

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Day of General Discussion

Submission II Nidos - Providing quality alternative care to unaccompanied children in the Netherlands

Introduction

The role of Nidos

[Nidos](#) is a certified youth care organization in the Netherlands. Nidos is responsible for legal guardianship for all unaccompanied and separated children that arrive in the Netherlands. Nidos is appointed as guardian by the court and guardianship is exercised by professionals who ensure proper accomplishment of the care provided to the child. Depending on various factors such as age, gender, vulnerability and level of independence, children are placed in different settings of alternative care. Aside from arranging appropriate shelter and living circumstances, Nidos is also responsible for protecting the children, intervening when their development is at risk of stagnation, acting in their best interest and legally representing them.

Unaccompanied children

When children (are forced to) migrate and embark on a dangerous journey without their parent(s) or guardian(s) they often experience a lot of uncertainty and hardship. Although these unaccompanied children in the Netherlands form a distinct group with shared experiences, vulnerabilities and strengths, this group is far from homogeneous. Diversity is not only encountered in terms of age, gender, origin, or reasons to migrate, but also in terms of perspective for the future, migration goals, qualities, strengths, and difficulties. Therefore, there is no such thing as a one size fits all approach in attending to the needs of these children.

Reception in the Netherlands and Nidos' alternative care practices

The Dutch reception system for unaccompanied children, with a focus on family-based care, is described in detail in the RLF report (de Ruijter de Wildt et al., 2015, p. 68-72¹) as part of the overview of the situation concerning the provision of family based care to unaccompanied children in all 28 EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland. Another description of the system in which family-based care is embedded in the Netherlands, including details on how it is organised, is provided in the ALFACA Manual (Schippers et al. 2016²).

Guardians of the Nidos specialised intake team are present at the application centre where all applicants launch their asylum claim. Stakeholders work under one roof to provide their services to asylum seekers in this centre. The guardian is one of the first persons the child is talking to. During this intake the guardian welcomes the child and assesses their needs and background to decide what placement is in their best interest. Together with the child, the guardian tries to contact the family of

¹ de Ruijter de Wildt, L., Melin, E., Ishola, P., Dolby, P., van de Pol, P. & Murk, J. (2015, February). Reception and Living in Families: Overview of family-based reception for unaccompanied minors in the EU Member States. Utrecht, the Netherlands: Nidos, SALAR, CHTB. Available at: <https://nidosineurope.eu/projects/reception-and-living-in-families/>

² Schippers M., van de Pol P., & de Ruijter de Wildt L. (Nidos), Thys K. (Minor-N'dako), Krogshøj Larsen M. (Danish Red Cross), Massoumi Z. (Jugendhilfe Süd-Niedersachsen) & Rozumek M. (Organization for Aid to Refugees) (2016), ALFACA Alternative Family Care. Manual for staff working with reception families and unaccompanied children living in reception families. Nidos, Utrecht, The Netherlands. Available at: <https://nidosineurope.eu/projects/alfaca/manual/>

the child, if safe, to find out if there is family in the Netherlands with whom the child could live but also to establish the first contact.

The available types of reception for unaccompanied children in the Dutch reception system are:

Family Based Care

All children under 15 years of age live in reception families from the first day they arrive in the Netherlands. Nidos works with families with a migrant and refugee background and tries to place children in families with a similar cultural background. They are appointed a guardian from the beginning as well. The guardian monitors the placement, regularly meets the child and the family and has a case management role. Family based care is Nidos' responsibility.

POL (15+ initial reception)

Children aged 15-18 live in a POL³ during their asylum application period. They will move to a different type of reception after a decision on their asylum claim has been made. At the POL, the guardian, together with the mentors of COA⁴ get to know the child and decide on suitable follow up reception, taking into account the asylum status and all other relevant factors. COA is responsible for POL.

Small scale reception facilities (15+ without residence permit)

After POL, children aged 15-18 whose asylum claim has been rejected move to small reception facilities (KVV) for this specific age group. COA is responsible for these facilities.

Small scale reception (15+ with residence permit)

After POL, children aged 15-18 with a residence permit⁵, move to small living groups (24/7 guidance) or small living units (18 hours guidance per week), depending on their independence. Organising small scale reception for children with a residence permit is Nidos' responsibility. Most of the small-scale reception for children with a residence permit are managed by youth care organisations contracted by Nidos. Some of them are managed by Nidos' itself. Small living groups and small living units are Nidos' responsibility. Some small living units are organised and managed by Nidos itself, but most of the small-scale reception is carried out by youth care organisations contracted by Nidos, who are using the Nidos methodology.

Protected shelters

Protected shelters are available for (possible) victims of human trafficking. Children who might be victim of trafficking move to a shelter upon arrival. The protected shelters are also the responsibility of COA and are in practice carried out by contracted youth care organisations.

