vice versa in Italy, the operators, according to them, are not informed or involved about the family issue of the children, which the community manager would deal with; only from an interview emerges the trust in the community in the gradual reintegration of children into the family. This data is refuted by the subsequent analysis of the question "*How much are the relationships between the family of origin and the community taken into due consideration and properly cared*

for?" in which for 41.43% of operators the consideration and care of the relationships between family of origin and community are quite adequate, for 30% they are little, for 17.14% they are very much, for 7.14 % are very many and finally for the remaining 4.29% they are not at all adequate. Therefore both the consideration and the care of the relationships of the communities with the families of origin, for this category of subjects, must be considered sufficient. In addition, the analysis of the question "*How much are the reasons why you are temporarily estranged from your family clarified and shared with the boy and the community?*" notes that for 40% of operators the reasons for introducing young people into the community and removed from their families are fairly explained, for 25.71% they are poorly explained, for 24.29% they are very clear, for 7, 14% are completely clarified, while for the remaining 2.86% the reasons for insertion are not explained at all. In summary, for this category of subjects, transparency and sharing of the reasons for the inclusion of young people in the community are almost satisfactory. The operators interviewed seem to have a fragmented view of the network work and the process of taking charge of users: each cites some of the figures belonging to the network, while there does not seem to be a global vision that includes all the actors involved in this complex process. It would be necessary to provide all operators with a global vision, so as to make the educator's work more specialized and aimed at the well-being of users.

The focus group with the authorities and operators delivered an image of the professional figures evidently frustrated by difficulties related not only to the management of the relationship with the children, but also to the interaction with the external system, for example, with the relevant bodies the issue of the certifications that force them to bureaucratic delays, or still often in conflict with the families of origin of the children, with whom it is difficult to establish educational agreements, often physically absent but present (and often in negative) in the children's representations.

This remains a perception of operators who, at the cost of great efforts and sacrifices, still try to do the best possible in the interest of minors / care leavers, but who, like their users, need listening, comparison, supervision and advice.

The request explicitly expressed by the operators about formalized and standardized comparison and supervision sessions is, more-

over, confirmed by the same perception of the boys when they assert that operators often discuss cases without however reaching concrete conclusions (focus group of 15-11-2019).

Romanian focus groups show that users are listened to in specially designed spaces such as: consulting rooms and the psychological department. In some communities (in others they are completely absent), seminars are organized for guests. The adults / operators support the children / care leavers in the activities organized in the communities to which they belong in order to support their future social and professional integration. In communities where children participate in sports and cultural activities, their attendance is around twice a week. The child is supported in the training of personal hygiene skills, of life in general in order to obtain greater autonomy. Users are aware of the presence of collective inclusion measures that facilitate integration into the social system and, indeed, children / teenagers also participate in the development of a plan to exit the system. More financial resources, greater involvement of local authorities and non-governmental organizations are needed to support the social inclusion of the child in the system.

The interviews show that various figures are involved in the IEP in the various communities: a sign of procedures that are not standardized but established within the community itself, depending on the skills and functions attributed to the roles operating within it. Only in two cases is there the perception that the entire work team is in charge of it; the others perceive that the commitment is of a single professional figure, generally the educator or the community manager; in one case the psychologist. This is an interesting fact, which indicates the need for standardized procedures, at least in the dissemination of a methodological dictat: the entire work team takes care of the drafting of the IEP, since all the figures involved in the boy's project are called to give the own vision and contribution. From the analysis of the interviews, gaps emerge in relation to the drafting of the IEP and, above all, to the monitoring and evaluation of the same.

In all cases, operators feel involved in the drafting of the IEP, in other words they perceive that their comments are taken into consideration. However, to the questions *"If you are in charge of it, can you explain how you structured this work?"* and *"If it's not you, do you know how it is structured?"*, the operator shows that he is not clear about these processes. Only in one case, the operator speaks of macro objectives,

split into specific objectives. Therefore, another area, which should be studied in depth in the training of operators, is precisely the drafting of the IEP and the structuring of this document and, therefore, of the entire process of accompanying the user. The gaps increase when it comes to monitoring and evaluation; phases entrusted exclusively to responsible for the community or social services, of which only a couple of operators seem to be aware of their need. Almost all the operators declare that in the community in which they work there is no phase of assessment of the life of the minor / care leaver discharged (or, it is also possible that there is and that the professional figures who work in close contact with the minors / care leavers are unaware of it). What emerged is certainly an element to highlight, in order to optimize not only the network work, but also the educational project of the boy.

