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“Refugee and migrant children in Europe” –
Final report on the implementation of the Action Plan (2017-2019)

Executive summary

This document provides a final overview of the implementation of the Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe (2017-2019), taking stock of achievements since its adoption by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe at its 127th meeting in Nicosia (Cyprus) on 19 May 2017.

The implementation of the Action Plan has been a priority area for the Organisation and has proven its pertinence in addressing the challenges documented throughout Europe. The objectives of the Action Plan have been largely attained with achievements such as Committee of Ministers' recommendations, practical guidance and dissemination of good practices. In addition to its envisaged activities, it has triggered the development and implementation of new courses and additional co-operation activities. For policy-makers, the results of the Action Plan provide guidance and examples on how to achieve the effective protection of refugee and migrant children. The outputs of the Action Plan enable professionals to use a child-friendly approach in their migration-related work involving children and help them to acquire an in-depth understanding of the multi-disciplinary measures required for addressing the situation of children in migration.

Its transversal approach – secured by the co-ordinating role of the Special Representative on Migration and Refugees – has streamlined the efforts of the Organisation and has fostered in-house co-operation between 19 divisions and entities for a solid and coherent response aimed at protecting children in migration. The Action Plan initiatives have also supported member states in addressing the recommendations of monitoring bodies and fact-finding mission reports of the Special Representative. The Action Plan has been a useful communication tool to highlight the role of the Council of Europe in promoting human rights in the context of migration. The initiatives undertaken contribute to the objectives of the UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the UN Global Compact on Refugees. They also indirectly contribute to the realisation of several of the European Commission's goals in the Communication on the protection of children in migration. The implementation of the Action Plan has demonstrated examples of thematic co-operation with other international partners. These need to be further pursued and reinforced.

The support provided through voluntary contributions made by member states was essential to continue the Action Plan. Its streamlining method enabled the development of cost-effective projects, to contribute to the work involving children affected by migration.

The Action Plan has created greater awareness and pooled resources on the existing standards, challenges and promising practices. To make a difference on the ground, more support should be given to their implementation, dissemination as well as testing new approaches. This final document aims to assist the Committee of Ministers' Deputies in their discussions on the possible way forward and on future action in this field.

1. INTRODUCTION

On 19 May 2017, at its 127th session, the Committee of Ministers adopted the Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe (2017-2019). In accordance with the Action Plan itself, the Committee of Ministers requested regular updates on the progress and results of the Action Plan through interim and final reports. Following the interim report in 2018,¹ this document is the final report, which takes stock of achievements and lessons learned in the implementation of the Action Plan since its adoption (May 2017-December 2019).

As noted in the Action Plan itself, the co-ordination of the implementation, internally and with external partners, was ensured by the Secretary General's Special Representative on Migration and Refugees, mandate exercised by Ambassador Tomáš Boček until 30 April 2019 and held by Ambassador Drahošlav Štefánek since 15 January 2020.

The structure of this report is the same as the interim report and not only highlights the achievements of the Action Plan but also the elements of co-ordination and complementarity emphasised by the Action Plan itself. This report analyses the added value of the transversal and co-ordinated approach of the implementation of the Action Plan (section 2) and the concrete results of the Action Plan according to its main objectives (section 3). It shows the complementarity of the Action Plan in line with other activities undertaken by the Organisation (section 4) as well as the strategic partnerships and complementarity with external actors (section 5). After a brief financial overview (section 6), the report summarises the lessons learned and makes suggestions for future strategies and action (section 7). Table 1 provides detailed information and links to all outputs mentioned in section 3 of the report.

2. PROTECTION OF REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CHILDREN – PRIORITY ACTION FOR THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

2.1. A coherent and transversal approach

The Action Plan was developed as an Organisation-wide response to the challenges faced by Council of Europe member states in ensuring the protection of refugee and migrant children in Europe. In March 2016, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe proposed a list of immediate and priority actions to be adopted by member states and the Organisation to better ensure the safety and proper treatment of migrant and asylum-seeking children entering Europe, with a special focus on those who are unaccompanied or separated.² At the same time, the Secretary General appointed Ambassador Tomáš Boček as his Special Representative on Migration and Refugees, with the protection of refugee and migrant children as one of the key priorities for his mandate. The findings and recommendations of the Special Representative's country mission reports and his Thematic Report on refugee and migrant children (22 March 2017) re-confirmed the need for concerted action.

¹ Refugee and migrant children in Europe - Progress in implementation of the Action Plan (2017-2019), 26 September 2018, [SG/Inf\(2018\)28](#).

² Protecting children affected by the refugee crisis: A shared responsibility, Secretary General's proposals for priority actions, 4 March 2016, [SG/Inf\(2016\)9](#).

The Action Plan was developed in close co-operation with various entities of the Council of Europe and through active dialogue with member states. It was designed as the Organisation's coherent response to support its member states in addressing the situation of refugee and migrant children in Europe. Its successful implementation also relies on the expertise and substantive activities of 19 different bodies and divisions within the Organisation.³ The Special Representative has co-ordinated the overall implementation of the Action Plan and has promoted the Action Plan outside the Organisation, including for the purpose of fundraising for its implementation and to highlight complementarity with instruments of other stakeholders.

The transversal approach has secured a comprehensive and co-ordinated response of the Organisation to the challenges faced by member states. The exchange of valuable in-house expertise and experience has been instrumental to achieving high quality outputs. For example, work on alternatives to immigration detention has relied on close co-operation between the Secretariat of the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH), the European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ), the Children's Rights Division, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT), the Registry of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and the Department for the Execution of Judgments of the ECHR. The preparation of the HELP⁴ training courses has drawn on expertise from the teams of the Human Rights Policy and Co-operation Department, Commissioner for Human Rights, the Social Charter Division and the Children's Rights Division.

The Action Plan initiatives also support member states in addressing the recommendations made by relevant monitoring mechanisms and the fact-finding mission reports of the Special Representative. The Action Plan activities are complementary to the Council of Europe's Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2016-2021) and to its Strategy on Gender Equality (2018-2023), as well as the Council of Europe's Action Plan on Building Inclusive Societies (2016-2019) and the Action Plan on the fight against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism (2015-2017)⁵. Several initiatives to assist the integration of children who will remain in Europe were supported jointly with the Action Plan on Building Inclusive Societies. More information on other activities carried out by the Organisation in the field of children in migration, outside the framework of the Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children, is available in Section 4.

³ Office of the SRSG on migration and refugees, Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), Lanzarote Committee, European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT), Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH), European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ), European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC), Ad hoc Committee for the Rights of the Child (CAHENF), Joint Council of Youth (CMJ), Steering Committee for Education Policy and Practice (CDPPE), Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Children's Rights Division, the Council of Europe Programme on Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP), Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS), the Media and Internet Division, Youth Department, Education Department, Human Rights Policy and Co-operation Department.

⁴ HELP is the Council of Europe Programme on Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals.

⁵ See [SG/Inf\(2018\)7](#) and [SG/Inf\(2019\)37](#) for the final reports on the Action Plan on the fight against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism and on the Action Plan on Building Inclusive Societies respectively.

2.2. Visibility of the Council of Europe action on refugee and migrant children

The launch of the Action Plan during the 127th session of the Committee of Ministers in Nicosia, Cyprus, demonstrated the political will to protect refugee and migrant children. The current Secretary General has confirmed the need to focus on the protection of refugee and migrant children, for which the Action Plan was put in place.⁶

Through the implementation of the Action Plan, the Council of Europe has gained considerable visibility in the field of migration thanks to a comprehensive communication strategy. This approach has resulted in a clear message about the Council of Europe's activities in the field which are part of a transversal non-fragmented programme.

Communication efforts were undertaken by each entity involved in the implementation process, as well as by the Special Representative and his office. The Action Plan attracted international attention through media coverage by, among others, *ANSA, EFE, Reuters, Athens News Agency, Xinhua, ITAR-TASS, La Vanguardia, France Bleu, Radio Prague, Irish Times, CTK, Prague Daily Monitor, Crotone informa, L'Orient Le Jour, Danas, Zougla, InfoMigrants* and *Reliefweb*.

The activities were publicised through the Council of Europe Migration Newsletter, presentations at various events, promotional videos and communications on the Council of Europe web portal and on the website of the Special Representative and social media. Over ten promotional videos were produced to promote, for example, the launch of the HELP training course on refugee and migrant children, the Conferences on effective alternatives to the detention of migrants, the projects on the European Qualification Passports for Refugees, the language toolkit for adult refugees and the handbook on child-friendly migration-related information.

Some 25 news items highlighting the Action Plan and its activities carried out by all entities concerned were published on the Council of Europe's website. The Migration Newsletter, produced by the office of the Special Representative, featured over 35 articles reflecting information about the Action Plan and its implementation from various angles.⁷

On 20 June 2018, on the occasion of World Refugee Day, the Special Representative launched a dedicated webpage⁸ to provide real time follow-up on the progress of the Action Plan's implementation. Its user-friendly platform provides access to all resources resulting from Action Plan initiatives. The Action Plan and its activities has equally attracted many discussions on social media through tweets, Facebook posts and videos produced for this purpose. Some 60 tweets generated almost 350,000 impressions and 4,000 engagements on the topic. On Facebook nearly 40 postings about the Action Plan resulted in some 3,000 engagements and 30,000 impressions.

The Special Representative and his office have raised awareness about the Action Plan and its results in presentations outside the Council of Europe, including written and oral contributions to

⁶ Council of Europe, "Child-friendly approaches in the area of migration: standards, guidance and current practices", 2019.

⁷ The monthly newsletter is published on the Special Representative's website and distributed by e-mail to more than 2,000 specific subscribers from the target group, such as legal professionals, NGOs, international organisations, asylum and migration staff, academia and international partners.

⁸ www.coe.int/action-plan-child-refugee

the UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the UN Global Compact on Refugees, the UN Global Study on Detention of Children, and the 11th European Forum on the Rights of the Child. The office of the Special Representative also benefitted from international co-operation on communications level with partners, such as the European Commission and the European Migration Network (Conference on Effective Alternatives to the Detention of Migrants), the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) when co-organising the Council of Europe-UNHCR seminar on protecting refugee and migrant children in Portugal (Lisbon), the Prague International Conference (Committee of Ministers' Chairmanship) and Council of Europe Development Bank events in Nuremberg, Melilla and Sarajevo.

The Action Plan brochures, available in English, French, German, Italian and Turkish, have been distributed to permanent representations of Council of Europe member and observer states, to different counterparts working in the field of migration and refugees, to participants during various events related to the Action Plan and migration, and to interested visitors.

3. IMPLEMENTATION: PROGRESS AND RESULTS

The Action Plan has three pillars that correspond to the main objectives decided by the member states: to ensure children's access to their rights and child-friendly procedures, to provide effective protection from different forms of violence and to enhance their integration. Following the structure of the above-mentioned three pillars, this section presents under the relevant headings the level of implementation and the state of play of all activities carried out in 2017-2019 (see Table 1 for detailed information and links to all outputs mentioned in this section).

The Action Plan has largely reached the established objectives, confirming the capacity of the Organisation and its member states to co-operate efficiently and to undertake collective efforts. At the same time, several new activities have been introduced in specific areas such as alternatives to immigration detention, education and social inclusion.

Following the methodology requirements of the Action Plan, civil society was an important stakeholder in the implementation, as many of the implementation projects involved civil society organisations to further develop and implement the outputs of the Action Plan.

