



DJS/CM Refugees (2011) 7

Consultative meeting

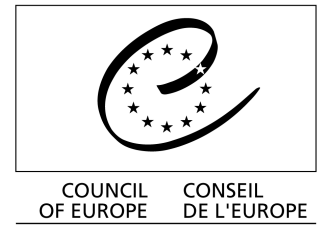
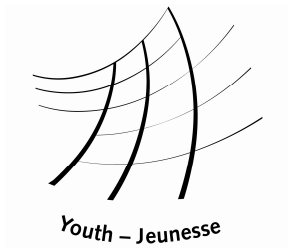
Challenges faced by young refugees and asylum seekers in accessing their social rights and their integration, while in transition to adulthood

17 - 18 November 2011

European Youth Centre Strasbourg, France

REPORT

www.coe.int/youth
www.coe.int



DJS/CM Refugees (2011) 7

Strasbourg 4 October 2012

Report of the
Consultative meeting

Challenges faced by young refugees and asylum seekers in accessing their social rights and their integration, while in transition to adulthood

17-18 November 2011

European Youth Centre Strasbourg

Written by Kateryna Shalayeva
Final edited by: Valerie Pini, Peter Mucha and Menno Ettema

Contents

SUMMARY	6
INTRODUCTION	8
Rationale	
Profile of Participants	
Methodology	
Programme Flow	
General Principles of the Report	
WELCOME ADRESSES	13
Ulrich BUNJES, <i>Head of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe</i>	
Jutta SEIDEL, <i>Senior Legal Associate/Officer in Charge, UNHCR Representation to the European Institutions in Strasbourg</i>	
KEY INPUTS	15
Sebastian RIETZ, <i>Committee of Migration, Refugees and Population, Parliamentary Assembly, Council of Europe</i>	
Magdalena SMIESZEK, <i>Regional Integration Officer, UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe, Budapest</i>	
MAPPING THE REALITIES OF YOUNG ASULYM-SEEKERS AND REFUGEES, WHILE IN TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD	18
Challenge I: Suddenly Adult, Social and Legal Status	18
1. Social and Legal Status	
2. Age Assessment	
Challenge II: Administration	19
1. Relations with Authorities	
2. Lack of Administrative Harmonisation	
Challenge III: Access to Social Rights	20
1. Access to Information	
2. Access to Formal Education	
2.1 Secondary School	
2.1.1 Admission to School Criteria	
2.1.2 Curriculum	
2.1.3 Risk of Detection	
2.2 Higher Education	
2.3. Professional Training	
3. Access to Employment	
4. Access to Means of Transportation	
5. Access to Housing	
6. Access to Health Care	
7. Access to Family Reunification	
Challenge IV: Successful Integration and Greater Personal Autonomy	24
1. Interpretation	
2. Language Training	
3. Providing Guidance in Daily Operations	
4. Social Integration - Social Environment	
5. Professionalization of Social Workers and Youth Workers	

Challenge V: Sustainability of Actions	26
1. Research	
2. Advocacy - Civil Society	
3. People's Networking	
SUMMARY OF IDENTIFIED SOLUTIONS	
Challenge I: Suddenly Adult, Social and Legal	28
1. Social and Legal Status	
2. Age Assessment	
Challenge II : Administration	29
Challenge III: Access to Social Rights	29
1. Access to Information	
2. Access to Formal Education	
3. Access to Employment	
4. Access to Means of Transportation	
5. Access to Housing	
6. Access to Health Care	
7. Access to Family Reunification	
Challenge IV: Successful Integration and Greater Personal Autonomy	31
1. Interpretation	
2. Language Training	
3. Providing Guidance in Daily Operations	
4. Social Integration - Social Environment	
5. Professionalization of Social Workers and Youth Workers	
Challenge V: Sustainability of Actions	32
1. Research	
2. Advocacy – Civil Society	
3. People's Networking	
THE PROGRAMME	34
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	36

SUMMARY

The consultative meeting "Challenges faced by young refugees and asylum seekers in accessing their social rights and their integration, while in transition to adulthood" was held on 17th and 18th of November 2011 in Strasbourg at the European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe.

The thirty two participants included young people in the situation of asylum, and representatives of national civil society organisations and international networks, locally-based service organisations for young asylum-seekers and refugees, international researchers and the Council of Europe and the UNHCR. The event therefore brought together experts with a good mixture of profiles and experiences relevant in the field of young refugees and asylum-seekers.

The consultative meeting aimed to identify existing successful practices and to develop possible strategies in order to ensure access to social rights of young refugees and asylum-seekers who are in transition to adulthood in Europe.

The consultative meeting had the following objectives:

- To discuss the challenges faced in Europe today by young refugees and asylum-seekers who are becoming to young adults.
- To develop recommendations for action regarding the integration and protection of human rights of young refugees and asylum-seekers, while taking into account existing recommendations and project outcomes of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, and the UNHCR.
- To further develop the work of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe on social rights and young refugees, and discuss possibilities to further associate young refugees and asylum-seekers to the bi-annual programme.
- To consolidate the work between the Youth Department, and the Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population of the Council of Europe; and the UNHCR.
- To strengthen the cooperation with European partners when developing an adequate programme and durable solutions for young refugees and asylum-seekers.

This report builds upon three principal ideas expressed throughout the Council of Europe's recommendations covering asylum policies, and firmly supported by the participants of the consultative meeting. These principles are: *The child is first, foremost and only, a child!, the legal consequences of being considered 'Suddenly' an adult!, and the need to acknowledge the transitional phase to adulthood of young people.*

The participants of the consultative meeting advocated a multidisciplinary approach to address the situation of young refugees and asylum-seekers while in transition to adulthood.

Five key challenges have been identified and potential solutions formulated:

- The juridical status of young refugees and asylum-seekers in transition to adulthood and age assessment procedures.

- The lack of harmonisation in the applied administrative procedures and the relations with authorities.
- Enjoying as young refugees and asylum-seekers equal opportunities and access to your social rights especially related to education.
- The economic, social and cultural integration of young refugees and asylum-seekers.
- The support measures available for young refugees and asylum-seekers when working with asylum policies and practices.

Overall, the need was expressed for a truly global vision on the situation of young people seeking asylum in Europe. There is need for clear, positive messages and effective strategies of social integration and accompaniment of young refugees and asylum seekers, while in transition to adulthood.

This period of 'transition' needs to be specifically addressed in policies, law and practice. Young refugees and asylum-seekers, while in transition to adulthood, should be considered as a separate group, with secured legal status and continued social assistance until their life project is fully realised.

INTRODUCTION

This report is the product of the intellectual efforts and inspiring debates that took place on 17th and 18th of November 2011, at the European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg.

A group of committed people was invited by the Youth Department, Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation of the Council of Europe to share their experiences, to debate and to propose solutions to a very urgent social matter: the access of young refugees and asylum-seekers to their social and economic rights, while in transition to adulthood.

This consultative meeting builds on previous activities organised or supported by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, such as:

- The training seminar 'Raising young refugees' voices in Europe and beyond', held in November 2006.
- The International meeting 'Raising the voices of young refugees: A step forward to organise ourselves', held in February 2008.
- The Consultative meeting 'Being a young refugee in Europe today', held in December 2008.
- The Study Session 'Active participation as a tool to social inclusion: The current challenges of refugee youth', held in June 2009.
- The Consultative meeting 'What future for the work with young refugees, IDPs and asylum seekers?' held in March 2010.¹

Specifically, this consultative meeting aimed to identify existing successful practices and to develop possible strategies to ensure that young refugees and asylum-seekers in a transition phase are able to access their social rights.

