





### From Voice to Action

On my lap some words

a mouth

a forest

who gave life to the moon

and an elegant circle yielded the sun

unleaves the night,

parsley, lips,

inside the moon doesn't speak

Why don't I open my eyes

and awake?

After all, WHY AM I HERE?

Young welcome (16 years old)



### Participating Entities (Houses) - 8

District of Aveiro:

Sangalhos – 13 Children and young people

Ílhavo – 15 Children and young people

Oliveira do Bairro – 9 Children and young people



obra da criança

Coimbra District:

Loreto – 8 Children and young people

Holy Queen – 25 Children and young people

Bencanta – 8 Children and young people



CASA DE FORMAÇÃO CRISTÃ  
DA RAINHA SANTA

District of Leiria:

Ansião – 16 Children and young people

Castanheira de Pera - 6 Children and young people



**TOTAL – 100 CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE**



## Phase I - Assemblies with children and young people from each Home

3 assemblies were held with young people aged between 6 and 18 years old age. The three sessions, lasting 1h30min each, would be organized as follows:

**1st Session: Discussion on the operation of the System for the Promotion and Protection of Children and Young People in Danger** (eg, reception/removal process; involvement of the child/youth about the reasons for their withdrawal; intervention upon arrival at Host House; the relationship between the foster home and the family...).

**2nd Session: Discussion around issues reported at school.** We intend to create schools more inclusive, involving them in the theme of the Assembly (ie, school approach, the importance of equity and empathy, awareness of teachers and the rest of the school community for the welcoming theme, among others), with the presence and/or participation of two or three teachers.

While some (formerly) hosted young people consider school or college a safe haven, for others it can be more a place of reluctance, where they struggle to be understood and respected. A study carried out by Become Organization (The Charity for Children in Care and Young Care Leavers), dated 2018, with the participation of 450 teachers, identified a significant gap in their training with regard to the needs of children and young people welcomed, in a school context. It is important to build schools that are more aware of childhood trauma and schools that understand what it means to be in foster care.

**3rd Session: Discussion around the theme “Management of Emotions”.** A management and recognition emotions has positive consequences on interpersonal relationships, reverberating if, among others, and in improving the quality of life. The past of sheltered children and young people and ex-children is, for the most part, full of adverse situations, and these children/youths are early victims of neglect, domestic violence and abuse, which serves as a lever (the age, resilience and approach of the technicians in the foster home can, for themselves, be risk or protective factors) to an emotionally distressed and maladjusted life. With this, it is important to create dynamics that help them to recognize emotions, identify them in themselves and others, in order to provide a present and future where young people can have happier and more meaningful life experiences.



## Regarding the first session:

### Synthesis:

Most people knew the reason for being welcomed, but some did not know why they were being welcomed and there were even those who mentioned that even telling them, it didn't make sense.

With regard to the functioning of the Welcome House, the majority of young people mentioned that he liked certain things to change, so that they would feel truly at ease home, for example, the rules regarding the use of the cell phone, no collective punishments, the rules are adapted to the age of each young person. Different opinions about the perception they have of the Home, the rules and its human resources.



Upon entering the House, young people, in general, said they did not like to be they said they would only stay for 3 or 6 months, when in fact they would stay for years.

In general, a large percentage of young people consider important decision-makers politicians to be aware of what happens in the CAs. However, although some young people from some Houses consider not.

Although not shared by all young people from all Houses, the generality agrees that it would be important to have positive discrimination after leaving.

In general, the young people mentioned that when they entered the House, everything was explained to them. operation (rules, schedules, etc), as well as their life history. *"If they explained, misunderstood."*

Several young people believe that more could have been done to prevent them from coming to the Casa.

**Notable phrases:**

*"Our family is our home. Separating from the family is a very difficult thing. For me to be with my mother it's unforgettable, even though bad things happen, I love it, she's in my heart."*

*"Yea. I thought coming here was my fault, but then they explained to me that it wasn't."*

*"Sometimes I remember a lot the day I arrived, it was remarkable. But there was no cake, nothing that effectively signaled my arrival. They just introduced me to people."*

*"It was raining. I asked for ice cream and they gave me ice cream. I cried because I was so happy."*

*"Sometimes I feel that there are too many people building my life project for me."*

*"I know what I want to do and I know I have the skills to do it, but the techniques don't believe and try to change my mind".*

