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Methodology Vademecum



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This version uses terminology and style consistent with European Commission and Erasmus+ publications, making it suitable for a professional methodological handbook.

1. Reference Framework and Context Analysis

1.1 Social, Educational and Territorial Context

The protection of children's rights, particularly those of the most vulnerable, is one of the European Union's priorities. The EU is committed to reducing poverty and social exclusion among children and young people, including those living outside their families (Porto Social Summit, 2021).

In Italy, more than 8,000 young people aged between 11 and 17 currently live in residential care communities, out of approximately 15,000 children and adolescents placed outside their family environment. In most cases, the circumstances affecting their families of origin prevent them from returning home upon reaching adulthood. A similar condition of isolation is experienced by many of the thousands of Unaccompanied Foreign Minors, most of whom are between 16 and 17 years old, who arrive in Italy without family support. Consequently, this large group consists of young people who are entirely or partially deprived of stable and meaningful relational references. Although they receive formal support in terms of accommodation, healthcare, education and social care from the professional staff working in residential communities, they often lack long-term supportive relationships with trusted adults.

Turning to Greece, updated assessments conducted at the beginning of 2026 reveal equally challenging circumstances. Between 1,200 and 1,500 children—primarily Greek citizens or residents removed from their families because of abuse, neglect or poverty—currently live in child protection institutions. This situation is further compounded by the presence of Unaccompanied and Separated Minors (UAMs), namely migrant and refugee children arriving in Greece without parents or legal guardians. Recent estimates indicate approximately 1,900–2,000 unaccompanied minors, of whom only around 1,500–1,600 are accommodated in specialised long-term reception facilities, while the remainder reside in temporary accommodation, transit camps or semi-independent living apartments.

In line with wider European trends, Greece faces a significant concentration of adolescents within the child protection system. Approximately 65–70% of children living in residential care are over ten years old, with the 11–17 age group representing the largest proportion. Among unaccompanied foreign minors, more than 85% are between 15 and 17 years old.

Spain reflects a similar structural trend. Its child protection system currently supports more than 51,000 children and adolescents. Although Spanish legislation prioritises foster care, currently involving over 18,000 children (approximately 25% aged between 11 and 14), reports published in 2026 indicate a 16.7% increase in residential care placements, which now accommodate around 17,000 children and young people. This increase is largely associated with older adolescents and unaccompanied foreign minors, who are predominantly placed in residential facilities. Their vulnerability is further confirmed by official admission data, showing risk situations affecting 31.1% of pre-adolescents (11–14 years) and 26.8% of adolescents (14–17 years) entering the Spanish child protection system.

1.2 Needs of Children Living Outside Their Families





The quality of the emotional relationships experienced by children and adolescents has a profound impact on their personal development. It is therefore essential to ensure that young people living outside their families have access to a caring environment capable of offering learning opportunities and relational experiences comparable to those typically provided within a family.

These young people often experience conditions of vulnerability that expose them to social marginalisation as well as economic and relational poverty, significantly affecting their physical, psychological and social well-being.

Although professional staff working in residential care provide formal support through accommodation, healthcare, education and daily care, only a small proportion of these young people benefit from complementary, informal and long-lasting relationships with positive adults capable of becoming stable points of reference and providing a reliable primary support network that they can rely upon throughout their lives.

1.3 The Role of Positive Adults in Growth and Social Inclusion

Only a small proportion of children and young people living outside their families benefit from complementary, informal and long-lasting relationships with positive adults capable of becoming trusted figures in their lives and providing them with a reliable network of supportive relationships.

Many of these young people would greatly benefit from the presence of one or more supportive individuals or families who, in cooperation with residential care communities and social services, could establish enduring and meaningful relationships with them. Based on the partnership's experience, relational mentoring has emerged as a key preventive and promotional strategy rather than a merely remedial intervention. Such mentoring plays a valuable role by offering meaningful human connections while simultaneously acting as a catalyst for social inclusion and for promoting foster care opportunities for adolescents living outside their families—a group that has traditionally proved more difficult to place in family-based care.

Our experience demonstrates that the most positive outcomes in terms of social inclusion and civic participation have been achieved through mentoring pathways that create regular opportunities for interaction and socialisation between children, adolescents and positive adult role models. As Professor Giovanni Lavanco observes:

"Solidarity develops spontaneously only when an emotional connection, an encounter between faces and mutual recognition, has first been established."

1.4 Legislative and Theoretical Framework

With specific regard to this target group, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the **Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children** in 2009, establishing that every State should ensure that children grow up within their own family whenever possible and, where this is not feasible, that alternative forms of care provide a safe, supportive and nurturing environment.

Likewise, one of the European Union's strategic priorities is the deinstitutionalisation of children living outside their families through the promotion of family-based and community-



based care. To support this objective, four major European policy initiatives published in 2021 highlighted the need to strengthen actions in this field: **EU Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights**; **EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child**; **European Child Guarantee**; **European Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**.

As early as 2004, the **Italian National Foster Care Coordination (CNSA)** emphasised the importance of relational mentoring, stating that: *"Supporting adolescents living in residential care through relationships with caring adults may enable them to establish meaningful bonds that can become lasting sources of support throughout their lives."*

Despite the recognised value of this intervention, its implementation remains sporadic and largely dependent on the commitment and sensitivity of individual professionals and local services, without being adequately integrated into regional or national welfare systems.

For this reason, in 2017 the **Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies**, through the **National Guidelines for Residential Care Services for Children**, recommended that social services: *"promote networks of meaningful supportive relationships"* and, more specifically, *"encourage the involvement of one or more supportive adults or families capable of enriching children's relational networks and providing opportunities for sharing, emotional closeness and solidarity."* International scientific literature likewise consistently highlights the importance of providing children and young people living outside their families with informal supportive relationships alongside those established by professional care services (Driscoll, 2013; Gilligan, 2008; Newman, 2004).