In Romania the person responsible for drawing up the IEP is mainly the social worker. The operators are not involved in the elaboration of the IEP but generally know its phases and how it is structured. Participants in the Romanian focus groups said that there is time to monitor and evaluate the achievement of the objectives and that these are monitored through observations, meetings of educators, social workers and multidisciplinary teams. The thoughts and assessments of the people handling the case are relatively considered. The community can support young people in the system, providing financial and emotional support when necessary to facilitate socio-professional insertion. Obviously, the young person inserted in the social protection system must be involved in all the phases that concern doing something and making decisions. The child involved in the protection system is assigned a reference person who supports him either through information and professional advice or by assisting and supporting him in the various stages of growth.

From the interviews, a similar element, but fortunately more contained, regards the presence or absence, in the community, of a figure of reference for the minor. Well, 50% of operators affirm the presence of this figure; in the remaining 50% this does not seem to happen or is not, however, clear to the operator interviewed. The question "*Are there figures outside the community in the lives of users?*" proposes and identifies the figures external to the structure that play a role in the lives of children.

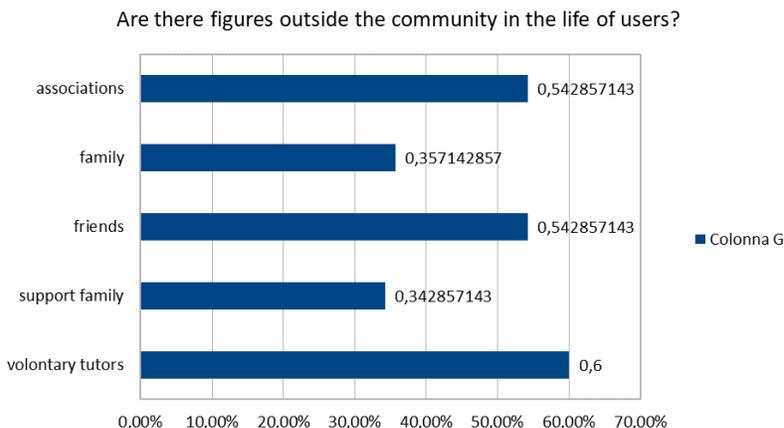


Fig. 2 - Figures outside the community.

60% of the specialized operators indicated voluntary tutors as external figures to the community and present in the life of the users, the same percentage equal to 54.29% indicates associations and friends, 35.71% family members and finally 34, 29% support families. According to the interviewees, the greatest external support provided to community users comes from volunteers, friends and associations. Once again this category of subjects confirms the result obtained with the general analysis and the need to offer help and assistance to families of origin or support who often fail to provide an adequate contribution for the proper development of loved ones.

From the Romanian focuses it appears that the relationship between operators and other professionals involved in the relationship with users, in general, is very good; and indeed a great desire to work in a team and to support each other shines through. However, although there is minimal involvement, relations between the community with public authorities are often lacking due to the lack of interest of the latter and a large bureaucracy. The participants argued the existence of an evaluation phase, but also the involvement of the user, family and team in this phase.

It is common practice for educators to identify a reference operator, the tutor educator, who is in charge of managing and checking the

documentation of the reference minor. It is important to point this out among the good practices of the communities. In conclusion, however, the community is perceived as a fundamental context for the growth of the boy: an important reference point, a place to take refuge and which, of course, transfers a new perspective, in addition to that formed in the family and in the context of origin. The community is perceived as a source of support, it helps to reach a certain degree of autonomy, ensures listening, even if, almost always in the absence of a specially dedicated space: listening to the boy, in fact, takes place in everyday life and, therefore, is left to the skills of the listener. From the analysis of the question “How much within the community or the services involved are children adequately supported in achieving a good level of autonomy?” for 34.29% of operators, the evaluation of the support provided by the communities and services involved to young people to achieve sufficient autonomy is quite adequate, for 30% it is little, for 24.29% it is a lot, for 7.14 it is very much and finally for 4.29% it is not at all adequate. In summary, the commitment provided by the community to achieve sufficient user autonomy for operators can be considered more than sufficient.