Through the Action Plan, the Council of Europe promoted its gender-sensitive approach, as girls are particularly vulnerable to the risk of abuse, exploitation and harmful practices. Additional details on the gender dimension of the Council of Europe work on the protection of refugee and migrant children are reflected in section 4.

3.1. Ensuring access to rights and child-friendly procedures

All activities under the first pillar of the Action Plan were implemented. The outputs enable authorities and professionals in member states to use a child-friendly approach when interacting with children throughout migration and asylum processes, to help professionals acquire in-depth understanding about the multi-disciplinary measures required for the protection of refugee and migrant children and to provide policy-makers with examples of practices to facilitate access to rights and avoid statelessness among refugee and migrant children.

a. Ensure access to child-friendly information and procedures

A roundtable on child-friendly information for children in migration, organised on 29-30 November 2017 by the Children’s Rights Division, explored the notion of child-friendly information and facilitated the exchange of examples of good and promising practices about how to communicate with children in the context of migration. As a direct follow-up to this roundtable, the “**Handbook for frontline professionals on how to convey child-friendly information to children in migration**” was launched on 18 December 2018. The handbook is aimed at all professionals and volunteers working with children in migration and contains examples of promising practice with recommendations from children on how to improve communication with them. It addresses the lack of accurate, trustworthy and accessible information, providing guidance on how to inform children throughout their journey, from arrival in Europe to finding a durable solution. Through its practical applications, professionals are encouraged to think critically about how they communicate with children and empower them to access their rights through child-friendly information. The handbook is currently available in English, French and Spanish. Based on the handbook, specific elements for the provision of child-friendly information in the context of Portuguese national age-assessment procedures were discussed in Lisbon and agreed upon. As a result, a country-specific brochure was published.

In addition, the Special Representative on Migration and Refugees developed **a compilation of promising practices on migration-related child-friendly procedures**: “Promoting child-friendly approaches in the area of migration: standards, guidance and current practices”. The compilation, published and launched in December 2019, brings together international and European standards on child-friendly processes in the context of migration with illustrations from practice of the kind of initiatives, programmes and procedures that serve to implement these standards. Structured in four comprehensive themes, the review covers the procedures concerning entrance and identification, child-friendly asylum and migration processes, special protection measures, and durable solutions. Research underpinning this compilation confirms the gap between the standards set by the various instruments and their implementation. The publication was officially launched by the office of the Special Representative on 9 December 2019 in Belgrade, Serbia, jointly with UNICEF. The launch event brought together government authorities, representatives of international organisations, civil society and diplomatic missions and discussed how to promote child-friendly approaches in the context of migration. Discussions are pending concerning the further dissemination of the publication in various events.

b. Ensure that every child has a nationality

The European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ) decided at its plenary meeting, on 14-16 November 2018, to carry out, **a preliminary review of protocols and procedures** used by member states to determine and resolve cases of statelessness, those of migrant children. As a preliminary step to this review, an ad hoc meeting of CDCJ members, national experts and key stakeholders, including the UNHCR, the European Network on Statelessness, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and the European Migration Network, took place on 11-12 June 2019. The participants exchanged views and experiences on national practices, recent gaps or new challenges and practical difficulties encountered by both national authorities and stateless persons. The meeting also discussed how the CDCJ can provide, in the course of

the next biennium (2020-2021), its expertise and contribute to the ongoing efforts undertaken by member states and other organisations working in this field. The outcome of the group's work was reflected in a detailed analysis, which was presented and examined by the CDCJ at its 94th plenary meeting (13-15 November 2019). At this meeting, the CDCJ agreed to organise in 2020-2021 an international conference on statelessness to raise awareness and promote implementation of the Council of Europe standards in the field, and based on the conclusions of the conference, to hold a series of targeted technical meetings on statelessness.⁹

c. Training course on refugee and migrant children

The HELP Programme launched the new **course on refugee and migrant children**, developed in co-operation with the UNHCR, in June 2018. The course covers the international legal framework, child-friendly procedures, alternatives to detention, family reunification, social rights and integration, guardianship, and age assessment. The course was developed on the basis of the HELP e-learning methodology and is linked to the HELP/UNHCR course on asylum and the HELP course on child-friendly justice.¹⁰ The course represents the support needed for the national implementation of guidelines and knowledge developed under the umbrella of all three pillars of the Action Plan.

Before the completion of the course, a training of trainers combining technical as well as content learning was organised by the Human Rights National Implementation Division in Strasbourg on 24-25 May 2018. Since June 2018 the course has been officially launched in the United Kingdom, Spain, Greece, France, Italy and Turkey. The main target group being lawyers but in Spain and Italy the training course was also launched for judges. National launch events were organised with the support of the UNHCR and national partners like the Spanish Bar Association, the Spanish Judicial Council, the Spanish Judiciary School, the Athens Bar Association, the French Council of Bar Associations, the Delegation of French Bar Associations, the Italian School of Magistrates, the Italian National Bar Council, and the Istanbul Bar Association. A launch in these countries for other groups of legal professionals will be explored in 2020. National adaptations and additional language versions in Albanian, Arabic, Azerbaijani, Bulgarian, Croatian, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Spanish and Turkish have been added to the HELP platform. Further translations will be gradually made available on the same online platform. Additional translations could also be envisaged. Legal professionals outlined the comprehensive approach of the course modules, providing knowledge and skills necessary to protect the human rights of refugee and migrant children. Based on the interest expressed and on appropriate support, its launch in new jurisdictions will also remain on the HELP agenda.

HELP also developed in 2019 **new e-learning courses on CPT standards**, including a module on immigration detention, and on **alternatives to immigration detention** (see more in section 3.2.d below).

⁹ See also the Terms of Reference of the CDCJ as approved by the Deputies, CM(2019)131-addfinal.

¹⁰ All courses are publicly accessible on the HELP e-learning platform <http://help.elearning.ext.coe.int/>

3.2. Providing effective protection

The results of the multi-disciplinary activities carried out under the second pillar of the Action Plan ensured new guidelines and guidance, with promising practices and policy advice already contributing to a more effective implementation of human rights in this area.

a. New guidelines regarding effective guardianship and age assessment

Irrespective of the differences in guardianship systems across the member states, their effectiveness is essential to securing that children's rights are upheld and refugee and migrant children can effectively access legal procedures. The use of age-assessment procedures can and should be carried out in a human rights compliant way to mitigate the potentially detrimental impact of age assessment on the child's physical and mental health. To carry out the mandate entrusted by the Committee of Ministers in respect of developing guidelines in the areas of guardianship and age assessment, the Ad hoc Committee for the Rights of the Child (CAHENF) set up a Drafting Group of Experts on Children's Rights and Safeguards in the context of migration (CAHENF-Safeguards). In 2018-2019, the CAHENF, with the support of its drafting group, has developed the draft texts of both sets of guidelines.

On 11 December 2019, the Committee of Ministers' Deputies adopted **Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)11 to member states on effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in the context of migration**. The text outlines key principles with guidelines to translate general provisions into practical legal, policy, institutional and resources arrangements able to secure effective protection for children through guardianship. These concern the appointment of guardians, their role, responsibilities and tasks, access to information and child-friendly complaints mechanisms, institutional measures and co-ordination at national level as well as international co-operation. This recommendation is the first soft law instrument setting out clear standards for effective guardianship. It is intended to guide and support Council of Europe member states in their processes aimed at reinforcing the protection of refugee and migrant children, while taking into consideration the diversity of guardianship models in member states. The text can also serve as inspiration for countries outside Europe.

After significant research and consultations, the CAHENF discussed in November 2019 a number of outstanding issues on the text of the draft recommendation on Human Rights Principles and Implementing Guidelines on age assessment for children in migration, concluding that further consultations are required before submitting the text for consideration and approval to the Committee of Ministers. The draft guidelines draw on the survey on age-assessment procedures in Council of Europe member states, conducted in 2017. The text also builds on consultations with children who have experienced age assessment in the context of migration, carried out in 2019 in Portugal, Greece, Germany and Cyprus. The children recognised the positive efforts of many professionals as well as the need to have persons of trust to rely on for explanations and protection. These consultations also revealed that children often did not know their rights, experienced anxiety as their lives were put on hold while their age was determined; the medical examination part was a particularly stressful moment.

Follow-up measures on guardianship and age assessment will be planned in the course of 2020.¹¹

b. Appropriate shelter for children and their families

On 27-30 November 2018, the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) endorsed the proposal to explore in its future work **reception conditions for refugee and migrant children**, once the handbook on alternatives to immigration detention is concluded. The CDDH decided on 18-21 June 2019 to focus particularly on family-based care arrangements for unaccompanied and separated children. It was agreed to consider both the challenges and good practices in the field, safeguards for existing arrangements, as well as possible support for foster placement and families. On 26-29 November 2019, the CDDH concluded that the outcomes should be concise and accessible, with the completion of the new work on family-based care foreseen by the end of 2020.¹²

c. Assistance in restoring family links and reunification, in accordance with existing norms

The Special Representative on Migration and Refugees prepared in 2018-2019 a handbook on standards and good practices to restore family links and reunify refugee and migrant children with their families. The **handbook “Family reunification for refugee and migrant children: standards and promising practices”**, completed in November 2019, pending publication in early 2020, presents an overview of principles of human rights, children’s rights and refugee law relevant to family reunification, as well as a series of key examples of noteworthy practices grouped thematically. The selected practices focus on making sure beneficiaries understand the process and receive legal counselling and advice, as well as administrative and practical support in dealing with family reunification. Certain initiatives aim to increase the capacity of service providers, such as guardianship services or legal aid providers, to respond to the increased requests for supporting beneficiaries of family reunification. The selected examples reiterate the need to ensure a multi-disciplinary approach to assessing the case of children, through protocols of co-operation or guidance between professionals, to improve cross border co-operation, to support good case management through more support services for potential beneficiaries and to take a holistic view of the process, including support measures after reunification. Discussions are pending concerning the further dissemination of the publication in various events.

d. Avoid resorting to deprivation of liberty on the grounds of migration status

This aim is pursued by promoting alternatives to immigration detention and CPT standards on immigration detention, as well as by raising awareness about the negative impact of detention on children and by enhancing the monitoring of places where children could be detained.

Alternatives to immigration detention

On 25-26 September 2017, the Czech Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe hosted the **Conference “Immigration Detention of Children: Coming to a Close?”**. This event offered a platform for exchange across diverse sectors and concluded that alternatives

¹¹ See also the Terms of Reference of the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) as approved by the Committee of Ministers’ Deputies, CM(2019)131-addfinal.

¹² See also the Terms of Reference of the CDDH as approved by the Committee of Ministers’ Deputies, CM(2019)131-addfinal.

to immigration detention are not only necessary where children are concerned but can be an effective and pragmatic policy of migration management while upholding the best interests of the child. The conclusions of the Conference contribute to the ongoing work of the Council of Europe in this field.

In January 2018, the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) published its “**Analysis of the legal and practical aspects of effective alternatives to detention in the context of migration**”. The Analysis gives a coherent and detailed overview of the applicable international human rights standards in the field and identifies a range of different types of alternatives as well as essential elements that render alternatives to immigration detention effective. The Analysis also reflects on the ways in which the Council of Europe could engage in this field. Based on the insights in the Analysis, in June 2019, the CDDH adopted the “**Practical Guidance on Alternatives to Immigration Detention: Fostering Effective Results**”, which focuses on the practical implementation of alternatives by synthesising certain key principles and findings into a concise and visual guide. The guidance outlines why alternatives should be applied, what types of alternatives could be considered and how one might make them work. The aim of the guidance is to inspire and provide concrete planning steps for implementation. In addition to English and French, the guidance is also available in German, Greek, Italian, Serbian, Spanish, and Turkish. The Committee of Ministers’ Deputies took note of the guidance on 16 October 2019.

