



UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI  
DI PALERMO

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 child<sup>1</sup>

## Research model

# Analysis and Monitoring of Good Practices in Reception Centers

### *Survey on care leavers*

### Introduction

The objectives of the Child.for.Child project are:

1. Strengthening of the services currently provided by the national systems of care, centered on the improvement of those addressed to careleavers.
2. Ensure the integration of children's rights in all policies concerning children in care or careleavers;
3. Collect statistical data on the social status of children in care/care leavers for monitoring purposes over time;

The activity that principally concerns Unione degli Assessorati alle Politiche Socio-sanitarie dell'Istruzione e del Lavoro (UA) is the one reconnected to point 3, which will have as its final output the realization of a research work, articulated in various sections with the aim of providing a precise focus on the condition of children in care in reception structures and careleavers. In particular, for what concerns this target group, the active policies and the most opportune procedures will be analyzed in order to increase their return to the family and to realize their own "life project".

In order to achieve this objective, it was considered more useful to build a framework of analysis and research that was not based solely on a tool for data collection purposes, but was based primarily on a model of observation useful to define and circumscribe the operations of reception communities. As a matter of fact, over the years, reception communities have been increasingly seen not as places capable of temporarily replacing the families of origin, where no other form of protection of the minor is conceivable, but above all as places where the minor can be "parked" because no other way is practicable.

However, if we want to move away from this logic, and being foster care in the community today the most adopted practice, it seems appropriate that the circuit of Sheltered Communities be structured according to well-defined procedures and models that, while respecting the centrality of the child, structuring life in the community as a real supplement to family life and provide all those tools for growth that help the child in his or her path to autonomy.



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## The model of analysis and monitoring

The model is based on two survey instruments:

The first consists of a personal data sheet containing summary information on the characteristics of the minors present in the community under analysis. The information collected concerns the personal and family history of the minor and is used to define a structural profile of the minors hosted in the community and to verify whether there are causal relationships between the personal and family history and the attitude of becoming care leavers and having a success story even after the period spent in the community. The purpose of the questionnaire is to identify and measure in a qualitative-quantitative manner the procedures and activities carried out by the care communities with regard to minors 14-17 years old and care leavers. The questionnaire, in coherence with the aims of the Child.for.Child project, is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Adolescent, placing the child/care leavers at the center of the action and identifying the areas of intervention suitable to guarantee the child, even outside his/her family of origin, all the protection and all the conditions of growth that a child has within the family nucleus.

This survey instrument serves two purposes:

- The first: to identify areas and measure the actions of the Sheltering Communities with respect to the minors housed and assess their impact and intensity;
- The second: to provide a general model for analyzing and monitoring the activities of the Residential Communities. In this way, through a series of synthetic (per activity) and overall (macro-area) indicators, we can provide indications on the areas of intervention and improvement in order to increase the effectiveness of intervention and the functional efficiency of the Sheltering Communities;

The identification of areas and actions starts from the observation of the flow of activities that affect the child from his/her entry into the community until the "release" phase.

Observing this temporal flow, Models of Care for Minors (MCM) generally implemented, or that should be implemented, in the community in favor of the minor have been identified and have been codified and traced within a qualifying macro-area.

These macro-areas have been identified on the basis of the analysis of a series of documents:

- Research and best practices already known in the literature, codified and schematized by the scientific analysis carried out by the University of Palermo, partner;
- The analysis and research documents produced by other research groups and also reporting the experiences of other communities in Italy and Europe;
- The documents elaborated by the Guarantor of Childhood and Adolescence of the Municipality of Palermo;



