

DFD-YD/ETD (2026) 56

Strasbourg, 19 March 2026



Building Futures: Legal Pathways and Psychosocial Support for Young Refugees and Migrants in transition to adulthood

*Seminar on strengthening the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4 on
Supporting Young Refugees in Transition to Adulthood*



28-30 April 2026

(2.5 working days)

European Youth Centre, Strasbourg

Deadline to register: 5 April 2026, 23:59 CET

Concept Note Call for Participants

Organised by the [Council of Europe Youth Department](#) in cooperation with the [Council of Europe Division on Migration and Refugees \(DMR\)](#), and the [Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants \(PICUM\)](#)

Supported by the [European Forum for Youth with Lived Migration Experiences \(VOICIFY\)](#) and the [Voices of Young Refugees in Europe \(VYRE\)](#)

Background

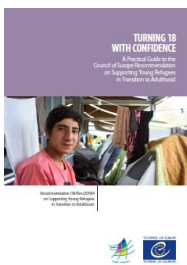
Transition to adulthood is a phase in a young person's life marked by milestones and achievements, such as that of one's 18th birthday. However, for all young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers turning 18 means an overnight loss of the rights and protection that they previously enjoyed as children, especially if they were unaccompanied. What should be a moment of celebration, can instead mean a sudden lack of access to basic human rights, such as housing or education. For some, it means becoming undocumented, excluded from most essential services and support.

Human rights protection and inclusion is key for the cohesion of European societies and deserves a special focus. At the Council of Europe level, the protection of young migrants and refugees transitioning into adulthood has long been identified as a priority area for its work.

On 24 April 2019, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4: Supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood ([the Recommendation](#)). The Recommendation invites governments of member states to adopt measures to ensure that "young refugees receive additional temporary support after the age of 18 to enable them to access their rights, and at recognising and strengthening the role of youth work and the youth sector in promoting better access to these rights, including through their work to build social cohesion and inclusion."¹

The Recommendation offers guidance to member states on several crucial aspects related to the transition to adulthood, including access to social services, housing, and society; educational opportunities, vocational training, and integration into the job market; as well as access to healthcare and psychological support.

In May 2021, the Committee of Ministers approved the Council of [Europe Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe \(2021-2025\)](#), outlining initiatives aimed at implementation of the Recommendation. Additionally, the Joint Council on Youth devised a roadmap to support it. As part of this, the Youth Department crafted the Guide [Turning 18 with Confidence](#) launched at a public event in April 2023. Turning 18 with Confidence presents the Recommendation in a practical manner and includes a collection of practices, questions and guidelines that can assist policymakers, youth organisations, young people, researchers, and other actors in promoting the implementation of the Recommendation.



Access to adequate housing and the job market is key for integration and inclusion in the medium- and long-term, which is still a big issue for many young people. The new crises worsened the vulnerability of refugees in Europe in general, it exacerbated already existing problems and highlighted the most urgent areas for taking action on.

From the Guide "Turning 18 with Confidence"

¹ The Recommendation defines "young refugees in transition to adulthood" as young people having reached the age of 18 who arrived in Europe as children and have obtained or qualify for refugee status under the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, or for subsidiary protection under European Union or national legislation.

In parallel, civil society organisations across the region continued to raise awareness around the many challenges young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers face while they transition into adulthood, while also calling for durable solutions and promoting good practices.

In 2025 the [first review of the Implementation of Recommendation](#) CM/Rec(2019)4 on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood was conducted under the authority of the [Joint Council on Youth \(CMJ\)](#).

The first review highlighted that many of the challenges faced by young refugees are structural and systemic, particularly related to legal and administrative frameworks and fragmented institutional responses. The review emphasised that legal restrictions, institutional barriers, and fragmented services between child and adult sectors often undermine continuity of support for young refugees and migrants.

Legal uncertainty and administrative barriers can have profound psychosocial consequences. Insecure residence status, difficulties accessing education or employment, and the risk of losing support upon turning 18 can create stress, anxiety, and long-term mental health challenges. At the same time, limited access to culturally appropriate psychosocial and mental health services can reduce young refugees' capacity to navigate legal systems and pursue stable life pathways.