The objectives of the Consultative Meeting, therefore, were:

- To discuss the challenges faced by young refugees and asylum seekers who are in transition to adulthood in Europe today.
- To develop recommendations for action regarding the integration and protection of human rights of young refugees and asylum-seekers while taking into account previous relevant work by the Parliamentary Assembly, the Youth Department of the Council of Europe and by the UNHCR.
- To further develop the work of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe on social rights and young refugees, and discuss possibilities to further associate young refugees and asylum-seekers to the bi-annual programme.
- To consolidate the work between the Youth Department, the Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population of the Council of Europe and the UNHCR.

¹Further details of these events are available on the website of the Youth Department, Council of Europe at www.coe.int

- To strengthen the cooperation of the Council of Europe and UNHCR with European partners when developing an adequate programme and durable solutions for young refugees and asylum seekers.

This consultative meeting was jointly organised by the Youth Department and the Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population of the Council of Europe, in close collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner Representation to the European Institutions in Strasbourg.

Rationale

This report builds upon three principal ideas some of which are already expressed in Council of Europe's documentation covering asylum policy and firmly expressed by the participants of the consultative meeting.

The child is first, foremost and only, a child²

...and only then a migrant, says The Council of Europe Recommendation on undocumented migrant children in irregular situations. This Recommendation refers to the best interest of the child, as stipulated by Article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child.

For the Council of Europe, the best interest of the child shall always prevail when making decisions that affect them. The Council of Europe has developed strong guidelines concerning the protection of the human rights of children in the situation of irregular migration and maintains high standards regarding child's protection.

One of many examples of successful intervention of the Council of Europe for protection of children in the situation of irregular migration is the recent ruling of the European Court of Human Rights. In the affair *Rahimi v. Greece*³ in 2011, the Court condemned Greece for violation of the principle of the best interest of the child. The Court declared that a child should not be put into prison based on the sole reason that this child is an undocumented migrant. The Court also ruled that a child had an inalienable right to adequate care and to a legal guardian. This is an obligation of the state to provide a child with the necessary assistance.

Therefore, internationally recognised standards for the protection of children human rights exist in irregular situation. Nevertheless, children grow up and their entrance to adulthood remains very uneasy.

'Suddenly' adult!⁴

How many of us knew what adult life was when we just turned 18?

Becoming an adult brings a radical change into a young person's life, in terms of social roles or social expectations. The transition to adulthood is a rationally challenging process and emotionally very demanding to everyone.

2 Recommendation 1985 (2011). Undocumented migrant children in an irregular situation: a real cause for concern. Parliamentary Assembly Council of Europe. Paragraph 1.

3 ECHR, Case 8687/08, *Rahimi v. Greece*, 5 April 2011

4 The term 'suddenly adult' is used in this report to name both natural ageing process and declaration of age in result of age assessment

It usually brings confusing experiences based on social expectations towards 'the children who have grown up'. It coincides with self-perception, the image of oneself, which is not necessarily mature yet.

For a young asylum-seeker and a refugee, the process of becoming an adult is even more challenging than for anyone else. Their personal transformation (growing up) coincides with the need to acquire living skills in another society (hosting country).

Additionally, in this period young asylum-seekers and refugees go through several 'administrative losses': the loss of accommodation in children's home, the loss of children's allowance, and the loss of legal guardian. The situation is particularly alarming for unaccompanied migrant children⁵ who have no family around to rely upon.

Need to acknowledge the transitional phase⁶

There is a strong need for acknowledging the transitional phase that young asylum-seekers and refugees are living through, the transition from childhood to adulthood. The Council of Europe, for example, recommends establishing a 'life project' for young asylum-seekers and refugees in order to support the process of transition to adulthood.

In this context, life project is a strategy, an action plan, for young asylum-seekers and refugees. Via an established set of steps, it aims to render a young person more autonomous and active in society.

In order to achieve this, life project shall include activities related to: social integration, personal development, education - vocational training, housing, health and employment.

Thereby, life project is particularly important for successful transition from childhood to adulthood in the situation of unaccompanied migrant children and young adult refugees and asylum-seekers.

Profile of Participants

The meeting was attended by 23 'experts' in their own right including young asylum seekers, members of youth-led organisations, migrants support centres, international experts, and representatives of the UNHCR and Council of Europe bodies.

Important input has been made by civil society organisations, who are everyday practitioners. Two international networks were represented: Voices of Young Refugees in Europe, with members coming from Montenegro and the Netherlands, and the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection, represented attending from Greece.

National organisations were represented by Aktion (Germany), France Terre d'Asile (France), Institut Protestant (France), and Cooperative Terre Solidali (Italy).

Strasbourg-based associations were invited too, and were represented by Themis Association, Association Jean Lataste, and Foyer Les Fougères.

⁵ Unaccompanied minors are children under the age of 18 who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not in the care of an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so (Appendix to Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)9. Concepts. Point 5).

⁶ Recommendation CM/Rec (2007)9 on life projects for unaccompanied migrant children. Committee of Ministers. Council of Europe.

The UNHCR was represented by the UNHCR Representation to the European Institutions in Strasbourg and the UNHCR Regional Representation to Central Europe.

Different bodies of the Council of Europe were present, including representatives from the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, from the Committee of Migration, Refugees and Population of the Parliamentary Assembly and from the Youth Department.

Methodology

The programme included a mixture of expert inputs, working groups and plenary debriefings that were followed by a case study of the 'ENTER!' project.

The mixture of working methods, combined with inputs from representatives of the Council of Europe and the UNHCR, allowed for the creation of a stimulating working atmosphere.

English and French were the working languages of the meeting. Simultaneous translation was provided during plenary sessions. The working groups were conducted either in English or in French, while during the second day a bilingual working group was organised with simultaneous translation.

Programme Flow

The two day meeting was opened with the official addresses. Mr. Ulrich Bunjes, Head of the Youth Department, Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation of the Council of Europe and Ms. Jutta Seidel, Senior Legal Associate / Officer in Charge, UNHCR Representation to the European Institutions in Strasbourg, presented the official positions of both institutions and highlighted their political priorities.

The welcome addresses were followed by the introduction of participants and the presentation of the objectives of the consultative meeting.

The key inputs were provided by Mr. Sebastian Rietz, substituting for Ms. Ivi-Triin Odrats, Committee of Migration, refugees and population of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and Ms. Magdalena Smieszek, Regional Integration Officer, UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe, Budapest.

Mr. Sebastian Rietz detailed the Council of Europe priorities on the topic of unaccompanied minors and migrant children in irregular situations. Ms. Magdalena Smieszek presented the UNHCR online evaluation tool, used by UNHCR in Central Europe in order to measure integration of forced migrants in hosting societies.

The inputs from key experts were followed by the first round of working groups in the afternoon. The participants were invited to map the realities faced by young refugees and asylum-seekers when trying to access their social rights and integrate in their new country. A special focus needed to be kept on the transition from childhood to adulthood. In addition, the participants were asked to identify existing positive experiences of social integration of young refugees and asylum-seekers.

