

**ADVISORY COUNCIL ON YOUTH**

20 June 2017

On World Refugee Day, the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe welcomes the Council of Europe's Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe whilst emphasising the importance of supporting young people's transition to adulthood and protecting their human rights past their 18th birthday.

The Council of Europe's Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe (2017-2019) was adopted by the Committee of Ministers during their meeting in Nicosia, Cyprus on 19 May 2017. The three pillars of the Action Plan aim to ensure children's access to rights and child-friendly procedures; provide effective protection of children; and enhance the integration of children who will remain in Europe. The Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) welcomes the important steps that are being taken to safeguard the well-being of child refugees around Europe. They are consistent with the principle that, in the context of migration, children should be considered first and foremost as children, as per Resolution 1996 (2004) and Resolution 2136 (2016) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

At the same time, as the CCJ celebrates the initiatives that have been made to ensure the safety of child refugees, we call for more action to protect young adults after their 18th birthday.

The Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) of the Council of Europe held a debate on the integration of young migrants and refugees in October 2016. There, a young refugee described his 18th birthday as the most dreaded day of his life. This is the case for many other young refugees, in particular those who arrive unaccompanied. This is because this is the day when they no longer receive any social protection or support from the government, but become fully self-dependant overnight.

The transition from childhood to adolescence and finally to adulthood is challenging for most individuals, however it can be much more difficult and traumatic for young migrants and refugees. The CCJ therefore calls for further action from the Council of Europe, other international organisations, governments and national organisations to ensure an easier transition to adulthood, thanks to improved mechanisms for social integration, opportunities for education and work, self-development processes and other general support and protection. These young people need these improved mechanisms in order to feel safe and to have opportunities to reach their full potential.

We also underline the importance of ensuring young refugees can participate in the procedures to develop these processes and the added value their experiences can bring to the discussions. We believe this to be essential for finding a sustainable solution for their future.

The opinions expressed in this letter and the enclosed statement are those of the Advisory Council on Youth and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Council of Europe.