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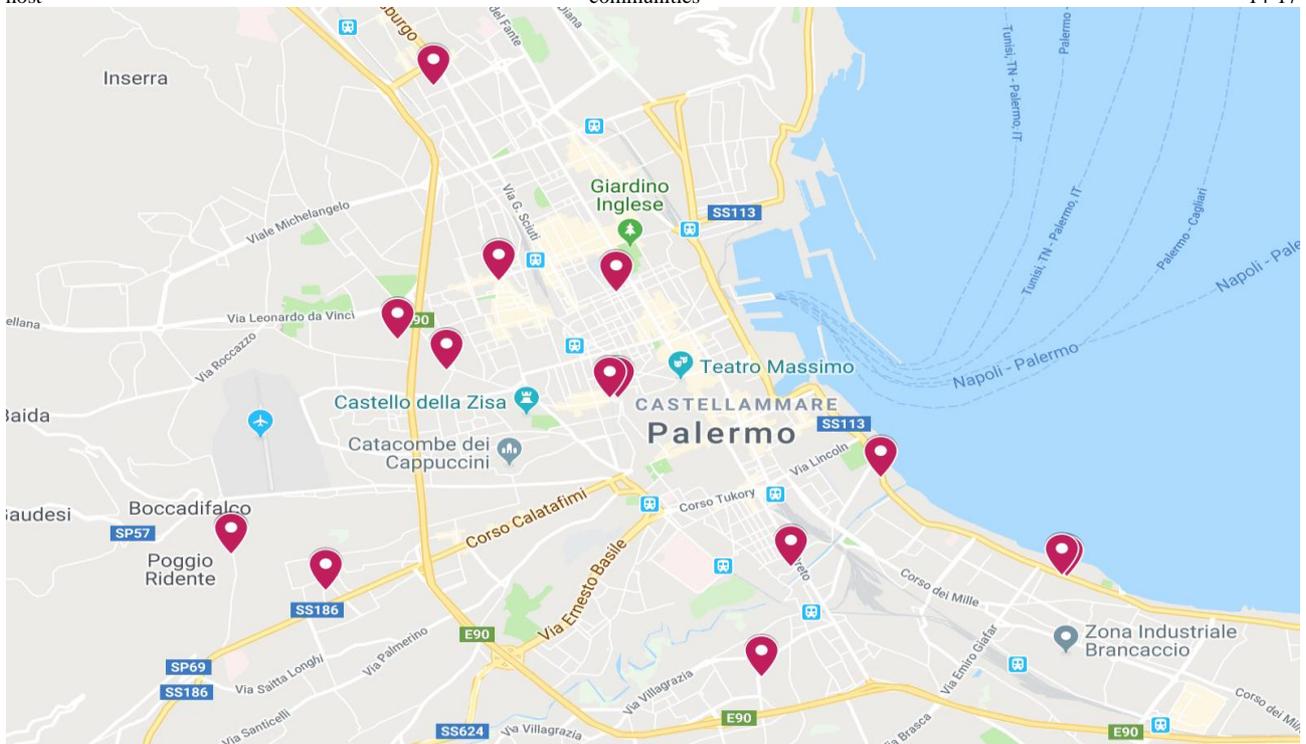
- The framework documents elaborated by international organizations concerning the protection of Childhood and Adolescence;
- The manual of good community practices elaborated by the research group of the 3P Cooperative and by the Guarantor of Childhood and Adolescence of the Municipality of Palermo;

### The communities surveyed and how the questionnaire was administered

The reference targets of the project are minors between 14 and 17 years and care leavers. Considering this aspect, all the residential communities that operate in Palermo were selected and included in the analysis sample. According to the project's indications, Palermo is one of the two cities, along with Bucharest, in which the observatory is to be applied. The list of these communities was extrapolated from the list of facilities accredited by the competent regional and municipal authorities. There are a total of 16 accredited structures, of which only 10 are still fully operational or still active with respect to the project's target.

The geographical dislocation of the communities in the territory of Palermo is represented in the following map.

Map 1 - Position on the map of Palermo of the communities registered in the Register of Social Welfare Services of the Municipality of Palermo as host communities 14-17



Source: Our elaboration on data from the Register of Social Services of the City of Palermo.



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### *Communities in the territory and number of beds available*

The communities are located all around the city. Their location is often influenced by the availability of housing facilities that can meet the accreditation standards without having to force communities to invest excessive resources in the renovation of the premises. Six of the communities on the register are located in the main area of the city, the one consisting of the portion of the historic center and the residential part closest to the city center. Another 5 communities are located in an outlying area.

Six structures welcome both males and females and have an accommodation capacity of 55 places. Only one community is dedicated exclusively to women and has an accommodation capacity of 10 beds. Nine facilities with a total of 86 beds are exclusively addressed to male users.

### *Contact methods and administration procedures*

Once the communities had been identified, we proceeded, in connection with the Office of the Guarantor of Childhood and Adolescence of the Municipality of Palermo, to an initial contact with the structures through a letter, signed by both the Guarantor of Childhood and Adolescence of the Municipality of Palermo and the President of Unione degli Assessorati, in which was explained: the context and the aims of the project, how the phase of collecting information would take place, the purpose of the data analysis and the methodologies for returning all the information collected.

