

Policy Paper

Make Protection Work!

Concrete steps to protect children on the move in Europe

Background and introduction

Policy context

In its Reflection paper on “Coordination and cooperation in integrated child protection systems”¹, presented at the 9th European Forum on the rights of the child, the European Commission (‘EC’) stated that while Member States of the European Union (‘EU’) hold primary responsibility to establish comprehensive child protection systems (‘CPS’), “there are fields involving child protection where the EU has scope to act to reinforce protection, particularly in **cross-border and transnational situations**”, and by promoting and supporting child protection systems outside the EU through its external relations role.

The need to establish comprehensive and functional child protection systems to protect children on the move within and across countries, both unaccompanied and separated children, and children travelling with families, is reiterated throughout the Reflection paper, as well as in other EU policy documents². The Reflection paper on CPSs provides several recommendations that specifically apply to children on the move in all different situations they may find themselves and in relation to different, additional risks they may be exposed to as a result of the movement.

In particular, the Reflection paper recognizes that – while most violence against children takes place in the home setting – some children may be exposed to greater risks of violence, including those who are on the move (themselves, or otherwise affected by movement), in particular: children “in situations of migration or seeking international protection, including undocumented or stateless children, children who are neglected, or without appropriate care [...], children who go missing [...], child victims of trafficking, [...] children in detention, [...], children left behind by parents moving abroad for work, EU national children who themselves move alone or without appropriate care within the EU”³.

The Reflection paper recognizes that not all children are regarded and treated as children first and foremost, particularly in the case of children in situations of migration, and that when these children are identified as in need of protection, they do not necessarily benefit from equal access to existing services⁴. Recognizing the “increasing prevalence of children in cross-border situations in need of child protection measures”, the Reflection paper highlights the need to clarify “roles and responsibilities, keeping abreast of country of origin information, ensuring a national focal point for cross-border child protection matters, adopting procedures/guidance/protocols/processes, for example for the transfer of responsibility within the context of asylum procedures (Dublin Regulation), or when considering out of country care placements, or family tracing and protection in cases of child trafficking” (principle No. 7). The Paper also recognizes the imperative to ensure adequate protection to children deprived of parental care, through the appointment of a guardian who shall ensure coherence and continuity of action and act

¹ EC, 9th European Forum on the rights of the child, Coordination and cooperation in integrated child protection systems - Reflection Paper

² Notably, the EC Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors (2010-2014) and the [EU Strategy towards the eradication of trafficking in human beings 2012-2016](#).

³ EC, 9th European Forum on the rights of the child, Coordination and cooperation in integrated child protection systems - Reflection Paper, Introduction

⁴ EC, 9th European Forum on the rights of the child, Coordination and cooperation in integrated child protection systems - Reflection Paper, para. 3

as a reference point for the different service providers and actors around the child (principle No. 8); and the need to support families in their role as primary caregivers and in protecting the child from violence (principle No. 4).

Regretfully, children on the move in Europe (and beyond) are still subjected to unequal treatment compared to national children. Between May and September 2014, Mario Project partners carried out a series of transnational researches⁵ with the overall aim to document and analyze the factors that contribute to making children on the move in Europe (particularly European national children) vulnerable to risks of neglect, violence, abuse and exploitation. Overall, the research showed that these children are highly vulnerable, and that their trust in and access to child protection and other services are seriously limited. Thus the principles recommended in the EC Reflection paper are far from being fully adhered to in reality.

Aims of the document

The present document is aimed to contribute to further policy development as well as implementation of the recommendations contained in the Reflection paper that apply in particular to children on the move in Europe (both within and outside the EU). It is also intended to contribute to other ongoing or expected policy processes at EU level, namely: the development of a new Strategy against Trafficking in Human Beings and, hopefully, of a new Action Plan to protect unaccompanied and separated children and of a new Strategy on the Rights of the Child (which child rights organizations are calling for).

Children on the move shall be understood as including the following categories of children: migrant children (internal or across borders; legal or irregular; accompanied or not), asylum seeking and refugee children, trafficked children, internally displaced children or children outside a protective environment. Therefore, the child should already have moved, may also be a returned migrant, is moving or/and is susceptible to impending migration, which may be either internal or international⁶.

In particular, this document focuses on two (inter-related) aspects that are deemed to be crucial in the protection of children on the move in their country of origin, transit and destination. These are:

- 1) Including in national CPSs some **key-elements that ensure protection of all children on the move** within a State's territory, on equal basis as of all other children, without discrimination; and
- 2) Establishing **transnational case-management systems**.