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2. Pedagogical and Social Foundations

2.1 The Central Role of Educational Relationships with Positive Adults

Positive and supportive relationships with adults play a fundamental role in adolescents' social well-being and personal development. Reflective and committed mentors provide guidance, emotional support and positive role models that significantly influence young people's psychosocial growth. Investing in these relationships and promoting supportive relational environments is essential for fostering healthy development and preventing negative outcomes during adolescence.

Relationships characterised by warmth, understanding and emotional support encourage prosocial behaviours while protecting young people from mental health difficulties throughout their developmental years. A recent study highlights that *"warm relationships promote*



prosocial behaviour and protect against mental health problems during development" (Fenili, 2023), demonstrating that caring and supportive environments are fundamental to adolescents' balanced growth.

Another key element is adults' capacity for reflection. Reflective adults continuously analyse and adapt their educational approaches according to young people's evolving needs. They critically evaluate the impact of their own behaviour, reconsider their educational models and modify their practices accordingly. This reflective approach promotes more effective communication, mutual understanding and stronger educational relationships.

Positive adult relationships also provide adolescents with valuable opportunities to develop essential social competences while expanding their interpersonal networks beyond the family environment. Through these relationships, young people learn empathy, effective communication, conflict resolution and emotional regulation within a safe and supportive context.

For adolescents experiencing significant life transitions, such as leaving residential care, the presence of a mentor can substantially improve future expectations and facilitate successful social integration. Research demonstrates that mentoring relationships improve access to education and employment opportunities, strengthen social connections and reduce involvement in risky behaviours. In this perspective, supportive adults become true *"promoters of young people's independence"* (Sulimani-Aidan et al., 2019), highlighting the importance of structured mentoring programmes for adolescents in vulnerable situations.

2.2 Promoting Civic Engagement and Active Citizenship

Civic engagement represents a cornerstone of contemporary education, contributing significantly to both personal development and social inclusion. International research consistently demonstrates that active participation in community life promotes the acquisition of key competences while strengthening democratic values and responsible citizenship.

The concept of *civic engagement* refers to citizens' active participation in public life through actions aimed at promoting the common good and strengthening democratic institutions. It encompasses a wide range of activities, including volunteering, participation in civic organisations, involvement in decision-making processes and citizenship education.

Integrating civic engagement into educational pathways offers considerable benefits for both individuals and society. One of the most effective pedagogical approaches in this field is **Service Learning**, which combines formal education with meaningful community service. As highlighted by Lubello (2022), Service Learning *"develops greater empathy and a stronger willingness to help others"* (Lubello, 2022, p.159). Beyond enriching students' theoretical knowledge, this methodology encourages awareness of community needs while promoting responsible and active citizenship.

Similarly, the **Eurydice Report (2017)** emphasises that *"in order to increase engagement and participation, individuals must possess the appropriate knowledge, skills and competences"* (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017, p.168). Consequently, citizenship education should extend beyond theoretical instruction by providing practical experiences that allow young people to apply their knowledge in authentic social contexts.

2.3 Integrating Relational Support and Social Participation

Civic engagement represents a fundamental pillar in building democratic, inclusive and sustainable societies. Through education, it evolves from an abstract concept into a daily practice that promotes collective responsibility, active participation and critical thinking. Within the framework of this project, relational mentoring and civic engagement are not viewed as separate dimensions but as mutually reinforcing processes. Positive relationships with supportive adults create the emotional security and confidence necessary for young people to participate actively in society, while civic participation provides meaningful opportunities to apply relational, social and emotional competences in real-life situations. This integrated approach reflects Paul Ricoeur's concept of the *"good life"*—living well, with and for others, within just institutions (Ricoeur, 1990). By combining supportive mentoring relationships with opportunities for civic participation, young people are encouraged to become active citizens who contribute positively to their communities while developing autonomy, resilience and social responsibility.

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- Sulimani-Aidan, Y., Melkman, E., & Hellman, C. M. (2019). Nurturing the hope of youth in care: The contribution of mentoring. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 89(2), 134.
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3. Objectives of Relational Mentoring

3.1 Strengthening Young People's Relational Competences

The **Eurhope** project aims to connect young people with new networks of positive relationships within the educational community through civic participation pathways based on European values and initiatives. These pathways are designed to answer the question: *"What can the European Union offer me to improve my situation and, at the same time, what can I do to ensure that my voice is heard?"*

The project's actions are intended to empower children and young people living outside their families to reflect on their role and actively contribute to building a Europe that is closer to their needs and to the vision of a democratic, inclusive society. The objectives of the relational mentoring activities are therefore fully aligned with the priorities and goals pursued by the Eurhope project.

3.2 Fostering Trust, Autonomy and a Sense of Belonging

Priority/Objective 1: Increase knowledge of and exposure to socio-political information about the European Union.

Achieving this objective primarily requires educational and awareness-raising activities aimed at equipping young people with the basic knowledge and skills necessary to understand contemporary society, as a prerequisite for meaningful civic participation.



To this end, activities will address the needs identified during the project by developing digital competences and life skills that enable young people to navigate safely in both the digital and real worlds of information. Participants will learn how to search for, select, understand and critically evaluate socio-political information, while also strengthening their understanding of politics and economics at both national and European levels. Particular attention will be paid to topics such as sustainable development, providing young people with the essential knowledge required to understand the structure, functioning and role of the European Union.

3.3 Supporting Personal and Social Development

Priority/Objective 2: Promote opportunities for participation in discussions and initiatives related to European issues and challenges.

To achieve this objective, the project will organise civic participation activities and discussion groups involving role models and positive adults from the local communities, who will serve as inspiring examples of active European citizenship.

These activities are designed to respond to the needs identified among participants by encouraging them to develop and express their own vision of Europe through discussions on current socio-political issues, particularly those they consider most relevant, such as climate change, gender equality and social inclusion. Special attention will be given to topics where significant differences in interest exist between boys and girls, encouraging inclusive participation through game-based and interactive methodologies.