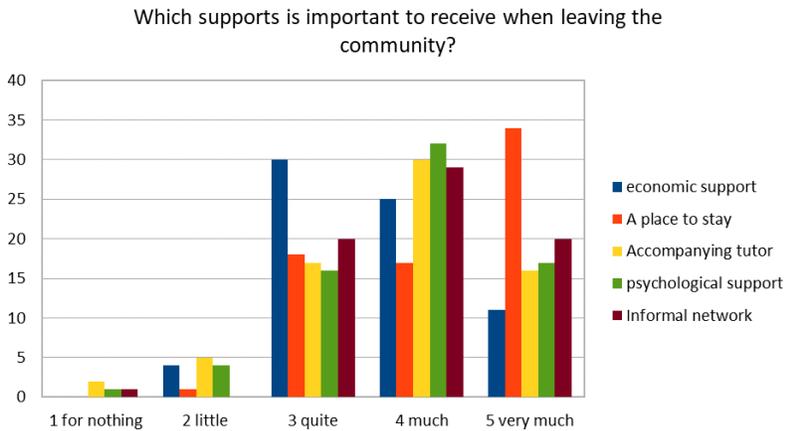


Fig. 3 - Types of support required by minors.

From the analysis of the functional supports offered upon leaving the community “Which supports is it important to receive / provide when leaving the community?” it emerges that for specialized operators the most important types of support among the predetermined ones are accommodation and the informal support network, followed by psychological support and economic support and finally by an accompanying tutor. What emerges from the interviews is that the community is alone in the educational process and in support of users’ autonomy: most of the interviewees declare that there are no support families. Some speak of tutor educators as important support figures, others of non-institutionalized figures that the children have had the good fortune to know. Therefore, those who professionally support the helping relationship and have the task of educating need a stable and solid organizational system at the base, which provides the dictates of conduct, clearly defines roles and tasks and helps the educator to be a model for the educated. The refresher courses, training and experiential training should therefore be addressed to the operating staff, as well as to the delegated authorities and the top management with the aim of revisiting and updating the production processes and generating greater efficiency of the services (focus group of 15-11- 2019).

Public authorities and public employees

The first part of the semi-structured interview with the authorities included an analysis of active social policies relating to minors / care leavers in the community. Most of the interviewed authorities declare that there is a regulatory vacuum; two interviewees, in fact, underline the presence of specific laws only up to the age of twenty-one years of age of the boy and, therefore, there is no specific legislation for the “after community”, that is, from the moment the boy leaves the host community. After all, care leavers are those children who live outside the family of origin on the basis of a provision of the judicial authority and who, at the age of majority, with the exception of some cases, find themselves having to leave the host community or to end the hetero-familial assignment, and therefore to lose the taking in charge by the services that have accompanied them up to that moment. Therefore, it can be said that the interviewees underline not only a regulatory

vacuum concerning the care leavers, but also, consequently, the lack of autonomy projects to accompany minors living outside the family from the age of majority to twenty-one years of age. In one case it is stated that the lack of laws mainly concerns Italian children, while for immigrant children the legislation is present. Three (out of ten) interviewees underline the complexity of the issue: taking charge is difficult, as is change and, therefore, there would be a need for clearer directives, less “cumbersome bureaucracy” and shorter times for the production of documents, without which many paths are precluded.

From the analysis of the question “*In taking charge of minors / children how much space is given to training / information meetings?*” it should be noted that for the same percentage of 40% of the representatives of the public institutions interviewed, the importance and timing dedicated to training and information meetings in taking charge of minors / care leavers within the communities is respectively scarce and sufficient, for the remaining 20% no importance is given to these meetings. Consequently, in a summary evaluation, for the representatives, the training / information meetings are given little importance. Otherwise, to the question “*How much space, instead, is given to the compilation / understanding of the documents, in taking charge of the minor / boy?*” for the same percentage of 40% the representatives of the Public Institutions interviewed for the compilation and understanding of the documents during the taking charge of minors / care leavers is dedicated respectively scarce and enough attention, for the remaining 20% instead a lot of attention is given. Consequently, in a summary assessment, more than sufficient importance is given to the training / information meetings for the interviewees.

The sentences that the interviewees elaborate are full of verbs expressed conditionally or constructed with “must”, “must”: “it would be more effective to have more specific regulations”; and again “in the end we have to accompany the boys”. The conditional, we remember it, is mainly used to indicate an event or situation that takes place only if a certain condition is met. And “must” is an expression of obligation. On the one hand, therefore, the clarity emerges that some mandatory processes must be carried out in favor of care leavers; on the other hand, these mandates can only be carried out if structural conditions of a certain scale take place, especially at the regulatory level. In the same way, it emerges that the support provided to the

