



LEAVING CARE

Issue 7
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Hi! This final project newsletter reaches you in very challenging times. The COVID-19 outbreak and its aftermath are putting care leavers in extremely fragile situations. As Human Rights consultant, Véronique Lerch writes in her latest article [The many transitions to adulthood](#), “The pandemic and the measures taken to deal with it have exacerbated the situation of young people ageing out of care around the world”. We must urgently take action to improve and scale up support and protection of care leavers to ensure the realisation of their rights in law and practice. This is further highlighted in SOS Children’s Villages International [Call to Action](#).

PROJECT RESULTS

The specific objective of the two-year *Leaving Care* project has been to **train care professionals in how to apply a child rights-based approach in their work with young people leaving care as well as to strengthen support networks for young care leavers. The training evaluation clearly shows that the training has been a success and appreciated by the participants:**

- 92% of Master Trainers evaluate the training of trainers as good or very good (target: 90%)
- 98% of trainees at national training sessions for CPs evaluate the training as good or very good (target: 90%)
- All national trainings included a youth module co-developed and delivered by young people (target: 100%)
- 94% of CPs trained that implement learnings from the training in their daily practice (target: 90%)
- 94% of CPs trained that evaluate their capacity to support young people leaving care or having already left care as improved or much improved (target: 90%)

One of the main strengths identified in the project evaluation was the “**actual youth participation**” and how it was **embedded across all project activities**. A young person with care experience who participated in project activities in Hungary stated:

“As a young person involved in the project I always felt that my views mattered and that the people in front of me were open and interested in what I had to say”.

Another example of empowering attitude comes from this young person in Italy who reflects on the impact the training had:

“I believe we really had an impact. Sometimes maybe the impact is not immediate, but I trust that even the most “resistant” participants will have a lot of food for thought to process after the training is over”.

The impact of the participation of young people with care experience as co-trainers is clear from the training evaluation: **many participants reported that the participation of young people in the training was the main thing that influenced them and inspired them in trying the methods proposed even after the training.**

Co-funder



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About the project:

Leaving Care – An Integrated Approach to capacity building of Professionals and Young People aims to embed a child rights based culture into child protection systems which improves outcomes for children and young people in particular in the preparation for leaving care. Project partners include FICE Austria, SOS Bulgaria, SOS Estonia, SOS Hungary, SOS Italy, SOS Romania and FONPC.



Stay in touch!
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ADVOCACY AND SUSTAINABILITY

By making the [Practice Guidance freely available online](#), partners have made it easier for others to highlight some of the issues that leaving care entails, and argue in favour of the importance of the training.

In terms of effectiveness of the advocacy strategies, the **promotion of the national policy recommendations at local level** during meetings facilitated by project staff was a winning strategy to raise awareness of the situation of care leavers at national level and the changes needed to improve their outcomes.

Partners are also working on the accreditation of the training at national level and are trying to involve universities. Several key stakeholders expressed the fact that care professionals operating in the system are quite unprepared. They often lack basic knowledge, and do not know anything about trauma, family care, let alone the needs of care leavers. There is need for a systemic change in the education system to build up their knowledge before or at the very beginning of their working career. As a result, **accreditation and embedding of trainings on these issues in educational curricula is an effective approach to ensure long-term sustainability.**

The large network of contacts strengthened in the course of the project through initiatives that involved both care professionals (during the training) and stakeholders (in particular, in occasion of events), has set the basis for further advancing the advocacy goals set by the project in the coming years.

FINAL WORDS FROM YOUNG PEOPLE WITH CARE EXPERIENCE

This project has provided us with the rare opportunity to be listened to and recognized as experts and individuals who want to improve the situation for care leavers of the next generation and are aware, thanks to their first-hand experience, of what works, what does not work, and what needs to be improved in the child protection services.

Our own experience shows us that:

- Care professionals need help and capacity building in order to develop the right skills and knowledge to prepare us for independent life.
- Not all care professionals are aware of how to manage their emotions, which often negatively affect the children and young people under their care.
- Not enough resources are allocated to supporting us in preparing to leave care, transitioning out of care and more specifically in further accompanying us in the after-care part of our journey to independence.

Our demands have been collected in the [Call to Action: Leave No Care Leaver Behind!](#) under three key actions:

1. Realise Care Leavers' Rights in the Law
2. Realise Care Leavers' Rights in Practice
3. Allocate adequate Funds for realising Care Leavers' Rights

Please take your time to go through it and let us know if there is anything we can do to help you ensure that future generations of care leavers are better supported!

We also want to point your attention to the [2019 Resolution on the Rights of the Child](#) that was adopted by the United National General Assembly on 18 December 2019 (A/74/L.21). It specifically focuses on children without parental care and urges governments to take measures to support adolescents and young people who transition from alternative care into independent life in a holistic approach (1:35:l).

Thank you very much for your support during these past two years, but mostly for your future actions on improving outcomes for care leavers.

Quotes from young people with care experience who participated in the project:

Really great and important project!
I could take a lot of knowledge from it for myself and I'm really proud that we founded the Care Leaver Association Austria.

It was a really cool project, very fruitful and it has changed a lot in the last two years!

super project :)

In my opinion, there should be more projects like that because many adults usually don't understand the background of children who are living in foster care or how behave around them.

I'm very happy about this project and I hope we will have more similar opportunities in the future.

The project has a huge power and trainings allow immediate reflection. They urge personal evolution for everyone, both trainers and trainees. We started the machine of change and actual participation, and little by little it will bear its fruits.