Following this initial approach, the secretariat of the Unione degli Assessorati made a telephone contact in order to verify receipt of the email, identify whether the person in charge of responding to the survey was the reference figure indicated in the register or had been designated someone else, make an appointment for the administration of the questionnaire on good practices and collect, at the same time, personal data.

A schedule of appointments was thus organized during the first three weeks of April 2019 during which we went to the facilities to administer the best practices questionnaire to the contact person identified by the facility itself. After the contact process, and even after subsequent recalls, only one community among all the active ones did not participate in the survey.

The methodological approach chosen for data collection and administration has tried to maintain, even in the necessary standardization of procedures to contain time and costs of information collection, a contact also participatory with the communities that have given their consent to be part of the sample.

During the appointment, the activity focused on two strands. A first check-out of the information file, about how to fill in the fields even though, together with the file, a brief guide was sent with the indications of how to answer for each field. The second strand was the administration of the questionnaire about good practices.

Both for the collection of personal data and the administration of the questionnaire on good practices, a face-to-face administration method was chosen to obtain reasoned responses that would allow identifying the correct mode concerning the actual dynamic within the community, even if had to be placed within closed answers.

In fact, during the administration process, the search for the correct answer to the question has often allowed for the generation of a conversation on certain aspects that, on many occasions, has led to



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the identification of the method that is most appropriate to the reality analysed, while on other occasions it has allowed for the collection of additional information useful for having a broader view of the community's activities.

## The qualifying areas

As specified in the introductory part, the identification of the qualifying areas stems from the analysis and processing of the documents that the research group has prepared and from the analysis of other documents that constitute the core.

Considering the flow of activities that affect the minor from the moment he/she enters the community to his/her "release", it is possible to build this diagram with respect to the individual age phases.



Based on this flow, it is possible to identify these qualifying areas as determined to "put the child at the center" in a condition that allows the child outside the family to enjoy all the rights and possibilities that are offered to the child within the family of origin.



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## FIRST AREA – General implementation measures

This section includes issues such as the definition of tools, methods, plans, resources and responsibilities made available to the children from the moment of reception until the final phase of "release", passing through all those actions that are designed to encourage autonomy.

## SECOND AREA – Definition of minor

The questions below investigate the definition of minor according to the criteria established in the document "Palermo città educativa" (Palermo as an educational city), arguing that all boys and girls living in Palermo (but also in other cities) have equal rights regardless of sex, nationality, religion.

## THIRD AREA - General principles and listening

- **Listening** : The questions in this sub-area investigate **listening** as a moment of encounter and knowledge between the minor and the community structure.
- **Release**: The questions in this sub-area investigate one of the areas related to best practices. The **area of release** refers to all those activities related to facilitating the transition from living in the community to living out of the community and managing care leavers even after their time in the community.

## FOURTH AREA - Civil Rights and Freedoms

The following questions investigate the area of the exercise of one's civil, religious, and social rights as tools of an overall framework aimed at increasing the autonomy of the child.

## FIFTH AREA - Family environment

### Activities for reintegration/management of family relationships

The questions in this sub-area investigate the activities aimed at attempting to **reintegrate the minor into his/her family of origin or to manage his/her relationships during the period spent in the community**. The questions consider whether some of the activities carried out in the community, even about other areas, aim to verify these opportunities and to direct the minor towards other areas.

## SIXTH AREA - Health and Care

The questions in this section investigate the feasibility of providing all children present with the necessary prevention and treatment in the area of health and care for their personal care and growth.



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## SEVENTH AREA - Education, Play and Culture

### Extracurricular activities

The questions in this sub-area investigate **extracurricular activities** as a set of activities and experiences related to the child's education and allow for the maturation of other skills related to activities that are not strictly curricular. The questions aim to observe whether such activities are planned and/or are carried out and with what frequency

### Social and Cultural promotion

The questions in this sub-area investigate the area of **social and cultural promotion** as a set of activities and experiences related to the enjoyment of cultural offerings. The questions aim to observe whether such activities are planned and/or carried out and how often.

## EIGHT AREA - Special Measures

### Management of Unaccompanied foreign minors

The questions in this sub-area investigate the specificity of the procedures regarding the management of unaccompanied foreign minors. In particular, they refer to the presence or absence of unaccompanied foreign minors in the community, to any experience gained in relations with unaccompanied foreign minors, and to which areas are most strengthened



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