



Call for Action

Strengthen the rights of children and youth in alternative care

Almost ten years ago, serious cases of all forms of violence against children (physical, emotional, sexual, economical, amongst others) by caregivers in residential homes and boarding schools in the post war era became known in almost all European countries. Current cases followed in schools, kindergartens, foster homes, sports and other areas of life. The expansion of foster care services and the reduction of residential settings seems to be a major European and national strategy in order to address violations in children's rights. Improving organizations alongside forcing intervention and prevention procedures are other possible strategies. Members of the European Network *Children's Rights in Organisations* intends to strengthen children's rights to participation, protection and provision everywhere: In families, in alternative care, in foster families as well as in the infrastructure of child and youth authorities. A European Network Conference in November 2021 focussed on the conditions and approaches to strengthen the safety of children and youth in alternative care. To ensure their safety is an issue of children's rights and in particular a child protection issue.

- **A European discussion about various national strategies to strengthen the rights of children and youth in alternative care is needed.**

At the European Network Conference various national strategies were discussed to deal with cases of abuse of power in alternative care in the past and present. In some countries, we found national inquiry reports, compensation procedures, independent commissioners and councils of victims. These initiatives are voluntary, but there is no liability to take action. Publications of the Council of Europe and the European Commission on children's rights do not contain any commitment to implement any of those procedures and measures in order to fulfil children's rights in alternative care. There are national and European initiatives (Quality4Children, Save the Children) but they are neither in the European mainstream nor at the forefront of the European discourse on alternative care.

- **A European initiative for a transnational evaluation and comparison of good practice of strategies to deal with cases of abuse of power in alternative care in Europe is needed.**

At the European Network Conference with scientists from universities in the field of children's rights in alternative care, seven national reports about national strategies to deals with cases of abuse of power in organisations were presented. This can be the foundation for a comparative transnational study. All presenters came to the conclusion that good practices in Europe should be identified in order to develop European standards and institutional policies for alternative care. Good practice can only be identified with a participatory research approach.

- **The enforcement and evaluation of European basic standards for children's rights in alternative care from a child and youth perspective are needed.**

For the last two years there was no European research call which addressed the issue of children's rights in alternative care. No European research program focusses on European strategies or European standards in this regard. In order to realize European transnational research projects in the field of children's right in alternative care, this issue should be included in European research funding policies.

- **Europe research funding is needed in order to learn more about how to reduce possible abuse of power and how to strengthen the rights of children in alternative care.**

European Network Conference Children's Rights in Organisations



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