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3.2 Family unity

STANDARD 14: Ensure that family unity is respected, in line with the principle of the best interests of the child.

Indicator 14.1: Unaccompanied children who are siblings (in accordance with the definition of Article 24(2) RCD) are accommodated together with their agreement.

- ***Additional remarks:*** *The agreement of siblings to be accommodated together is obtained on a voluntary basis, taking into account the age and the gender of the siblings and their best interests. If unaccompanied children are with adult sibling/siblings, they can be accommodated together in adult reception facilities taking into account the best interests of the child, age, gender and the degree of maturity.*

- *The best interests of the child must be continually assessed and monitored by social workers, other reception officers and their representatives. Safety considerations should be taken into account to allow for possible exceptions.*

- *In order to avoid future separation, if unaccompanied children are transferred, their siblings should be transferred as well*.

Indicator 14.2: Unaccompanied children, their spouses and their children can be accommodated together if this is in line with the best interests of the unaccompanied children and in accordance with relevant national law.

- ***Additional remarks****: Married unaccompanied children who are above the nationally legislated legal age of consent can be accommodated together with their adult spouses and with any children they might have in reception facilities for families taking the best interests of the child as the primary consideration.*

- *The best interests of the child must be continually assessed and monitored by social workers, other reception officers and the representative in order to identify possible sexual exploitation, forced marriage or human trafficking. Unaccompanied children below the national age of consent must be accommodated separately from their spouse.*

- *There is a need for a multidisciplinary team to assess the best interests of the child in cases of child marriage immediately after arrival. The assessment should involve a team composing at least a social worker, a medical professional and a representative. If the assessment is not done upon arrival, measures should be put in place so as to protect*

unaccompanied children.

- *Unaccompanied children who are single parents should be accommodated together with their child/children taking into account the principle of the best interests of the child (including the best interests of the child who is also a parent). The best interests of the child must be continually assessed and monitored by social workers, other reception officers and representative. Safety considerations should be taken into account to allow for possible exceptions.*

Good practice on unaccompanied children who are single parents
It is considered good practice to:

✓ provide special reception facilities with day care/nursery in order to allow the parents to attend school.

Indicator 14.3: Where possible and appropriate, family unity should be respected with regard to members of the broader family.

- ***Additional remarks:*** *A broader definition of family members is applied taking into account the background of the unaccompanied children, the particular circumstances of dependency and their best interests.*

- *Depending on the national arrangements and on the agreement of unaccompanied children and representatives, members of the children's broader family (including relatives outside the definition of Article 2(c) RCD) and unaccompanied children can be accommodated together.*

- *Unaccompanied children and adult members of the broader family can be accommodated together in an adult reception facility if it is in the children's best interests. This should be taken into consideration especially with unaccompanied children, who are accompanied by relatives, who are not responsible for them whether by law or by the practice of the MS concerned. The best interests of the child must be continually assessed and monitored by social workers, other reception officers and the representative. Safety considerations should be taken into account to allow for possible exceptions.*