In view of the interest of stakeholders in this area, additional activities were carried out. The **International Conference on Effective Alternatives to the Detention of Migrants**, organised on 4 April 2019 by the Directorate for Human Rights and the Special Representative on Migration and Refugees, jointly with the European Commission and the European Migration Network, discussed a variety of concrete examples and practices from different corners of Europe with some 200 participants. The discussions focused, among others, on the international obligation to implement alternatives, on the practical ways in which alternatives have been rendered effective in terms of human rights, compliance with immigration procedures and cost-effectiveness, as well as potential benefits. The key findings of the Conference endorsed several insights offered in the above-mentioned Analysis. The discussions highlighted that greater dissemination of knowledge and lessons learned could better equip states to achieve success and prevent failure through practical and pragmatic approaches. To this end, concrete and collaborative pilot projects on alternative measures could be implemented in more locations based on practices discussed at the Conference.

In addition, in 2019 a new e-learning **HELP course** was developed in close co-operation with the UNHCR, dedicated to **alternatives to immigration detention**. The course covers the applicable legal standards, the various types of alternatives and the processes which are essential for them to be designed and implemented effectively. The course also outlines the benefits of alternatives to immigration detention for migrants and for member states and will be available on the HELP platform in early 2020. Other actions to promote alternatives to immigration detention include further preparation of know-how and user-friendly materials on effective alternatives to detention, capacity building among professionals, and enhancing the overall awareness of good practices and lessons learnt in effectively implementing alternatives.

CPT standards on immigration detention

On 15 March 2017, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) published a **factsheet on immigration detention** to present its standards based on hundreds of visits to places of immigration detention. The main objective of the factsheet is to achieve greater visibility of the CPT's standards in the field of immigration detention. The factsheet covers, among others, safeguards during detention, description of suitable premises, open regime, the provision of healthcare, effective monitoring and complaints mechanisms. It recalls the need for establishing meaningful alternatives to immigration detention and for making every effort to avoid resorting to the deprivation of liberty of migrant children. In addition to English and French the factsheet is now available in Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Serbian, Slovak, Spanish, Turkish, and Ukrainian. In 2019, a new HELP course on CPT standards was developed and it includes a module on standards for conditions in immigration detention.

The CPT's standards are a reference to migration-related work within the Council of Europe and are increasingly used by other actors such as the United Nations and the European Union. In some Council of Europe member states, the CPT's work on immigration detention has led to improvement in conditions or to legal amendments precluding detention of children for immigration purposes.

Monitoring places where children are deprived of their liberty as a result of immigration procedures

The Children's Rights Division and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in co-operation with Defence for Children International Belgium launched on 11 October 2017 a **Guide for Parliamentarians on monitoring places where children are deprived of their liberty** on immigration grounds. The guide, developed in the framework of the PACE Campaign to End Immigration Detention of Children, provides practical advice and checklists to enable parliamentarians to conduct visits, to interview detained children and detention staff, and to undertake effective follow-up to their visits. It is available in English, French and Arabic.

Several **training courses for ombudspersons** for children and parliamentarians took place in April and November 2017, and in March 2019. The trainings built on the methodology and guidebooks developed for professionals visiting places where children are deprived of liberty. The sessions conveyed skills for interviewing and visiting children in immigration detention and techniques for effective monitoring. The 2019 training session also included the dimension covered by the handbook on child-friendly information to children in migration. The training triggered interest from representatives of authorities involved in fulfilling the rights of the child in the framework of detention and/or migration. The UNCHR and the CPT partnered for the organisation of the training sessions. A good geographical representation was achieved with participants from 20 member states and 2 states with observer status.

To further raise awareness about the benefits of open residential centres, to learn about non-custodial good practices in care and accommodation of unaccompanied children and to build acquired skills of monitoring, members of parliaments carried visits to several facilities in Europe

and beyond (transit zones in Hungary, migration centres in Austria, refugee camp in Jordan, facilities in Greece and Cyprus).

Additional activities undertaken by the PACE in the context of migration are reflected in section 4 of this report.

e. Ensure protection from violence, including trafficking and sexual exploitation

The Action Plan aims to protect children from violence associated with smuggling, trafficking and sexual exploitation and sexual abuse through activities enabling international co-operation, ongoing country monitoring, identification and dissemination of good practices.

Preventing and suppressing the smuggling of migrants, including children

On 23 June 2017, the European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC) organised in Strasbourg **an International Conference on the smuggling of migrants** to discuss good practices and concrete measures to prevent and combat the smuggling of migrants, to develop strategies for co-operation and information exchanges, and to protect the rights of smuggled migrants. The Conference concluded that the Council of Europe mechanisms against human trafficking (GRETA), violence against women (GREVIO) and the sexual exploitation of children (the Lanzarote Committee) should continue to be supported and strengthened in order to ensure the protection of the rights of smuggled migrants. The conclusions suggested that further measures to prevent smuggling and to promote international co-operation should be explored.

As a result, the CDPC decided in December 2017 to set up **two working groups** to work on measures to prevent the smuggling of migrants and on measures to improve international co-operation respectively. The working groups' membership comprised highly qualified practitioners from member states, specialists from academia and the research community, and representatives of international partners such as EUROPOL, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Criminal Court (ICC), and the UNHCR.

The working groups held their first meetings in Paris on 20-22 June 2018. The working group on preventing measures focused on data-collection and research; awareness-raising; deterring migrant smugglers; and the synergy between smuggling of migrants and legal avenues of migration, among others. The working group on international co-operation made proposals on strengthening the exchange of information between relevant actors and on more modern and flexible measures of co-operation for the purpose of effective investigation. In November 2018, the CDPC decided to continue the work of the group on international co-operation as directly related to its field of competence.

The second meeting of the working group on international co-operation in April 2019 discussed in detail a **draft Action plan** to translate the group's observations into concrete Council of Europe action. In particular, the draft puts forward six action lines, including the setting-up of a Council of Europe Network of Prosecutors on Migrant Smuggling; the organisation of a Workshop to foster co-operation amongst source, transit and destination countries; the listing of 24/7 points of contact to facilitate first alert contact between law enforcement authorities dealing with

migrant smuggling and the creation of a Council of Europe open database containing judicial and legislative information on migrant smuggling. The draft Action Plan was examined by the CDPC at its 77th plenary meeting in December 2019 with a decision to have the text submitted for its approval in June 2020 at the next plenary meeting, after review based on consultations on national level. At the same meeting, the CDPC reconfirmed that the topic of migrant smuggling remained among its priorities for the next biennium.

Combating child trafficking

In its 6th, 7th and 8th General Reports, covering the year 2016, 2017 and 2018 respectively, the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) highlighted important gaps in the prevention of child trafficking and the identification and protection of child victims of trafficking. The risks faced by children and young people remain of concern, as child protection systems in many countries are not fit to ensure timely responses to the rights and needs of migrant and asylum-seeking children at risk.

A compendium of good practices in the fight against child trafficking has been developed based on GRETA's evaluation reports. Its publication is pending early 2020. The compendium is intended to provide support to member states in addressing gaps outlined by GRETA when it comes to the identification and assistance of victims of trafficking among migrant and refugee children and the prevention of (re)trafficking.

Child trafficking was also one of the focuses of the second evaluation round of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, carried out from 1 June 2014 to 31 December 2018. GRETA has monitored as part of this round 40 of the 47 Parties to the Convention, and the reports produced describe the current procedures for the identification of victims of trafficking among children, paying attention to unaccompanied and separated asylum-seeking children. Further, the reports contain information concerning the appointment of legal guardians and age assessment in each country. Recommendations are made by GRETA and the Committee of the Parties to the Convention. These may include taking steps to secure that unaccompanied and separated children benefit from effective care arrangements, to prevent the disappearance of unaccompanied foreign children from state care, to provide additional training to professionals working with children, or to strengthen multi-agency involvement in victim identification for all forms of exploitation. GRETA will take stock of the second evaluation round of the Convention and its next general report will contain a section summarising the main gaps and needs identified during this round.

Protecting children from sexual exploitation and abuse

Following an urgent monitoring round, on 3 March 2017 the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse ("the Lanzarote Convention and Committee") issued a **special report on "Protecting children affected by the refugee crisis from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse"**. The report highlighted situations that expose children affected by the refugee crisis to a

risk of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and recommended how to avoid such risks and protect children, those who are unaccompanied and those who go missing after arrival.¹³

Based on information provided by state parties to the Lanzarote Convention, the Lanzarote Committee adopted on 6 June 2019 **an evaluation report** of the measures taken following its five “urge” recommendations. The report concluded that 33 European states have complied with all five “urge” recommendations. The Lanzarote Committee notably recommended effectively screening all persons who by their professions have regular contact with children affected by the refugee crisis for convictions of acts of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse of children. The Lanzarote Committee has now undertaken the evaluation of its ten “consider” recommendations which refer to situations in which further improvements are necessary in law or in practice to fully comply with the Convention.

The impact of the Lanzarote Committee’s special report has been to raise awareness of the risks faced by children on the move and to reinforce their protection from sexual abuse and exploitation through concrete recommendations. In addition, the evaluation of how states implemented the recommendations yielded a selection of good practices, which can further inform exchanges of information and experiences. The Secretariat of the Lanzarote Committee is currently preparing a “checklist” to help practitioners dealing with children on the move in reception, transit and destination countries to know what the Lanzarote Convention requires states to do and/or to have in place to prevent sexual violence against children on the move; to identify and provide support to any alleged victim of such violence; and to report the suspicion of sexual violence against children on the move and prosecute the alleged offenders.

To complement the Action Plan activities, on 13-14 December 2018 the Children’s Rights Division, together with the Special Representative on Migration and Refugees, organised **an international roundtable on “Delivering real change: effectively protecting refugee and migrant children’s rights”** inviting representatives of governments and civil society to discuss among others follow-up to the recommendations of the Lanzarote Committee’s special report and of the Special Representative’s fact-finding missions. The discussions indicated several challenges faced by member states, but also a need for wider dissemination of Council of Europe work and of information of funding opportunities for co-operation projects in the area. Representatives of member states expressed interest in convening further meetings for similar meaningful discussions.

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities has developed the Pact of Towns and Regions to Stop the Sexual Violence against Children, inviting local and regional authorities to set up multi-disciplinary child protection centres. Under the Action Plan, in 2017 the Congress organised in Belgrade (Serbia) the second **seminar for local government associations** focusing on the Pact and mechanisms to protect children affected by the refugee crisis at international and national level. As of 31 December 2019, a total of 80 cities, regions, local government associations and NGOs from 24 countries have signed the Pact.

¹³ In its recommendations to the parties to the Lanzarote Convention, the Committee uses the verbs to “urge”, “consider” and “invite” to mark different levels of urgency.

3.3. Enhancing refugee and migrant children's integration

Inclusive education and active participation in society are essential for the social inclusion of refugee and migrant children and youth who are in Europe, and for this reason, constitute the third main objective of the Action Plan. The initiatives on linguistic integration, recognition of qualifications, leadership academy and integration through sport were supported jointly with the Action Plan on Building Inclusive Societies.

a. Provide education

The Action Plan promoted linguistic integration and recognition of qualifications as priorities for effective access to mainstream education and for inclusion.