While anchored in and referring to existing international human rights legal standards and most advanced policies and guidelines on child protection and on the protection of children on the move in particular, this document intends to **provide concrete elements that constitute promising practices**, developed by Terre des hommes along with a wide range of partner NGOs in the framework of the Project **“Mario - Joint action to protect children on the move in Europe”**, co-funded by the European Commission.

Implemented in 16 European (both EU and non-EU) countries by 19 NGO partners, the **Mario Project** aims to promote the rights of children on the move, through enhancing transnational cooperation in their protection and by improving access to services for these children and their families. Along different phases, activities started in 2009 and are supposed to end in December 2016. The Project has been co-funded by the European Commission (Daphne) and the OAK Foundation – as part of its Child Abuse Programme. Further information at: www.marioproject.org

⁵ The five research reports are available at: <http://www.marioproject.org/documents>

The transnational researches carried out in the framework of the Mario Project focused on Albanian, Romanian and Bulgarian children on the move. However, several findings, conclusions and recommendations can apply more broadly to children on the move in Europe.

⁶ Definition adopted by Mario Project partners in 2014

1. Including in national CPSs key-elements to protect all children on the move

Transnational analysis carried out in 2014 in the framework of the Mario Project revealed that – regretfully – the principles enshrined in the above-mentioned Reflection Paper, and more broadly children’s fundamental rights, are far from being fully implemented regarding children on the move in EU. These children have unequal access to child protection and other services, and in many instances services offered to them are not adequate to address their needs⁷.

While a comprehensive CPS should be able to effectively prevent, identify and address all situations of children in need of protection without discrimination based on, among others, immigration status, their or their parents’ race, language, religion, national, ethnic or social origin, some elements and measures have proven to directly contribute to enhancing the protection of children on the move. This holds particularly true in contexts where the existing CPSs at national and local level are not well-functioning and present several gaps (in terms of human resources’ capacity, broader financial resources, geographical scope, etc.)

While recognizing that closing such gaps shall be the priority for the States concerned (and for the EU in its role of promoter and supporter of comprehensive CPSs), the Paper intends to bring immediate attention on some elements that – if embedded in national and local CPSs – can expeditiously ensure the protection of children on the move in line with minimum quality standards. These elements – stemming from the Project’s implementation in different countries – are illustrated below.

a) Bringing coherence in policies and institutional practice in protecting children on the move

As an overall consideration, it has been assessed by Mario Project partners that both policy makers and service providers often demonstrate limited awareness of the complex life and migration situations experienced by children who move within or across the EU. Overall, the approach to protecting children on the move appears fragmented, with different responses provided to the needs of children grouped in different ‘categories’ (such as separated and unaccompanied children, child victims of trafficking, asylum seeking children). The understanding of the concept of “children on the move” indeed varies among stakeholders, and it is often nuanced according to the type of activities or services provided by the institution or organization they work with. Generally, there is no commonly agreed-upon definition of ‘children on the move’ among statutory service providers.

Thus, the level and standards of services provided to children on the move in the EU varies within a country or region based on existing policies and laws (above), and also as a consequence of service providers’ perception and knowledge of the protection rights of these children. Indeed, some professionals consider some groups of children (notably children working in the street, children moving within families, separated EU national children) as not being part of their mandate. Sometimes, children on the move experience discrimination by service providers in terms of how they are treated.

Albeit the principle of ‘multi-disciplinary team work’ is generally part of existing cooperation agreements among service providers, due to the fragmented policy approach to children on the move, and to the way these children are ‘categorized’ and treated according to the different sub-groups they belong to, this

⁷ A more in-depth analysis of the main protection gaps identified by the transnational research is provided in: Mario Project, *Position Paper on Children on the Move in Europe*, 2015, available at: <http://marioproject.org/documents/position-paper-children-on-the-move-in-europe/7248>

principle is not always applied in practice. Furthermore, several children reported having experienced harsh treatment by police officers with whom they came into contact (this is particularly the case for children in street situations, as well as for children held in administrative detention due to their migration status)⁸.