The activities will take place in a safe and supportive environment where young people can freely express their opinions, emotions and aspirations under the guidance of experts and positive adult mentors.

Following a bottom-up approach, the ideas and proposals emerging from these discussions will be collected, analysed and transformed during dedicated creative workshops into awareness-raising products such as theatre performances, short films, podcasts, exhibitions or communication campaigns. These outputs will be presented to the wider community to promote public awareness of the issues discussed and may also be linked to participation in European youth initiatives promoted by the European Parliament, such as the European Youth Event (EYE).

3.4 Promoting Active and Informed Participation

Within this framework, the role of positive adult mentors is to establish meaningful, empathetic and empowering relationships with each young person, enabling them to:

- benefit from the guidance of a trusted mentor who accompanies them throughout their personal development journey, making empathetic proximity the foundation for recognising both their own value and that of others;
- overcome cultural and socio-economic barriers by participating in shared experiences that foster a deeper understanding of different social and cultural realities;
- develop transversal competences such as critical thinking, effective communication and teamwork by engaging with real-life challenges and collaboratively identifying creative solutions;



- strengthen their sense of responsibility towards the community and understand the importance of their active contribution to democratic processes.

4. Profiles of the Target Groups and Stakeholders Involved

4.1 Operators: Required Competences, Role and Responsibilities

Training adults who volunteer to support young people living in residential care is a delicate and essential process to ensure that they are able to carry out their role effectively and responsibly. As described above, positive adults, who often operate in complex and sensitive contexts, are expected to build meaningful relationships with young people while providing emotional, educational and social support.

For this process to be successful, the trainers responsible for preparing these adults must possess specific competences, adopt an appropriate training style, and demonstrate a professional approach that fosters a positive, inclusive and safe learning environment. In this context, both the trainer's profile and educational approach become crucial.

The profile of a trainer of positive adults should be characterised by a range of specific competences, spanning educational and psychological expertise as well as the ability to facilitate the development of trusting and supportive relationships between adults and young people. Individuals undertaking this role should possess a solid theoretical background, including a sound knowledge of psycho-pedagogical principles, relational dynamics, and the specific needs of adolescents experiencing situations of social vulnerability.

Practical and Theoretical Experience

The trainer should possess an appropriate theoretical background in adolescent psychology, social issues and adult education. However, theoretical knowledge alone is not sufficient. It is equally important for trainers to have practical experience, preferably gained in settings that support vulnerable young people or in comparable educational environments.

Such practical experience enables trainers to fully understand the challenges, relational dynamics and difficulties that positive adults are likely to encounter while mentoring young people. Combining theory and practice allows trainers to provide concrete examples, adapt training content to participants' actual needs, and offer realistic guidance based on professional experience.

Emotional and Relational Competence

An essential component of the trainer's profile is emotional and relational competence. Since trainers prepare adults who will work closely with vulnerable adolescents, they must be capable of establishing relationships based on trust, empathy and active listening.

Trainers should be able to recognise the emotions experienced by participants and respond appropriately to both their practical and emotional needs. An effective trainer is not merely a subject-matter expert but also someone capable of facilitating participants' emotional and relational development throughout the training process.

Conflict Management Skills

Another key competence is the ability to manage conflict. Training adults who will become significant figures in the lives of vulnerable young people often involves dealing with contrasting emotions, uncertainty, communication difficulties and resistance to change.



The trainer must be able to manage such situations calmly, impartially and competently, ensuring that the learning process continues constructively without individual difficulties undermining the group's overall development. Effective conflict management not only supports the training environment but also serves as a valuable model for future mentors, who will themselves need to address conflicts and challenges in their relationships with young people.

4.1.1 The Trainer's Style

The trainer's style has a direct impact on the effectiveness of the training programme. The way in which trainers engage participants, motivate them and encourage reflection is fundamental to the success of the learning experience.

Although different training styles exist, trainers of positive adults should adapt their approach to the specific characteristics and needs of each group.

Participatory Approach

An effective trainer should adopt a participatory approach that actively involves participants throughout the learning process. Training should not be a one-way transmission of information; rather, it should promote dialogue, the sharing of experiences and collaborative reflection.

By encouraging interaction among participants, trainers facilitate reciprocal learning, recognising that they themselves can also learn from the experiences, perspectives and insights of the adults attending the programme.

A participatory approach is essential for building a sense of community among participants, creating an environment where everyone feels valued and respected, and where constructive dialogue is encouraged. Group discussions, role-playing activities and simulations of real-life situations are particularly effective methods for promoting engagement and deepening participants' understanding of the topics addressed.

Experience-Based Approach

Trainers should also adopt an experience-based approach that values participants' personal and professional experiences.

Training should be firmly rooted in the real-life contexts of the adults involved, using practical case studies and authentic situations that participants are likely to encounter while supporting young people.

Participants' own experiences constitute a powerful learning resource, enabling theoretical concepts to be explored through concrete examples and immediate application. This approach allows trainers to remain closely connected to participants' actual needs while adapting the training process in a dynamic and flexible manner.

Empathetic and Supportive Approach

Another defining characteristic of an effective trainer is the ability to create an empathetic and reassuring learning environment. As previously highlighted, adults preparing to support socially vulnerable young people may experience intense emotions, uncertainties and concerns throughout the training process. Trainers must therefore be able to acknowledge these emotions, listen without judgement, and respond in ways that help participants feel understood and supported. Creating a psychologically safe environment is essential for



promoting participants' well-being and enabling them to explore their concerns, fears and uncertainties openly, without fear of criticism or judgement.

4.1.2 The Trainer's Professional Stance

The trainer's professional stance refers to the ability to demonstrate ethical, competent and responsible professional behaviour. Trainers should convey both authority and openness, combining professional expertise with approachability and willingness to engage.

Their professional attitude should foster mutual trust and social responsibility, recognising that trainers play a crucial role in preparing adults to become positive and reliable reference figures for vulnerable young people.