The second day started with a presentation of the results of the working groups, followed by a reflection on the identified challenges and solutions. The 'ENTER!' project was presented as a possible comparative example of a Youth Department initiative. The 'ENTER!' project aims to promote the protection of social rights of young people from disadvantaged

neighbourhoods by youth workers and young people. The challenges, approaches and solutions developed in the Enter! project were taken into consideration in the afternoon working groups.

In the working groups, that followed the morning session of the second day, participants reflected on the results of the meeting thus far and proceeded to draft recommendations on how to strengthen successful practices and to implement suggested solutions. The participants were invited to suggest possibilities for potential involvement of young refugees and asylum-seekers in activities of the Youth Department, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the UNHCR.

The meeting was closed with participants expressing their impressions and expectations for future cooperation.

General Principles of the Report

This report builds on the experience shared by the participants of the consultative meeting and their drafted recommendations. Occasionally examples are provided from specific countries to illustrate the points raised by participants.

The participants of the consultative meeting advocated a multidisciplinary approach in addressing the situation of young refugees and asylum-seekers, while in transition to adulthood. Their approach is illustrated in this report.

WELCOME ADRESSES

Ulrich BUNJES, Head of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe.

Mr. Bunjes expressed the initial conviction that nobody can talk better about young refugees' needs than young refugees themselves. Due to the commitment of young refugees in the activities of the Youth Department it was possible to prepare recommendations and action plans, to address the challenges that young refugees and asylum-seekers face in accessing their human rights and in particular their social rights.

He, therefore, invited all the experts to the consultative meeting to share their valuable experience with the Youth Department to enhance the advocacy for human rights and active participation of young refugees and asylum-seekers.

Mr. Bunjes explained that the economic crisis, which pushes young people to look for a better future in Europe, has also hit the field of youth work in Europe itself. Fewer funds are available for youth centres and youth work. Moreover, vital information and counselling services for young people have been effected by budget cuts. The consequent decline of the range of services and support programmes has hit young refugees even harder. In addition, they are subjected to a range of policies and regulations that often limit their possibilities to develop themselves.

New in their host countries, Mr. Bunjes continues, young refugees have to overcome resistance, xenophobia and misconceptions about their situation and their reasons to flee. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has suggested including the protection of the rights of young refugees and asylum-seekers in the framework of a new convention on the rights of young people. However, at this stage, it seems unlikely that the member states will follow. Therefore, the initiatives in the youth field, in youth work in particular, become even more important.

He concludes with the statement that the Youth Department has committed itself to continue to promote social inclusion of young refugees and asylum-seekers in Europe, and hopes for common work towards a policy instrument that responds to the needs of the young people and upholds human rights for everyone.

Jutta SEIDEL, Senior Legal Associate/Officer in Charge, UNHCR Representation to the European Institutions in Strasbourg.

Ms. Jutta took the opportunity to talk on behalf of the UNHCR about solutions, possibilities and strategies in response to the growing challenges faced by young refugees and asylum-seekers in accessing their social rights and their integration, while in transition to adulthood.

Before sharing her thoughts on durable solutions, she reminded participants that local integration is only one of the possibilities and may not be the most desirable solution, since it is dependent on various situations of each refugee.

In reality, 6 million refugees worldwide have been in exile for more than five years, therefore in her speech; Ms. Jutta attempted to urge others to address the present situation of people for whom local integration is the only viable solution. Once the most viable solution is defined, the focus can be and should be shifted to reach the final goal: put an end to refugees' protection needs. She also added that when local integration is the only way, then the unique objective should be the complete integration of refugees – legal, cultural,

economic and social.

Unfortunately, refugees face a number of challenges in their host country, which include stereotypes, racism, xenophobia or violence. For young refugees, who are not exempt from confronting such challenges, integration seems even more daunting as they have a double objective: becoming an adult and being able to integrate in the society in which they have just landed.

Although the UNHCR has learned from its experience on how to approach multiple challenges faced by refugees, Ms. Jutta pointed out that no universal solution exists, therefore a more specific method is recommended rather than a specific solution. The AGDM strategy (Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming Strategy) within UNHCR was introduced as a specific method by which, ideally, refugees are the actors of every process trying to identify problems and find solutions to help in integration. Accordingly, this strategy is the only mean to protect people deprived from their rights to become autonomous.

To conclude, the role and the aim of UNHCR were outlined, reminding participants that UNHCR intends to reinforce partnerships between state agencies, local communities, civil society and refugees themselves. Hence, states are constantly reminded about their commitment to implement the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees which helps to secure refugees' legal status with an access to social rights equal to that of nationals. The final remark was a reminder of the very topic of this conference: how we allow young refugees to become full members of our society.

KEY INPUTS

Sebastian RIETZ, Committee of Migration, Refugees and Population, Parliamentary Assembly, Council of Europe.

Main conclusions of the two reports of the Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population on the topic of unaccompanied minors and irregular migrant children.

8 years ago the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted its first recommendation in regard to unaccompanied migrant children in irregular situation. What is the added value of the work done by the Council of Europe in this area?

First of all, it is the “rights-based” approach that the Council of Europe is advocating, be it about detention, age assessment, guardianship, returns or child-specific experiences of persecution.

In this regard, the Council of Europe has proposed 15 common principles on how to deal with unaccompanied migrant children in irregular situation. These principles address the authorities and other stakeholders in the field.

A migrant child is, first of all, a child, and only then, a migrant and an asylum-seeker, believes the Council of Europe. It means that children are entitled to special care and protection, that their best interests shall prevail in all decisions affecting them, and that the child’s views shall be heard. It also means that these principles shall apply to all unaccompanied children, and not only those who submitted a request for asylum or other form of international protection.

No detention of children shall be allowed on migration grounds. Their return to the country of origin shall never happen without proper guarantees for safety and reintegration. The creation of reception centres in the countries of origin for young asylum-seekers and refugees does not cater for the child’s best interest.

Any of three options shall be considered: return and reintegration in the country of origin, family reunification in a third country and child’s integration into the host country.

Undocumented children who are separated from their parents shall receive continuous and reliable support even when over 18. Unnecessary psychological pressure caused by the uncertainty of their future shall be avoided. The practice of ‘ageing out’, when unaccompanied children are returned home and when they reach the age of 18, shall be abandoned.

At present, unaccompanied children who will soon become 18 years old, ‘vanish’ from care centres. Instead of having effective solutions to their situation, these children are forced into irregular status and straight into the hands of traffickers.

At this stage, there is no European legal instrument which would govern transition of unaccompanied children to adulthood. National legal frameworks and administrative practices vary considerably.

As generalised experience, young migrants, who turn 18, can no longer benefit from procedural safeguards or have entitlement to family reunification. They are exposed to increased risk of detention. The safeguards regarding return cease to exist.

Unless their residence permits are extended on individual compassionate or humanitarian grounds, the former unaccompanied children automatically drift into irregular status.

Everything indicates that the asylum procedures for children in Europe must be improved. Every unaccompanied child shall be granted a fair, comprehensive, and individualised assessment that respects age and gender specificities of a child. The results of such assessment shall lead to durable and beneficial solution for every child.