*"Sometimes the life project doesn't always work out."*

*"It's our life, they should listen to us, but it's up to the adults to decide."*



*"I think adults know what we need."*

*"They don't listen. We ask for something and they say "we'll think about it" and I keep putting it off"*

*"I would change some people who work here, I feel that some do not understand me, they are insensitive."*

*"On Fridays we go to bed at midnight and have to hand over the cell phone at 9.30 pm, the same happens on Saturdays, where they can go to bed at 01:00 in the morning."*

*"What happens is that sometimes they are watching a series on television and we all have to be to see, even if we don't like it, because we don't have our cell phone to see our own series."*



*"They say that here there are no rules for everyone, there are rules for everyone, equally."*

*"I feel that when I tell something, then it goes out to everyone and everyone knows."*

*"I was told I was going to stay for 3 months and I stayed much longer."*

*"They treat everyone equally, but each one is unique."*

*"Whatever is put on the plate must be eaten. If not, wait for the next one. snack."*

*"The Court lets me go home and the Host House does not."*



*"The way we are treated, with more respect and understanding that we are people. I feel like they need to trust us more."*

*"I think we needed more autonomy and for that you need more trust and respect."*

*"They don't know how to wake us up properly. Today it was 7:30 am when they woke us up and they say «in one minute they have to get up, otherwise they are penalized»".*

*"I don't think there should be collective punishments – everyone pays for one."*

*"We should be able to forget that we are in CA, we should feel that we were in our home."*

*"Many mentioned that sometimes living here feels like living in a hospital or a prison."*

*"We feel that it is very easy to get a penalty here. Every day there's someone who stays penalized."*

*"They mess with our things without authorization, they mess with our room, they don't respect the individuality and privacy. They put our things in the trash without consulting us, or take things of ours to their office."*

*"What makes it not feel like a home is not even the rules, but the way we are treated, the affective climate of the house."*

*"The regime here in the House makes some of our colleagues decide to flee."*

### **Regarding the second session:**

#### **Synthesis:**

Some young people reported feeling that they were treated differently (either positively or for the negative) by colleagues or teachers, for living in a shelter.

Both the young people and the teachers present consider it important that those who work at school is aware of the consequences of adverse childhood experiences and of the implication that this may or may not have on the behavior of a young person. Do you still think that teachers, assistants and school technicians must know and be prepared for what means living in residential care.



Some young people reported that, because they were welcomed, they sometimes needed to miss classes to go to the CPCJ, or to the Court, or to a consultation, and which the teachers stigmatized, considering their absences as a result of their experience in foster care and possible “inappropriate behavior”.

In these sessions, opinions were very heterogeneous and some were diametrically opposed.

**Notable phrases:**

*“School is a terrible place, I don't like school.”*

*“I don't like the school, nor the people there. I don't like anything.”*

*“Once I couldn't deliver a paper that the teacher had asked me to bring signed and she said to me «it's not my fault if you don't have parents, now manage yourself.»”*

*“There was a teacher who said to me «it's a good thing you're in the host house!»”*

*“At one point in my life I started cutting my arms. And at some point I decided stop hiding my arms... one day in a class the teacher said that whoever did that it was to get attention. And all my classmates were looking at me. I felt humiliated.”*



*“I was in 3rd or 4th grade. I didn't want to be taking classes and I slept through the whole class. THE teacher didn't like it and wanted to send me away. I got really nervous and started to putting everything on the floor, throwing the notebooks and material (mine and my colleagues) on the floor. felt very ashamed because I didn't want that to happen in front of everyone and actually I didn't want to have hurt anyone with my behavior.”*

*"I like people, they are welcoming, especially the adults, they are always helping (the my class director for example). I also like my class and studying."*

*"I don't like the school, but I like the people there."*

*"Teachers understand the difficulties I feel living in the Host House."*

*"I think only my class director understands what it's like to grow up outside the family. I consider my Class Director as family."*



*"At school there are no poor people, they are all the same."*

*"School for me is a refuge, a learning experience."*

*"School for me is like my second home."*

*"It is a key to life."*

*"The school as a whole is welcoming."*

*"I trust the teachers, the adults, but some colleagues don't. We trust adults because They are very affectionate and really care about us."*

*"Between the school and the institution, I prefer the school, there is more to do. I signed up for all support to be able to stay late at school."*

*“Over time I realized that I couldn’t tell young people my age everything, unlike what happens to adults.”*