families of minors guests in the community, in order to ensure their reintegration in the nucleus of origin, is perceived as inadequate. And this derives on the one hand because it clashes with families in which there are “serious educational difficulties”, accompanied by a possibility of complex change and difficulties in reintegration, by often uncooperative families who perceive the intervention of the authority as a threat; on the other hand, obstacles to this support also seem to be the lack of economic resources and the lack of concrete tools to be able to achieve this support. Without neglecting also the methodological aspects of the intervention which, probably, should be reviewed in order to really understand the needs of the family of origin and propose the intervention as a possibility of positive change. From the interviews with public authorities, significant phrases emerge, such as: *“work with the family must be done inside and out, we must all achieve the same objectives; during the journey, procedures leading to a return should be activated, if this does not happen it means that taking charge is complex and therefore difficult for the return to take place; any work mandated by the judicial authority regarding the communities is aimed at urging and restoring the conditions of family life that allow the return. The problem is that the removal does not occur only as a result of economic problems, but also of educational difficulty and an educational difficulty is not easily changed”*.

The use of the conditional, unfortunately, in this case pertains to the doubt connected with the fulfillment of two conditions among all: that the family actually wants to question itself to activate a path of change and that it is actually able to implement change processes.

The biggest fear for those who do this job is that when users leave the community, efforts are thwarted when the children return to their core; because the work done within the structure does not correspond to a real change in family behavior. And it is clear that the more opportunities there are, the more it is possible that the boy leaving the community can build a life of his own. Both conditions, however, represent an important point from which to start, since they represent “self-fulfilling prophecies” (thus eliminating the commitment of the formal and informal network, oriented towards reintegration); or an element of reflection for the launch of more effective intervention methods the families of these children tend not to be helped, they perceive the intervention as a threat, they do not see it as an opportunity to get involved. The focus group with the authorities and operators

has shown that the professional figures involved in the social insertion of the client are frustrated by all the difficulties deriving not only from the management of relations with the young people, but also from the complex interaction with the external system that requires a considerable amount of bureaucratic obligations, for example, with the bodies responsible for issuing certifications, or again with the frequent conflict with families of origin, often physically absent, but present (and often in negative) in mental representations of children and minors, with whom it is difficult to establish educational agreements (focus group of 15-11-2019).

When a minor is removed from the family for a long time, many interventions are activated and these are resources that are not always accepted or used. Perhaps a different method and approach would be enough to better understand their needs. Even the support provided to the foster families, in the case of foster projects, is perceived as "to be enhanced". The foster families seem to be left to themselves, although some interviewees still declare the presence of a rather active foster service.

However, two interviewees underline how the reduction of staff in this service does not allow them to better follow these families "*the foster family remains connected to the foster care service, where however the staff has reduced. At this moment, therefore, I do not have the perception that colleagues are able to follow all the situations well precisely because of a numerical problem of the operators involved*". To this is added once again, a bureaucracy that complicates things, as well as a cultural substrate that considers paradoxically a surrogate of adoption.

A positive element which, however, emerges from the interviews carried out is the presence of actions aimed at improving this support; commitment to trying to do more. For the Romanian authorities, the need for collaboration and the creation of joint meetings aimed at the educational project of the child are needs shared by all. The participants in the focus group agreed that the Individual Education Plan should be based on collaboration between the school and the representatives (tutors) of minors and that it should be adapted according to the educational needs of the child. Collaboration with other institutions in the drafting of the child's IEP is still lacking and meetings to determine the highest interest of the child take place at about 6 months.

The second part of the semi-structured interview involved an analysis of the network work and design to protect the minor. When the interviewees refer to the networks that are activated, they cite above all the social services, the school, the family advice center, the court, the ASP, social volunteering, the extended family, the foster family, etc. When it comes to the involvement of the child in the development of the project, the most frequently used word is "certain", underlining the importance of knowing the boy's needs, interests and attitudes. The involvement of the boy serves to inform him of the project, but also to create the indispensable relationship of trust and collaboration. From the answers to the question "*How adequate are the tools for listening and welcoming guests within the community?*" for 60% of the representatives of the Public Institutions interviewed, the tools for listening and welcoming guests living within the communities are poorly adequate while for the remaining 40% they are quite adequate. Therefore, it can be assumed that the aforementioned instruments are scarcely adequate for them.