The assessment must be carried out on a case-by-case basis and with the consent of all parties concerned: immigration authorities, social services, child's legal guardian and the child. When identification of durable solution is pending, a child shall benefit from legal residence status.

The child's rights shall be extended for the whole duration of the personal life project, even if the project goes beyond the age 18.

Children shall enjoy the right to challenge decisions concerning them, with the help of their legal guardians and lawyers.

It is clear, that Europe need common guidelines on the best interests' assessment. Europe also needs common standards and procedural safeguards on what concerns legal guardianship and legal aid, age assessment, harmonised system of asylum for unaccompanied minors.

Particularly, the rights of undocumented migrant children need to be clarified and strengthened in the following areas: right to education, right to health care, right to housing, protection from detention, and protection from exploitation.

All the above mentioned should form the basis for the harmonised policies and practices in regard of unaccompanied children in Europe.

It is therefore important, that the same protection measures and procedures are applied in all 47 member states of the Council of Europe.

Magdalena SMIESZEK, Regional Integration Officer, UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe, Budapest.

Integration indicators as part of online evaluation tool developed by UNHCR in Central Europe.

Integration is a dynamic, multi-faceted two way process, leading to full and equal membership in society. Integration is a success, when refugee communities are ready to adapt to the host society, while keeping their cultural identity, and receiving communities and institutions are ready to welcome refugees as part of their diverse population. Integration is a complex process, which includes legal, economic, social and cultural dimensions.

There are many indicators for integration, to list a few, secure legal status, access to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, access to citizenship, employment, education, health, housing, and vocational training. It also includes acquisition of knowledge of host society's language, history and institutions, participation in life of the society, equal treatment and protection from discrimination.

Integration necessitates actions from various parties. It includes numerous ministries and state administration at different levels all the way down to municipalities. It also covers a large variety of non-governmental stakeholders such as NGOs, employers, trade unions, schools, education providers of language and vocational skills, health care providers, the banking system, landlords and many others.

Therefore, it has been very difficult to evaluate the impact and the cost efficiency of

integration measures so far. Available information is rather unsystematic and *ad hoc*.

However, the evaluation of integration is important, because it allows adjusting policies, to assess progress on integration and to make the information exchange more effective. Monitoring is important because it allows increasing comparability of national experiences and reinforcing the European learning process.

Therefore, the UNHCR came with the idea of the on-line evaluation tool, which includes around two hundred relevant indicators. The tool aims to gather and analyse data about whether policies are working in practice. It is sort of a 'benchmark' among peers and stakeholders in the region of Central Europe.

The indicators evaluate general considerations, like the impact of reception conditions on integration; the infrastructure for mainstreaming refugees and their special needs into different public policies. They also evaluate legal integration, like residency rights for refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. Family unity, reunification and socio-economic conditions make part of the evaluation too.

There are four types of indicators, which are used to evaluate these areas. They are: policy indicators, detailing how laws and policies in place help to implement integration principles; administrative inputs, indicating if the government invested in the infrastructure to implement these policies and services in partnership with NGOs; financial inputs, evaluating government's commitment to use sufficient national resources and to effectively utilize EU financial support; and outcomes, whether beneficiaries of international protection who access and use these policies have greater participation and well-being in society.

The Evaluation tool unites different areas of expertise (i.e. naturalisation, employment, health) with different types of expertise (i.e. legal, policy, financial, evaluation, research). It uses a 'joined-up approach' of different responsible actors (from states to NGOs and refugees themselves) and a 'joined-up approach' of different types of evidence (self-assessment, internal audit, independent evaluation).

It is an on-line tool. Putting the tool online facilitates sharing and completing the questions, as well as uploading, sharing, and analysing the results.

When correspondents complete their questions online, their answers are automatically coded and uploaded on a central national and regional database. It works as a peer review process with the help of coordinators.

The coordinators may ask questions of clarification and can generate simple, excel-like charts and graphs. In this manner, strengths and weaknesses are identified, and countries compared. Progress over time can be compared too.

Specific findings were brought in during the two days by the UNHCR representative and have been integrated in this report in the forthcoming sections.

MAPPING THE REALITIES OF YOUNG ASYLUM-SEEKERS AND REFUGEES, WHILE IN TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

The experts attending the consultative meeting undertook initial mapping of the daily realities of life of young refugees and asylum-seekers, taking special care of the aspects of “transition” from childhood to adulthood, and from being considered a minor or adult.

Challenge I: Suddenly Adult, Social and Legal Status

1. Social and Legal Status

Overall, it was noted by the participants of the consultative meeting that a minor, who seeks asylum, is obligated to become mature much faster than any other child. In their travel from country of origin to country of asylum, children face a great risk to their security and personal integrity. Upon their arrival to Europe, young asylum-seekers risk detention and deportation. They also risk homelessness, hunger and violence. Their experiences and ‘relation’ with life largely surpass what could be considered as reasonable for their age.

As it is further described in this chapter, there is a sharp difference in access to rights and legal status of young migrants, depending on their age: the one under 18 (minors) and the one above 18 (adult).

Minors, in the situation of irregular migration, are protected by international law on the rights of child, as any other children. A drastic change happens when a minor migrant turns 18.

When an asylum-seeker or a refugee turns 18, they enter into a new phase of their life where they are ‘suddenly adults’.

In this period, young asylum-seekers and refugees discover rapidly, and often overnight, what being an adult means for their living situation. Adult life arrives with new responsibilities and social expectations. And this period is especially difficult to those young migrants who have no members of family with them, because:

1. Young asylum-seekers and refugees turning 18 lose support of children's services and legal guardians. Their cases are now handled by immigration authorities as of any other adult person. And they receive no particular administrative support or guiding into their new legal status.
2. ‘Suddenly adult’ asylum-seekers and refugees are expected to have the capacity to read and understand, without any additional training, legal texts and administrative documents that concern them. There is no exception to the principle ‘ignorantia juris non excusat’, which means ‘ignorance of the law excuses no one’. They are expected to fulfil all the requirements from day one.
3. on their 18th birthday asylum-seekers and refugees usually have to leave their accommodation, which has been allocated to them, while they were still minors. They urgently need to find another place to live, and find ways to pay for it.
4. Young asylum-seekers and refugees turning 18 lose their children's allowances. An economic solution, being it job or social allowance needs to be found quickly otherwise, they risk becoming homelessness and worse.
5. This means most often they need to find a job, under condition, that they have the right to

work. Legislation, that regulates access of asylum-seekers to labour market, varies from country to country.

2. Age Assessment

One of the recurring issues of the whole debate around young asylum-seekers and refugees, while in transition to adulthood, and therefore also during the consultation meeting is the assessment of their age.

Currently, X-ray of bones and similar radiology tests are widely used as a medical method to estimate biological age. Questionable from medical and ethical points of view, the techniques of X-ray are highly contested by international organisations, civil society and forced migrants themselves.

Therefore, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Resolution 1810 (2011) 'Unaccompanied children in Europe: issues of arrival, stay and return' has addressed the member states as following:

“Age assessment should only be carried out if there are reasonable doubts about a person being underage. The assessment should be based on the presumption of minority, involve a multidisciplinary evaluation by an independent authority over a period of time and not be based exclusively on medical assessment. Examinations should only be carried out with the consent of the child or his or her guardian. They should not be intrusive and should comply with medical ethical standards. The margin of error of medical and other examinations should be clearly indicated and taken into account. If doubts remain that the person may be underage, he or she should be granted the benefit of the doubt. Assessment decisions should be subject to administrative or judicial appeal”.

