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'I don't feel alone anymore.'

The first COA AMIF IKP event turned out to be a great success. The IKP is COA's new International Knowledge Platform. On Tuesday October 4th and Wednesday October 5th 2022, a select group of professionals in the field of unaccompanied minors from various European countries gathered in Maastricht at the invitation of the COA AMIF IKP to share experiences and learn from each other. They were professionals who work with unaccompanied minors on a daily basis, in reception centres, as well as researchers, policy makers and police officers.

An intensive programme

The programme of the event included various lectures about working methods and best practices in different countries, there were interactive workshops in which participants discussed various topics amongst each other, and on Wednesday a large group of participants went on a working visit to the COA process reception centre for unaccompanied minors in Cadier en Keer.

Partly thanks to the facilitator, Bahram Sadeghi, the event on Tuesday had a tightly organized but also cheerful start. Gertru Diender, director of the Professional Development and Support Department at COA welcomed the participants through an online. Then Tom Kleijn took the floor. He took the people with him in his journalistic documentary 'Lost Boys'. In this documentary he tries to find an unaccompanied minor in response to a missing report concerning a 14-year-old boy. The journey takes him from the Netherlands to Belgium, Sweden, France and even Tunisia. It is an emotional story that illustrates the background of unaccompanied minors. Recognizable for many colleagues who work with this target group. The first day was concluded with snacks provided by residents of asylum seekers' reception centre Maastricht, via the participation project (Meedoenbalie) there.

Being together

It was the start of two exciting and eventful days, during which new contacts were established and mutual agreements were made to tackle concrete matters together. It includes matters such as unaccompanied minor reception methods, study and work opportunities, dealing with substance use, and criminal exploitation.

On the second day, the foreign participants in the COA AMIF IKP event were given the opportunity to visit a COA unaccompanied minors reception facility in Cadier en Keer, near Maastricht. About twenty participants signed up for it, from Norway, Denmark, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and France. In the reception centre they were given a tour by boys living there. Lunch was again provided by residents of reception centre Maastricht, via the Meedoenbalie. During lunch a number of boys from different countries also told more about their personal backgrounds and motivations.

All in all a very successful event. As one of the participants pointed out. During this meeting he sensed a feeling of no longer being alone. That he can now share the dilemmas in his work with many experts, who know the problems of unaccompanied minors well and can also provide specific advice

and suggestions. And because there were participants from different sectors and many countries, sometimes with a surprising angle.

A great start for IKP

That is exactly what the COA AMIF IKP stands for: Sharing know-how on asylum and reception. Marcel van der Heijden, project manager of the International Knowledge Platform was therefore very satisfied with the event organised by his project team. 'It is fantastic to see how we have been able to convert a need for more knowledge from other countries into such a successful event. It also resulted in exactly what we had in mind: A good first step for further exchange across borders, perhaps even collaboration. I couldn't have wished for a better start of the IKP', Marcel van der Heijden stated.

Want to know more?

The highlights of Tuesday's meeting, with the lectures and workshops will be available at our website. See 'Documents'. Do you have a best practice yourself? Please submit the best practice [here](#).