From the interviews emerges on the one hand the awareness of the importance of an active involvement of the families of origin, on the other a sort of mistrust towards the latter. At the base there is the awareness that it would be appropriate to do it: "*it would be propitious to involve them where possible*"; "*The law maintains that there must be a return, for there to be their participation and their involvement*"; and again, "*the family of origin has a fundamental role. Parents must feel active*". Among the interviewees, two factions emerge: there are those who argue that the involvement of the family of origin is essential and should be done even when this has difficulty in supporting its role; and those who believe should be limited only where the family is a resource and not otherwise. This data is refuted by the subsequent analysis of the question "*How much are the relationships between the family of origin and the community taken into due consideration and properly cared for?*" in which for the same percentage of 40% of the representatives of the participating Public Institutions the consideration and care of the relationships between family of origin and community are not at all adequate and quite adequate respectively, for the remaining 20% they are not adequate. In summary, for this category of subjects, the consideration and care of the relationships between the family of origin and the community is insufficient. The Romanian

focus groups have a common vision with the Italian ones; Romanian authorities consider the involvement of responsible parents in the development of any personalized project concerning the protection of the child absolutely necessary. This should be done through regular communication meetings, in which to allow their involvement in the knowledge and monitoring of the correct application of the law on the rights of the child. Knowing the family of origin and maintaining the connection with it is a child's right, provided that biological parents are considered suitable and pursue the best interests of the child.

According to the target audience, the synergy between the protection system and the school system would correspond to the optimum for working towards common objectives; but unfortunately, the current situation shows an absence of this relationship. It is underlined how the school is the ideal context for seeing and intercepting certain data: it is a privileged space where the boy or the child expresses himself and where a series of things can be detected that do not emerge in other places. However, the activation of synergy presupposes a network work of which, even today, it is not competent.

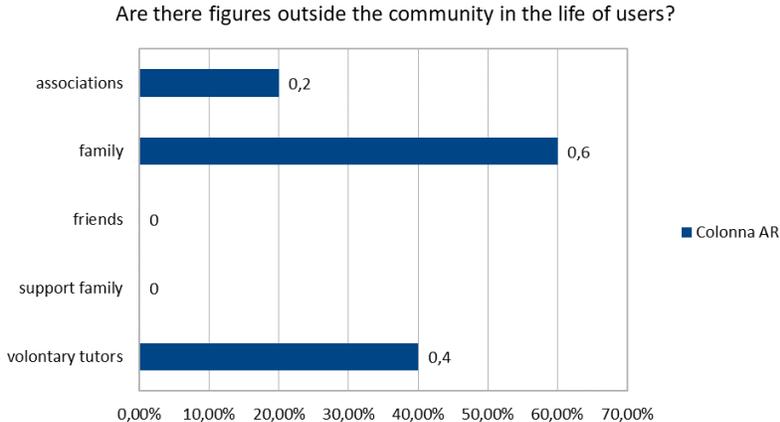


Fig. 4 - Figures outside the community.

As regards the phase of evaluation of the moment of exit of the children from the community and the way in which it is carried out, the interviewees express a sort of hesitation in the answers. The need

to think of a standardization of the assessment of the boy leaving a community is highlighted, in order to mark this phase with a series of measurements and reflections necessary to the definition of personalized projects for activation and social and work inclusion. Vague answers are also obtained regarding the adoption of standardized procedures for the evaluation of the case, where only one interviewee speaks specifically of a predetermined procedure which provides, first of all, the compilation of a procedure start-up form, through to which all the actors involved in the case are informed; secondly, a series of periodic meetings and, finally, the drafting of a conclusive act signed by all.

In the focus groups carried out in the city of Bucharest, most of the public authorities interviewed expressed that current social policies are not adapted to reality, there is no continuity as regards the provision of services and post-institutionalization monitoring. To a large extent, if reference should be made to the number of success stories, the support provided to children is not individualized according to their needs. Many of the participants, however, believe that the support must be personalized. The lack of clear predefined evaluation directives, a *sine qua non* condition to put in order the many information certainly collected by each actor for the definition of the boy's project. As regards taking care of the minor, the limits of network work emerge. According to the interviewees, the actors involved in the protection of the child are: the court, the social services, the community, the school, the educators, the parents, but the municipality, the parish, the associations, the legal guardian. The question "*Are there figures outside the community in the life of users?*" proposes and identifies the figures external to the structure that play a role in the lives of children. 60% of the interviewed representatives indicated family members, 40% voluntary tutors and 20% associations as external figures to the community and present in the users' lives. Given that the number of representatives of public administrations is extremely small in order to influence the general results, it should be noted that for this category the external figures closest to the users of the communities are the family members, generating a result that is in contrast with the analysis general questionnaire replies. Conversely, volunteer tutors assume significant importance in accordance with general opinion, while always in contrast with the overall trend of the questionnaire responses, according to the target under consideration, friends do not play any role.