There is the need to promote a holistic approach to the protection of children on the move, based on an effective cooperation among all concerned service providers from different sectors. Such approach should recognize the complex life and migration situations experienced by these children – and their families – and should protect all children whose movements places them at increased risks of neglect, violence, abuse and exploitation. Emphasis should be put on prevention, and children in need of protection should enjoy effective access to equitable services provided to them as children first and foremost, and tailored according to their specific needs.

b) **Training of professionals from the CPS or with child protection responsibilities on the rights and protection needs of children on the move**

While addressing legal and policy framework is paramount in order to harmonize the protection provided to children on the move, building the capacity of professionals from the existing child protection services or with child protection responsibilities proved to be an effective action bringing practical improvements to the protection of children on the move. Professionals to be targeted in order to effectively enhance the protection of children on the move based on a child-centered, holistic approach, with a focus on prevention, include (although are not limited to): social workers; psychologists; other staff (managers, etc.) from child protection services; teachers; health professionals; police officers; judges;

Elements that should be embedded in training professionals in order to enable them to ensure adequate protection of all children on the move include:

- **Training on children's rights and child protection.** A start-up training on children's' rights as provided in the UN CRC and other international human rights legal treaties (including regional ones), as well as on child protection legislation in the country they operate;
- **Training on identification, assistance and protection of children on the move.** Professionals should be trained on considering the complexity and the multi-layered situation of children on the move, how they belong to different 'sub-groups' at the same or at different times, and on how to respond to the protection needs of these children; This would equally include the training of all professionals in contact with these children, including teachers and health professionals, on recognizing abuse;
- **On the job training on case management.** This capacity building approach is aimed to support professionals from the child protection system in dealing with child protection cases, including children who are on the move. It envisages ongoing mentoring and supervision by external experts over a medium-long period of time;
- **Capacity building on child-friendly interviewing techniques.** This training program should target in particular police officers and social workers, focusing on how to interview children during the first contact with police. The training should encompass specific elements and issues around communicating with children who originate from different countries and cultural contexts.

Follow-up and monitoring of trained professionals should be an integral part of any capacity building program, with the twofold aim of, on the one hand, monitoring the impact of the training provided (in terms of changes in knowledge and awareness, as well as in practice), and on the other hand, in order to provide support to trained professionals beyond the training.

⁸ Mario Project transnational research reports: <http://www.marioproject.org/documents>

c) **Providing immediate access to basic services and fundamental rights**

Many children on the move lack basic identity documents and/or administrative permits in order to access most or the full range of services they are entitled to, and in many cases to have their identity duly recognized and protected. This is the case not only in countries of transit and destination, but also in countries where children originally come from (and return to).

Birth registration and administrative status

In Europe and beyond, a considerable number of children do not have their birth registered⁹. In some cases this happens when they are born in their own country, due to lack of information and/or literacy skills of the child's parents, and/or of the costs attached to the registration process.

When children are born abroad, the process of getting their birth registered is often more expensive and laborious, and additional complications may occur, such as, for example, when the mother delivered the child in a hospital where she was admitted with health cards borrowed from someone else.

Two children (a boy and a girl aged 6 and 12) who were collecting scrap metal with their parents of Albanian origin were unable to travel between Albania and Greece as they were not properly registered in Albania nor in Greece. When pregnant with them, their mother did not have a passport and gave false identity to the hospital, borrowing a friend's identification document (Mario Project, *Transnational research on Central and South Eastern European migrant children in Greece*, 2015)

While some children are not registered at all, other children have been registered, but the birth certificate is not recognized as valid by relevant authorities in the country to which they move or return. Procedures can entail even DNA testing, which is usually very expensive.

A service provider interviewed in Macedonia stated that "usually the families, especially children, have no documentation, and the process of getting adequate documentation is long and rather expensive for these categories of people. If the child is born at home and not in a hospital there is a specific procedure in place that requires witnesses that can confirm the act of birth and the mother's identity. If the child is born abroad and the mother does not have the needed documentation, a DNA test is obligatory, but these tests are very expensive and these families are not able to pay for them. Very often women go to the hospital with borrowed health cards, and in those cases they have to take a DNA test to prove parenthood, so that a birth certificate can be issued" (Mario Project, *Children and adolescents engaged in street work in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Mobilities, vulnerabilities and resiliencies*, 2015)

In all the above cases, the burden placed on the child and his or her family is huge and many of these children do not have their birth properly registered and recognized for several years, sometimes even for an indefinite period of time.

Even for those children who have their birth duly registered, problems arise when they are not provided with **residence permits** required in order to access certain services. This applies both to countries of transit and destination, and to countries of origin, in cases when children move internally and thus change their place of residence. Often the procedures are complicated and require some costs, representing practical obstacles for the child's family.

⁹ UNICEF, *Progress for Children: Achieving the MDGs with Equity*, No.9 September 2010, p.44. According to this source, "only half of the children under 5 years old in the developing world have their births registered".