Professional Ethics

An effective trainer should act according to the highest standards of professional ethics, respecting the privacy, dignity and confidentiality of both participants and the young people they will eventually support.

The trainer should serve as a positive role model by demonstrating an appropriate balance between professionalism, empathy and respect for diversity. An ethical professional stance also involves the careful handling of sensitive information and group dynamics, ensuring that the training takes place within a safe, respectful and protected environment.

Communication Skills

Communication competence represents another essential element of the trainer's professional stance.

Trainers must be able to communicate clearly, accurately and accessibly, using language that is easily understood by adult learners. Equally important is the ability to practise active listening and respond with empathy and constructive feedback, fostering dialogue, reflection and meaningful exchange throughout the training process.

4.2 Positive Adults: Characteristics, Educational and Relational Function

The target group involved in engaging children and young people consists of positive adults from the local community, who will be trained to become positive role models of European citizenship by embodying and conveying European values to the young people involved. At the same time, this represents an opportunity to further develop the adults' own European citizenship by increasing their awareness of the objectives and policies of the European Union and by acting as promoters of human rights and equal opportunities across Europe. Gender balance will be ensured (at least 50% women), involving **15 adults per country** (total: **45**).

4.3 Children Living Outside Their Families: Needs, Vulnerabilities and Potential

Children and young people living outside their families are at high risk of long-term social exclusion due to their circumstances. This includes fewer opportunities to participate in public debate and in shaping the future of society. This represents a critical issue, as the European Union is committed to leaving no one behind and to protecting the rights of the most vulnerable groups. Considering that adolescents are the age group least likely to be included in family-based care programmes and/or social inclusion initiatives because of their age, and are therefore at greater risk of long-term social exclusion, EurHope focuses on young people aged between **13 and 16 years** living in residential care settings. As far as



possible, depending on the willingness of young people to participate, gender balance will be ensured with **at least 50% girls**, involving approximately **30 young people in each country** (total: **90 young people**).

5. Operational Guidelines – Activity 1 (WP3) Adult Training – Train the Trainers

5.1 Training Modules

The main objective of the training programme for support adults assisting children and adolescents living outside their families is to provide individuals or families who choose to undertake this pathway with the skills necessary to welcome, support and accompany minors within a family support framework. This pathway is not only an opportunity for the child, but also a challenge for the support adult, who must be prepared to deal with complex situations, often characterised by traumatic experiences and relational difficulties. The specific objectives of the training programme can be divided into three main areas: emotional-relational, practical-operational, and social-educational.

Emotional-relational objectives:

- Develop empathy, namely the ability to put oneself in the child's place, understanding their needs, fears and aspirations.
- Acquire tools to manage intense emotions, both one's own and those of the child, such as anger, frustration, sadness or anxiety.
- Foster the development of a secure and positive relationship based on mutual trust and respect.

Practical-operational objectives:

- Provide theoretical and practical knowledge on how to manage complex situations, such as challenging behaviours, conflicts or crisis situations.
- Teach active listening and effective communication techniques, which are essential for establishing constructive dialogue with the child.
- Prepare support adults to accompany the child on their pathway towards autonomy by helping them develop practical skills such as money management, self-care and solving everyday problems.

The contents of the training programme have been selected to cover all the areas of competence required by support adults, with particular attention to understanding the experiences of children living outside their families and to strategies for supporting them in their development.

Legal aspects:

- Responsibilities of support adults.
- Regulations concerning family support and child protection.
- The role of local authorities and institutions in the support process.

Psychological aspects:



- Understanding trauma and the emotional consequences of separation from the family of origin.
- Managing intense emotions (anger, fear, sadness, etc.) in both the child and the support adult.

Relational aspects:

- Active listening and effective communication techniques.
- Conflict management and mediation in relationships.
- Development of empathy and the ability to understand the child's perspective.

Practical aspects:

- Supporting the child's educational pathway.
- Assisting in the development of practical skills (self-care, problem-solving).
- Strategies to promote the child's autonomy and independence.

Social-educational objectives:

- Promote the child's integration into a healthy social environment through participation in extracurricular activities, community events and everyday family life with the support family.
- Encourage the development of a "social kinship" network, where the child can feel part of a wider community beyond the residential care setting.
- Foster the child's personal development by helping them build an adult identity and develop relational and social skills.

Social and educational aspects:

- Promoting the child's social inclusion through extracurricular activities and everyday life experiences.
- Building a social support network (social kinship).
- Developing the child's relational and social skills.

5.2 Training Methodologies

The training methodology has been designed to ensure comprehensive and multidimensional learning, involving both the cognitive and emotional-practical dimensions of participants. The approach is based on an integrated methodology combining theoretical, experiential and practical learning, with the aim of preparing support adults to address the challenges of family support in a conscious and effective manner through:

Theoretical sessions:

- **Lectures:** training sessions presenting the theoretical foundations of family support. These include legal aspects (rights and responsibilities of support adults), psychological aspects (understanding trauma, managing emotions) and relational aspects (active listening techniques, conflict management).



- **Training materials:** guidelines, reference texts and practical worksheets providing useful information on specific topics such as attachment, resilience and working with children from different cultural backgrounds.

Practical sessions:

- **Role-playing:** simulations of real-life situations that support adults may encounter, such as conflicts with the child or emotional crisis situations. This method enables participants to apply theoretical knowledge and develop problem-solving skills.
- **Analysis of real case studies:** discussion of family support experiences with the aim of reflecting on intervention strategies and possible solutions.

3. Experiential sessions:

- **Testimonials:** meetings with experienced support adults who share their experiences, successes, challenges and lessons learned. This approach promotes participants' emotional engagement and increases their awareness of the challenges involved in family support.
- **Discussion groups:** opportunities for participants to exchange doubts, fears and expectations, enriching the training process through the sharing of personal experiences.

Feedback and self-assessment:

At the end of each training module, participants are invited to provide feedback and reflect on what they have learned. This step is essential for consolidating acquired competences and identifying areas for further improvement.