One of the interviewed authorities underlines how the actors involved are different according to the taking charge phase and according to the case. Unfortunately, an extreme difficulty in doing networking emerges clearly, as the answers provided indicate a self-centered vision on one's own working context. A vision of networking emerges as a waste of time, difficult and cumbersome, unrealized due to lack of human resources or incompetence in networking. This is confirmed by the analysis of the answers to the question "*How functional are helping relationships with the territory currently?*" where for the same percentage of 40% of the representatives of the public institutions, relations with the territory are respectively not very functional and functional enough, for the remaining 20% they are not functional at all. In summary, for this category of subjects the aforementioned relationships are poorly functional. This assessment is also confirmed by the analysis of the question "*How do you evaluate the various initiatives promoted by the territory aimed at involving minors / care leavers?*" in which it emerges that for 60% of the representatives of the public institutions interviewed, the territorial initiatives aimed at the participation of minors / care leavers are by no means adequate, for the same percentage equal to 20% they are respectively scarcely and fairly adequate. Therefore, for this category of subjects, the aforementioned initiatives are assessed to be very scarce.

A rejection of network work almost emerges, perceived as complicated and difficult, especially in relation to the scarce human resources available and to the limited time. There is a strong need to train all the actors involved in taking charge of minors and care leavers in networking, in order to activate a real interest in this methodology and, therefore, a real motivation to implement it, as well as the skills necessary to achieve it in the best way.

From the analysis of the answers to the questionnaire to the question "*How much importance is given to the educational and professional orientation of young people within the community?*" 40% of the representatives of the public institutions believe that the educational and professional orientation of the children within the communities is given little importance, in the same percentage of 20% the respondents respond respectively that the communities give much, enough and not at all importance to user training. In other words, it can be said that for the average of the interviewees, the communities dedicate little

importance to the training of young people. To the question “*In taking care of a minor, how do the services involved operate with a view to networking?*”, Most of the answers provided do not give an understanding of how this occurs, but once again its complexity, the need for greater skills and the need for specific legislation are highlighted “*an institutional law is needed for this type of activity*”. Furthermore, from the interview with the public authorities, it is noted that the court and social services are the bodies deemed responsible for the first phase of taking charge of the minor; in a few cases the interviewees try to clarify the criteria adopted for the activation of the services in favor of the same: in two cases there is talk of an evaluation of the case which, on the one hand, is carried out through fact-finding interviews and home visits and, on the other other, it leads to a concept design.

The criteria that determine the decision about the inclusion of the minor in the community are, above all, the presence of physical and psychological mistreatment, attested by a psychophysical analysis of the minor; the minor age, and the finding of absence of primary care and inclusion in criminal contexts.

About half of the interviewees perceive that insertion into the community does not always respond to the need of the minor; one interviewee states that this insertion “*still represents a traumatic event*”. Although for most of the interviewees it is not the best way to meet the needs of the minor, the community still responds to the need for a detachment from the family of origin and represents an important place of temporary growth. One of the interviewees believes that knowing how to respond to the needs of the minor depends on the community itself; others say that insertion into the community, especially in the most serious cases, is even inevitable, as a context that responds to the need for protection and that provides the child with the possibility of a path educational. The alternatives to inclusion in the community are designed, especially in the form of economic incentives both to the families of origin and to the foster families, but also in the form of home interventions aimed at promoting a change directly in the family context, through the figure of a tutor, with the boarding schools, but also through prevention activities such as the investigation upstream of the needs and problems of the family and promoting work.

From the Romanian focus groups it emerges that, taking into account the procedures in place and trying to respect the principle of

the best interest of the minor, it is appropriate to focus the various types of intervention taking into account precisely the best interest of the minor. The changing needs of children should be evaluated more carefully, in consideration of the needs that arise from time to time: abandonment of the family, abuse in any form, extreme poverty. Assistance and recovery interventions should be assigned, exclusively, to rigorously specialized personnel, who are asked for qualitative performance criteria in working with children, psycho-social support services for children and families, alternative services and day centers. These professionals should ensure emergency material assistance, psychosocial counseling, inclusion of participants in a program adapted to their specific needs, monitoring of cases.

A part of the interview illustrates the strengths and weaknesses attributed by the interviewees to the work done by the communities, as well as their assessment of the adequacy of the number of educators / community guests. The responses show that all the public authorities interviewed consider specific training for social workers useful, responding to the specific needs of minors / care leavers. one case would make such specific training mandatory.