Linguistic integration

In November 2017, the Education Department launched the toolkit “**Language support for refugees**” (LIAM). It offers practical and free support to NGOs and their volunteers, and to national and regional bodies involved in the provision of language support to adult refugees. It encompasses a collection of guidelines, tools and teaching material likely to respond to a range of needs, both of refugees and volunteers, and may be used for designing language courses. It is currently available in seven languages (Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Italian and Turkish). Following a call for tenders, 14 NGOs and associations around Europe were selected to raise awareness and help disseminate the toolkit through translation, training, communication and visibility initiatives.

In 2018 various **dissemination projects** were carried out at local, regional and national level in Albania, Belgium, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Serbia and the United Kingdom. Among these initiatives, a webinar training was prepared with the participation of associations from eight countries and is available for further use free of charge. In December 2018 a consultation meeting among involved NGOs discussed success stories and lessons learned and provided insights and recommendations regarding the adaptability of the toolkit. In 2019, the LIAM toolkit and methodology was used as basis for capacity-building and non-formal education implementation in four Greek refugee camps, servicing about 3,500 asylum seekers. The LIAM toolkit is used in the teaching of the Greek language to teenagers and adults, as well as in life-skills sections of the weekly educational programme. The project acts as a pilot case, potentially resulting in use of LIAM as a methodology for the national linguistic integration of the refugee and migrant population. Based on the feedback of the piloting of the existing toolkit, the development of a similar toolkit targeted specifically at a younger public will be considered for the next biennium.

In follow-up to previous surveys (2007, 2009 and 2013), the Council of Europe in co-operation with the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) conducted in 2018 the **survey “Language and Knowledge of Society Policies for Migrants: requirements and learning opportunities”**, with an extended focus on vulnerable groups, such as children, low-literate migrants, and refugees. The official results of the survey were presented on 16 October 2019 during the 4th intergovernmental conference “Achieving Equal Opportunities for All Migrants Through Learning and Assessment: Language and knowledge of society requirements for migrants in Council of Europe member states”. The event provided insight into the trends in the

integration policies in Council of Europe member states and discussed the implications of increasing use of language and knowledge of society requirements. The results of the survey suggest that integration policies need to focus more on language learning opportunities and devote particular attention to vulnerable groups, such as refugees, unaccompanied children and low-literate learners.

To support linguistic integration and, in particular, language educators, curriculum designers and language policy makers in their professional endeavour to design, implement, evaluate and improve curricula tailored toward the specific needs of second language literacy learners, the Council of Europe developed in 2019 **the reference guide for literacy and second language learning for adult migrants**. The reference guide is expected to contribute significantly to the improvement of language learning opportunities for non-schooled and low-literate adult immigrants. The guide complements the Common European Framework for Reference for Languages below and up to the A1 literacy level, by covering the competence range from illiteracy (hardly any knowledge of letters in any language and little experience with writing tools) to low-literacy (the inability to successfully participate in social practices of literacy despite the ability to read sentences). The reference guide will be piloted in the first half of 2020.

Drawing on these developments, the drafting of policy recommendations on the linguistic integration of refugees and migrants is foreseen for the next biennium.

Recognition of qualifications

The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (ETS No.165), jointly drafted by the Council of Europe and UNESCO, is the standard-setting text for the recognition of qualifications in Europe. Under the leadership of the Council of Europe, the Convention Committee adopted on 14 November 2017 a Recommendation on the recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation, together with an explanatory memorandum. **The European Qualifications Passport for Refugees** (EQPR) project, developed by the Education Department and explicitly cited in the above-mentioned explanatory memorandum, offers a reliable methodology to assess refugees' qualifications in the absence of full documentation and a format to describe these qualifications to facilitate the recognition of their assessment if refugees relocate to new host countries. It helps public authorities and institutions by supporting refugees to be admitted to further studies or enter the job market in the host country.

A pilot phase run in Greece in 2017 assessed 92 applications and issued 73 passports. Based on the positive results of the pilot phase, a more extensive, second phase of this project was launched on 28 March 2018 and will run throughout 2020. The partners of this phase are the Ministries of Education of Greece, Italy and Norway, Government of Flanders (Belgium), qualification recognition centres in Armenia, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom, the Conference of University Rectors of Italy and the UNHCR. The new phase relies on the use of online technologies, widening the scope of potential candidates and reducing the costs. As of 15 November 2019, 476 interviews were conducted during 13 evaluation sessions, which resulted in 396 issued EQPR. Some 140 interviews have been conducted online. The second phase of the project has also included the

assessment of a number of applications on the basis of claimed secondary school education qualifications and is therefore of particular relevance to youth/young adults. As a result, 39 EQPR holders have been accepted in universities and others were able to secure a job due to the confirmation of their qualifications by the EQPR.

The project helped different national recognition centres to train a pool of credential evaluators in the EQPR methodology, so they are ready to conduct the assessment when necessary. So far, 32 evaluators have been trained in the methodology. At the beginning of 2020 a similar training will be open to evaluators from national recognition centres which are not participating in the project. In 2020, the project will develop an online platform to facilitate the secure access of refugees to assess their credentials and to allow holders share their EQPR in a secure way with third parties for a specific purpose and for a limited period, for example, when applying for access to a study programme or employment.

In September 2019, UNESCO announced its intention to develop a global document for the recognition of qualifications held by refugees and vulnerable migrants drawing on the experience of the European Qualification Passport for Refugees. Further information can be found in section 5.2. below.

b. Provide opportunities to participate in society

According to the Action Plan refugee and migrant children who remain in Europe have the right to live in dignity and safety with the opportunity to participate in society. The Council of Europe has reviewed its framework on life projects and has adopted a recommendation to support young refugees in transition to adulthood. Measures to enhance media-diversity tools and integration through sports have also been taken.

Life projects

The CAHENF undertook **a review of the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)9** of the Committee of Ministers on life projects for unaccompanied migrant minors. In 2018 member states were invited to reply to an online questionnaire on the policy tools in place to implement life projects. In May 2019, the CAHENF took note of the information provided by member states, which revealed that several states are still hosting large numbers of unaccompanied children in need of immediate assistance and access to durable solutions. The CAHENF examined in November 2019 a draft report, building on the replies received and additional sources on the protection and care of unaccompanied children in Europe. Further policy options and follow-up proposals, including the development of relevant training tools, will be discussed in early 2020 by the newly established Steering Committee on Children's Rights (CDENF).

Transition to adulthood

Based on a draft prepared by the Joint Council of Youth, on 24 April 2019, the **Committee of Ministers adopted the Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4 on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood**. Even though they are no longer children, some young refugees who arrived in Europe as children and have since turned 18 are still in need of additional temporary support in order to become autonomous and to integrate European societies. The recommendation advocates for additional temporary support which could be put in place for young

refugees after the age of 18 to enable them to access their rights. It recognises the important role of youth work and of the youth sector in providing such additional support and in promoting better access to rights. It is the first recommendation which promotes the social inclusion of young refugees it also tackles risks of radicalisation while building inclusive societies. The recommendation will be implemented within the framework of the Council of Europe “Youth for Democracy” programme.

In parallel, in November 2018, the Youth Department initiated the project YOUTH.TOGETHER on the **social inclusion of young refugees**. The project addressed the risks of social exclusion and violence that young refugees, especially those in transition to adulthood, are exposed to. The centre-piece of the project was a long-term training course (LTTC) for youth workers and young refugees active in reception and hosting centres or other social and educational facilities for or involving young refugees. The participants planned and implemented local, national and international youth projects to assist vulnerable groups of young refugees, including young people in their transition to adulthood. Six of these projects in Sweden, Italy, Germany, France and Malta received institutional and financial support from the Youth Department through direct granting, project visits, provision of educational resources and advice. The achieved results confirm that it is very important to empower young refugees and to provide a space for young refugees and local young people to meet and socialise.

Media

The Media and Internet Division published several **studies and research** on the narratives developed by print media and how they contributed to the public perception of the “migration crisis”, as well as on the needs for refugees and migrants in the domain of media communication and responses by community media. A follow-up study on community media as spaces for local dialogue and cohesion is in preparation to help identify ways to foster integration of young migrants with host communities.

The conclusions of the above-mentioned publications showed that ongoing efforts to properly equip and prepare journalists for the challenging task of contextualised and evidence-based reporting on migration were essential. They emphasised that it is equally vital to ensure that sufficient opportunities are provided to migrants and refugees themselves to develop their independent voices and make them heard in public debate. The results of the report and the study were presented in PACE and at several media events, which fostered discussions between civil society, institutions and media on the role and responsibilities of media in enabling social empowerment and participation of all members of society.

In addition, the Media and the Internet Division has provided support in 2017-2018 to the **Media against Hate campaign** led by the European Federation of Journalists and, in particular, to three workshops which succeeded in providing media literacy skills to young citizens of different backgrounds and in encouraging projects countering discrimination and emphasised the need for better responses through standard-setting and through co-operation activities.

Sports

In July 2017, the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) launched a **platform on the integration of migrants via sport**. The platform fosters the sharing of expertise and good practices between relevant stakeholders at international, national and local level, such as government authorities, the sports movement and NGOs. It provides its users with useful and practical information and includes otherwise isolated projects and facilitates their promotion. On 27 November 2018, the EPAS organised a meeting that enabled project-holders to come together to share experience, to identify the challenges which they faced when implementing their projects, and to promote and to fund inclusion projects through sports. As of 31 December 2019, the platform had collected 56 projects, run in over 20 countries in over 38 sport disciplines and therapeutic techniques.

Depending on the availability of funding, EPAS envisages activities aimed at supporting member states in the implementation of **Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)10 of the Committee of Ministers on the protection of child and young athletes from dangers associated with migration**, such as a possible North-South conference on this topic. In addition, to promote integration opportunities, research measuring the impact of sport in the integration process of refugee and migrants, with a focus on children and youth, will propose a methodology and relevant indicators to be used by authorities and civil society. These activities are suspended until funding or partnerships are identified for their implementation.

Academy for democratic leadership

The project “**Academy for democratic leadership for members of the refugee community and people working with refugees in European host countries**”, running until August 2020 is part of the comprehensive programme “Council of Europe Network of Schools of Political Studies” which aspires to build a community of competent democratic leaders functioning as agents of change and development in their respective countries. It is designed to assess the feasibility of setting up such an Academy by a series of four pilot seminars organised in different locations seeking a diversified feedback, ideas and proposals. The seminars addressed the themes of democratic participation of refugees in European societies, the efficient protection of unaccompanied children, the refugee’s education for democratic citizenship, and democratic governance of migration and forced displacement. Each seminar included individuals with a refugee background and actors representing organisations working with refugees in the public and private sectors.

4. ADDITIONAL RELEVANT ACTIVITIES

The Council of Europe carries out additional activities in the field of children in migration which go beyond the scope of the targeted initiatives of the Action Plan. The following section illustrates several activities with a dimension relevant to protection of refugee and migrant children, which also reinforce the impact of the Action Plan as a whole.

Special Representative on Migration and Refugees

The protection of refugee and migrant children is one of the four priorities set by the Special Representative in his first Activity Report in 2018 in line with his mandate. The Special Representative has conducted eight fact-finding missions in 11 member states of the Council of Europe, including since May 2017 missions to Serbia and two transit zones in Hungary, to Bulgaria, to Spain, to Croatia and to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The mission reports assess the situation of refugee and migrant children as well as the protection and integration policies and mechanisms set up in the countries concerned. The urgency and the pertinence of the Action Plan initiatives have been reconfirmed by the findings of the Special Representative in his missions. At the same time, the activities under the Action Plan have addressed the recommendations made in all fact-finding mission reports by the Special Representative. For this reason, the implementation of the Action Plan is an essential contribution in assisting member states follow-up on the recommendations of fact-finding mission reports and tackle the challenges they face.