The training programme consists of **8 hours** in total, divided into three main phases: theoretical training, practical training and experiential training.

Theoretical training (5 hours):

- Introduction to family support.
- In-depth exploration of legal, psychological and relational aspects.
- Exercises and questionnaires to consolidate acquired knowledge.

Practical training (2 hours):

- Simulations of real-life situations (role-playing).
- Case analysis and group discussions.

Experiential training (40 minutes):

- Testimonials from experienced support adults.
- Reflection and discussion sessions.

Feedback and self-assessment (20 minutes):

- Evaluation of the training experience.
- Reflection on acquired competences and areas for improvement.

5.3 Operational Tools for Training

To ensure an effective and engaging learning experience, the training programme includes the use of different tools and materials designed to encourage interaction and active participation. Some suggested resources include:

Training materials:

- Guidelines and operational manuals: to provide clear and structured guidance.
- Reference texts: on specific topics such as attachment, resilience and emotional management.
- Practical worksheets and questionnaires: useful for self-assessment and personal reflection.

Suggested visual tools:

- Multimedia presentations: using charts, images and explanatory diagrams to facilitate understanding of key concepts.

Recommended interactive tools:

- Role-playing and simulations: to apply acquired knowledge in realistic contexts.
- Discussion groups: to analyse real cases and encourage participant exchange.
- Practical exercises: with immediate feedback to reinforce learning.

5.4 Expected Outputs: Trained Adults Ready to Provide Support

These objectives can only be achieved through a structured training pathway that includes theoretical, practical and experiential components, enabling support adults to acquire not only knowledge but also transversal competences and emotional skills. Thanks to its integrated structure and the variety of tools and methodologies employed, this programme ensures comprehensive and in-depth preparation for those who choose to undertake the pathway of family support.

6. Operational Guidelines – Activity 2 (WP3) – Discussion Groups and Civic Engagement

The text defines the methodological, organisational and operational framework for the implementation of the "Discussion Groups" envisaged within Work Package 3 (WP3). These groups represent a key project activity aimed at achieving **Objective 2**: promoting opportunities to participate in discussions and actions related to European issues and challenges. The intervention specifically targets adolescents living outside their family of



origin—a highly vulnerable target group—and trained adults who act as models of active citizenship, according to the relational support model. The primary objective of the discussion groups is to help minors develop informed and critical opinions on the main current socio-political issues. This process aims to increase their understanding of the role of the European Union and its values on the global stage, laying the foundations for future informed civic participation.

6.1 Group Structure

Group Composition:

- Participants per country: 20 minors and 10 trained adults.
- Individual Group Structure: each working group will consist of approximately 6 minors and 2 adults, under the constant supervision of 1 experienced operator/facilitator. This ratio is designed to maximise individual interaction and ensure adequate support for each participant.

3.2 Schedule and Duration:

- Period: 6 months.
- Frequency: 1 meeting every 2 weeks.
- Duration of each meeting: 2 hours.
- Total: 12 meetings for a total of 24 hours.

Roles:

- **Operator/Supervisor:** acts as a neutral facilitator. Plans the session, introduces the methodologies, moderates the discussion, ensures that the protected setting is respected, manages group dynamics and leads the debriefing. Is responsible for monitoring and collecting feedback.
- **Trained adults:** actively participate in discussions, not in a teaching or academic role, but as models of citizenship. They offer their perspective, actively listen to the young people's opinions, encourage dialogue and help build a relationship of trust and support (relational support).
- **Young participants:** are the protagonists of the activity. They are encouraged to express their ideas, participate in simulations and actively contribute to building a shared vision.

Each meeting will follow a flexible but consistent structure divided into the following phases:

- **Phase 1: Preparation (by the operator)**
 - Selection of current news/topics in line with the interests of young people and European priorities.
 - Consultation with the team of social workers to validate the topic.
 - Preparation of materials: role-play cards, short articles, stimulus videos, game/simulation rules.
- **Phase 2: Welcome and Icebreaker (15 min)**
 - Creating a positive and informal atmosphere.
 - A short icebreaker activity to encourage group cohesion.
- **Phase 3: Introduction to the Topic (15 min)**



- Presentation of the news item or issue in an objective and multi-perspective way.
- Provision of the background information needed to understand the context.
- Explanation of the rules of the activity (simulation or role-play).
- **Phase 4: Core Activity – Simulation/Role-play (60 min)**
 - Participants, divided into subgroups if necessary, assume the assigned roles and interact according to the planned scenario.
 - The operator and adults facilitate the activity, observe group dynamics and intervene only when necessary to overcome possible deadlocks.
- **Phase 5: Debriefing and Guided Reflection (25 min)**
 - Stepping out of the assigned roles.
 - Discussion guided by the operator using guiding questions:
 - How did you feel in your role?
 - What difficulties did you encounter?
 - What solutions emerged?
 - How does this issue relate to EU values (e.g. democracy, solidarity, sustainability)?
 - Summary of the main points that emerged.
- **Phase 6: Closing (5 min)**
 - Thanking participants.

6.3 Facilitation Techniques

The principles of active learning and non-formal education are prioritised, placing young people at the centre of the learning process as active participants (bottom-up approach) in their pathway of learning and self-expression.

- **Role-play and Simulation:** these techniques are fundamental for engaging young people in practical activities. Real-world situations (e.g. a parliamentary debate, an international conference, a newsroom) will be simulated to allow participants to assume different roles, understand multiple perspectives and assimilate complex content through experiential learning.
- **Game-Based Methodology:** learning will take place through game dynamics that facilitate the exploration of abstract concepts (e.g. ethical values, institutional mechanisms) and promote collaboration and group problem-solving.
- **Guided Dialogue and Debriefing:** each practical activity will be followed by a structured debriefing session led by the operator to review the experience, connect it with reality and consolidate learning.

The approach ensures maximum inclusion through:

- **Preliminary analysis of the content:** before each meeting, operators will examine the selected current topics in order to identify and proactively address any potential critical issues or emotional triggers related to the participants' personal experiences.

