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8. Food, clothing and other non-food items and allowances

Introductory remarks

Food, clothing and other non-food items as well as daily expenses allowances form an essential part of the material reception conditions.

Standards included in this chapter should be considered irrespective of whether unaccompanied children are provided with food, clothing and other non-food items in kind or in form of financial allowances or vouchers. This means that where EU+ States choose to provide unaccompanied children with a financial allowance to cover the costs of food, clothing and other non-food items, this allowance should allow unaccompanied children to purchase food, clothing and other non-food items in accordance with the standards listed in this chapter. This is without prejudice to situations where unaccompanied children already possess sufficient clothing or other non-food items in line with the standards included in this chapter and thus do not need to receive additional items.

The term ‘food’ as referred to in this chapter includes food as well as non-alcoholic beverages. The term clothing as referred to in this chapter refers to both clothes and shoes. The term ‘non-food items’ refers to essential household items other than food, including for example personal hygiene products, cleaning and laundry products, bed linen, as well as towels. Non-food items also include school utensils.

The provision of non-food items should always take place while taking into consideration the personal situation of unaccompanied children. Specifically, the composition of the non-food items as well as the quantity provided should take into account the personal needs of the child in question.

The RCD does not directly address the details and purpose of the daily expenses allowance. Nevertheless, the concept is essential to respond to unaccompanied children’s needs. The daily expenses allowance covers other essential needs of unaccompanied children addressed by the RCD that go beyond food and clothing (those being covered through financial allowance, whenever not provided in kind or in the form of vouchers).

In this document, the concept of ‘daily expenses allowance’ should be understood as having three different purposes, namely:

- to allow unaccompanied children to reach a minimum level of physical subsistence, beyond the basic necessities of housing, food or clothing;
- to ensure a minimum standard of participation of unaccompanied children in the socio-cultural life of the EU+ State they are residing in; and
- to enable unaccompanied children to enjoy a certain degree of autonomy.

This guidance refers to ‘daily expenses allowance’ as aminimum as the monetary allowance provided to unaccompanied children for no specific purpose and at their free disposal (pocket money). Additionally, where specific non-food items or other complementary needs are not provided in kind or in the form of vouchers, their costs could also be taken into account when calculating the amount of daily expenses allowance provided to unaccompanied children.

Provision of allowances (‘pocket money’) is based on the consideration that a dignified standard of living can only be achieved when unaccompanied children have a certain degree of financial autonomy. In other words, at least part of the allowance provided to them should not be earmarked but rather be at the free disposal to use in line with their own personal needs and preferences. The age and maturity of the unaccompanied child may, however, determine how much supervision and help the child needs in managing the allowances (cf. Chapter 4. Day-to-day care).

In light of the varying standards and costs of living across EU+ States, the standards on daily expenses allowances does not attempt to define the exact level of allowance that should be provided to unaccompanied children. Irrespective of the method used for calculation of the daily expenses allowance, the three purposes listed above should always be fulfilled.

Legal references – food, clothing and other non-food items, and allowances

- Article 2(g) RCD: Definition of material reception conditions
- Article 18 RCD: Modalities for material reception conditions