As noted in section 2.2. above, the visibility of the Council of Europe action on refugee and migrant children has relied on the support lent by the Special Representative and his office. In addition, the Special Representative sought opportunities for synergies and complementarity in all his exchanges with major international partners.

The implementation of the Action Plan has crystallised the need for a direct dialogue with national migration authorities. With the support of delegations during the informal exchange of views of the Ministers' Deputies on migration issues on 13 November 2018, the Special Representative invited member states to designate focal points with a view to establishing a network to facilitate the sharing of information, to promote a better understanding of current and emerging challenges faced by member states and to exchange examples of good practices. The network had its first meeting on 28 and 29 November 2019 in Strasbourg. The members of the network confirmed their interest in a direct dialogue with the Council of Europe, in the sharing of information (for example, between EU and non-EU member states), expertise on human rights and case-law of the European Court of Human Rights, organised thematically, as well as good practices and solutions for daily challenges of migration management. The working methods of the network will be further developed by the new Special Representative.

The Special Representative continued to inform the Secretary General about evolving migration issues and how to strengthen the Organisation's assistance to member states. In April 2019, the Special Representative published an issue paper on the human rights aspects of immigrant and refugee integration policies. This paper identifies good integration practices and supports Council of Europe member states in designing and implementing their integration policies.

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

In addition to the joint initiatives under the umbrella of the Action Plan, discussed in section 3 above, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), in its Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, took place, from 2015 to 2019, the Parliamentary Campaign to End Immigration Detention of Children. The campaign had a pioneering role in strengthening the role of the national parliaments in protecting and promoting the human rights of

migrant children. On 26 June 2019, the Campaign's final conference took stock of its achievements and exchanged views on ending violence against migrant children. The campaign has promoted, through events and studies positive and protective alternatives to immigration detention and child-friendly procedures for assessing the age of unaccompanied, building a strong link with the Council of Europe's intergovernmental work in the CDDH and the CAHENF, such as the "Study on immigration detention practices and the use of alternatives to immigration detention of children" in Council of Europe non-EU member states (October 2017), the stocktaking study "Age assessment: Council of Europe member states' policies, procedures and practices respectful of children's rights" (September 2017) and various other events and visits to facilities accommodating children.

The PACE also regularly prepares reports, resolutions and discussions on various migration-related topics. In respect of refugee and migrant children, the PACE has brought forward issues such as the need to harmonise the protection of unaccompanied and separated children, to stop violence and exploitation of migrant children, to provide effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children, to provide human rights compliant age-assessment procedures, as well as family reunification, missing refugee and migrant children in Europe; and trafficking and exploitation of migrants and refugees.

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities has addressed the situation of unaccompanied refugee children in its Resolution 428(2018) and the Recommendation 414(2018) from 28 March 2018 on the role and responsibilities of local and regional authorities. With these texts, the Congress invited all levels of government to adopt a child-rights-based approach – including non-discrimination, best interests of the child, right to life, survival and development and the right to be heard – towards every refugee and migrant child for the duration of their stay in a country.

In 2019 the Congress produced the first volume of a human rights handbook focusing on the right to non-discrimination against: refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants, Roma and Travellers and LGBTI persons. The handbook includes a presentation of the legal framework and of the role that local and regional authorities can play, as well as 65 good practices implemented in more than 25 countries.

The Council of Europe Development Bank

Assistance to migrants and refugees is one of the statutory priorities of the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB). In 2017-2019 the CEB continued to help member countries to provide emergency support in favour of migrants and refugees through the Migrant and Refugee Fund (MRF), focusing in particular on the needs of the most vulnerable groups.

At the end of 2019, 22 CEB member states and the European Investment Bank had contributed to the MRF, raising over € 28 million. Among CEB member states, the largest contributors were Germany, France and Italy. So far, the CEB has approved € 28 million in grants in favour of 15 countries. Recently approved projects focus on the most vulnerable among migrants and refugees, such as unaccompanied children, victims of sexual and gender-based violence and single parents with children.

In 2017, the European Union contributed € 50 million to the CEB-managed Turkey Refugee Account. This amount financed the construction of a state hospital in Kilis (Turkey) close to the Syrian border, in order to provide better medical care to both the Syrian refugees and their host community. In 2018, the CEB signed an agreement for a € 1 million grant from the MRF to help Bosnia and Herzegovina cope with renewed migratory inflows. The MRF grant enabled the setting-up of a reception facility in the area of Sarajevo to offer a more structured response to the migrant and refugee situation the country. In 2019 an additional grant of € 400,000 was approved under the MRF to support the running of the centre.

In 2018, the CEB contributed with a € 1.15 million grant to the efforts of the Spanish authorities to provide in the city of Melilla enhanced healthcare assistance as well as faster identification and proper registration of migrants and refugees. Also in 2018, through a mixed agreement, including a € 80 million loan and a € 600,000 grant, with the City of Nuremberg, the CEB contributed to the construction and renovation of schools and early childhood care facilities, and supported projects focused on the identification of immigrants' own potential as well as their learning and qualification needs. In 2019, the CEB signed a grant agreement with the Portuguese Refugee Council for the benefit of the Reception Centre for Unaccompanied Minors in Lisbon, financing refurbishment work and complementing the previous € 2.5 million grant, which financed the construction of a new refugee reception centre in Loures and the extension of the Centre for Unaccompanied Minors in Lisbon.

In addition, the CEB continues to partially finance, through loans, investment projects presented by its member countries to facilitate the integration of refugees and migrants.

Refugee and migrant women

On 7 March 2018 the Committee of Ministers adopted the new Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023. The protection of the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls is for the first time included among the six priority areas. In 2019, the Gender Equality Division published a new factsheet on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls, which provides an analysis of their situation, including discrimination and violence. It tackles the need for gender-responsive policies and measures in countries of origin and destination to ensure that the grounds for asylum are interpreted in a gender-sensitive way, and that reception and asylum procedures are also gender-sensitive in line with the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

The Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) monitors compliance of state parties to the Istanbul Convention, including in the area of migration and asylum. Its country reports address in a special chapter the support and protection migrant and refugee women and girls receive against gender-based violence, their living conditions and their access to international protection. Recommendations include: the development of gender-sensitive guidelines and procedures to enhance awareness of special protection needs to allow women to disclose instances of violence against them, the training of relevant professionals, the identification of solutions for child marriages, the provision of safe

accommodation, provision of systemic access to information, and in the establishment of a data collection system that records asylum claims based on gender-related persecution.

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has continued its fifth monitoring cycle with the analysis of trends on migration and integration during its country visits and through its thematic work. In its 2017-2018 annual reports, ECRI noted that migration has continued to be represented by xenophobic populist circles as a threat to social cohesion and security. Despite this, ECRI has reported a growing awareness amongst many governments that successful integration requires continued and sustained long-term efforts and financial resources. To this end, many member states have adopted often very comprehensive strategies and action plans for the integration of refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection. These strategies may include various aspects of integration, such as language learning and introduction to national culture, education and employment training, housing and access to health. Integration and inclusion remained in the focus of ECRI in its sixth monitoring cycle which started in 2019.

Intercultural integration

In 2017 the Intercultural Cities programme of the Council of Europe launched the “Inclusive Integration Policy Lab”, which is an initiative to promote co-operation and co-ordination among local, regional and national authorities in the field of diversity management and inclusive integration. At its meetings in 2018 and 2019, participants discussed the Policy Framework on Inclusive Integration providing for the key principles and structure of national inclusive strategies, including the principle of individualised approach especially for refugee and migrant children. The draft policy framework builds on a review of existing national and local integration strategies and exchanges with policy officials from Council of Europe member states and intercultural cities, as well as drawing on the established positive results of intercultural integration approaches at local level. The draft document will be further consulted and proposals for policy actions will complement it.

As of 2020, the work of the Inclusive Integration Policy Lab will continue in a more formal intergovernmental setting of a working group on intercultural integration to be set up by the newly established Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI).¹⁴ The working group is mandated to prepare a draft recommendation to member states on multi-level policies on inclusive integration, for discussion in the CDADI and eventual adoption by the Committee of Ministers. The recommendation should enable *inter alia* local authorities and states to work in a more co-ordinated manner in relation to the inclusion support to be provided for migrant and refugee children.

Youth work

The Youth Department regularly holds activities in the European Youth Centres to develop the capacity of young multipliers, including many refugees, to support the social inclusion of young refugees. Particularly relevant in this context are the study sessions co-organised with Voice of

¹⁴ See also the Terms of Reference of the CDADI as approved by the Deputies, CM(2019)131-addfinal.

Young Refugees in Europe (VYRE), The European YWCA and the NOW Association. The sessions developed the participants' competencies in human rights education and provided space for reflection on the existing competence framework designed by the association for youth workers dealing with young refugees. The study session organised in November 2019, jointly with the European Trade Union Conference (Youth) and VYRE, raised awareness about the precarity of young refugees and migrants and in offering an important platform for dialogue, as well as for potential co-operation in the framework of the European Social Charter and the Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4 on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood.

The European Youth Foundation has financially supported 17 youth-led projects in 2017-2019 on the theme of refugees and migrants, including international youth activities and pilot activities led by young refugees themselves. The activities were instrumental in the preparatory work on the Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4 on support measures for young refugees in transition adulthood, by identifying needs and contribute to a clearer understanding of the added value youth work has in the social inclusion of young refugees and migrants. In order to respond better to the needs of youth NGOs in 2020 and to promote the Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4, the European Youth Foundation will focus in particular on actions supporting inclusion of young refugees and migrants. Further information on co-operation activities in the youth sector can be found under section 5.2. below.

5. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND COMPLEMENTARITY

Important work has been carried out or is well under way in other organisations in respect of the protection of refugee and migrant children. The Council of Europe has actively engaged with such organisations and their work in order to contribute to the global effort to promote the human rights of refugee and migrant children. This report outlines several examples in which the Action Plan initiatives described in Section 3 have shown their added value and provided constructive and pragmatic input in the field and, by doing this, have facilitated and furthered the partnership of the Council of Europe with these organisations.

5.1. Transversal co-operation

United Nations Global Compact on Migration and Global Compact on Refugees

In September 2016, at a High-level Summit to address large movements of refugees and migrants in New York, United Nations member states decided to conclude a Global Compact on Refugees and a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The Special Representative on Migration and Refugees has followed developments closely, participated in the consultation phase orally and in writing, and submitted in 2018 written comments on the draft zero of both compacts. His comments underlined the need to protect migrants' and refugees' human rights as part of a migration and refugee management strategy and outlined the role the Council of Europe can play, through the initiatives of the Action Plan in the implementation of the compacts. The added value of the Council of Europe, in particular through its standard-setting and co-operation activities, was emphasised during the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration which took place in Marrakech on 10-12 December 2018.

Following the formal endorsement of both Compacts by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 2018, work has been ongoing to identify relevant points of connection to support the implementation of the compacts during numerous expert level meetings in the course of 2019. In respect of the Global Compact on Refugees, through the Action Plan, the Council of Europe provided concrete examples to achieve the objectives of the compact and to further its partnership with the UNHCR. In this spirit, during the first Global Refugee Forum on 17-18 December 2019 in Geneva, the Council of Europe put forward its successfully developed European Qualification Passport for Refugees as a pragmatic contribution to the implementation of the Refugee Compact.