For example, a 25 year old mother from Kosovo living in Macedonia reported that she had approached several offices and organizations seeking help, but a copy of her ID was always a pre-condition to that. Because of her illiteracy and financial problems, it is difficult for several families to prepare all the paper work needed to register for different kind of assistance (Mario Project, *Children and adolescents engaged in street work in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Mobilities, vulnerabilities and resiliencies*, 2015)

Lack of identity and residence documents, in turn, represent major obstacles for children to enroll in the mainstream school system and to access health services.

Access to education

Barriers for children on the move to access and successfully stay within the education system are multi-faceted. Besides the administrative requirements mentioned above that often times they cannot (timely) fulfil, these children face a number of other challenges in getting enrolled in and completing school education. In most cases, lack of access to school is related to a broader marginalization within the society and discrimination suffered by children and their families¹⁰.

Children on the move and their families generally come from a very poor background. In other cases, they might have belonged to middle or even upper classes of their country's population, but have lost assets and resources due to conflict and displacement. Among the many needs in their lives that are not adequately met, they lack resources to afford school books and uniforms, other materials, as well as transport costs. Moreover, some children often are too busy to attend school, as a large part of their time is dedicated to work in order to support the family and to perform house duties. Even when they have the possibility to go to school, these children are often tired and stressed to be able to focus during the lessons and to complete their homework. In some cases, children in temporary placement are prevented from attending school due to the limited capacity of local schools to absorb them in considerable numbers.

As it is the case for children on the move outside their country of origin, but as well as for children belonging to ethnic minorities, language often represents a barrier in adequately performing at school. In some cases, children have attended school irregularly in the past, a fact which makes it difficult for them to go back to the formal school system and to enroll in a grade that matches their age and the number of years attended. Finally, children on the move in many cases suffer stigma, discrimination and even violence at school, which pushes them to drop out. While on the one hand disruption of socialization is intrinsic to the movement of children from one place to another, discrimination stems from intolerant and even racist attitudes within societies.

For instance, a 12 year old boy from Albania living in Kosovo stated: "The director of the school himself told me to quit. The teacher would beat me up. "I will beat you if you do not study!", she used to say. Although I used to write so well!" (Mario Project, *Children and Adolescents on the Move Involved in Street Work in Albania and Kosovo: Transnational and Internal Patterns*, 2015)

Access to health care

Health problems feature prominently among the main concerns that children on the move have, particularly when they travel with their parents. These families face a number of challenges in accessing

¹⁰ See also: PICUM, *Protecting undocumented children: promising policies and practices from governments*, February 2015

See also: *Half-Way Home: Monitoring the Reintegration of Children Returned from EU Countries to South-East European Countries*, pp. 32, Terre des hommes, 2014

regular and qualitative health care services. In some cases, they cannot access these services due to the lack of a residence permit.

For instance, three children living in a camp in Thessaloniki (one boy aged less than 5 and two girls between 6 and 12 years old) with their father, appeared to be in poor health conditions. They stated that they would need help in getting a residence permit, which would enable them to access public services including health (Mario Project, *Transnational research on Central and South Eastern European migrant children in Greece, 2015*)

Even when this requirement is met (or lifted), children and their families often meet literacy and language barriers in dealing with the health system and even in accessing information about health care and prevention.

Lack of financial resources to cover for health needs is a major obstacle in benefiting from adequate health care by children on the move and their families. Moreover, in some cases these children and their parents experience unfavorable treatment by health professionals, who do not regard them as falling within their mandate. Mental health issues appear to be generally overlooked among children on the move, although this group is often affected by mental health problems due to a variety of reasons – ranging from domestic violence stemming from extreme poverty, through to having lived through harmful conditions and experienced very traumatizing events, such as in the case of children escaping from conflict-affected areas.

Based on the experience of the Mario Project partners, including immediate and concrete measures to support children on the move – and their families – in accessing and benefiting from the above-mentioned services significantly contributes to realizing their fundamental rights. Such measures include:

