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New Handbook for Educational Centers to Better Serve Adopted Children and Those in Alternative Care

The European project “Brighter Future”, coordinated by the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), with PAC-UK (Part of Family Action) as the United Kingdom partner institution, has released a new handbook for teaching staff with information and resources designed to help them better care for the boys, girls and adolescents with whom they work who are in foster and other forms of alternative care or who joined their families through adoption.

For children who reside in centers or foster families and for those who joined their family through the process of adoption, school is not always a bed of roses. Research has shown that centers of education tend to operate on the assumption that all family situations are homogeneous, which results in practices that exclude some children and/or are insensitive to those who don't live with their families of origin. According to Dr. Chandra Clemente, anthropologist from the UAB and expert in transnational adoption, “To ask a child to bring a photo to school from when she was a baby, when she has almost no information about her first years, can put her in an extremely uncomfortable and difficult situation, as can asking a child to fill out a family tree that leaves no space for them to accurately represent the totality of their family situation”.

In addition to being separated from their families, many of these children have experienced other situations that have impacted their development, including institutionalization, negligent care, or abuse. Schools and other educational institutions need actionable information that they can use to correctly interpret and respond to such children's needs, so they can help adopted and children in care make the most of their educational experience and achieve their full potential.

Brighter Future, financed by the European Union's Erasmus+ program, has just published a handbook especially for primary and secondary teachers with strategies to facilitate the incorporation into their classrooms of children with non-traditional histories. *From Protection to Inclusion* offers opportunities for reflection and practical suggestions that reflect the realities faced not only by children who are adopted or in alternative care, but also those who have arrived in a new country without parental figures or guardians. The handbook has been

published in English, Dutch, Italian and Spanish, and is available for download at the project website <http://brighterfutureproject.eu/outputs> as well as through the UAB's digital document depository <https://ddd.uab.cat/record/243413>.

The Brighter Future project will now turn its attention to developing a training module for undergraduate and master's-level students of education. The team is currently engaged in the first step of collecting impressions from children who have been in care and adoptive families regarding their experiences with educational institutions, as well as from primary and secondary education professionals. The final product will produce an analysis of the needs of such children as well as the professional competencies that are essential to making centers of education welcoming and safe places for all students, regardless of their life trajectories and family situations. After completing the training module, the Brighter Future team will transform these identified competencies into a training curriculum that will be made available to faculties of university-level education programs as well as in the form of continuing education.

The Brighter Future team is made up of seven organizations from four countries: the government of Turin and the University of Verona in Italy; Pharos, a nongovernmental organization and the University of Groningen in the Netherlands; PAC-UK in the United Kingdom; and Acogimiento CORA and the Autonomous University of Barcelona in Spain.

For more information about Brighter Future, contact PAC-UK via phone (0113 264 6837), email advice@pac-uk.org or web www.pac-uk.org.

Notes:

- Brighter Future is financed by the European Union's Erasmus+ program. The contents of this press release and the handbook to which it refers are the exclusive responsibility of the authors. Neither the European Commission, nor the Spanish Service for the Internationalization of Education (SEPIE) are responsible for any use that is made of the information contained therein.