European Union - European Commission

On 12 April 2017, the European Commission adopted a Communication on the protection of children in migration, which proposed a number of priority areas for member states to focus on in order to improve the protection of children in migration and to ensure a closer link between asylum and child protection services. The initiatives under the Action Plan complemented the priority actions in the Communication, particularly in respect of access to child-friendly information and child-friendly procedures, alternatives to immigration detention, guardianship and age assessment, integration and durable solutions. The good practices identified in the different activities under the Action Plan equally complement the European Commission's online database on promising practices related to the protection of children in migration in a joint effort to share existing knowledge.

The Special Representative on Migration and Refugees established a regular political dialogue with the Directorate General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) and enhanced co-operation by organising joint events on migration-related topics. While contacts with the EU Commission (DG HOME) were strengthened during 2019, the scope of co-operation widened to include also the Directorate General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST) and the Directorate General for European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR).

The areas of complementarity in both organisations on the issue of migration are regularly discussed during the Senior Officials meetings. Regular contacts between different sectors of both organisations play an important role in preventing the duplication of activities and in promoting harmonious activities.

5.2. Thematic co-operation

Smuggling of migrants

There has been great interest in and participation by international and regional organisations such as the UNODC, the UN experts panel on Libya, the International Criminal Court, the European Migrant Smuggling Centre (Europol), academics and some non-Council of Europe states in the Action Plan initiatives on preventing and suppressing the smuggling of migrants. The Council of Europe remains in a prime position to gather and disseminate research and data collection relevant to all member states. The proposed follow-up action on international co-operation and investigation of smuggling of migrants will further develop the Council of Europe's co-operation with other global and regional intergovernmental and supranational organisations in this field.

Alternatives to immigration detention

The Prague Conference on alternatives to immigration detention brought together a variety of international and regional organisations to ensure synergies and complementarity of action in this field. Both the UNHCR and the European Union used the opportunity to inform participants of their activities and programmes, as well as to exchange information on their future priorities and joint ways forward. The event engaged representatives of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. The conference contributed to the European Commission's 11th European Forum on the Rights of the Child, on 6-7 November 2017, which addressed children's deprivation of liberty. In 2018 and 2019, the Human Rights Policy and Co-operation Department organised jointly with the UNHCR a number of events, such as those in Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Portugal and Turkey focused on relevant ECHR case law, Council of Europe, European Union and UNHCR action on asylum and migration, and in particular on alternatives to detention of migrants. In addition, the thematic co-operation on the development and implementation of alternatives to immigration detention continued with the organisation by the Council of Europe, the European Commission and the European Network for Migration of the international conference on 4 April 2019, described above in section 3.2. Co-operation activities with the IOM and the International Detention Coalition were also pursued, including on pilot projects implementing alternatives to immigration detention in Italy, Greece and Cyprus.

Youth work

The Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe has supported on the inclusion and participation of young refugees and reinforces the capacity of youth work and youth policy fields. The preparation of a policy brief and the Summer School in 2017 in Braga, Portugal, paved the way for the Joint Council on Youth to prepare for the adoption by the Committee of Ministers' Deputies in 2019 of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4 on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood. Several publications were developed in 2018 to present how youth work supports young refugees' inclusion, participation and empowerment. The seminar "Bridges to New Beginnings: developing synergies between different sectors supporting the inclusion, human rights and participation of young refugees and migrants" held in December 2018 highlighted the added value in co-operating to secure social inclusion and participation. As a result of this event, in 2019 a set of guidelines on working with young refugees and migrants was distributed to promote multi-agency co-operation.

Education

The European Union - Council of Europe Joint Programme "Democratic and Inclusive School Culture in Operation"¹⁵, in its 2018-2019 cycle promoted collaboration with five higher education institutions across four European countries to facilitate access to refugees with professional experience and relevant qualifications to teaching employment opportunities in higher education. Through this initiative refugees were invited as visiting experts to share their knowledge with students and teaching staff, within the framework of the academic curriculum.

¹⁵ The programme contributes to building democratic and inclusive societies through helping develop a culture of democracy by promoting Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE) in the states parties to the European Cultural Convention (ETS No.018).

The project was completed at the end of October 2019 and a toolkit based on the lessons learned was developed to assist other educational institutions and professionals to optimise the skills that refugees can bring, providing guidance on co-ordination, recruitment, preparation and communication. Synergies between the project and other initiatives of the Education Department were sought, including the presentation of the preliminary results of the project at the roundtable “Hand in hand to support refugees’ integration – Education, training and recognition of qualifications”, held in Strasbourg on 1 March 2019, in co-operation with the UNHCR and the City of Strasbourg, with the aim to emphasise the role of education in supporting the integration of refugees in their host societies. The 2020-2021 cycle of this joint programme will continue to foster inclusion in the field of education.

Drawing from the experience of the Council of Europe and its Norwegian partners with the European Qualification Passport for Refugees (described in section 3.3 above), UNESCO is pursuing the development of a global document for the recognition of qualifications held by refugees and vulnerable migrants. In this context, the EQPR was presented as an example of good practice at a high-level event during the UNESCO General Conference in Paris, on 15 November 2019 and at the UNHCR Global Refugee Forum in Geneva on 16 December 2019. The Council of Europe participates in the advisory group for the UNESCO project to ensure complementarity between the two instruments.

Children's rights

The work undertaken by the CAHENF complements the position taken by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Effective guardianship will enable children to access social services and be of relevance to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 11.1.¹⁶ Action Plan initiatives on the integration of unaccompanied refugee and migrant children are of particular relevance to SDG target 8.6.¹⁷ Strengthening the implementation of the life projects recommendation ties in closely with the obligations of member states under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the General Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on the child’s right to an adequate standard of living. The Council of Europe has also contributed with a comprehensive submission to the United Nations Global study on children deprived of liberty. The intergovernmental work on developing guidelines on guardianship and age assessment has included regular exchanges of views with the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union (FRA), the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), the European Commission, the UNHCR, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on violence against children, the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC), the ENGI network and numerous civil society organisations.

The joint Council of Europe-UNHCR event “Effective Protection of Refugee and Migrant Children in Portugal” in May 2019 in Lisbon brought together professionals from different agencies and

¹⁶ By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.

¹⁷ By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.

sectors, such as migration, asylum, anti-trafficking and child protection authorities, as well as lawyers, NGOs and Ombudspersons to consider the multi-disciplinary challenges and existing solutions in tackling efficiently child protection, migration management, law enforcement, and social services for refugee and migrant children. The programme included presentations from the Council of Europe Children's Rights, Anti-trafficking, Human Rights Policy and Co-operation and Special Representative's teams, as well as from the European Court of Human Rights.

Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse

The special report by the Lanzarote Committee on "Protecting children affected by the refugee crisis from sexual exploitation and abuse" drew, among others, on input from comments made by the FRA secretariat on the draft version of the report and from FRA publications (their monthly and thematic reports). In 2017 the findings and recommendations of the report were promoted in events organised by the European Parliament, the IOM and INTERPOL. The IOM has indicated that it will use the recommendations in their policy advocacy work and capacity-building activities.

Combating child trafficking

Since 2017 the Council of Europe has been a member of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT). The membership provides an opportunity to work towards complementarity with the members of ICAT (OHCHR, UNODC, UNHCR, IOM, ILO, UNICEF, UN Women, OSCE, and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development), and to avoid duplication. In 2019, Council of Europe, being a partner to ICAT, participated in the preparation of an issue brief on "Trafficking in children" which reflects GRETA's findings and recommendations. The document stresses *inter alia* the need to expand safe and legal pathways for children to move with their families, including by accelerating refugee status determination and family reunification procedures, scaling up resettlement schemes, issuing humanitarian, student, and trainee visas, and setting up labour migration schemes for all skill levels that take into consideration every child's right to family life.¹⁸

6. FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The costs of the implementation of the Action Plan represent the ordinary and extraordinary budget for the activities proposed, developed and carried out by the 19 involved units and bodies of the Organisation.

The implementation of the Action Plan activities relied on substantial financial support from the Organisation's ordinary budget with a total forecasted amount € 1,355,486 and extra-budgetary resources with a total of € 1,689,857.¹⁹ The voluntary contributors are Andorra, Belgium, Czech

¹⁸ <https://icat.network/sites/default/files/publications/documents/ICAT-IB-06-Trafficking%20in%20Children.pdf>

¹⁹ Further expenditure is planned for a number of projects to continue beyond the timeframe of the Action Plan. The total amount of allocated extra-budgetary resources was of € 1,999,146 of which € 474,919 were non earmarked contributions and € 956,171 were earmarked voluntary contributions.

Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and the International Association of Former Council of Europe Staff members (AIACE).²⁰

7. CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

Protecting refugee and migrant children in Europe is a long-term commitment. This section outlines the main achievements and lessons learned in the implementation of the Action Plan and identifies several points for discussion in respect of a future strategy.

It should be noted that the Action Plan has largely attained its objectives, including two Committee of Ministers' recommendations, practical guidance on alternatives to immigration detention and dissemination of good practices in several areas. In addition to its envisaged activities, it has triggered the development and implementation of new actions, such as new HELP courses and additional co-operation activities. The Action Plan has enabled professionals to use a child-friendly approach in their migration-related work involving children and has helped them to acquire an in-depth understanding of the multi-disciplinary measures required to the situation of children in migration. For policymakers, the results of the Action Plan provide guidance and examples to achieve the effective protection of refugee and migrant children.

Lessons learned

Firstly, the analysis carried out on the occasion of the Mid-term review of this Action Plan remains accurate. There is an indisputable added value in the transversal approach, coherence and complementarity of the Action Plan, as results from the achievements described in Section 3 above show. The framework of the Action Plan, combined with the active role of the Special Representative, allowed for an efficient co-ordination and streamlining of activities within the Organisation and enhanced the visibility of the Council of Europe's contribution to the protection of human rights in a migration context. The thematic co-operation with other organisations advanced with more engagement at policy level as well as expert level, as described in Section 5 above.

For the field of refugee and migrant children, which relies on multi-disciplinarity (migration, children's rights, law enforcement, youth, education), the co-ordinated framework of the Action Plan allowed for better planning, delivery and communication of the Organisation's holistic effort (as opposed to fragmented outputs in each separate sector). The implementation of the Action Plan relied on co-ordination between 19 different teams inside the Organisation and created an impetus for starting the inter-agency and inter-sectoral dialogue on the protection of children in migration at national level. The creation of a Focal Points Network on migration to pursue a direct dialogue with migration authorities also follows the line of discussion of the Mid-term review in the Committee of Ministers' Deputies last year.

Secondly, the main achievement of the Action Plan is the translation of existing human rights standards in the migration context, child-friendly justice, and youth work into practical knowledge

²⁰ In addition, Azerbaijan, Germany, Norway, San Marino, Switzerland, and the European Union made voluntary contributions in support of the activities covered by the Action Plan on Building Inclusive Societies.

in the format of training courses, guidance, peer exchanges on the protection of refugee and migrant children, as well as innovative approaches and methodologies on topics like alternatives to immigration detention and integration. The work of intergovernmental committees and their working groups has been central in this endeavour, also in view of new Committee of Ministers' recommendations, as well as enhanced co-operation on action against smuggling of migrants and research on statelessness. Monitoring bodies have accumulated first-hand knowledge on the situation of refugee and migrant children but also on elements of good practices.

There is certainly more awareness and resources on the existing standards, challenges and promising practices. To make a difference on the ground there is need for further support in their implementation, dissemination as well as in testing new approaches.

Thirdly, the adoption of the Action Plan and its implementation coincided with a period of budgetary austerity. Essential for the continuation of the Action Plan was the support provided through voluntary contributions made by member states. With the support of extra-budgetary resources, important projects have been successfully initiated and some activities have been re-designed so that core objectives and proper planning for follow-up can be achieved. The streamlining method of the Action Plan enabled the development of cost-effective projects that address at the same time recommendations made by monitoring bodies and by the Special Representative in his fact-finding mission reports. What has been achieved despite the existing constraints is a consistent contribution to the work concerning children affected by migration and has confirmed the Council of Europe's place as an essential actor in the field of migration based on a human rights-compliant approach.

Points for discussion on the way forward

The situation today is rather different from that in 2017 when the Action Plan was approved. There are new developments in the Middle East and in North Africa. In Europe, the overall drop in arrival figures in 2018 and 2019 may have decreased the public pressure and shifted perceptions. What was deemed as an emergency about the situation of refugee and migrant children in 2017 is seen now more as an ongoing challenge. At the same time, more member states of the Council of Europe are concerned by such challenges than in 2017, the conditions of stay in many parts of Europe over time have become more challenging, there is increasing focus on returns as a tool to maintain the credibility of the asylum system as a whole and there are already first lessons learned and promising examples in respect of integration.

The Special Representative acknowledged these trends in his latest fact-finding mission reports. The judgments of the European Court of Human Rights delivered in this timeframe, as well as by the newly communicated cases reveal concern in areas such as reception conditions, effective guardianship, age assessment, detention of children, procedural safeguards and alternatives to immigration detention. At the Ministerial Meeting in Helsinki in May 2019, the Committee of Ministers recalled the need to continue addressing the challenges arising from global migration.

These developments suggest that the Council of Europe should continue its support to member states on migration and children in migration beyond 2019. Based on existing results, a form of follow up could be another Action Plan, due to its strategic, structured and coherent approach,

able to prevent fragmentation and overlapping initiatives, and to promote efficient use of Organisation's potential and resources, according to its streamlining and cost-effectiveness policies.

Maintaining the refugee and migrant children scope would allow capitalising on already acquired experience, knowledge and visibility in the field and would provide meaningful follow-up also in respect of co-operation with other international organisations. The feasibility of a wider framework on migration and human rights could also be explored. In this respect, the Network of Focal Points on migration can play an important role in informing the Ministers' Deputies decisions concerning the strategy to be followed in respect of refugee and migrant children, and on migration in general.

In fact, the Network of Focal Points on migration could be instrumental in building co-ordination and co-operation in the field of refugee and migrant children and on migration generally, to reflect the interest of member states expressed during the Mid-term review discussions in September 2018 and the informal exchange on migration on 13 November 2018. The new framework could envisage enabling and enhancing inter-agency co-operation and build on the Network's potential to foster peer to peer exchanges and thematic discussions on different topics related to migration and human rights.

The new framework could encompass the implementation of existing projects and the development of new areas. Among existing projects which are to continue beyond 2019 are the HELP courses on refugee and migrant children, on CPT standards and on alternatives to immigration detention, the intergovernmental activities on statelessness, on reception conditions, on alternatives to immigration detention, on age assessment, on international co-operation against smuggling, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children, on anti-trafficking, the implementation of newly adopted Committee of Ministers' recommendations, as well as the many initiatives on social inclusion and integration. Relying already on the discussions during the first meeting of the Network of Focal Points, returns, healthcare, refugee and migrant women and girls, as well as other aspects of integration could represent new areas worth consideration, in consultation and strategic thinking together with the Major Administrative Entities.

Against this background, the member states will have the opportunity during the discussion of this final report to exchange views and express their points of view on how they envisage the follow-up and consider tasking the Special Representative on Migration and Refugees to draft, in consultation with the Secretariat, a strategic document reflecting the selected priority areas and to submit it for the approval to the Committee of Ministers.

Table 1. Results of the Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children (2017-2019)

on 31 December 2019

Action Plan activities	Details on implementation
1. ENSURING ACCESS TO RIGHTS AND CHILD-FRIENDLY PROCEDURES	
<i>a. Access to child-friendly information and procedures</i>	
Roundtable on child-friendly migration-related information	Roundtable organised by the Children’s Rights Division on 29-30 November 2017. Round table report and report “ Child-friendly information for children in migration: What do children think ”.
A handbook on promoting child-friendly information for refugee and migrant children on access to rights and relevant procedures, including good practices, to be drafted and translated into several languages	The “Handbook for frontline professionals on how to convey child-friendly information to children in migration” was launched on 18 December 2018. It is currently available in English , French and Spanish . Brochure for children undergoing age assessment (available in Portuguese, French and English).
A compilation of good practices on migration-related child-friendly procedures	The compilation “Promoting child-friendly approaches in the area of migration: standards, guidance and current practices” was published in December 2019 and launched in Belgrade.
A HELP training course on the rights of refugee and migrant children	The course was completed in June 2018 and is available online from September 2018. Training of trainers session carried out on 23-24 May 2018. The course was officially launched as follows: - in the United Kingdom (13 November 2018) with UNHCR for solicitors, barristers and legal professionals in the United Kingdom, - in Spain (23 November 2018) together with the Spanish Bar Association (Consejo General de la Abogacía Española), the Spanish Judicial Council (Consejo General del Poder Judicial) and the Spanish Judiciary School for a mixed group judges, prosecutors and lawyers, - in Greece (10 December 2018) with the Athens Bar Association and UNHCR for Greek lawyers, - in France (3 June 2019) jointly with the Conseil National des Barreaux (CNB), the Délégation des Barreaux de France (DBF) and UNHCR for French lawyers,

	<p>- in Italy (30-31 October 2019) with the Italian School of Magistrates and the Italian National Bar Council for Italian judges and lawyers, and</p> <p>- in Turkey (2 December 2019) with the Istanbul Bar Association for lawyers.</p> <p>The abovementioned national adaptations of the course and language versions in French, Greek, Italian, Spanish and Turkish as well as the new translations into Albanian, Arabic, Azerbaijani, Bulgarian, Croatian, German and Hungarian will be added to the online platform.</p>
<p><i>b. Ensure that every child has a nationality</i></p>	
<p>Identifying solutions to avoid statelessness for child migrants and refugees.</p>	<p>The European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ) decided on 14-16 November 2018, at its 93rd plenary meeting, to undertake preliminary review of protocols and procedures used by member states to determine and resolve cases of statelessness, in particular of migrant children. On 11-12 June 2019, an Ad-hoc Meeting on Statelessness Determination Procedures examined recent gaps or new challenges and practical difficulties encountered by both national authorities and stateless persons. A detailed analysis reflected the outcome of the ad hoc meeting. It was presented and examined by the CDCJ at its 94th plenary meeting (13-15 November 2019), with a decision to organise in 2020-2021 an international conference on statelessness and to hold a series of targeted technical meetings on statelessness.</p>
<p>2. PROVIDING EFFECTIVE PROTECTION</p>	
<p><i>a. New guidelines regarding effective guardianship and age assessment</i></p>	
<p>New guidelines on effective guardianship and age assessment</p> <p>Identify measures and follow-up action for the implementation of the guidelines</p>	<p>The CAHENF, with the support of its drafting group (CAHENF-Safeguards) developed these guidelines. On 11 December 2019 the Committee of Ministers adopted Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)11 on effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in the context of migration.</p> <p>A draft text of the recommendation on Human Rights Principles and Implementing Guidelines on age assessment for children in migration was prepared and its pending consultations. More on the drafting process.</p> <p>The drafting process relied on a 2017 survey on age assessment and on consultations with children who have experienced age assessment in the context of</p>

	<p>migration and asylum procedures in four countries. The report “We are children, hear us out! Children in migration speak out about age assessment” reflecting these consultations was published on 27 May 2019.</p> <p>Follow-up action for the implementation of the guidelines will be discussed by the CDENF in 2020.</p>
<i>b. Appropriate shelter for children and their families</i>	
Draft instrument on standards of reception and accommodation of refugee and migrant children	<p>At its 90th meeting on 27-30 November 2018, the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) endorsed the proposal to explore in the 2020-2021 biennium reception conditions for refugee and migrant children. The Drafting Group on Human Rights and Migration (CDDH-MIG) held several exchanges of views on the topic at their 5th meeting on 17-19 October 2018 and on their 6th meeting on 26-28 March 2019, including a feasibility study of various options for future work. Following a consultation among its members, the CDDH decided at its 91st meeting on 18-21 June 2019 to focus, in particular, on family-based care arrangements for unaccompanied and separated children. At its 92nd meeting on 26-29 November 2019, the CDDH concluded that the outcomes should be user-friendly, concise and accessible, with the completion of the new work on family-based care foreseen by the end of 2020.</p>
<i>c. Assistance in restoring family links and reunification, in accordance with existing norms</i>	
A handbook on standards and good practices to restore family links and reunify families	<p>The handbook “Family reunification for refugee and migrant children: standards and promising practice” was completed in November 2019 and is pending publication in early 2020.</p>
<i>d. Avoid resorting to deprivation of liberty on the ground of migration status</i>	
<p>Conference within the Czech Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe “Immigration Detention of Children: Coming to a Close?”</p> <p>Prepare a guidance and/or a compilation on alternatives to detention</p>	<p>The conference took place in Prague, on 25-26 September 2017. A report on the conference is available here.</p> <p>Analysis of the legal and practical aspects of effective alternatives to detention in the context of migration, published on 28 January 2018 by the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH). The document is also available in French and German.</p>

	<p>On 16 October 2019, the Committee of Ministers endorsed the Practical Guidance on Alternatives to Immigration Detention: Fostering Effective Results, adopted by CDDH at its 91st meeting. (French version)</p> <p>On 4 April 2019 the International conference on Effective Alternatives to the Detention of Migrants, organised jointly by the Council of Europe, the European Commission and the European Migration Network, discussed a variety of concrete examples and practices of alternatives to the detention of migrants from different corners of Europe with some 200 participants.</p> <p>A newly developed HELP course on alternatives to immigration detention will be available on the HELP platform in early 2020.</p> <p>Additional actions to promote alternatives to immigration detention: preparation of know-how and user-friendly materials on effective alternatives to detention, capacity building among professionals, and enhancing the overall awareness of good practices and lessons learnt in effectively implementing alternatives.</p>
<p>Translate and distribute CPT factsheet on immigration detention</p>	<p>Factsheet on immigration detention published on 15 March 2017. In addition to English and French the factsheet is now available in Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Hungarian, Greek, Italian, Serbian, Slovak, Spanish, Turkish, and Ukrainian.</p>
<p>Elaboration of a practical training guide for visiting/monitoring places where children are deprived of their liberty as a result of migration procedures, in the framework of the Parliamentary Campaign to End Immigration Detention of Children</p> <p>Training for members of national parliaments and ombudspersons' staff on visiting/monitoring places where children can be deprived of liberty as a result of migration procedures</p>	<p>The guide was developed by the Children's Rights Division in co-operation with Defence for Children International Belgium for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), it was launched on 11 October 2017.</p> <p>Guide for Parliamentarians: Visiting places where children are deprived of their liberty as a result of immigration procedures</p> <p>It is also available in French and Arabic.</p> <p>Training courses, organised by the Children's Rights Division and PACE, took place in Strasbourg in April and November 2017. The course included participants from 14 member states and 2 states with observer status. Another training session was held on 28-29 March 2019 in Paris for representatives from 11 member states.</p>

