

# CHILD-FRIENDLY INFORMATION FOR CHILDREN IN MIGRATION



**Roundtable**

**Strasbourg**

**29-30 November 2017**



**Building a Europe  
for and with children**  
**Construire une Europe  
pour et avec les enfants**



“No one puts their children on a boat  
unless the water is safer than the land”  
(Warsan Shire)

## BACKGROUND

All children are full bearers of rights, regardless of their immigration status. As such, States should take measures to ensure the effective implementation of children's rights, and to protect them from human rights abuses, including violence, sexual exploitation and trafficking. Equally, children must be empowered to make informed choices and participate in processes concerning them along their migration or asylum journey<sup>1</sup>. States should undertake to inform children of their rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (Article 42)<sup>2</sup>. Child-friendly information must be understood as including information and advice provided to children which is adapted to their age and maturity, in a language which they can understand and which is gender and culture sensitive<sup>3</sup>.

Statistics suggest that more than one in three migrants and asylum-seekers crossing between Greece and Turkey is a child. The large majority of migrant and asylum-seeking children are boys. However, the situation for girls is particularly worrying due to the risk of abuse, exploitation and harmful practices, such as the risk of early and forced marriage, as well as the inadequacy and shortage of not just child-sensitive, but also gender-sensitive reception centres and accommodation. Evidence shows that migrant and refugee children arriving in Europe face significant challenges in accessing clear, accurate and child-friendly information.

While many interesting and promising practices exist, the Council of Europe is determined to support member States to mainstream good practices and communications methods or tools used to enhance access to rights and procedures for children on the move and otherwise affected by migration throughout Europe.

The Council of Europe standards require member States to protect children from violence, ensure their access to justice, health and social services, strengthen the participation of children, including by developing child-friendly and age-appropriate materials. Action in this area is guided by the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021). The Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe (2017-2019) includes a set of priority measures focusing on ensuring access to rights and child-friendly procedures, providing effective protection and enhancing the integration of children who remain in Europe.

## TARGET STAKEHOLDERS

The Roundtable will gather government and local authorities, child-protection authorities, border and asylum officials, Ombudspersons for children, civil society actors and children who have participated in child consultations.

- 1 Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Recommendation on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18, CM/Rec (2012)2,
- 2 See also: ECtHR *Rahimi v Greece* No. 8687/08 (2011), UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No 6 (2005), Para 24 and 25, European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights 1996 (ETS No. 160) Article 3, Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence 2011 (ETS No 210) Article 19, Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings Article 12.1.d, Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Guidelines on child-friendly justice (2011), guideline 2, Directive 2013/32/EU, Article 25.
- 3 Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Guidelines on child-friendly justice (2011), guideline 2.

## **OBJECTIVE AND CONTENT OF THE ROUNDTABLE**

This roundtable will serve as a platform for discussion, exchange of experiences and lessons learned in this area, as well as networking among practitioners by:

- ▶ Identifying good practices about communicating with children on rights and procedures in a child-friendly, age-appropriate way;
- ▶ Discussing on-going challenges to the provision of accurate child-friendly information and key areas for improvement;
- ▶ Formulating recommendations for further action to be taken by relevant stakeholders, building on identified opportunities and solutions for the provision of child-friendly migration-related information;
- ▶ Contributing towards the development of a guide on child-friendly information for children in migration.

Participants are invited to share examples of good practices and make recommendations throughout the discussions, paying attention to the specific needs of particularly vulnerable groups of children such as children with disabilities and children who have been victims of trafficking, exploitation, torture, sexual, gender-based and other forms of violence.

**13.30** *Arrival/Registration of participants (Palais de l'Europe: Room 10)*

**14.00** **Welcome address and opening statement**

- ▶ **Ambassador Tomáš Boček**, Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for migration and refugees

**14.15** **What is child-friendly information?**

Unaccompanied children and former unaccompanied children share their views on their experiences of the information received during their migration journey and make recommendations about how child-friendly information could be strengthened by the relevant authorities.

Reporting from child-participation workshops organised in Council of Europe member States.

Discussion on the application of the recommendations made the child-participants in practice and methodology of child-friendly information.

