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Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF)

**Opinion by the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF)
on Recommendation 481 (2022) of the Congress of Local and Regional
Authorities – “Reception of women and children refugees in Europe’s
cities and regions”**

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**Opinion by the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) on
Recommendation 481 (2022) – “Reception of women and children refugees in Europe’s
cities and regions”**

1. Following the adoption, during its 43rd Session (25-27 October 2022), of [Recommendation 481\(2022\) – “Reception of women and children refugees in Europe’s cities and regions”](#) by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”), the Committee of Ministers agreed, at its [1450th meeting on 30 November 2022](#), “to transmit it to the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF), [...] *for information and possible comments before 1 February 2023*”.
2. The Bureau of the CDENF examined the Recommendation in written proceedings. Due to time constraints, and in order to expedite procedure on decisions requested by the Committee of Ministers, the Bureau had recourse to the tacit approval of all the members of the Committee through electronic communication, following the procedure set out in Article 13 b) of Appendix 1 to Resolution CM/Res(2021)3.
3. The CDENF welcomes the fact that the Congress has called on member States, including local and regional authorities, to develop child-friendly reception policies, and to protect child refugees from violence, exploitation, or trafficking by developing screening mechanisms to identify victims and those perceived as vulnerable, particularly relevant since the start of the Russian Federation’s war against Ukraine in February 2022. The CDENF agrees with the intersectional approach encouraged by the Congress, with regard to reception and integration policies that take into account the specific and individual vulnerabilities and needs of women and children. This approach is in line with the [Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child \(2022-2027\)](#), which includes a gender-sensitive and anti-discrimination approach as cross-cutting issues to be mainstreamed across all thematic priorities. Moreover, the Strategy includes priority areas on “Freedom from violence for all children”, “Equal opportunities and social inclusion for all children”, and “Children’s rights in crisis and emergency situations”, particularly relevant for child refugees. This approach has also been dealt with more specifically by the Council of Europe Committee on the Protection of Children from Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation (Lanzarote Committee, see paragraph 7 below).
4. The [Terms of Reference of the CDENF](#) for 2022-2025 include the dimension of protecting migrant and refugee children, and preparations are underway for the CDENF to review the implementation of CM/Rec(2019)11 of the Committee of Ministers on effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in the context of migration, which will cover the identification of good practices among member States, including relevant good practices at local and regional level related to the reception and protection of child refugees.
5. Although the CDENF welcomes the reference to CM/Rec(2022)17 of the Committee of Ministers on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women and girls, as well as the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027), the CDENF would also have welcomed a clear reference to Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)11 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in the context of migration. The appointment of a guardian for unaccompanied or separated children is an essential guarantee towards the protection of their rights and fulfilment of their needs, as well as towards the prevention of violence, exploitation, trafficking and discrimination. In 2020, the CDENF finalised [a comprehensive report](#) on the Review of the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)9 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on life projects for unaccompanied migrant minors, recommending that member States be encouraged to apply a holistic child protection approach by enhancing cooperation between legal and

child protection and welfare professionals, as well as migration authorities, promoting a shared understanding of the life projects approach. The Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)22 on human rights principles and guidelines on age assessment in the context of migration, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 14 December 2022 - and thus after the adoption of the Congress Recommendation - is also highly relevant by ensuring that age assessment procedures in member States duly comply with the rights of the child.

6. The Council of Europe Programme “Building a Europe for and with Children”, has focussed extensively on developing child friendly information and handbooks for professionals to strengthen their capacity to work with children, in various situations of vulnerability. The child friendly publication on [“Your rights in age assessment procedures”](#) is specifically focused on children that have to go through age assessment procedures. The comprehensive Handbook [“How to convey child-friendly information to children in migration”](#), available in English, French and Spanish, is furthermore an important resource that can be of assistance to professionals working with children in migration.

7. When referring to protection of child refugees from violence and trafficking, attention should also be drawn to the relevant work by the Lanzarote Committee, including its [Special report](#) on protecting children affected by the refugee crisis from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (3 March 2017), its [Declaration](#) on protecting migrant and refugee children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (28 June 2018), as well as its [Statement](#) on protecting children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse resulting from the military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine (10 March 2022).

8. Finally, reference could be made to the [Handbook on the Protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse in crisis and emergency situations](#), prepared by the Lanzarote Committee Secretariat, which is available in 8 languages to serve as guidance to implement child-friendly reception policies and practices in member states.