*“I don't like it when they take me to school, the van is identified and full of boys and girls. girls. Although no one makes fun of it, I don't!”*

*“My classmates stare at the van when I arrive at school... I feel ashamed being here and the van having those things written on it.”*

*“The more they judge, the worse the person does. There are people who don't understand, they think this is a house of correction, they immediately ask me what I did to come here.”*

*“In my class everyone knows that I live in a CA, because the teachers talk about it in front of of all.”*



*“I think it's important to know. It can help to understand situations and not judge soon.”*

*“Sometimes they make fun of me, but as a joke. I don't take it the wrong way.”*

*“There's a boy there who when he found out I lived here, he's always sending jokes about the family and about parents.”*

*“I feel that I am treated differently and even with some contempt.”*

*“I feel that everyone treats me equally.”*

*"It's not treating them differently, but since they know I'm here, they are careful with how I treat them. how they talk. For example, instead of saying "my father, my mother", they say "my sponsor of education"."*

*"I don't like it when people say I live in an institution. I live in a House, this is a House normal."*

*"I have a colleague who one day told me that she was jealous of me, because she felt that I was much loved here. This colleague is in a situation where she has no conditions at home, and has many problems (financial, relationship...)."*

### **Regarding the third session:**

#### **Synthesis:**

Emotions, being personal, can be transmitted and living in a Casa de Welcoming, it becomes more difficult to share what you feel inside the walls, not always welcoming.

Through dynamics adapted to the age groups in question and taking advantage of the relationship that interactions in previous sessions allowed, we got them to release expressions and verbalize thoughts that we will transcribe because it becomes impossible to group them in another way. form.

#### **feeling of loss**

*"Losing people costs a lot, but then you get used to it and become insensitive."*

*"All of us who have experienced shelter are well aware of the meaning of loss."*

#### **Loneliness**

*"We can't count on anyone, it's every man for himself."*

*"I read, listen to music, try to remember good things or even jokes, to laugh."*

*"We can feel it both in CA and in the family".*

*"I don't have anyone in the world... I feel this way too often. I was born alone and I will die alone".*



**Longing**

*“Longing never disappears.”*

*“I miss my colleagues, even the smells of the place where I lived with my family.”*

*“I miss my mother... my family”.*

**Rage**

*“I feel more angry for being in the Host House.”*

*“I often get angry – I bang my head against the wall.”*

*“When people think they know what I feel, but they don't know anything.”*

*“To pass, I shout, I go to the cell phone, “I get to talk badly” with people.”*

**Revolt**

*“A lot at the beginning of the reception... now it doesn't make sense. I used “my inner weapons and I feel more emotionally grown”.*

*“I walk away to my room.”*

**Frustration**

*“When I'm frustrated I get angry, I hit, throw my slipper and say bad words.”*

*“In those moments I get angry, but then I calm down.”*

*“Since I don't expect much anymore... I don't feel frustrated.”*

*“I keep it for myself.”*

*“I no longer feel frustrated about being in a foster home.”*

**Sadness**

*“In here (in CA) it is almost always.”*

*“It is often, very often.”*

*"When I'm sad I turn to my friends from CA"*

*"When I'm sad, I cry, I listen to music, I count to 100, I exhale hard."*

### Shame

*"I am sorry, from some colleagues here at CA"*

*"Here I am more ashamed than in my family."*

*"So much being alone and listening to music. I need it... I don't want anyone to tell me to calm down."*