	<p>Visits to Greece (July 2018), Budapest and the Röske transit zone in Hungary (November 2018), to Traiskirchen and Zinnergasse migration centres in Austria (May 2019), to Cyprus (June 2019).</p> <p>Website of the PACE Campaign to End Immigration Detention of Children: www.assembly.coe.int/stop-child-detention</p>
<p><i>e. Ensure protection from violence, including trafficking and sexual exploitation</i></p>	
<p>Organise a conference to develop strategies aimed at preventing and suppressing the smuggling of migrants, including children</p> <p>Identify measures and follow-up action for the implementation of the strategies for preventing and suppressing the smuggling of migrants</p>	<p>A Conference was organised by the European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC) on 23 June 2017.</p> <p>At its plenary session in December 2017 the CDPC decided to set up two expert working groups to analyse and propose follow-up action: the Working Group on Prevention of smuggling of migrants and the Working Group on fostering international co-operation and investigative strategies in fighting the smuggling of migrants. Their first meetings took place on 20-22 June 2018 in Paris (Conclusive observations on the prevention and international co-operation and investigative strategies in fighting the smuggling of migrants).</p> <p>Based on the results of these first meetings, at its 75th plenary meeting on 27-29 November 2018, the CDPC decided that the possible future activities of the WG on preventive measures should not remain in the remit of the CDPC because there is very little substantive elements directly related to its field of competence. The activity of the WG on international co-operation continued with a second meeting on 10 April 2019, during which the group discussed in detail a draft Action Plan meant to translate the observations of the Working Group into concrete Council of Europe action. At its 76th plenary meeting on 25-26 April 2019, CDPC took note of the information provided by the Secretariat regarding the latest developments in the work carried out by the Working Group on smuggling of migrants and on the main outcomes of the draft Action Plan. At its 77th plenary meeting in December 2019, the CDPC decided to carry out consultations at national level with all relevant agencies and for a revised text to be submitted for approval at its plenary in June 2020.</p>

<p>Develop and keep updated a compendium of good practices in the fight against child trafficking</p> <p>Monitor to identify gaps and needs in the current procedures for the identification of victims of trafficking among migrant children and refugees</p>	<p>The publication of the compendium of good practices is pending in early 2020.</p> <p>GRETA reports from May 2017 to September 2019 addressing the situation of refugee and migrant children, in particular unaccompanied and separated children: Thematic chapter on trafficking in children of the 6th General report, 7th General report, 8th General report, Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Finland, North Macedonia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine.</p> <p>Relevant visits to Austria, Cyprus, Slovak Republic (for which reports have not yet been published).</p>
<p>Awareness-raising seminar on combating sexual exploitation of refugee and migrant children</p>	<p>On 13 June 2017, in Belgrade, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities organised the second seminar for local government associations focusing on the Congress Pact to stop the sexual exploitation of children. Conclusions of the seminar.</p> <p>To date, the Pact to stop sexual exploitation of children has 80 signatories from 24 countries.</p>
<p>Identify measures and follow-up action for the implementation of recommendations of Lanzarote Committee</p>	<p>On 3 March 2017 the Lanzarote Committee issued a Special Report “Protecting children affected by the refugee crisis from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse”, which contained “urge”, “consider” and “invite” recommendations. At its 24th meeting (4-6 June 2019), the Lanzarote Committee decided to make public its evaluation report on the implementation of its five “urge” recommendations and to launch the collection of information concerning the implementation of the “consider” implementations. Based on the evaluation report will be identified promising practices for future exchanges of information or co-operation.</p> <p>On 13-14 December 2018 in Strasbourg, Council of Europe Children’s Rights Division, in association with the SRSG on migration and refugees, organised an international roundtable on “Delivering real change: effectively protecting refugee and migrant children’s rights” to discuss among others follow-up to the recommendations of the Lanzarote Committee’s Special report and to SRSG’s fact-finding missions.</p>

3. ENHANCING REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CHILDREN'S INTEGRATION

a. Provide education

<p>Develop, translate, publish and pilot a toolkit for volunteers offering language support</p>	<p>The Education Department launched the toolkit in November 2017. The toolkit is currently available in 7 languages (www.coe.int/lang-refugees)</p> <p>Following a call for proposals, 14 associations were selected to focus on the translation and/or adaptation of the toolkit into the local/national context, training of volunteers/teachers of language courses for refugees and migrants, of social services' interpreters, and further dissemination, etc. Among these initiatives, webinar training is available for further free of charge use by the NGOs involved with the linguistic integration of migrants and refugees. In December 2018 a consultation meeting discussed success stories and lessons learnt and provided insights and recommendations regarding the adaptability of the Toolkit.</p>
<p>Conduct a survey of member states' experience on provision of education to migrants and refugees and on integrating them into mainstream education systems</p>	<p>A survey on Language Policies and Language Requirements for Migrants in the member states was being undertaken by the Education Department in close cooperation with the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE). Its primary aim was to map the language requirements and knowledge of society (KoS) requirements for migrants in Council of Europe member states. A new feature in this survey is the particular attention dedicated to vulnerable groups, such as illiterate/low-literate migrants, women, unaccompanied children, asylum seekers and refugees.</p> <p>The results of the survey have been made public and discussed at the 4th intergovernmental conference "Achieving Equal Opportunities for All Migrants Through Learning and Assessment: Language and knowledge of society requirements for migrants in Council of Europe member states" on 16 October 2019.</p>
<p>Draft recommendation on the linguistic integration of migrants</p>	<p>A reference guide will be developed to provide the content of the syllabus from non-literacy to level A1. It is targeted to the migrants and refugees with no or hardly any previous schooling, or who are low-educated semi-literate but who can read and write in a non-alphabetic script and learn the language(s) of the host countries. It will be piloted in 2020.</p>

	<p>Collection of Council of Europe texts: Children and Adolescents from a migrant background: Integration and Education; Linguistic and educational integration of children and adolescents from migrant backgrounds; Resources.</p> <p>The drafting of policy recommendations on the linguistic integration of refugees and migrants is foreseen for the next biennium.</p>
<p>A pilot project on the assessment of qualifications through a European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR) held by refugees</p>	<p>On 14 November 2017 was adopted a Recommendation on the Recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced person, and persons in a refugee-like situation and its explanatory memorandum. The EQPR is cited in the explanatory memorandum as a good practice implementing the recommendation and Article 7 of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.</p> <p>After a successful pilot phase in 2017, a second phase was launched in 2018 with additional national partners and new objectives to cover secondary education credentials, building national capacities in the use the EQPR methodology and setting up an online platform to facilitate access to the assessment of credentials and to allow EQPR holders to share their confirmed credentials with third parties. Role of EQPR in the development of a global qualifications passport.</p>
<p><i>b. Provide opportunities to participate in society</i></p>	
<p>Promoting diversity inclusiveness in mainstream media</p>	<p>The Media and Internet Division published in 28 February 2018 an explorative study on the needs of refugees and migrants in the domain of media communication “Spaces of Inclusion – needs for refugees and migrants in the domain of media communication and responses by community media” and in April 2018 a report concerning media on the massive arrival of refugees “Media coverage of the ‘refugee crisis’: A cross-European perspective.”</p> <p>Upcoming 2019 report “Across generations - community media as spaces for local dialogue and cohesion”.</p> <p>Presentation and discussion of the mentioned publications in PACE and in different forums, such as: the Civil Media 2017 Conference in Salzburg, 15-17 June 2017; the Conference on Media and Migration 2017, Hamburg, 24-25 November 2017; the Vienna Conference “Media Democracy under Pressure” on 22 May 2018; and the NECS Conference in Amsterdam “Media Tactics and Engagement” on 27-29 June 2018; Panel “Refugees in the Media: Best Practices of Rights Based Approach to</p>

	<p>Journalism", Istanbul, 1 June 2019; Conference "Global Migration Trends 2020: Security, Healthcare and Integration", Moscow, June 4-5, 2019.</p> <p>A flash session "Framing the public debate on migration and refugees" was organised at the Conference "Addressing Hate Speech in the media: the role of regulatory authorities and the judiciary" with participation of SRSG on migration and refugees Tomáš Boček in Zagreb, 6-7 November 2018.</p> <p>Support for three Media against Hate workshops. The workshop in Poland, 7–9 June 2017, focused on presentation of various community media projects promoting dialogue and cohesion. The workshop in Germany, 23–25 November 2017, focused on the promotion of counter-narratives with respect to young and women refugees. The workshop in Spain, Barcelona, 28 June 2018, focused on the treatment of the Mediterranean migrant and refugee crisis on the audiovisual media.</p> <p>Factsheet on media and refugees.</p>
<p>Promoting integration through and in sport</p> <p>A North-South conference on protecting child and young athletes from the dangers associated with migration</p> <p>Initiatives to raise awareness about the possible contribution of sport as a tool to the integration of migrants</p>	<p>In July 2017, the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) launched a migrant integration via sport platform. There are currently 56 projects, run in 21 countries in around 35 sport disciplines and therapeutic techniques, on the platform.</p> <p>Depending on the availability of funding, EPAS envisages activities aimed at supporting member states in the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)10 of the Committee of Ministers on the protection of child and young athletes from dangers associated with migration.</p>
<p>Academy for democratic leadership for members of the refugee community and people working with refugees in European host countries</p>	<p>An addition to the initial actions included in the Action Plan, the project is part of the comprehensive programme "Council of Europe Network of Schools of Political Studies" and responds to the current need for better strategies to promote and support the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe. It relies on a series of four pilot seminars organised in different locations aimed to obtain a diversified pool of resources for feedback, ideas and proposals for the set-up of the Academy (October 2018 in Berlin, Germany; June 2019 in Strasbourg, France; October 2019 in Rovereto, Italy; and December 2019 in Athens, Greece). The seminars addressed the themes of democratic participation of refugees in European societies, the efficient protection of unaccompanied children, the refugee's education for democratic citizenship, and democratic governance of migration and forced displacement.</p>

<p>Review the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)9 on life projects for unaccompanied migrant minors</p> <p>Develop training tools on life projects for unaccompanied migrant minors</p>	<p>An online questionnaire, approved by the CAHENF, was circulated to national delegations in 2018 in order to collect examples of practices on how the Recommendation is implemented at national level. At its 6th meeting in May 2019, the CAHENF took note of the collected information and discussed proposals to complement the information received. In November 2019, at its 7th meeting, the CAHENF examined the report and decided that further policy options and follow-up proposals, including the development of training tools, should be discussed early 2020 by the newly established CDENF. More materials on life projects.</p>
<p>Prepare policy recommendations on assisting young refugees and migrants, in particular unaccompanied minors, in their transition from childhood to adulthood</p> <p>Disseminate the policy recommendations. Pilot awareness-raising and training with youth workers, staff of reception centres and NGOs. Organise study sessions with refugees and youth organisations on advocacy for application of the guidelines</p>	<p>Based on the preparatory work carried by the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ), on 24 April 2019 the Committee of Ministers adopted the Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4 on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood. The recommendation will be implemented in the framework of the Council of Europe “Youth for Democracy” programme.</p> <p>In parallel, at the end of 2018, the Youth Department launched the YOUTH.TOGETHER project on pursuing the social inclusion of young refugees. The centre-piece of the project is a long-term training course for youth workers and young refugees active in reception and hosting centres or other social and educational facilities for or involving, young refugees. The one-year training course allowed participants to learn how to develop a project with young people/refugees, to pilot the projects in their local context and then to share lessons learned with their peers in a final evaluation seminar</p>