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9.4 Common areas

Introductory remarks

In the framework of this guidance, the term ‘common areas’ refers to a space where unaccompanied children eat and spend their leisure time. The size and set-up of the common area, as well as its functionality, depend on the type of housing where the unaccompanied children are located. Common areas for unaccompanied children should be furnished in a child-friendly manner. This should include the provision of comfortable seating (sofas and armchairs). They should also be fire resistant. In addition, general decoration for example providing rugs, cushions, pot plants and curtains. As such, common areas might refer to one or more rooms which can be used by unaccompanied children.

With regards to bigger housing facilities, common areas could likely refer to a number of different rooms which each fulfil multiple purposes, i.e. to eat, to carry out leisure activities, or to take part in other collective activities (e.g. completion of school homework, language classes, information provision, etc.). At the same time, smaller facilities might have one multipurpose room which can be turned into a dining/living room or a room for studying or carrying out leisure activities, depending on the need and time of the day. This is based on the important link existing between the unaccompanied children’s possibility to engage in leisure activities and their mental health. The existence of space for leisure activities or the possibility for unaccompanied children to engage in collective actions (e.g. play indoor games, do chores, attend language classes, group information sessions or sport activities) serves an important purpose as it helps to bring more structure to their day and thus can help to decrease tensions arising from spending too much time without anything to do.

STANDARD 51: Ensure that unaccompanied children have sufficient space to eat.

Indicator 51.1: All children have the possibility to eat in a designated space.

- ***Additional remarks:*** *It is possible for all unaccompanied children to eat in a canteen (in a bigger facility) or in a room where there is a table and sufficient number of chairs. The place for eating could have other functions as well, as long as it is available for eating at certain times.*

STANDARD 52: Ensure that unaccompanied children have sufficient space for leisure and group activities.

Indicator 52.1: An area that is suitable for leisure activities exists inside the housing or nearby within public space.

- ***Additional remarks:*** *Gender, age as well as the cultural of the unaccompanied children should be taken into account when setting up rooms for leisure activities in collective housing (e.g. for changing rooms). If possible, this could involve separate rooms or hours during which rooms designated for leisure activities can be used.*

Indicator 52.2: Where group activities are organised by an EU+ State, sufficient and suitable space, e.g. in the form of a separate room, is available.

- ***Additional remarks:*** *The term 'group activity' refers for example to language classes, group information sessions, sport activities, etc.*

Indicator 52.3: A safe room/area exists for unaccompanied children to play and to engage in open-air activities in the housing itself.

Indicator 52.4 a): A minimum of leisure activities are located at a reasonable walking distance and the distance is safe for walking; **AND**

Indicator 52.4 b): In collective facilities, a minimum of leisure activities appropriate to children's age are available inside the housing; **AND**

Indicator 52.4 c): Additional activities may be accessible by public transportation or through organised transports provided by the EU+ State.

Indicator 52.5 a): Unaccompanied children 0-12 have daily access to playgrounds and playrooms appropriate to their age; **AND**

Indicator 52.5 b): Unaccompanied children 13-17 have weekly access to indoor and outdoor sport facilities.

Good practice with regards to common areas
It is considered good practice to:

✓ arrange a separate study room or specific hours in a multipurpose room where school homework can be done in peace.