6.4 Key Themes (Citizenship, Participation, Rights)



- Promoting European values: through the analysis of topics such as environmental sustainability, human rights, immigration and gender equality, stimulate reflection on the founding values of the European Union.
- Co-design of themes: priority topics (e.g. climate change, gender equality) have been identified through a needs analysis of young people, thus ensuring the relevance of the activities and participants' intrinsic motivation.

6.5 Active Involvement of Minors

Specific Objectives:

- Develop critical thinking: enable minors to search for, select, analyse and interpret complex information relating to national and international current affairs (in synergy with WP2).
- Create a safe environment for dialogue: provide a safe space where minors can freely express ideas, doubts and emotions without fear of being judged, guided by professionals and trusted adults.
- Build intergenerational bridges: facilitate the creation of meaningful emotional and educational relationships between young people and adults, based on mutual listening and constructive discussion ("social kinship").

6.6 Expected Outputs: Greater Awareness and Participation

Systematisation and collection of the content, ideas and visions emerging from the discussions to be used as raw material for the subsequent artistic and creative workshops (Objective 4)

7. Operational Guidelines – Activity 3 (WP3)

The main objective is to enable minors to internalise European values and strategies through play and creative expression, producing tangible outputs to be presented to the public in order to raise awareness of global issues. The workshops serve as protected spaces for active civic participation.

Organisational and logistical details:

- **Duration:** 6 months in total.
- **Frequency:** Weekly meetings.
- **Time commitment:** 2 hours per meeting, for a total of 48 workshop hours.
- **Indicative period:** From November 2025 to April 2026.

Each partner organisation responsible for the workshops (Centro Studi, Metacometa, Arsis, Cordoba Acoge) must ensure the involvement of the following groups:

- **Children Living Outside Their Families:**
 - **Number:** 20 minors per country.
 - **Profile:** Priority will be given to the most vulnerable minors already involved in previous activities, ensuring gender balance.
 - **Specific selection criteria:** Level of participation demonstrated during WP2, motivation to continue, and psychological cost-benefit ratio for the child. Informed consent from legal guardians must be obtained.
- **"Positive" Adults:**



- **Number:** 10 adults per country.
- **Profile:** Adults already trained during WP3 Activity 1 (Relational Support and Citizenship).
- **Role:** Supporting the operators and facilitating relationships, rather than delivering formal teaching

7.2 Methodology and Implementation Phases

The activity must follow a participatory and game-based approach. These are not lessons but co-creation workshops.

Phase A: Topic Selection (Co-design)

- The topic of the project work must not be imposed from above but selected together with the minors.
- The topic must address a relevant European issue (e.g. environmental sustainability, inclusion, human rights) previously discussed during the discussion groups.

Phase B: Workshop Implementation

- The association's operators/educators lead the activities, supported by volunteer adults.
- Activities should stimulate reflection through art and creativity, enabling young people to express their vision of Europe.

Phase C: Production of the Output (Final Product)

Each partner must produce at least **one artistic/recreational product or service**. The format depends on the preferences expressed by the minors. Examples include:

- Theatre performances
- Short films
- Podcasts or web radio programmes
- Visual awareness campaigns (posters, exhibitions)

7.3 Roles and Responsibilities of the Partners

A. Partners

- Manage the workshops operationally in their respective countries.
- Recruit and coordinate minors and adults.
- Ensure the physical production of the final output.

B. Cordoba Acoge (WP3 Leader – Activity 3)

- **Supervision:** monitors the implementation of workshops across all partner countries.
- **Quality Control:** verifies that objectives are achieved and that outputs meet quality standards.
- **Critical Issue Management:** collects feedback on any problems in order to systematise the "lessons learned".
- **Guidelines:** provides the specific guidelines for workshop management.

C. Technical/Training Partners (Indepecie, Cuore, HAU)

- **Technical support:** provide technical expertise for the production of specific outputs (e.g. video editing, web-radio setup) when requested by the social partners.



- **Visibility:** contribute to promoting the outputs produced within their respective countries.

7.4 Monitoring

To consider the activity successfully completed, partners must ensure the achievement of the following indicators, to be reported to the activity leader (Cordoba Acoge):

- **Participation:** 20 minors and 10 adults involved in 24 meetings/48 hours.
- **Output:** actual production of the artistic product.
- **Visibility:** number of likes, comments, shares or participants attending the live presentation events.

7.5 Expected Outputs: Concrete Civic Engagement Projects

At the end of the activity, each country must have produced tangible artistic and recreational products aimed at increasing public awareness of the issues addressed. These products will subsequently be presented within **Activity 4 (Promotion and Presentation)**, which will include public events.

Example 1: Podcast Series (Web Radio Product)

Title: *EURHOPE Talks: Our Planet, Our Voice*

Theme: Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change (identified as a priority topic for young people).

Operational Description:

A series of 3–4 podcast episodes (10–15 minutes each) in which minors discuss how climate change affects their future and how the EU protects the environment.

Implementation

1. Co-design (Weeks 1–4):

- **Minors:** choose the specific topic (e.g. "Plastic-Free Cities" or "Sustainable Fashion"). They assign roles among themselves: Host, Interviewer, Scriptwriter, Sound Technician.
- **Adults:** facilitate the brainstorming session using the discussion group techniques (WP3 Activity 2) to encourage ideas to emerge without imposing them.

2. Content Creation (Weeks 5–12):

- **Minors:** write the script and interview questions. They decide to interview a local expert or a "positive" volunteer adult about their environmentally friendly habits.
- **Technical Support:** the training partners (HAU or INDEPCIE) provide basic guidance on how to structure a radio script.

3. Recording (Weeks 13–18):

- **Activity:** recording the episodes using smartphones or basic microphones.
- **Minors:** conduct the interviews and record voiceovers.
- **Adults:** help manage the environment (ensuring silence and reducing anxiety during recording).

