

THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD

- a more sustainable return
process for unaccompanied minors



Barnets bästa
vid återvändande



Länsstyrelsen
Jämtlands län



Information, counselling and co-operative practices - for the child's best interests

The Best Interest of the Child is a project co-operatively run between Strömsund Municipality, The Swedish Migration Agency and the County Administrative Board of Jämtland. The project is partially funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). In order to support the child's best interests during an asylum and return process, the project will support municipalities and organisations through-out Sweden in developing and maintaining routines, approaches and models for co-operative practices.

To help improve the situation for unaccompanied minors whom are expected to return we need to support the professionals directly involved with supporting the children through-out the asylum seeking and return process. All adults and professionals surrounding the children need to accept and relate to the decisions made by the Migration Agency. We believe that all professionals work towards what they believe to be in the child's best interest, but are also aware that defining what that includes may be difficult which could lead to contradictive and varied efforts. To create a safe and reliant environment for the children, all adults need to give clear signals to what their roles and responsibilities hold, making motives, incentives, prerequisites and various forms of co-operative practices a crucial part of our work.



Ladder of co-operation, developed by the project in 2019

The project has, as a supportive tool, developed a ladder of co-operation. The model can aid discussions about the co-operative practices surrounding the child in an asylum and return process. It can help identify and evaluate current practices, explain the need for co-operation, make expectations visible as well as clarify which level of co-operation is necessary.

We work actively with unaccompanied minors seeking asylum whom have received, or may receive a refusal decision, providing information, counselling and initiating co-operative practices. All work is based on an academic and theoretic foundation of knowledge, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as ethical practices.

Our aim is to aid the child in getting the most possible out the time waiting for a decision and to constructively deal with future challenges, from day one of the process and without having all the answers.

Even after a refusal, waiting for a return can be a long process. To be able to complete a return the Swedish Migration Agency need to make arrangements with the child's family, relatives or a receiving orphanage in the country of origin. Whilst waiting, it is of importance to ensure that the child still participates in a mea-

The project shall achieve the following:

- >> Raised focus on the child's needs in the return process
- >> Raised quality and effectivity in the return process
- >> Raised predictability for children that will return
- >> Raised appreciation for the return process

ningful everyday life. A way of normalizing everyday life can be to continue attending school and other activities. Helping the child translate important documents verifying the knowledge he or she has acquired in Sweden can give the child better opportunities for a successful reintegration and resettlement in the home country.

Sometimes the child becomes of legal age before a decision is made, significantly changing his or her life in Sweden and the terms of returning. Aiding those affected in necessary preparations can make a big difference to the individual's ability to relate to the asylum process as an adult.

Main initiatives:

- >> Training for professionals and legal guardians
- >> Information given to the child straight after being placed in a municipality to give a higher sense of connection, support in planning for a possible refusal and finding alternative goals
- >> Information and counselling after a refusal to help find alternative goals, get past worries and see other possible outcomes and opportunities
- >> A tool box for organizing and evaluating co-operative practices for those around the children

In order to improve the child's sense of security it is of importance that the given information is correct and relevant to the role we hold. As professionals surrounding the child, we need to have knowledge of asylum laws and an understanding that some children don't have sufficient reasons for staying in Sweden.

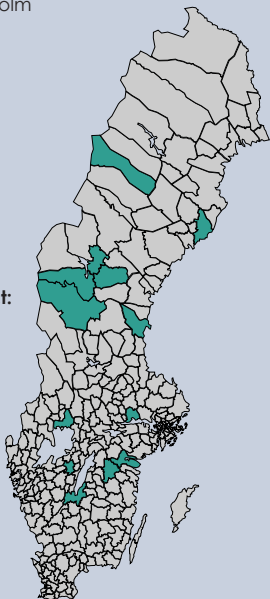
Besides spreading knowledge and experiences nationally, the project also supports local municipalities and non-governmental organisations, focusing on local abilities and needs. The project focuses on meeting professionals at residential care homes and schools, legal guardians and social workers as well as dedicated representatives from the civil society. The project will also support participating municipalities in producing a local co-operation plan.

National advisory board:

Swedish Police National Operative Unit
The Swedish Migration Agency's Unit for Organizing Returns
Save the Children Sweden
The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
The Swedish National Agency for Education
The Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare
UNICEF Sweden
The Ombudsman for Children in Sweden
County Administrative Board of Stockholm
The Church of Sweden
Swedish Red Cross
UNHCR Sweden

**Swedish municipalities
participating in the project:**

Berg
Bräcke
Hudiksvall
Härjedalen
Jönköping
Karlstad
Linköping
Norrköping
Skövde
Storuman
Umeå
Västerås
Östersund





In order to help professionals who meet unaccompanied minors, the project has developed an interactive map of the asylum process and a guide explaining how to use the map. The map is available in Swedish and English, and the guide is available in Swedish only. The material can be downloaded at begripligt.nu.

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Duration: 1st July 2017 - 31st December 2020

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Project owner: Strömsund municipality

Project partners: The Swedish Migration Agency and the County Administrative Board of Jämtland

Target audience: Unaccompanied minors currently in the asylum process or whom have been refused asylum and are yet to return to their home country.

Aim: The project aims to improve the situation for unaccompanied minors through raising awareness, training and enhanced co-operation amongst those who are involved in the asylum and return process.

Funding: The Asylum, Migration and Integration fund (AMIF), The Swedish Migration Agency and Strömsund municipality

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We promote the opportunities of migration by running a project co-financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund