

CAMPUS HANDBOEK

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# Interpreter- mediated Child Interviews

TOOLS FOR  
INTERPROFESSIONAL TRAINING



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This publication has been produced with the financial support of the Justice Programme of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the CO-Minor-IN/QUEST II consortium and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.

D/2018/45/409 – ISBN 978 94 014 5500 8 – NUR 630

Cover design: Studio Lannoo | Keppie & Keppie

Cover illustration: logo of the CO-Minor-IN/QUEST II project | Vintage Productions

Interior design: Wendy De Haes

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LannooCampus Publishers  
Erasme Ruelensvest 179 box 101  
3001 Leuven  
Belgium  
[www.lannoocampus.be](http://www.lannoocampus.be)

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# 1

## Background of the Training Manual

- 1 What the Training Manual is about
- 2 Reason behind and goals of the training
- 3 Key concepts
- 4 Necessary steps before organising the training

# 2

## The Training Manual in Practice

# 3

## Toolkits and Supporting Documents



# 1

## BACKGROUND OF THE TRAINING MANUAL

*Interpreter-mediated child interviews* is published in five languages. Purchase of this English manual also includes access to a Dutch, French, Italian and Hungarian digital version of the text. These versions are available for download at the web page of the book on <http://www.lannoocampus.be>. The book's web page can easily be found by typing the name of the book in the search box.

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# 1 WHAT THE TRAINING MANUAL IS ABOUT

## 1.1 HOW TO USE THE MANUAL

This manual contains information and ideas for trainers/facilitators of the CO-Minor training. The CO-Minor training targets professionals who already have experience in interviewing minors. It should be stressed that the training is not suitable to teach professionals on how to question minors. The manual consists of two main parts.

### **Introduction (Part 1)**

The Introductory section (Part 1) offers a brief summary of the key concepts related to interpretation, children, and questioning for the trainers' reference throughout the training. It gives an overview of the most elementary issues regarding interpreter-mediated questioning of minors, from different professional points of view. First, the legal background will briefly be discussed, then the psychologist's view on the needs and rights of minors is presented. Finally, the needs of the various professionals involved in interpreter-mediated child interviewing will be listed, e.g. legal professionals, police, forensic psychologists and legal interpreters.

## Facilitator's guidelines (Part 2)

Part 2 presents detailed facilitator's guidelines with the principles behind the CO-Minor training and steps to follow when planning and carrying out a workshop.

Part 2 is organised like a training course. The topic sections are roughly in the order they should be used, but we have not set them out as a pre-designed course. By selecting the topics (training modules) you need, you should be able to run a range of different courses appropriate to the needs of your group.

The manual always indicates how the activity/exercise has been or should be used and sometimes has suggestions for ways you might tailor the training.

The CO-Minor training is versatile and flexible, leaving room for use of your own professional and creative skill.

## 1.2 THE CO-MINOR-IN/QUEST PROJECTS

When minors come into contact with public services, various regulations and guidelines stipulate how to interact with under 18-year-olds in a safe and child-friendly environment. More specifically for the justice system, these basic principles are laid down in European Directives (2012/29/EU, 2016/800), the Council of Europe Guidelines on child-friendly justice (2011) and the UN Guidelines on Justice in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (adopted through ECOSOC Resolution 2005/20).

Institutions and professionals having to implement these practices, however, have to face an additional challenge: dealing with an ever more frequent language barrier. Parents travel abroad with their children, either for a holiday or because they intend to settle in a foreign country on a temporary or permanent basis. Entire families are forced to flee from war, conflict, and persecution to seek asylum in another country. Among

these refugees, there are also thousands of unaccompanied minors, traveling without parents or family members, considered to be at particular risk of abuse and exploitation.<sup>1</sup> This fast-growing international mobility and migration results in an increased likelihood of being confronted with non-native children in interview settings. Minors who come into contact with public services are not always sufficiently familiar with the language of the host country, which raises the need for linguistic support.