*"I go to Nature."*



### Anxiety

*"I feel anxious at night."*

*"I cry and then it goes away."*

*"I fall asleep to pass the anxiety."*

*"I feel before a test..."*

*"I feel and many times! It starts with a very strong grip on the heart."*

*"My nails show my anxiety."*

## Fear

*"Afraid of some colleagues in the house."*

*"Afraid when Bea hits me."*

*"When I'm scared, I ask the CA adults for help"*

*"What triggered the fear was the nightmares."*

## Euphoria

*"When I get good grades."*

*"When I win something I really want."*



## Happiness

*"When I'm with my friends."*

*"When I visit my family."*

## Kindness

*"Be kind to others".*

*"Don't bother others".*

## Kindness

*"There is affection here at the Host House".*

*"There could be more...but there is".*

*"Vivi doesn't like to give or receive hugs."*

*"We can't count on anyone, it's every man for himself."*

## Love

*"Love kills."*

*"Here at home, more love is needed."*

*"There is more love out there."*

*"Here there is more love than my home."*



## Phase II – Mega Meetings with the various participating Homes



# PROGRAMA

## ENCONTRÃO





**10:30h - Receção e Acolhimento**  
Lanche  
Entrega de materiais aos jovens

**11:00h - Início dos trabalhos**  
Realização de dinâmicas

**12:00h - Momento musical**  
A música enquanto elemento chave na criação de laços

**12:30h - Pausa para almoço**

**13:30h - Momento musical**  
A música enquanto elemento chave na criação de laços

**14:00h - Momentos de reflexão, partilha e dinâmicas**  
Atividades que promovem a reflexão crítica e interação entre os jovens

**15:00h - A liberdade para poderes escolher é tua!**  
Do desporto à estética, passando pela arte. Onde preferes estar?

**16:00h - Momento final**  
Entrega dos lanches  
Despedida






**Coimbra - Centro Social de Ribeira de Frades**

**Casas parceiras:**










Two moments with about 50 children and young people in each one, also counting on professionals from Participating Homes involved.

Diverse dynamics, music workshops, aesthetics, sports, painting...

moments of reflection

Small group and large group sharing

musical animation

Nice food















It started in a circle and ended in a giant hug







It started in a queue and ended in a giant hug



## Conclusions

The From Voice To Action Project had as its main objective to listen to the points of view of those who are experts in this area – the boys and girls who live in residential care.

Starting from creative dynamics, provide moments of sharing experiences and experiences, in a swell of voices.

In the final two meetings – days lasting one day, with around 50 children and young people at each “Meeting” – moments of conviviality, good mood, sharing, group reflection and even image care opportunities or even hypotheses possible vocational guidance.

Upon completion of the project, a Final Report was made with the compilation of the contents discussed in the Assemblies and, in some way, also in the final Meetings (Meetings), which will later be handed over to Eurochild, as well as to those responsible for the Houses of Reception and other *players* in this matter.

We hope that this document can produce change in the 8 Host Houses participants. Through the implementation and/or affirmation of youth assemblies as constant practice, so that in a collaborative spirit children and their caregivers understand themselves better, as well as their motivations. Also, the conclusions that are given to those responsible for each House involved in the project, so that this reflection on aspects to improve in the Promotion and Protection System, but also in each structure residential, can lead to a better service provided.

It is intended that the voices of the participating children and young people – one hundred – can be influence **changes in the policies and practices of the Reception System in Portugal.**

Together, we will contribute to the quality of welcoming in Portugal, through suggestions, proposals and recommendations from young people in foster care.

## ANNEXES

### Structure of the dynamization of the sessions



## 1st session

### Life is a Memory



The session begins with the introduction of each participant (name, age, profession, where they live and where they are from). After the presentation, the dynamic begins “Who like me?”.

#### ICEBREAKER DYNAMICS: WHO LIKE ME?

The facilitators start the dynamic, in which each participant goes to the center and says “Who like me likes...”. Participants who identify with the phrase selected, also go to the center and join the group. The dynamic ends at moment when everyone has completed the sentence “Who like me...”.

#### PROJECT PRESENTATION

The facilitators explain, in general terms, what the project consists of and what is what will be done in the session.

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE SESSION

The phrases address issues related to the system of promotion and protection, the system of care, the functioning of the Shelter House and the rights of children.

It is intended to lead to a reflection on the system of promotion and protection, specifically on the host measure; the dynamics and functioning of

Homes and the rights of children and young people, as human beings, as children and as children in foster care.

## BOX DYNAMICS IN REFLECTION

### MATERIALS:

- Computer with Internet access.
- Box with questions to answer/reflect on.

### GOALS:

- Sharing experiences and reflection.

### METHODOLOGY:

1. Participants are asked to sit in a circle.
2. A box containing several questions is passed from hand to hand to the sound of lively music.
3. When the music stops, the participant who has the box in his hand opens it, takes out a card and answers/reflects on the question according to your own ideas and feelings.
4. The box continues to circulate from hand to hand, with the next participant is chosen by the previous one.
5. The dynamic continues until all the cards in the box have been withdrawn.



