



Proposal to develop an International  
Classification of Alternative Care for Children

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# BACKGROUND



## CONTEXT

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Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children set out the following main goals and objectives for child welfare and protection policies:

1. Prevention of unnecessary separation of children from their families and family networks.
2. If a child needs to be placed in alternative care: provision of supportive and protective care settings in a family-like environment, or in limited circumstances, a residential setting if 'appropriate, necessary and constructive' and 'in the child's best interests'.
3. For children in alternative care: work on safely reuniting and reintegrating the children with their families or family networks.

# CONTEXT

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In line with these obligations and policy commitments, many countries are making efforts to prevent family separation (where possible) and the institutionalization of children, reduce the number of children living in institutional care or to reunite children with their families (if in the child's best interests).

Today, most children without parental care are living in family-based alternative care, such as kinship care, foster care, or other forms of family-based or family-type care.

# CONTEXT

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Despite the existing obligations, policies and reform efforts, children in alternative care are frequently missing in official statistics and national and international indicator frameworks

- By the Conference of European Statisticians (CES): [2022 Guidance on Statistics on Children: Spotlight on children exposed to violence, in alternative care, and with disabilities](#)
- By Eurochild and UNICEF in their joint [DataCare initiative](#)
- By the European Commission during the preparatory action for a [European Child Guarantee: Feasibility Study for a Child Guarantee Target Group Discussion Paper on Children in Alternative Care](#) and by the Social Protection Committee Indicator Sub-Group mandated by the European Commission to develop an EU-wide monitoring framework for the European Child Guarantee

**CURRENT  
DATA  
LANDSCAPE**



# FINDINGS

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- Most countries collect some data on children in alternative care, largely statistics on stock and flow disaggregated by type of alternative care (residential, family-based) and by sex and age
- Different definitions and categorizations are used by many countries in administrative data systems and in surveys
- Among the difficulties confronted in measuring alternative care for children are differences in acceptance of different types of care facilities as residential care at the country level, the distinction between residential institutional care and residential care provided in small-group homes, as well as the distinction between different categories of family-based care.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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- For countries to adopt standardized definitions and classifications for alternative care, for the two main types of alternative care (residential and family-based care), and for sub-types of family-based care and of residential care
- However, there currently exist no internationally accepted standard definitions or classifications for statistics on children in alternative care
- The definition of alternative care and of the different types of care provided in the 2009 Alternative Care Guidelines do not serve the purpose of a statistical definition or classification.



# CONTENT



# SCOPE

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- An International Classification of Alternative Care for Children would address the differences in the way that the two main types of alternative care for children, namely residential and family-based care, are defined through the introduction of standard elements of residential care and family-based care
- The classification would also include an illustrative list of the types of facilities providing residential care for children, and of the various types of arrangements constituting family-based and family-type care
- Applicable to all types of data on alternative care for children



**PROCESS**



# WAY FORWARD

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- UNICEF to form a task force composed of representatives from national statistical offices and government entities, as well as academia, civil society organizations and international organizations.
- The task force will produce a first draft that will then be shared for technical review among key experts and revised accordingly.
- The advanced draft will then undergo further review through expert meetings, an online country consultation process and a multi-country testing.
- The final draft to be submitted to the Expert Group on International Statistical Classifications for review. The process is expected to be completed by early 2025.

**THANK YOU**

A photograph showing a child's feet in pink sandals on a sidewalk. A white stuffed toy, possibly a lamb or bear, is lying on the ground next to the child. The toy has a white tag attached to it. The background is a grey concrete sidewalk.

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