- **Lifting administrative and financial barriers** to birth registration, as well as to accessing the school and health systems, for children on the move and their families (as well as for other at risk groups of the population);
- Regularizing the **administrative status** of all children temporarily or permanently residing in a country, in order to allow them to enroll in school and access health and other services as any other children;
- Regularly providing **support to school attendance** for children who are going back to the formal school education after discontinuation, namely through catch up classes and support classes (for children who need support and/or a proper space for their homework etc.);
- Offering **non formal education** opportunities to children who cannot go back to the formal school system, as well as vocational training and apprenticeship programs for children when suitable and preferable for the child concerned;
- Envisaging regular **awareness raising** initiatives targeting teachers, school personnel, as well as students and their parents, in order for the school to become more inclusive towards children on the move;
- Besides training professionals from the health system on recognizing abuse (above), training programs targeting those professionals should also focus on **promoting an inclusive approach to healthcare**, and on the need to assess also mental health issues that children on the move might be affected by – not only for refugee children.

d) Establishing participation mechanisms for children on the move

Children on the move often belong to the most marginalized groups of societies. They are often regarded as victims and passive recipients of help, rather than active contributors to the policies and programs affecting them. Similar considerations apply to these children's parents and other caregivers. Children

consulted as part of the different initiatives within the Mario Project expressed feelings of sadness, hopelessness and loneliness. These children are not regularly consulted with in the making of decisions affecting them, sometimes even at the individual and family level, but certainly regarding policies and measures generally directed towards them.

The opinions of children on the move and of their parents and caregivers should be taken into account when designing services affecting them, and they should be regarded as skilled and experienced individuals who know very well their own situation and can give significant contribution to decisions concerning them.

Based on their concrete experience, Mario Project partners recommend the following elements to be envisaged in order to ensure regular participation of children on the move:

- In addition to ad hoc consultations on occasion of researches and program or policy design processes, regular **child consultation boards** for children on the move should be set up, in order to ensure a group of children to represent their target group's stances towards relevant stakeholders. Children should be provided initial support in the form of training and basic advices on ground rules and organization for the functioning of such board (training and support may be needed over a relatively long period of time, based on children's skills and competences);
- Within regular child consultation bodies as above, gender balance should be sought, as well as **representativeness** of the different sub-groups and profiles of children on the move in the country (or local area); while age grouping should be consistent (in order to allow meaningful exchange and activities among children involved), children on the move of **different age groups** should be actively consulted with and given the chance to express themselves;
- Explicitly aim to **include the most marginalized children** within the target group, through actively reaching out to and building trust with them and with their families and communities;
- Ensure adherence to the **highest standards of child participation**, as well as the existence and effective implementation of **child safeguarding protocols** within the organizations supporting the child participation processes – be it a regular consultation board, or ad hoc participation initiatives.

e) Reaching out to children where they are

Children on the move – and their parents - consulted and assisted by Mario Project partners showed very limited awareness and knowledge about existing child and social protection services in the place where they lived. Moreover, as previously mentioned, these children and families face a number of administrative, linguistic and cultural barriers in accessing services, often in a general context of social marginalization and discrimination. They often live in rather remote and/or poorly serviced areas, which adds logistical difficulties in accessing services.

Reaching out to children (and families) in the places where they live (and/or work, such as in the case of children in street situations) is deemed to be a key element in protecting children on the move, as it promotes trust and relationships between these children, their families and the service providers.

For example, a 23 year old woman interviewed in Macedonia stated: "All day I am at the traffic lights with my children. From morning till evening I stay there. I feel very lonely and sad! [I need] good life for my children. They need to eat to grow up; they need clothes. The house where we live is in very bad conditions; it is better to live outside" (Mario Project, *Children and adolescents engaged in street work in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Mobilities, vulnerabilities and resiliencies*, 2015)

A regular presence on “the field”, through outreach and community services, is needed with several aims, including:

- (a) Providing children and their families with information about the services available to them in the place where they live. Information should be comprehensive and not just limited to handing out leaflets or other materials about specific services;
- (b) Building trust with children and their families (or other caregivers), in order to encourage their access to services and participation to different ongoing initiatives (e.g. school support classes, but also leisure and sport opportunities);
- (c) Initiating referral of children and families in need of child protection and other (e.g. health, social protection) services;
- (d) Promoting integration of children on the move and their families.

Outreach services for children on the move should include:

- **Outreach units** with qualified and trained Staff, in order to reach out to children on the move and their families on a regular basis and to initiate contact and relationships. Mobile teams should be equipped with all needed language skills and a solid understanding of the social, health, educational and employment conditions in the place where they operate and in the area where children come from;
- **Low-threshold centers** (drop-in, daily centers), based in the communities where children live, offering different services meeting the most pressing needs that children have (school support; food and hygiene; clothes; etc.) and also providing a protected space for socializing among themselves and with other children;
- A **referral system** with standard operating procedures in place that apply to all children on the move in need of protection, and not solely to certain sub-groups (for example trafficked children);

Such services should be flexible enough to adapt to the changing needs and situations of children. They should involve civil society organizations that have developed effective approaches to build relationships with the target groups.