## Questions:

1. When you arrived, they explained why you came to this House of Reception and what was going to happen next?
2. When you arrived, they explained to you how the Homestay did it work?
3. Do you feel that you are heard regarding your process:
  - At the Host House;
  - In school;
  - On court;
  - By your Process Manager.
4. Do you agree with the decision to place you in this Homestay?
5. Do you agree that the best thing for you is not to grow up with your family?
6. Do you think that your entry into the Homestay could have been less memorable?
7. Do you think that everything that could have been done was done before you came to Host House?
8. Are you aware of what happened in your family life until you came here?
9. Do you feel that at opportune moments the moments highlights of your life story?
10. Do you participate in building your life project?
11. Do you feel frustrated because you cannot decide about your life?
12. Are you aware that in case of incompatibility you can request a another process manager?

13. When they make decisions you don't agree with, do you feel comfortable to talk to someone?
14. Do you feel it is important that "those in charge of the country" know what happens with you?
15. After you leave foster care, does positive discrimination make sense to you access to employment, housing and health care?
16. They usually hold assemblies at the Host House, in order to discuss different issues?
17. What would you like to be different about the Host House?
18. Do you think this assembly was useful?



## 2nd Session

### The plus and minus of the School



#### OBJECTIVES OF THE SESSION

It is intended that the School space and entity is also the guarantor of well-being of children and young people, namely those who live in residential care.

It is also intended that participants are aware of their rights and of their duties, as well as those of the educational community.

**MATERIALS:** a bag containing strips with phrases/reflections

#### DESCRIPTION:

To introduce the session, children and young people are challenged to respond to some questions that entitle you to a prize (candy, chocolate, etc.): Who are the enablers? What was done and discussed in the last session?

After this initial dynamic, the promoters pose an **opening question** to all participants (children, young people and teachers), to which they are the first answering: **What is school for you?**

Subsequently, participants are asked to share negative episodes and later positive episodes experienced at school, to be discussed together, namely with the teachers present.

After sharing negative and positive episodes experienced in context school for children and young people, teachers are invited to give their contribution towards identifying any flaws that may exist and improving the well-being of these children and young people in the school environment. At this stage are Some questions were raised to encourage a joint discussion:

- The school knows and recognizes the specificities of those who grow up outside the family?
- The educational community takes into account that some behaviors misfits are just consequences of adverse experiences lived in childhood that are activated by recent episodes?

## Reflections:



### Negative Episodes

19. I feel that at school I have no one I can trust.
20. I feel that school is not a safe place because I was scared at school.
21. I feel that I am treated differently by adults at school for not live with my family.
22. I was once humiliated by an adult at school.

23. I am treated differently by my classmates for not live with my family.
24. I was scared at school because I lived in a foster home.
25. I used to feel ashamed for not living with my family.

### **Positive Episodes**

1. When I finish school I think I'll miss it.
2. The school understands the difficulties I feel for living in a House of Reception.
3. In the class, my colleagues know that I am in a shelter and they still like me.
4. School is my second home.
5. There are people at school that I care about like family.

## 3rd Session

### me and my house



#### OBJECTIVES OF THE SESSION

It is intended that participants become aware of the place of the Casa de Reception in their lives, leading to individual reflection on emotions triggered by living in residential care.

#### MATERIALS:

- A bag containing cards with various emotions
- A poster with the various emotions represented

**DYNAMICS:** Game of time - how much is a minute worth?

What did you feel?

Is it worth putting pressure on others?

Do you like being pressured?

*Everyone has their own pace*



**DESCRIPTION:**

The cards are placed in a bag and drawn randomly by each young person, who must select a partner to, through mime/body expression, represent the emotion shown on the card and lead the other young people to identify there. With the help of the group, it is intended to decipher the role of the Home in the life of each young person and the emotions that it arouses in him (eventually concrete situations and how to overcome them).

In case the youngsters cannot represent the emotion through expression corporal/mimic, they will be able to give clues for the other participants to be able to identify it: start with the letter .... We felt that emotion when...

After identifying the emotion, a discussion/reflection around it begins:

- ÿ In what moments of your life did you feel that emotion?
- ÿ What or who triggered this emotion?
- ÿ How did you overcome that emotion? ÿ Did you have help from someone to overcome what you were feeling? ÿ Do you often feel this emotion? ÿ Do you think that the fact that you live in the House sometimes makes you feel that emotion?

**At the end:**

- ÿ Of all the emotions, which one(s) best represent what you do you feel about living in the Host House?
- ÿ Of all the emotions, which one do you most like to feel in life?