At present, there is no single European standard of running age assessment. Age assessment remains very approximate and may differ for up to 5 years from actual biological age of a person⁸.

Certain solutions can be proposed by applying multidisciplinary approach to age assessment. Multidisciplinary approach combines medical and psychological tests, and shall consider document evidences and include personal interviews. But even in this case, validity of results remains under question.

Therefore, the Council of Europe in its Resolution 1810 (2011) and NGOs via their advocacy campaigns underline the importance of the benefit of the doubt. As testified by young asylum-seekers and refugees themselves, they want that officials believe them and do not perceive everyone as 'liars'.

Challenge II: Administration

1. Relations with Authorities

The first 'relations' young refugees and asylum-seekers build up with their country of asylum are with the administration of this country. Building trust between the public administration and young asylum-seekers and refugees is an especially sensitive issue. However administration officers often have difficulty to communicate with young people, especially if

⁷ Resolution 1810 (2011), Unaccompanied children in Europe: issues of arrival, stay and return. Council of Europe, Paragraph 5.10

⁸ Separated, asylum-seeking children in European Union Member States. Comparative Report. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. 2011. p.53

they are asylum-seekers and refugees.

Usually, there is no common administrative rule on how to interact with young asylum-seekers. And civil servants receive no special training on that. Therefore, they find themselves unprepared to answer certain questions or to deal with specific requests of young asylum-seekers and refugees.

Participants claimed they experienced serious difficulty dealing with intercultural interaction and solving language barrier in order for young asylum-seekers and refugees and the administration to communicate. Young migrants, who have just arrived to a new country, are not necessarily aware of *“how it functions here, in this new country”*. Civil servants at the very same time do not necessarily know *“how it functions there, where young people are from”*.

2. Lack of Administrative Harmonisation

More than that, immigration policies and administrative procedures often resemble patchwork, where changes happen way too frequent in one administrative field, and way too slow in another resulting to miss matches and lack of harmonisation.

One of the dramatic examples of administrative incoherence relates to age assessment: a young person remains minor for certain state services and becomes adult for other administrations. This double status causes a lot of trouble to a young person. Participants provided some concrete examples:

“If, based on the result of age assessment, a young asylum-seeker or a refugee is declared an adult, and then social services for children immediately cease to pay child allowance. But the employment office may still refer to a birth certificate or the declared age by the young refugee that was accepted earlier, according to their documents the young refugee is still a minor. In which case, the employment office will refuse to pay social benefits available to adults leaving the young refugee with no financial support. It will neither be possible to sign a contract, rent accommodation nor to open a bank account. Without a rental contract such young persons risk ending up on the street, can not register for benefits or open a bank account and it is rather complicated to receive salary or social benefits without a bank account”.

Meanwhile following the change of the legal states of a young asylum seeker from child to adult the immigration authorities might start procedures aimed to deport the young person. Young refugees and asylum-seekers, who become 18, lose international protection guaranteed to children. They might be simply sent to their country of origin, as their residence permit might not be renewed.

Such situation often forces young refugees and asylum-seekers to simply ‘vanish’ from state registers. They are now on the street, without documents and job. They become an easy target for traffickers, risk becoming victims and perpetrators of violence and might get involvement in illegal activities.

Challenge III: Access to Social Rights

1. Access to Information

Access to information allows young asylum-seekers and refugees to find correct answers to their important, often urgent questions. Access to information allows young asylum-seekers and refugees to be informed about their rights, procedures to follow, documents to present,

requests to undertake, requirements to fulfil, deadlines to respect, and much more when entering the administrative procedures, for the first and throughout the process there after.

It is sometimes very difficult for young asylum-seekers and refugees to stay well-informed in the middle of the ocean of laws, procedures, blank forms, and deadlines which also often change. They would need procedures and documents written in an easy style and preferably in their native language. In addition someone should explain and guide them through administrative processes. This need is as pressing for young Asylum-seeking and refugee minors as those that just turned 18.

2. Access to Formal Education

Young asylum-seekers arrive from various countries with each different educational system, or possible, with no established schooling at all. Their formal educational level varies greatly. Consequently, their educational needs are different.

Some of asylum-seekers and refugees might not know how to read and write, and others are apt for university studies. There is a clear need for tailor-made educational policies in regard to young asylum-seekers and refugees.

2.1 Secondary School

2.1.1 Admission to School Criteria

European countries practice universal education meaning that anyone from a certain age to the age of 16 or 18, depending on the country, must go to school. But in several countries the right to education in practice is only guaranteed to children, born and raised in the country. For example until recently German law did not ensure children in irregular situation can also attend school. In several countries in Europe many asylum-seeking minors, especially those in irregular situations, are excluded from the possibility of getting into schools.

Other young asylum-seekers and refugees can not access school because by the time of arrival to the country of asylum, they have reached the upper compulsory school age limit. Their problem is that because of their travel, they have “lost” several years of schooling. By the time of admission to a hosting country they can however no longer enter school and therefore can not complete their secondary education.

A concrete example shared from Germany:

“Many young refugees came to Germany from Serbia during the Balkan war years. They made 6 years of school in Germany, and then were suddenly sent to Serbia. In Serbia these young people did not follow any education. Now with the Schengen agreement young refugees may come back. But because they did not make enough years at school, they cannot start a job or continue with education. No school wants to take them. They are too old for secondary education”.

2.1.2 Curriculum

School curriculum provides a standard set of information that has to be learned in a certain period of time at a certain generalised speed. There is an obvious need to take into consideration life circumstances of young asylum-seekers and refugees and their educational history when they enter school. Schools should explore how the curriculum can

be adapted to their learning needs and abilities. In many countries there are educational support measures that provide assistance to those who experience difficulty to progress with the general curriculum, but they fall short when addressing the different needs of young asylum seekers and refugees.

2.1.3 Risk of Detection

It is very unfortunate, but the school is often considered as a 'dangerous' place by irregular migrants. Children in irregular situation are usually identified via schools, and their families risk deportation. Therefore, parents in irregular situation avoid sending their children to school, thus children stay out of education.

2.2 Higher Education

Participants in the consultative meeting identified a change of barriers for young asylum-seekers and refugees aspiring to start university studies.

1. Young asylum-seekers and refugees need to prove they completed their secondary education and to present a certified diploma. But they usually arrive without any papers.
2. Accessing higher education is in several countries also restricted by age. For example: "*In Italy, one can only go to university at the age of 18 or older. Certain asylum-seekers and refugees are younger than 18, and are already in possession of their secondary school certificate. They are not allowed to start university immediately and need to wait*".
3. Publicly funded higher education and grants are not available to everyone. Examples shared in the consultative meeting: "*in Ukraine, foreigners always pay for their higher education. Nationals can apply for a grant or a loan*".

Where the system of loans exists, foreigners often do not have access to it. For example: "the Swiss government would give an educational loan to a Swiss national. However, in case of an asylum-seeker, there is no guarantee that the person will stay and pay the money back, so no grant is provided".