The majority of Romanian authorities believe that a correlation of existing social policies with reality on the ground would be necessary. The support given must be adapted to the real and concrete needs of the family. In this regard, legislation should be adapted and invested in staff training. Many argue that we are faced with the lack of specialists and inadequate legislation, which leads to inadequate monitoring of cases and the tendency to go too superficially on the real needs of the child.

Among the weak points most cited in the interviews, there are the irregular payments and the turnover of the operators, a cause not only of demotivation, but also of interventions often not completed and confusion of the reference points for the minor. This distrust is also evident from the answers to the question *"How satisfied are you with the work done in general? / From your being in the community?"* where, for the same percentage equal to 40% of the representatives of the public institutions interviewed, the level of satisfaction with the work done and the way of life in the community is not at all adequate and quite adequate, for the remaining 20% it is not adequate. In summary, the interviewed representatives feel scarcely satisfied with the work done and the way of living in the community. The strengths highlighted by

the Romanian respondents on the work done by the community are social integration, the social protection of minors. The weak points of the work carried out by the community are the immediate advice and emotional support of the minor who has entered the protection system. There are too few specialized personnel inside the residential centers. A greater number of educators involved in the process of social inclusion in the community is the response of all participants in the focus. Most highlight the importance of the quality of the specialists, their practical experience and note that the results obtained depend on them, so much so that they can speak of quality services.

The services offered by centers and communities are not uniform and generally cover only the minor's primary needs. From the point of view of acquiring independent life skills, each child / young person needs a reference figure (attachment) and whom they can trust, to constantly report and monitor their evolution, intervening whenever necessary.

Regarding the adequacy of the ratio of educators / community guests, it seems that for respondents it can be considered adequate only on condition of certain essential conditions: punctual payments, regular contracts, organization of shifts and supervision. They also suggest the need for at least two operators per shift. The answers to the question "*How is the child supported in managing the removal from his family?*", In some cases they refer superficially to practices such as calling via mobile phone, in other cases, the answers are more articulate and profound, recalling a path of accompanying the minor in understanding and accepting this removal, as well as underlining the important involvement of the family of origin. A common idea is that the minor should be made aware of the reasons for his insertion, obviously adapting the communication to the age of the user; must be accompanied on the path and protected by making parents participate in the insertion into the community, avoiding leaving the home with the police and making this change as peaceful as possible. From the analysis of the question "*How much are the reasons why you are temporarily estranged from your family clarified and shared with the boy and the community?*" it emerges that for the same percentage of 40%, the representatives of the public institutions interviewed, the reasons for the inclusion of the children in the community and removed from their families are respectively not at all fairly explained, for the remaining 20% they are very much. In summary, for this category of subjects,

transparency and sharing of the reasons for the inclusion of children in the community is very poor.

Furthermore, all the interviewees believe that the presence of a reference figure is important to support the minor / young person on the way out of the protection system, be it called "tutor" or "guarantor".

Most of the public authorities participating in the Romanian focus groups, consider the psychological advice of users and the attempt to maintain a connection with their family of origin.

Young people who abandon the assistance system are supported by the operators in the area, probably through information, the jobs offered and professional advice. The post-institutionalization assistance services are very few and not adapted to the needs and problems that children / young people face. All specialists working in the field of child protection should participate regularly in training courses. Educational services, psychological counseling, social inclusion are services that should be strengthened. From the participant's point of view, case management services should be addressed so as to have an integrated approach of the child in the family and social environment. The centers do not promote initiatives aimed at involving minors / people who leave the assistance system. Social, professional and community integration initiatives, as well as the emotional support of young people, should be urgently updated to support participants. The initiatives supported to sensitize the community are those related to the provision of housing for these young people and jobs, campaigns to promote children's rights, through information, flyers, local announcements. Currently, there are a number of measures designed to support young people in the process of starting an independent adult life. Unfortunately, however, there is no constant and adequate monitoring of the use of these measures. There is, however, a tendency to change the way of approaching the beneficiaries, from the need to face them differently, each according to specific needs and purchasing capacity.

With regard to the initiatives promoted by the territory aimed at involving minors / care leavers, there is little knowledge of Italian respondents, often remaining silent or responding "I don't know". The same occurs for initiatives that are promoted by public and private bodies in order to involve and sensitize the community.

Finally, poor knowledge is also noted with regard to measures aimed at promoting the transition to adult life and social inclusion. From the analysis of the question *“How much within the community or the services involved are children adequately supported in achieving a good level of autonomy?”* it emerges that for 60% of the representatives of the public institutions interviewed, the evaluation of the support provided by the communities and services involved to the children to achieve sufficient autonomy is quite adequate, for the remaining 30% it is not at all. In summary, the commitment provided by the community to achieve adequate user autonomy for representatives of the I.P. is not sufficient.