4. Editing and Finalisation (Weeks 19–24):

- **Tools:** use of free software or dedicated editing software (e.g. multimedia content tools mentioned in the project such as Animoto or similar audio editing tools).
- **Minors:** select royalty-free music and edit the audio tracks.



- **Supervision:** Cordoba Acoge supervises the quality of the output and ensures that the content is aligned with EU values (e.g. factual accuracy).

Final Output:

An MP3 series ready to be uploaded to the project website and shared during the final event.

Example 2: Graphic Awareness Campaign (Digital & Print)

Title: *We Are Europe: Breaking Down Stereotypes*

Theme: Social Inclusion and Human Rights (focus on diversity and non-discrimination).

Operational Description:

A visual communication campaign consisting of **5 posters** (for print) and a set of **Instagram/social media carousel posts**, designed to challenge stereotypes about children living outside their families or promote gender equality.

Implementation

1. Concept & Message (Weeks 1–4):

- **Minors:** brainstorm slogans. Example: *"Family is where there is love, not just DNA"* or *"Europe Means Equal Rights."*
- **Adults:** help minors refine the messages so that they are impactful and clear for the general public.

2. Visual Workshop (Weeks 5–12):

- **Activity:** workshop on visual storytelling.
- **Minors:** create sketches on paper or take photographs representing the selected slogans.
- **Technical Support:** introduction to graphic design tools such as Canva (specifically mentioned in the project).

3. Digital Design (Weeks 13–18):

- **Minors:** digitise their ideas using tablets or computers. They choose colour palettes (e.g. using the colours of the EU flag or the project branding).
- **Adults:** support participants with lower digital skills in using the software, encouraging peer-to-peer learning.

4. Production (Weeks 19–24):

- **Output:** high-resolution PDF files for printing and JPG/PNG files for social media.
- **Supervision:** Cordoba Acoge verifies the quality of the visual output and ensures the correct use of EU logos and mandatory wording.

Final Output:

A digital folder containing the campaign assets, which will be physically printed for the Final Conference and published on the project's social media channels (WP3 Activity 4)

8. Monitoring and Impact Assessment

To ensure the success of the project, it is necessary to establish a monitoring system, an impact evaluation framework, and verification indicators to assess the effectiveness of the trainer training programme, as well as the actual impact it will have on adults and young people. These tools help measure progress, identify any issues arising during



implementation, and provide objective evidence of the effectiveness of the intervention. Monitoring is a continuous process aimed at collecting and analysing data in real time in order to ensure that the programme is implemented correctly and that the expected results are consistent with the established objectives. Within the trainer training activity, monitoring is crucial for promptly identifying any difficulties, allowing programme managers to introduce adjustments and improvements throughout the project.

8.1 Monitoring the Trainer Training Process

Monitoring the training process is essential to ensure that trainers receive appropriate and effective preparation that meets the needs of the positive adults they will subsequently train. The following aspects should be monitored:

- **Active participation of trainers:** It is essential to verify that trainers regularly and actively participate in training sessions and follow-up meetings. Their participation is an indicator of their commitment and motivation.
- **Skills acquired by trainers:** Monitoring the trainers' level of preparation is essential to ensure that they have acquired the competencies necessary to train supporting adults. Trainers must be capable of managing complex emotional situations and providing adults in training with effective strategies for addressing the challenges faced by young people.
- **Participant satisfaction:** It is important to collect feedback from trainers regarding the quality of the training received, the relevance of the content, and the effectiveness of the methodology used. Satisfaction questionnaires and informal interviews may be used to gather this information.

8.2 Monitoring Relationships Between Trainers and Trained Adults

Monitoring the relationships between trainers and trained adults is essential to ensure that the training is effective and that adults receive the support they need to successfully carry out their role. The following indicators should be monitored:

- **Ongoing communication between trainers and adults:** It is essential to monitor whether trainers maintain regular and open communication with adults, both during the training programme and in the subsequent phases, when adults are actively supporting adolescents.
- **Quality of emotional and professional support provided by trainers:** Trainers must be able to provide emotional support to adults by answering questions, resolving conflicts or difficulties, and helping them develop their mentoring role effectively. This support is essential for the well-being and effectiveness of the adults themselves.
- **Adult satisfaction:** Monitoring adults' satisfaction with the support received from trainers is essential for evaluating the effectiveness of the training. Surveys and interviews can provide valuable information regarding the quality of interactions with trainers.

8.3 Impact Evaluation: Measuring Long-Term Effects



- Impact evaluation focuses on analysing the long-term effects of the project. In this case, its main objective is to determine whether trainer training has had positive effects not only on the trainers themselves, but also on the trained adults and the adolescents receiving support. Impact evaluation makes it possible to measure changes in the competencies and attitudes of trainers, the effectiveness of relationships between adults and young people, and, ultimately, the psychosocial well-being and development of the young people themselves.
- **Impact on the Quality of Trainer Training**
- Impact evaluation should consider improvements in trainers' competencies. Relevant indicators include:
 - **Improvement in training competencies:** Have trainers acquired the skills needed to train adults? Are they able to clearly and effectively convey the competencies required for adults to fulfil their role?
 - **Improvement in relational competencies:** Have trainers become more effective in managing relational dynamics with adults in training, providing emotional support, and creating a positive and collaborative learning environment?
 - **Overall trainer satisfaction:** The impact of the training on trainers may be assessed through surveys measuring their overall satisfaction, sense of achievement, and motivation to continue their training activities.
- **Impact on Adult Preparation**
- The training project also aims to improve the preparation of positive adults. Relevant impact indicators include:
 - **Improvement in adults' competencies:** Are adults better prepared to manage the difficulties experienced by young people and to build positive and constructive relationships with them?
 - **Adult satisfaction:** Do adults feel more confident in their role and more capable of supporting adolescents?
 - **Impact on young people's well-being:** Adequate training for adults may positively affect the psychosocial well-being of young people. Monitoring improvements in adolescents' social skills, self-efficacy, and social inclusion is therefore essential.