2.3. Professional Training

Current professional training projects for young asylum-seekers and refugees are strongly oriented towards fast employment. They do not envisage long-term theoretical studies. The participants reflected that young asylum-seekers and refugees need such professional training that reflects their professional aspirations, stimulates their learning potential and assures their economic sustainability.

Young asylum-seekers and refugees feel the need to be accompanied by a coach or a guardian in their professional training project.

3. Access to Employment

Questions of education and employment are paradoxically connected. On the one hand, young asylum-seekers and refugees discover they need to work in order to finance their existence. On the other hand, they might sustain delays and be late with their studies, or might not have access to any training because of a language barrier, missing documents, or

absence of finances to pay for the education.

When the majority of their peers usually continue education in order to find their place on the labour market later on, young asylum-seekers and refugees need to settle this dilemma straight away and have to work in order to finance their studies.

Without qualification, young refugees and asylum seekers end up in low-skilled jobs, and their employers are not keen on supporting their continued education.

Their access to the labour market is, therefore, very difficult. And such situation goes against all efforts to facilitate greater social and economic autonomy of young asylum-seekers and refugees.

4. Access to Means of Transportation

Some of the participants in the consultative meeting raised a particular issue: *“How can young refugees and asylum-seekers travel to attend a job interview or a meeting with the immigration authorities, if they do not have any access to means of transportation? Simply said, they have no money to pay for their ticket.”* They would be in a similar situation, if they wanted to visit family members, or to buy food, or clothes.

Access to means of transportation is strongly related to economic capacity of young refugees and asylum-seekers, and therefore, needs to be addressed in respective policies.

5. Access to Housing

Homelessness among young asylum-seekers and refugees persists as a continues threat, and too often becomes reality. In certain countries social housing is provided to minors. But, unfortunately, *“it resembles a Cinderella story in its dark moments, at midnight, the day of the 18th birthday of the young refugee, the carriage becomes a pumpkin, the right to social housing for minors disappears. Will a story of a young refugee and an asylum-seeker have a happy ending too?”* as one participant explains.

It would seem logical to extend housing assistance, in whatever form, until solutions to the personal and professional challenges of a young refugee and an asylum-seeker, regardless of their age, has been defined and realised.

Participants suggested that the existing lack of places in temporary accommodations could be compensated via rent in the private sector. To make this possible, the state or NGOs may become guarantors for a young person. The state could also contribute financially to such an initiative.

Participants in the consultative meeting underlined that housing is an important element in the process of integration of young refugees and asylum-seekers into the larger society of the host country. Providing support in the rent in private sector will address the issue of segregation into social housing neighbourhoods, known as the aggregation of foreigners and poor people. The created mixed living environment will contribute into more intensive intercultural communication. All together, it will contribute to successful integration and greater autonomy of young refugees and asylum-seekers.

6. Access to Health Care

This is one of the least developed legislative issues according to participants. An example

was shared from the French law where there is no provision for social security coverage of unaccompanied migrant minors, because only parents are recognised as insurance holders for their children. There is no provision for a legal guardian either, who could take responsibility in case of vaccination, for instance.

In case of adults, a person must work in order to have the right to health care coverage. As was already mentioned earlier, the access of young refugees and asylum-seekers to the labour market remains a challenge and is limited. Therefore, their access to health care remains restricted.

As a participants mentioned: *“One shall not forget that access to health care is an important issue of public hygiene. It is also an important human rights issue”.*

7. Access to Family Reunification

Family remains important to young people, particularly to young asylum-seekers and refugees. It provides emotional comfort, economic support, education, guidance and protection.

Family reunification on the one hand often stimulates more active social integration into the hosting society, but on the other often also stimulates voluntary return, as family members feel stronger together. Family reunification therefore, should be seen as part of the ‘life project’ of young asylum-seekers and refugees.

Challenge IV: Successful Integration and Greater Personal Autonomy

1. Interpretation

Interpretation is essential to ensure the administrative process young refugees and asylum-seekers have to go through is fair, truthful and accurate, as establishing a relation of trust remains especially important with migrant minors and young adults. Since professional interpreters cost a lot, other solutions should be found.

The participants of the consultative meeting were saying that they had been experiencing the need of someone who is integrated into the hosting society, and is able to transfer ‘correct messages’, aiming to build the trust. This ‘someone’ called linguistic mediator, is a person belonging to the same community, and might be a former asylum-seeker her or himself. Having followed necessary training, young refugees and asylum-seekers can become interpreters for their peers. And professional interpretation would be upheld in conversation with advocate or social worker.

2. Language Training

Knowledge of the language of the host country - is an important step to successful integration, which facilitates access to their rights and to equal opportunities. It is clear that mastering the language is the way to affirm one's real social value. It allows access to education, employment, and housing. It also provides the capacity to defend oneself in court and during public administration procedures and allows becoming an autonomous individual without being a ‘surcharge’ for the society.

There are cases where young refugees and asylum-seekers speak the same language in their country of origin as in the host country and therefore are native (or nearly native) speakers in the hosting society. Nonetheless young people of those countries might only

speak their local dialect not used in the host society. It is, therefore, that all young refugees and asylum-seekers should have the possibility to access language training.

3. Providing Guidance in Daily Operations

While language training is important in the long run for their integration and independence, young asylum-seekers and refugees need rapid access to information about their rights in the country of asylum and about local administrative procedures. First information could be provided through translated and easy to read documents. However, it provides only a partial solution, as the level of illiteracy is high among asylum-seekers and refugees. Therefore there is always still a need for human contact, for someone who explains and guides the young asylum-seekers and refugees.

Participants of the meeting however noted that the guidance should go beyond the administrative procedures only. Basic daily practices, which may be banal to someone who was born and raised in the host country, or to someone who is used to travelling, might be an absolutely new thing for a young asylum-seeker or a refugee. As one participant summoned up: *“how to read a city map, how to make a transfer within public transport, how to take a metro, how to buy a transport ticket, how to understand validity of it, how to read a public transport timetable for example in order to get for an interview with immigration authorities; how to use computer and how to navigate through the internet – in order to find necessary information and forms; how it functions in a supermarket, how to pay by credit card – in order to buy food and clothes, and so on.”*

There is also a large set of administrative skills that a person needs to possess in order to operate in modern society: how to fill in official documents, how to write requests to all sorts of institutions, how to follow personal cases in administration or court. It is necessary to know how the administration functions in order to understand how to address it and how to defend oneself.

There is, therefore, the need for continued guidance and to prepare the young asylum-seeker or refugee who is in transition to adulthood for their newly gained legal independence by a private person, an NGO or a social service.

4. Social Integration - Social Environment

There is need for equilibrium between ensuring support from members of the native community, which helps to understand the new society the young asylum-seeker has entered and the necessity to jump into the new waters of life, with the purpose to become autonomous. This equilibrium is one of the central characteristics of successful integration of young asylum-seekers and refugees in their hosting society.

It is very important to stimulate social integration of young migrants. They should be encouraged to meet with people who live next door, and should be helped in establishing human ties with their peers.

Parents play a crucial role in the personal development and social integration of young refugees and asylum-seekers. As role models, parents show example to their children.

It might happen that migrant families remain reluctant towards social integration and community participation of their younger generations. It applies to girls and young women in particular, according to participants in the meeting. Therefore, positive examples of people from their own cultural communities are determinant for successful social and cultural

adaptation of young migrants overall.