2. Establishing transnational case-management systems

Transnational cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination for children on the move in Europe appears to be triggered only when a criminal investigation is taking place. Besides law enforcement and crime investigation aspects, international coordination and cooperation in protecting children on the move in Europe is very limited, which reduces opportunities to ensure a continuum of protection to children in migration situations at transnational level, and to develop adequate prevention as well as r(e)integration strategies.

While legal harmonization within EU and acceding countries is a concrete aim being pursued in the area of migration, trafficking and asylum, common standards and clear procedures to deal with cases of children on the move between countries are lacking, a fact which hampers effective protection and the adoption of both immediate and long-term decisions that are really in the best interests of each individual child.

The high mobility of children within Europe requires increased transnational collaboration to ensure that they are effectively protected and have their best interests upheld in all civil, administrative and criminal procedures concerning them. Such cooperation should ensure that adequate and timely responses are enacted at all stages of the movement of a child.

As witnessed throughout the 7 years of implementation of the Mario project, bilateral and regional coordination efforts which involved joint case management (in terms of sharing information, coordinating assistance, monitoring progress etc.) proved to be successful in preventing exploitation and in supporting children's (re)integration through better decision making.

Too often however, international coordination between countries of origin and destination was governed by cumbersome procedures not necessarily designed for the purpose of transnational case management, and applied on an *ad hoc* basis. This resulted in lengthy procedures focusing on preparing for the return of the child rather than on gathering relevant information to inform the decision-making process making sure that the best interests of the child is given primary consideration. Despite all efforts, the international coordination remained limited to just a few countries, resulting in different procedures applied to different cases with no harmonization potential at international level.

Based on their concrete experience, Mario Project partners recommend the establishment of a **European case management system** that would enable all concerned actors to detect and identify children on the move, to assess their individual situation, and to provide support in a coordinated fashion across different locations.

Elements embedded in transnational cooperation to protect children on the move should include, as a priority:

- Establishing **effective channels for communication and information exchange** among countries of origin, transit and destination, particularly concerning family investigation procedures and service provision. With regard to the latter, common tools and methodologies should be developed to support information exchanges with a view to ensure a harmonized and comparable data collection and ensure the integrity of data collected.
- Appointing a **National Central Authority** with an *exclusive* mandate to ensure international coordination and dispatch of all information requests coming from other countries in transnational child protection cases. Its mandate should also comprise the duty to liaise with competent authorities able to provide the information required and ensure continuum of care and protection at national level. The possibility to link the mandate of national central authorities appointed under the Brussels IIa regulation should be carefully considered.
- Ensuring that both short-term measures and long-term decisions to integrate or return the child to its country of origin can be subject to an **effective judicial review** and that children are informed about this possibility in a language and format they can understand. The paramount role of adequately trained guardians in all decision-making process should be recognized in both law and practice, and properly resourced at national level.
- Establishing **clear referral procedures** among countries, to be applied to all children on the move (not only to some sub-groups, typically child victims of trafficking);
- Ensuring **lasting political and financial support** to the cooperation, and an adequate monitoring system to ensure oversight and accountability;

Conclusions

Based on their concrete experience in protecting children on the move in Europe, Mario Project partners urge the swift and comprehensive inclusion of the measures recommended above in this Paper into national and regional child protection mechanisms and systems in Europe, as well as for the establishment of a European case management system to ensure the protection of children on the move across European countries.

In addition, Mario Project partners wish to reiterate the broader recommendations previously put forward to the attention of European institutions, Member States and acceding States, as these remain of utmost relevance and urgency¹¹. In particular:

- **EU Member States should initiate a dialogue to explore the opportunity and added value of adopting legislative measures at EU level** fostering transnational collaboration on transnational cases of children on the move;
- **Put discriminatory practices to an end** when deciding upon migrant children cases and conduct best interests determination on an individual basis, including when children are accompanied with family members, based on objective elements contemplating the adoption of durable solutions for children on the move;
- **Invest in outreach and extend child protection services to migrant children**, including those from other EU Member States;
- **Consolidate child protection system at national level and foster transnational collaboration** to ensure an appropriate management of children on the move cases at transnational level.


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¹¹ Mario Project, *Position Paper on Children on the Move in Europe*, 2015, available at: <http://marioproject.org/documents/position-paper-children-on-the-move-in-europe/7248>