The CO-Minor-IN/QUEST projects examine how to optimize this type of support in legal contexts, more specifically in pre-trial settings. At this stage of the criminal procedure, in particular, allowing children to give their account of the facts in a language they are most comfortable with is of major importance for the process of truth finding and for safeguarding the best interests of the child. As the project's full name "Cooperation in interpreter-mediated questioning of minors" suggests, successful communication with foreign-speaking children is not the exclusive responsibility of the interpreter. Much also depends on the interview team as a whole and their disposition to work together in order to protect the well-being of the child interviewee.

## **CO-Minor-IN/QUEST I**

From 2013 to 2014 the first part of the CO-Minor project (JUST/2011/JPEN/AG/2961) aimed at mapping the current practices in interpreter-mediated child interviewing, with specific attention to the needs of the various practitioners involved. Through an online survey, the project consortium collected the opinion of these professionals, mainly in the partner countries (Belgium, France, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) and to a lesser extent various other countries. Separate questionnaires targeted respondents from the following groups:

police and legal actors (e.g. youth judges and lawyers), spoken and signed language interpreters, psychologists, and child support workers. The survey analysis identified a number of needs with regard to interpreter-mediated questioning of minors (ImQM): the need for more information, better knowledge, and awareness about roles and role boundaries, more trust, the necessity of briefing, debriefing, and teamwork.<sup>2</sup>

### **Roles and role boundaries**

Interpreters indicated, for instance, that they would like to gain more insight into specific interviewing techniques and protocols for children: “It would be wonderful to have some kind of seminar or workshop to sketch out the main points of training which police officers and other professionals receive when dealing with minors. I have never had any.” The remaining professionals, in turn, also wish to receive more information on how to work with interpreters.

Several narratives of the CO-Minor I survey illustrate that the interpreter’s role is not entirely clear, particularly to legal professionals: “The interpreter must translate literally what I say and what the minor says without ‘interpretation’”. Also, the answers of the interpreters regularly point to role boundary confusion: “Sometimes it is appropriate for the interpreter to adopt a warm-hearted attitude when this facilitates communication. Adopting a detached attitude, on the other hand, might seem the right thing to do for an interpreter, but it makes it more difficult for the children.” Interpreters and other professionals should, therefore, have the opportunity to discuss mutual expectations, as well as to make clear agreements about role and responsibilities, before working together in a highly-specialized (and sensitive) setting such as a child interview.

### **Trust**

A shared understanding of each other’s professional reference points may contribute to greater trust between the different actors involved.

For legal professionals, in particular, it is important to remain in charge of the interview. They sometimes fear losing this control because of the interpreter: “When asking children and young people questions, it is essential that non-leading questions are asked and it is impossible to know that the questions are put to the child in exactly the way they were asked”. The need for trust also manifests itself on a second level, i.e. between the child and the professionals present during the interview. Ideally, the rapport building happens between the child and the interviewer, but what if the child clearly puts more trust in the interpreter?

### **Briefing and debriefing**

This is where the necessity of briefing and debriefing comes into play. In practice, however, both are hardly used. Yet several respondents acknowledge the importance of a proper, detailed briefing about interviewing techniques, the case, background of the child, etc. and ask to allow for enough time to discuss these issues with the other professionals involved. They would like to have “a preliminary preparation both of the interpreter and other professionals: mutual understanding, situation/background of the minor, agreements on how to conduct the interview and to achieve its goals, as well as a good debriefing after the interview.”

### **Teamwork**

In addition to briefing and debriefing, teamwork was also put forward as a prerequisite for a successful interview, although not only for interview situations with sign language users: “Collaboration in a team when questioning Deaf minors is essential in my opinion”. A possible solution that was suggested is a ‘mini-équipe’, with all different professionals cooperating closely together before, during and after the interview.