8.4 Verification Indicators: Measuring Project Success

Verification indicators are concrete tools used to measure the effectiveness of the project and determine whether the established objectives have been achieved. These indicators provide tangible evidence of the effectiveness of the activities carried out and enable real-time measurement of progress.

Indicators Related to Trainer Training





- **Number of training sessions completed:** How many training sessions have trainers completed compared with the number planned within the programme?
- **Competencies acquired by trainers:** Percentage of trainers reporting that they have acquired new competencies and skills compared with the beginning of the programme.
- **Trainer satisfaction:** Percentage of trainers expressing satisfaction with the quality of the training received and the methodology adopted.

Indicators Related to Adult Support

- **Frequency of meetings between trainers and adults:** How many supervision or support meetings have trainers conducted with adults during the programme?
- **Quality of support provided:** Percentage of adults who report feeling supported by trainers in addressing the challenges encountered during their mentoring role.

Indicators Related to Impact on Young People

- **Young people's self-efficacy:** Percentage of young people reporting that they feel more capable of carrying out the tasks assigned to them within the project thanks to the support received from adults.
- **Social participation:** Percentage of young people who actively participate in social activities and demonstrate improvements in their social interactions.

9. CRITICAL SITUATIONS AND HOW TO ADDRESS THEM

Supporting vulnerable adolescents and training **"positive adults"** are delicate and complex processes. It is inevitable that critical situations may arise during project implementation. This chapter aims to map potential risks and provide trainers and organisers with appropriate strategies to prevent and manage them promptly.

9.1 Types of Risks and Critical Issues

Low participation or dropout: this occurs when adults in training or supported minors lose motivation, reduce their attendance at meetings, or decide to withdraw from the programme.

Relational conflicts: misunderstandings, unmet expectations, or actual tensions may arise both between the trainer and the adult in training and (especially) between the supporting adult and the young person, often due to the adolescents' previous traumatic experiences.

Organisational difficulties: these include logistical problems, lack of coordination between the supporting family, the residential care community, and social services, as well as bureaucratic constraints.

9.2 Prevention and Management Strategies

To mitigate these risks, the project adopts a proactive approach based on the following key pillars:





- **Clear definition of roles:** from the outset, it is essential to establish clear boundaries by defining what is expected from the positive adult and what does not fall within their responsibilities (avoiding, for example, overlaps with the roles of educators or psychologists).
- **Ongoing support and supervision:** trainers/project staff must provide regular supervision sessions (individual or group) for supporting adults, offering a space to process frustrations, recalibrate expectations, and prevent adult burnout.
- **Mediation techniques:** in the event of conflict, the trainer or project coordinator must act as a neutral mediator, facilitating communication and helping the parties reinterpret the situation from a constructive and empathetic perspective.

9.3 Documentation and Continuous Learning

Every critical situation addressed should be carefully documented (in compliance with privacy regulations). Recording incidents, their underlying causes, and the solutions adopted represents an invaluable asset for the project. It enables the continuous updating of the guidelines, the improvement of future training interventions, and the consolidation of a body of **best practices** available to the educational community.

10. Dissemination

Dissemination is a fundamental strategic process to ensure that the impact of the EURHOPE project extends beyond its direct beneficiaries and becomes a shared resource. This chapter defines how the project's results, methodologies, and good practices will be communicated externally.

10.1 Communication Target Groups

Dissemination activities are designed to reach different audiences, with messages tailored to their specific characteristics:

- **Professionals in the social and educational sector:** residential care staff, social workers, psychologists, and pedagogists, enabling them to learn about and adopt the relational support model.
- **Institutions and Policy Makers:** local authorities, regional administrations, and ministries, with the aim of encouraging the inclusion of relational support programmes within public policies and Local Social Plans.
- **Local communities and citizens:** to raise public awareness, challenge stereotypes concerning **children and adolescents living outside their families**, and recruit future **positive adults**.

10.2 Operational Tools and Communication Channels

To promote the visibility and transferability of the project's results, multiple communication channels will be used:

- **Digital platforms and social media:** creation of awareness-raising campaigns and accessible informational materials.
- **Multiplier events:** organisation of a final public conference open to stakeholders and the general public to present the project's impact results.



- **Publications and toolkits:** dissemination of this Handbook, evaluation reports, and operational toolkits available for free download.

10.3 Monitoring Dissemination Effectiveness

The effectiveness of dissemination activities will be continuously assessed through specific indicators, including the number of material downloads, social media engagement metrics (reach and interactions), the number of participants attending events, and qualitative feedback collected through post-event questionnaires.

11. Sustainability

To ensure that the results, tools, and relationships established through the EURHOPE project continue beyond the conclusion of the initial funding period, generating long-term structural change, the first step is:

- **Methodological and organisational sustainability:** ensuring long-term continuity through the integration of project practices into the routine work of the organisations involved. The training methodologies and relational support protocols should become established practices within residential care communities and social services. Strengthening the competencies of trainers and practitioners (**Capacity Building**) ensures that the project's know-how remains within the participating organisations.
- **Financial sustainability and partnership networks:** to ensure the continuity of relational support activities, it is essential to:
 - **Build networks (Networking):** strengthen the relationships established among Third Sector organisations, public institutions, and civil society by formalising cooperation agreements;
 - **Identify resources:** implement fundraising strategies, access new funding opportunities (local, national, or European), and encourage co-financing by public authorities by demonstrating—through impact evaluation—the preventive and cost-effective value of relational support compared with the long-term consequences of youth social exclusion.

11.1 Replicability and Long-Term Impact

The project has been designed to be modular and transferable. The continued use of the training materials, together with the availability of a network of experienced trainers and already trained **positive adults** (who may themselves become peer educators or ambassadors for new volunteers), will ensure a **cascade effect**. In this way, the social innovation promoted by EURHOPE can be replicated in other territories and within other residential care settings, actively contributing to the construction of a more inclusive and cohesive Europe.