- ▶ **Mr Daniel Senovilla Hernandez**, IR CNRS - MIGRINTER - University of Poitiers, France
- ▶ **Mr Guillaume Coron**, Head of Service, Foyer de l'Enfance Sud Isère, France

**15.30** *Extended Coffee Break: Exhibition "Perspectives from elsewhere, here"*

*Exchange with the young photographer exhibiting their photos who are themselves unaccompanied migrant or refugee children living in Strasbourg.*

## 16.30 **SESSION 1 – Communicating with children in migration to prevent violence, sexual violence, risk of trafficking and smuggling**

Children's lack of information about procedures and rights heightens the probability of unaccompanied and separated children disappearing and using smugglers to reach and move through Europe. This reality exposes far too many children to dangerous journeys, risks of trafficking, all sorts of violence, including sexual violence and abuse at the hands of smugglers, authorities and other refugees/migrants, including peers, encountered on the journey. These children are also exposed to greater risks of early and forced marriage.

Speakers and participants are invited to share good practices and make recommendations about:

- ▶ Tools and safeguards that exist to protect children within the refugee and migration context;
- ▶ Information available particularly to unaccompanied or separated children;
- ▶ Child-friendly information available to children who are detained or in de facto detention in transit zones, including accompanying children;
- ▶ Information gaps that exist, problematic practices, rights that are recurrently inaccessible to children, gaps in procedures;
- ▶ Challenges and solutions to accessing child-friendly information;
- ▶ Communicating with children about their rights to protect them from becoming victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation or using smugglers' services.

**Chair: Mr George Nikolaidis**, Director of Department of Mental Health Social Welfare, Institute of Child Health, Greece; Vice Chair of the Lanzarote Committee

Panel members:

- ▶ **Ms Mirela Shuteriqi**, Advocacy Coordinator, UNICEF Refugees and Migrants Response in Europe  
*"Addressing information gaps to protect children on the move"*
- ▶ **Ms Eléonore Chiossone**, Child Protection Technical Advisor, ECPAT France  
*"Unaccompanied children, child victims of trafficking, child participation in the elaboration of tools to inform them of their rights"*
- ▶ **Ms Eda Çok Öztürk**, Programme Coordinator, Turkish Red Crescent  
*"Child friendly space as model of prevention of violence intended to Syrian children in Turkey"*

## 18.00 *Close of day one*

### 09.00 **SESSION 2 – Informing children of their rights in asylum procedures in a child-friendly way**

As soon as a child is registered as an asylum-seeker they should receive information about a whole host of rights: to a guardian, to information and to receive legal assistance, to special protection and assistance if they have been a victim of torture, to social protection and access to health and social services, not to be punished for illegal border crossings, to an effective remedy, to have their asylum claim considered on child-specific grounds if relevant. However, serious information gaps about children's rights in the context of asylum procedures are a reality. The consequences of not providing the right information to children in a child-friendly way can result in asylum claims being rejected, missing time-limits, children not attending status determination interviews, misinformation. For the above reasons, States must provide appropriate information in a child-friendly manner in order to simplify as far as possible the complex nature of asylum procedures.

Speakers and participants are invited to consider good practices and make recommendations with particular focus on:

- ▶ Child-friendly information materials and communication methods in the context of asylum-procedures and refugee status determination procedures;
- ▶ Ensuring professionals and children have access to child-friendly materials that are accurate and up-to-date.

Chair: **Ms Michelle Lafferty**, Legal Adviser, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for migration and refugees

Speakers :

- ▶ **Mr Jesús Pérez Sánchez**, Protection Officer (Community-Based Protection) – Child Protection, UNHCR Regional Office for Southern Europe  
*"Information to children on reception and the International Protection – a participative methodology example from Italy".*
- ▶ **Ms Karin Sjömillä Fagerholm**, Legal Adviser, the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden  
*"Children's perception about the information they receive".*
- ▶ **Mr Farid Sultani**, Chairperson of EF Ensamkommande Förbund, Sweden  
*"Experiences from the field: information for asylum-seeking children".*

**10.30** *Coffee Break (refreshments provided)*  
*Foyer by the exhibition "Perspectives from elsewhere, here"*



## 11.00 **SESSION 3 – Communication with children about access to legal routes to and through Europe**

Separated and unaccompanied children may not stop their journey in the first Council of Europe State they reach. Child-appropriate and age-appropriate information needs to be provided along the entire journey by a wide range of actors. The aims of this session, building on session 1, are to explore child-friendly information in the context of legal routes to and through Europe particularly regarding family reunification, family reunion, relocation, resettlement, sponsorship and Dublin transfers.

