

European day to end child sex abuse: irregular migrant children are among the most vulnerable, says Council of Europe's Anti-racism Commission

Strasbourg, 14.11.2016 - 18 November will mark European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) recently adopted its General Policy Recommendation (GPR) No. 16 on safeguarding irregularly present migrants from discrimination. This instrument has a strong focus on protecting children whose immigration status is irregular. Children are generally recognised as a vulnerable group; migrant children are especially vulnerable, and *irregular* migrant children are among the most vulnerable of all, not least because they are often unaccompanied.

The GPR recalls states' obligation to respect children's rights and their best interests, regardless of immigration status. Specifically, it calls on member states to respect the right to family life: ensuring that children remain with their families reduces their exposure to strangers and to the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. The GPR recommends access to paediatric care for all irregularly present migrant children; such health care is vital to detect sexual abuse and prevent further exploitation. Access to housing also has major implications for children's safety and the GPR calls upon states to ensure adequate shelter to irregularly present migrant children and their families.

ECRI strongly supports the goals of European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. Its GPR No. 16 - as an important new tool to prevent situations conducive to sex abuse of irregular migrant children - can help to achieve those goals.

ECRI is a human rights body of the Council of Europe, composed of independent experts, which monitors problems of racism, xenophobia, antisemitism, intolerance and discrimination on grounds such as "race", national/ethnic origin, colour, citizenship, religion and language (racial discrimination); it prepares reports and issues recommendations to member States.

For more information on ECRI: www.coe.int/ecri