A promising pilot project: PON

In recent years, the Netherlands, similar to other EU member states, has seen an increase in the arrival of children from Northern African countries. Many of them have been traveling through different European countries before arriving in the Netherlands. As they come from so called safe countries and are often undocumented, their asylum claim will likely be rejected in all EU member states. Most of the children went through hardships in different European countries, such as living in the streets or being used by criminal organisations and often are addicted to substances. Such severe cases were challenging reception staff, guardians and other stakeholders to an extent that a special intervention

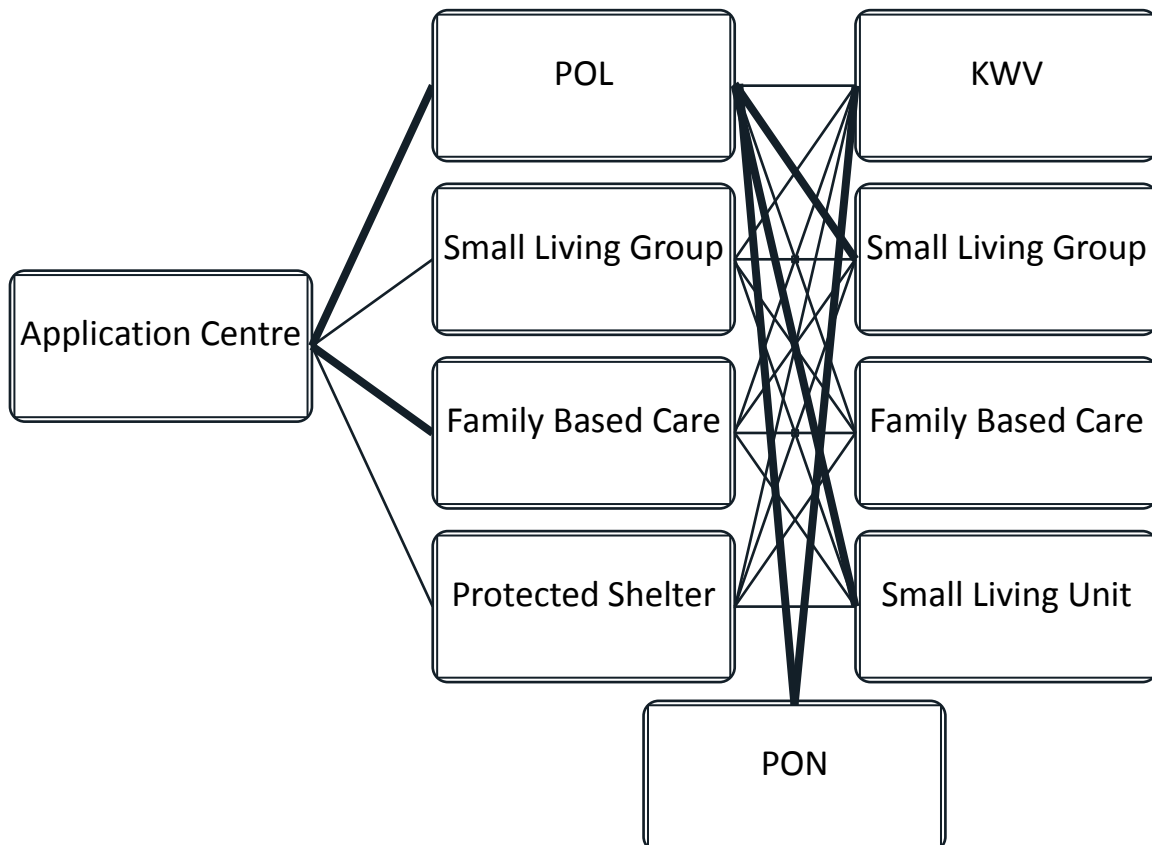
³ Proces Reception Centre = first reception after arrival operated by COA, for children aged 15-18 during their asylum procedure. Period of stay normally around 3 months.

⁴ COA is the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers in the Netherlands.

⁵ Exception: if a child without a residence permit is extra vulnerable, they can also be placed in small scale reception or in family based care.

was needed. Nidos therefore initiated a pilot project catering to the needs of these children. Specialised small living units with intensive guidance were set up as places where the children can unwind and get to rest. The pilot is a close cooperation with COA. Together with the guardians of Nidos, COA can register children for the pilot project. The daily guidance is carried out by employees with a similar background as the children (mainly boys), who are experienced in dealing with severe and challenging cases.

Overview of the reception possibilities and routing



Contact details

Liedewij de Ruijter de Wildt
Head of Policy and European Cooperation Unit
www.nidosineurope.eu
l.deruijterdewildt@nidos.nl