Speakers and participants are invited to share good practices and propose recommendations on:

- ▶ Communication tools used by government representatives during visits to find candidates for relocation and resettlement;
- ▶ Child-friendly materials available during family reunification and reunion procedures;
- ▶ Communicating with children in a child-friendly way about Dublin procedures;
- ▶ Child specific information or counselling available before and during procedures;
- ▶ Mechanisms in place to ensure that the child's views are taken into account.

Chair: **Ms Penelope Denu**, Deputy to the Head of the Secretariat, Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly

### **Panel members:**

- ▶ **Ms Anna Skeehan**, Specialist Children and Young Person's Immigration Solicitor, Migrant and Refugee Children's Legal Unit, Islington Law Centre, United Kingdom  
*"Child friendly information for asylum-seeking children on legal routes to the UK"*
- ▶ **Ms Zsuzsana Veg**, Project Assistant, "Protecting children in the context of the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe, IOM  
*"IOM's child-friendly information materials"*
- ▶ **Dott. Rosanna Malleme**, Deputy Vice-Prefect, Director of Area IV, Civil Rights, Citizenship, Judicial Control of Foreign nationals, Immigration, Asylum, Prefecture – Territorial Office of the Governor of Ragusa, Italy  
*"Unaccompanied and separated children arriving by sea: the experience in Sicily and Pozzallo hotspot"*

**12.30** *Lunch will be provided to all participants in the Galerie Portugaise, in the Blue Restaurant*



## 14.00 SESSION 4 – Child-friendly information in host states

Once they have arrived in the host State, refugee and migrant children are still in need of accurate child-friendly information to ensure proper access to their rights and procedures. At this stage of their journey, children need information about guardianship, age assessment procedures and access to education, health and social services. It is also important for the child to understand the durable solutions for integration available. Child-friendly information may be communicated by many different professionals and stakeholders through a range of methods.

Speakers and participants are invited to share good practices and make recommendations about communicating with children in host states to inform them about their rights and procedures as regards:

- ▶ Guardianship;
- ▶ Age assessments;
- ▶ Access to education;
- ▶ Access to healthcare and social rights;
- ▶ Durable solutions for integration, including transition to adulthood.

Chair: **Ms Elda Moreno**, Head of the Children's Rights and Sport Values Department

- ▶ **Mr George Moschos**, Deputy Ombudsman for Children's Rights, Independent Authority "The Greek Ombudsman"  
*"Children's right and expectations to be informed, when they first arrive in a country as immigrants / refugees".*
- ▶ **Ms Radia Elgribi**, Lawyer, Themis, France  
*"Access to rights and to information: a guarantee for protection and recognition of the child migrant in the host country".*
- ▶ **Mr Bernard Georis**, Expert Advisor, SPF Justice, Guardianship service, Belgium  
*"The "feedback" project: interviews with young unaccompanied migrants to gather their views about how guardianship systems and the guardian fulfil their fundamental needs".*
- ▶ **Mr Sølve Randal**, Programme Director - Unaccompanied Minors Unit, Bergen, Norway  
*"Integration of Unaccompanied Minors in Norway – Safety, Belonging and Success".*

## 16.00 Coffee Break (refreshments provided)

Foyer by the exhibition *"Perspectives from elsewhere, here"*

## 16.30 **SESSION 5 – Conclusions and closing remarks**

Under the Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children (2017-2019), a handbook on promoting child-friendly information for refugee and migrant children on access to rights and procedures will be elaborated by the Council of Europe to empower States to provide child-friendly and appropriate information to children on the move in Europe, to be released in 2018.

This closing session will therefore explore the next steps in the development of such a handbook and the recommendations and good or promising practices that emerge from the discussions will be used as a basis for this work.

- ▶ **Ms Regína Jensdóttir**, Children's Rights Co-ordinator, Head of the Children's Rights Division

## 17.00 *Close of the meeting*