Specifically, job grants, scholarships and housing support seem to be the most implemented initiatives to facilitate the exit of children from the community. From the analysis of the functional supports offered upon leaving the community *“Which supports is it important to receive / provide when leaving the community?”* it emerges that for the representatives of public institutions the most important types of support among the predetermined ones are accommodation and an accompanying tutor, followed by economic support, psychological support and finally by the informal support network.

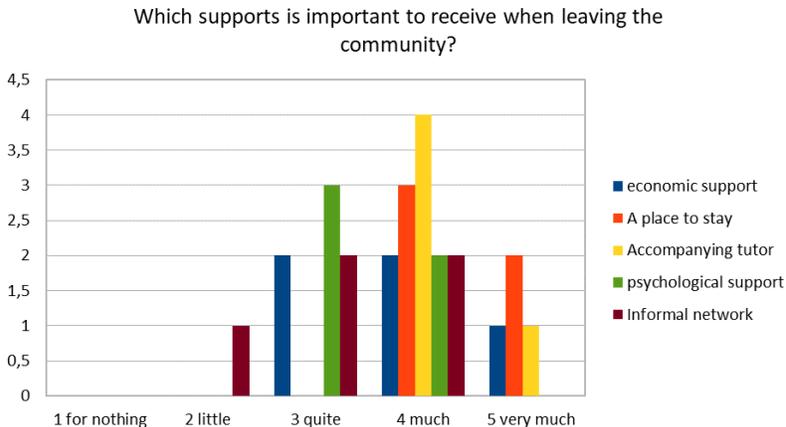


Fig. 5 - Types of support required by minors.

Therefore, there is a lack of knowledge of public and private initiatives carried out in the territory to involve the whole community with respect to the problem in question and a poor knowledge of inclusion initiatives for new adults.

Conclusions

As already highlighted, there are several similarities and characteristics in the experiences of minors accepted in public structures and care leavers. Most of the children housed in the facilities come from problematic families, punctuated by recurrent crises. Precisely for this reason in many European countries the awareness has matured that the minors accepted in the social-welfare structures are strongly disadvantaged compared to their peers, as their life is generally marked by traumas and contexts of educational poverty and psychological poverty which they do not allow adequate psycho-social development. In order to gather useful information to improve the services aimed at minors / care leavers, on 28.02.2020 the Waldensian Institute of Palermo organized at the Diaconal Center “La Noce” a focus group attended by a dozen professional figures (specialized operators, educators and representatives of institutional authorities) in order to deepen the reflection on assessment of learning needs, public services offered. Furthermore, specific recommendations have been developed to be proposed in the future to promote new intervention models with children outside the family and care leavers. From the group reflection, relevant elements emerged that reflect the results obtained with the other parts of the project, such as the analysis of best practices, the interviews and the questionnaire addressed to the four targets, the Italian and Romanian focus groups, which are summarized in the following recommendations:

1. Strengthen the trust of minors / care leavers in institutions through an economic investment;

2. Establish the tutor and school mentor for the minor who will bridge the P.A. as per good practice as guarantor office and as per ministerial directives;

3. Enhance the culture / vision of the support family through the professionalization of the family and with a tutoring process and an opening on the national territory, with adequate funding;

4. Redefine the role of the community in the light of a clear project on entry and exit times with concrete analysis of the residual capacities of the family of origin;

5. Strengthen parental support through counseling services and territorial services (child neuropsychiatry);

6. Strengthen the internship of university students in psychology and education to activate the taking charge;

7. Activate mutual aid courses through training courses in cases of educational poverty and psychological poverty.

From a careful analysis of the recommendations provided by the participants in the aforementioned group focus, the need to make a significant political impact to stem youth unemployment in Sicily emerges. This is a fundamental objective that affects not only all minors present in the area, who directly suffer the consequences in terms of deprivation of their autonomy, but involves the whole population as it determines a pathological situation of social stasis and distrust in public administrations, which should represent the driving force of an optimal welfare state system. A first step aimed at activating in a more incisive way the evolutionary process of insertion of minors into the regional and national social fabric must be to facilitate the transition from foster care to adoption, ensuring them a more stable economic-affective situation. in which to develop one's values and ethics. As the situation is similar across Europe, the European Commission invites member states to strengthen and expand the current support systems for children, promoting the strengthening of respect for their rights not only within the reception structures but also beyond.

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