Young people in the situation of asylum shall be encouraged to fully and freely integrate into their new society, to have access to all social networks available to their peers.

Participation in social, cultural and sport life was called the “*magic factor*” by participants of the consultative meeting. It is magic, because it accelerates the development of social cohesion between young asylum-seekers and refugees, and their peers. It also helps to communicate and to ‘exchange’ cultures. A district championship or an outing together, a promenade in forest or a picnic in a park will already create human ties. There should be more of such initiatives.

5. Professionalization of Social Workers and Youth Workers

It was noted that social and youth workers are not always well informed about the challenges of forced migration. As a consequence, they are not prepared to advise young refugees and asylum-seekers in their situations.

Youth and social workers need additional training in order to know how to address specific needs of young asylum-seekers and refugees. It resumes to having competences to accompany young refugees and asylum-seekers in their transition to adulthood.

Challenge V: Sustainability of Actions

1. Research

Participants of the consultative meeting realised the an overview of existing practices was missing and only limited research data was available on the issue of young asylum-seekers and refugees in transition to adulthood and young forced migrants in general.

There is need for further research, which would aim at presenting tailor-made solutions to the challenges of young refugees and asylum-seekers. The participants thought of a sort of mapping exercise, which would describe the actors in the field, and would analyse actual problems in various countries across Europe. It would then present how these actual problems are addressed in policies and practice, and would capitalise on identified solutions.

2. Advocacy - Civil Society

Civil society organisations (CSO) form an essential relay of the state when it comes to reception, guiding and integration of young asylum-seekers and refugees. They also play an intermediary role between public administration and migrants. It is most often CSO’s, where young asylum-seekers and refugees turn to when they need information, support, advice, or simply need to talk to someone and to be considered.

These relations are successful because they are based on trust. They are free from formal authority, human hierarchies and forced obedience to rules. Careful intervention and guiding of CSO’s helps to mitigate the fear that often obsesses young asylum-seekers and refugees.

In parallel to this, civil society organisations often keep strong relations with national authorities and seek cooperation. In this way, they serve as a motor of evolution of asylum policies by contributing to the perfection of the care system and remedying lacuna in administrative procedures.

3. People's Networking

The importance of human networks has been strongly emphasized in the consultative meeting. There is a continuous need to invest into human interactions and mutual learning among people. Honest exchange of opinions shall be upheld by all appropriate means. It shall aim to ally people and transform individuals into agents of change.

SUMMARY OF IDENTIFIED SOLUTIONS

Despite many challenges, the participants of the consultative meeting have identified potential solutions. They cover juridical status, education and economic, social, and cultural integration of young refugees and asylum-seekers, while in transition to adulthood.

Overall, the need was expressed for truly global vision on the situation of young people, who seek asylum in Europe. There is need for clear positive messages and effective strategies of social integration and accompaniment of young refugees and asylum seekers, while in transition to adulthood.

This period of 'transition' needs to be specifically addressed in policies, law and practice. Young refugees and asylum-seekers, while in transition to adulthood, should be considered as a separate group, with ensured legal status and continued social assistance, which is not cut off so abruptly.

Namely,

Challenge I: Suddenly Adult, Social and Legal

1. Social and Legal Status

- Being considered as a particular group, young refugees and asylum-seekers, while in transition to adulthood, should benefit from policies, laws, and practices that address their specific needs.
- Young asylum-seekers and refugees shall benefit from same presumption of innocence as all other people.
- Special attention shall be given to the situation of asylum-seekers and refugees who have been declared legally adults as result of age assessment.
- Complementary judgement (judgement suppletif)⁹ shall be used to establish the legal age of a young person, seeking asylum, in the absence of birth certificate or in case of reasonable doubt about its validity.
- 'Positive discrimination' shall be considered as an option, aiming at social integration and greater autonomy of young refugees and asylum-seekers.

2. Age Assessment

- Young asylum seekers and refugees shall be given the benefit of the doubt in the situation of age assessment.
- Age assessment shall only be used when serious doubt about the age of asylum-seeker or refugee exists, and shall not be possible without informed consent of a young person.

⁹ Complementary judgment is court rule, which replaces authentic document, in the situation, when its establishment is obligatory, but the original was either never made, or destroyed. Replacement of birth certificate is an example of complementary judgment.

- Age determination procedure shall be a multidisciplinary investigation, which considers biological, psychological and social factors.

Challenge II : Administration

- Protocol of reception of asylum-seekers and refugees shall provide non-discrimination and no sense of suspicion.
- State services shall be more involved into reception and accompaniment of young asylum-seekers and refugees. NGOs shall not be left alone.
- Administrative procedures of different authorities within one country shall be harmonised.
- Coordination between different state services, so far fragmented, shall be strengthened. Special attention should be given to cooperation between immigration service and children's and youth service.
- 'One window' or independent agency shall be established, which would deal exclusively with asylum applications for youth in transition to adulthood.
- Accelerated procedure of examination of asylum applications shall exist for minors and young adults.
- Public servants of different sectors of public administration shall receive training in how to deal with the requests and cases of young refugees and asylum-seekers.

Challenge III: Access to Social Rights

1. Access to Information

- Young asylum-seekers and refugees shall be informed about their rights in the country of asylum in the language they understand.
- There shall be youth-friendly publications, which explain how to access and use assistance in asylum processes.
- There shall be training sessions, where young refugees and asylum-seekers can learn how to collect and to use information in the country of asylum about their asylum status and procedures to follow, and how to defend their rights.

2. Access to Formal Education

- Access to education shall be opened to all asylum-seekers and refugees, independent of their age.
- Teachers shall be sensitized in intercultural issues, in how to deal with foreign students, particularly with asylum-seekers and refugees.
- Curriculum shall be sensitive to differences of educational levels and capacity that young refugees and asylum-seekers could have in comparison to their peers.

- Access to higher education shall be guaranteed via quotas or similar instruments.
- Young refugees and asylum-seekers shall have access to economic means to finance their studies, including higher education.
- Young migrants in situation of asylum, who are not in possession of valid documents, certifying their education, shall have access to special accelerated learning programme, which attests their qualification. Upon successful completion of such programme, asylum-seekers and refugees shall receive a recognised diploma, allowing them to continue education and to access the labour market.
- Young asylum-seekers and refugees shall have access to professional insertion projects that reflect their needs. Such professional insertion projects shall include a coach or a guardian.

3. Access to Employment

- Labour market shall be free from discrimination. Asylum-seekers and refugees shall have access to gainful employment.
- Equally qualified asylum-seekers and refugees shall enjoy equal payment for job of equal value.
- Anonymous CV continues to be an important non-discrimination instrument.

4. Access to Means of Transportation

- Free access to public transport shall be considered as an option.
- Exceptional revisit of fines shall be considered as an option.
- Explanations on the use of public transport should be provided.

5. Access to Housing

- Accessible housing shall become part of the support provided to for young asylum-seekers and refugees in transition to adulthood.
- The state and NGOs shall consider becoming guarantors for young asylum-seekers and refugees, if they, the young people, decide for renting in the private sector.
- The state shall consider the option to financially participate in accessible housing in private sector for young asylum-seekers and refugees.

6. Access to Health Care

- Access to free vaccination shall be guaranteed, as it assures good health condition of asylum-seekers and refugees and protects public hygiene.
- The problem of language barrier between a patient, who is a young asylum-seeker or refugee, and a medical practitioner shall be addressed.