The results of the CO-Minor survey clearly show that all professionals involved in child interviewing report difficulties in working together during interpreter-mediated interviews. It is beyond doubt that this in-

adequate cooperation (due also to limited knowledge about each other's professional norms of action and behavior) has an impact on child interviewees. Thanks to a joint training, each participant would know more about the expectations and professional requirements of the others and would better understand how to collaborate effectively to protect vulnerable minors.

## **CO-Minor-IN/QUEST II**

One of the main objectives of the follow-up project CO-Minor-IN/QUEST II (JUST/2015/JTRA/AG/EJTR/8678) thus consists in developing a joint interprofessional training for interpreter-mediated child interviews. The outcomes hereof are embodied in this manual.

### **Focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with minors**

Before setting up the joint training, the project consortium tested the conclusions of the previous project (i.e. the large-scale online survey) through additional qualitative research by means of focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews held in all four partner countries (Belgium, France, Hungary, and Italy). In doing this, the project partners not only wished to carry out more in-depth research on the specific needs of professionals with regard to training but also wanted to add a unique and previously untapped perspective by listening to the opinion of the children themselves.

The semi-structured interviews included non-native children (i.e. children who do not speak/understand the language of the interviewer) and were held in an experimental setting, to determine what the effect of the interpreter is as an extra dimension to the already complex interview situation. The focus group discussions were intended to bring together professionals of all domains involved in interpreter-mediated question-



ing of minors: interpreters, different legal actors (youth judges, youth lawyers, police officers, child rights experts, etc.), forensic psychologists and child support workers. Participants had the opportunity to explain what their specific needs are and how those could be integrated in an applicable joint training material.

The outcomes of the focus groups confirmed the previously identified need for a joint training involving the various professional groups, offering each of them the opportunity to exchange information about their way of working (e.g. interview structures, interpreting techniques, communication skills, etc.) and to exchange expectations.

### **Training module**

In June 2017 the very first joint training design was tested in Belgium, leaving ample room for discussion and including both informative parts and role plays, in line with the suggestions resulting from the focus groups. Eight persons from the various professional fields (justice and police, interpreting, psychology and child protection) actively participated in the Belgian pilot training. The majority of the selected participants acted as coordinator or trainer within their organisation. Thanks to two data collection toolkits, the training facilitators could get a clear picture of the participants' experience and expectations beforehand, and better tailor the content of the activities to the target group. After the pilot workshop, the content of the training was revised, taking into account the feedback of the participants, external observers and project partners. The final design for the interprofessional training of trainers is presented in detail in the present manual. It contains valuable guidelines for experienced trainers who would like to implement a similar joint training on interpreter-mediated child interviews themselves. To further support the trainers and trainees, the CO-Minor consortium has set up a collection of additional resources with materials and links to useful reference works on ImQM, which will gradually be expanded (cf. further reading

section in this volume) where trainers and trainees will be able to consult extra reading material before and after their training.

In addition, the manual is complemented by a training video for all professionals involved in the interpreter-mediated questioning of minors.<sup>3</sup> The video helps viewers to understand and learn more about ImQM. Finally, the consortium has also developed two animation movies for children: one for the age of 3 to 6, and another for minors older than 6.<sup>4</sup> The animation movies mainly aim at awareness raising and capacity building. By focusing on the role of the interpreter, each movie attempts to clarify for the children who the interpreter is and what s/he does. It not only tries to counter misconceptions about the interpreter's function but also wishes to encourage children to simply tell or signal when they have a problem or have not understood something in an interpreted encounter.

Even though the two CO-Minor projects and their deliverables primarily focus on criminal proceedings, and pre-trial settings in particular, many of the research output can also be of use for other contexts where interpreter-mediated child interviews are part of the everyday professional practice: youth protection services, civil proceedings, as well as administrative proceedings related to asylum and immigration. This manual will hopefully prove to be a valuable aid for trainers and practitioners active in the entire range of ImQM settings.