- Formal protocol as how to orient unaccompanied migrant children in case of medical intervention shall be established. The role of an accompanying NGO shall be clarified.
- Health care coverage for unaccompanied migrant children shall be created, where it does not exist.

7. Access to Family Reunification

- Family reunification policies need to be fostered.

Challenge IV: Successful Integration and Greater Personal Autonomy

1. Interpretation

- The matter of trust shall be addressed in communication and interpretation with young refugees and asylum-seekers. Linguistic mediators shall be attracted to this, including young peers.
- Linguistic mediators shall receive the necessary training.
- Professional interpretation shall be upheld in conversation with an advocate and a social worker.

2. Language Training

- Young refugees and asylum-seekers shall have access to language training.
- Such training shall be free of charge and adapted to learning capacities of its audience.
- State organisations shall be involved in delivering language training, together with NGOs.

3. Providing Guidance in Daily Operations

- Young refugees and asylum-seekers, while in transition to adulthood, shall benefit from a mechanism which shall provide assistance throughout the period for at least 6 months after turning 18.
- 'Life project' shall be established for all young refugees and asylum-seekers, in the age between 16 and 23 (approximately). It shall include educational, professional and social dimensions, and shall aim at raising sustainable autonomy of young refugees and asylum-seekers.
- Mentoring system, type of 'big brother/big sister' programme, relying on peer to peer support¹⁰ shall be created. It shall connect with municipalities, schools and civil society.

¹⁰ Similar to ENTER! Project, Council of Europe, Youth Department. Please, refer to www.coe.int/youth for further information

4. Social Integration - Social Environment

- Young people in the situation of asylum shall be encouraged to fully and freely integrate and to have access to all social networks available to their peers.
- Young migrants shall be encouraged to take part in the community life of their neighbourhood, and to participate in economic, social, cultural and sport life.
- NGOs shall not forget about young migrants, while preparing their events.
- Integration policies shall stimulate positive role of community leaders/mediators.

5. Professionalization of Social Workers and Youth Workers

- Knowledge of social workers and youth workers about living conditions, access to rights and administrative procedures that concern young refugees and asylum-seekers shall be enhanced.
- Social workers and youth workers shall be brought together in a forum in order to discuss what competences they miss for guiding young asylum-seekers and refugees to successful integration.
- There shall be a training course, which can stand on its own or be implemented within existing curriculum for social workers and youth workers. This training course shall become an obligatory part of formal education of youth workers and social workers.
- A thematic tool-kit shall be created for use in educational activities with social workers and youth workers.

Challenge V: Sustainability of Actions

1. Research

- Comparative information shall be collected via research. It shall be oriented on practical application and shall map the actors in the field. Analysis of the best practices shall be translated into tailor-made solutions.

2. Advocacy – Civil Society

- Advocacy shall be mainstreamed by all appropriate means, specifically via electronic social networks.
- There shall be peer to peer transmission of information. Youth Ambassadors for Peace¹¹ could be used as an example.

3. People's Networking

- There shall be policies and actions that stimulate human interactions and mutual

¹¹ Youth Ambassadors for Peace is the Project of the Council of Europe, Youth Department. Please, refer to www.coe.int/youthpeace for further information

learning among people. Honest exchange of opinions shall be upheld by all appropriate means.

- Integration policies and actions shall aim at true social cohesion and shall transform individuals into agents of change.

THE PROGRAMME

Consultative meeting

Challenges faced by young refugees and asylum seekers in accessing their social rights and their integration, while in transition to adulthood

17-18 November 2011

Thursday 17th November 2011

- 09:30 Official opening of the meeting
- Mr. Ulrich Bunjes**, Head of the Youth Department, Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation of the Council of Europe.
- Ms. Jutta Seidel**, Senior Legal Associate / Officer in Charge, UNHCR Representation to the European Institutions in Strasbourg.
- 10:00 Introduction of participants, presentation of the rationale for the Consultative Meeting, its objectives and scope.
- 10:40 Presentation of findings of the preliminary mapping on the challenges faces by young refugees and asylum seekers in Europe regarding access to their social rights when their legal status transitions from minor into young adult.
- 11:30 What are the challenges?
- Sebastian Rietz**, Committee of Migration, refugees and population of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.
- Main conclusions of the two reports of the Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population on the topic of unaccompanied minors and irregular migrant children.
- 12:15 What is successful integration?
- Magdalena Smieszek**, Regional Integration Officer, UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe, Budapest.
- Integration indicators as part of an online evaluation tool developed by UNHCR in Central Europe.
- 14:30 Working groups
- Map the realities faced by young refugees and asylum seekers when trying to access their social rights and integrate in their new country while being in transitions from minor to young adult.
- 16:30 Working groups
- Identify existing positive experiences, successful practices of addressing the challenges faced by young refugees and asylum seekers to access their social rights and integrate in their new country.

Friday 18th November 2011

- 09:30 Presentation of the products of the working group and reflection on challenges and solutions identified.
- 10:30 Recommendations for action:
- Presentation of the Youth Department's programme on social rights and the recommendations from the ENTER! Project.
- Recommendations of the consultative meeting: 'What future for the work with young Refugees, IDP's and Asylum Seekers?' drafted 4th March 2010.
- What other recommendations and guidelines for addressing the challenges are already available?
- 11:30 Working groups
- How can the recommendations strengthen successful practices and practical solutions suggested by young refugees and asylum seekers to ensure their access to their social rights?
- 14:30 Working groups
- How to associate young refugees and asylum seekers with the programmes of the Youth Department, the UNHCR and the Parliamentary Assembly?
- 16:30 Presentation of results from the working groups.
- 17:30 Evaluation & official closing.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

FRANCE

Julien Bonnaud	Association Jean Lataste, Foyer Les Fougères
Hawa Camara	Association Jean Lataste, Foyer Les Fougères
Serge Durand	France Terre d'Asile
Julian Mache	France Terre d'Asile
Nicolas Männlein	Institut Protestant
Gaëlle LeGuern	Themis Association
Michel Adiche	Themis Association

GERMANY

Elvira Ajvazi	Aktion 302 – Network for a right to stay for Roma people
Katrin Schnieders	Aktion 302 – Network for a right to stay for Roma people

GREECE

Georgia Dekavalla	European Bureau for Conscientious Objection
-------------------	---

ITALY

Antonio Saccone	Cooperative Terre Solidali
-----------------	----------------------------

MONTENEGRO

Milena Karisik	Voices of Young Refugees in Europe
----------------	------------------------------------

THE NETHERLANDS

Nyakueth Wako	Voices of Young Refugees in Europe
---------------	------------------------------------

UNHCR

Jean-Etienne Kautzmann	UNHCR Representation to the European Institutions in Strasbourg
Jutta Seidel	UNHCR Representation to the European Institutions in Strasbourg
Magdalena Smieszek	UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe, Budapest

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Sabrina Buechler	Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights
Sebastian Rietz	Committee of Migration, Refugees and Population, Parliamentary Assembly
Ulrich Bunjes	Youth Department
Rui Gomes	Youth Department
Menno Ettema	Youth Department

DOCUMENTALIST

Kateryna Shalayeva	
--------------------	--