Research and practice highlighted in the review show that integrated approaches are the most effective. Programmes that combine legal assistance, youth work, mentoring, social support, and access to psychosocial and mental health services create stronger conditions for young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to successfully transition to adulthood.

The seminar

Building on the findings of the first review of the implementation of the Recommendation, the 2026 seminar will focus on the interconnection between legal barriers and psychosocial support.

The Recommendation encourages Member States to reduce legal barriers by ensuring that residence permits and administrative procedures do not abruptly disrupt a young refugee's transition into adulthood. It emphasises the need for flexible and secure legal statuses so that access to education, employment, and housing is not jeopardised by uncertainty or delays. At the same time, the Recommendation highlights the importance of continuous psychosocial support, recognising that many young refugees face trauma, isolation, and stress during this transition. It is especially relevant for children who arrived in Europe as unaccompanied and separated children due to their vulnerability. As noted in the 2025 DMR Thematic Paper "[Vulnerability of migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees: Council of Europe and European Union standards](#)", the European Court of Human Rights consistently recognises children as belonging to a category of vulnerable people, particularly in a migratory context. This applies even more strongly to unaccompanied or separated children, especially when they face detention or risks of violence and abuse. The intensifying focus on vulnerability, which is often multi-layered, in the context of migration presents a demanding challenge for Council of Europe member states: to take into account, in an individualised and contextualised manner, the fragility arising from characteristics pertaining to specific groups such as migrant children and those transitioning into adulthood.

The Recommendation calls for accessible, culturally sensitive mental health services and long-term support systems rather than short-term interventions. Together, these measures aim to

create stability both in legal standing and emotional well-being, enabling young refugees to integrate more effectively into society.

The event will explore the above-mentioned themes and apply an inter-agency coordination approach, bringing together actors from legal, migration, youth, social, and health sectors representing governmental and non-governmental structures.

Seminar aims to promote coordinated responses that strengthen the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4 on Supporting Young Refugees in Transition to Adulthood focusing on legal barriers and psychosocial support measures.

Objectives of the seminar are:

1. Examine the psychosocial impact of legal insecurity, including the ways in which uncertainty and administrative obstacles affect the mental health and well-being of young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.
2. Identify integrated approaches that combine legal support, youth work, and psychosocial or mental health services to better support young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.
3. Facilitate exchange of practices and experiences among governmental institutions, civil society organisations, youth organisations, and service providers working with young refugees.
4. Contribute to strengthening inter-agency coordination between actors working in migration, youth, social, legal, and health sectors representing governmental and non-governmental structures including local authorities and youth organisations

Draft programme structure

The seminar will use a participatory and multi-stakeholder methodology including expert inputs, panel discussions, case studies, and thematic working groups.

A detailed and updated programme will be made available at a later stage and shared with the participants of the seminar.

28 April (14:30 – 18:00): Setting the Scene

- Opening session and getting to know each other
- Presentation of key findings from the review of Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4.
- Networking and exchange session

29 April (09:30 – 17:30): Legal Barriers and Mental Health

- Panel discussion: Legal transitions and their psychosocial impact on young refugees.
- Session on Residence status, access to rights, and administrative challenges.
- Session on Psychosocial and mental health support for young refugees.
- Exchange of promising practices.

30 April (09:00 – 16:30): Inter-agency Coordination and Way Forward

- Interactive working groups exploring integrated responses combining legal and psychosocial support.

- Discussion on strengthening cooperation across institutions.
- Identification of recommendations and follow-up actions.
- Closing session.

Participants

The participants of the seminar will include up to 20 representatives from governmental institutions, international organisations, civil society organisations including youth organisations, service providers, researchers, and young people with lived migration experience, for example representatives of:

1. International/European youth organisations (e.g. members of the European Youth Forum, Advisory Council on Youth)
2. Refugee-led and migrant-led organisations, including youth organisations
3. Non-governmental organisations and projects active in supporting and promoting the rights and inclusion of children and young people in the contexts of migration and asylum
4. National institutions responsible for migration and refugees (e.g. guardianship authorities and agencies, child protection, child and youth care services, national contact points of the Division on Migration and Refugees of the Council of Europe)
5. Local and Regional Authorities working directly with migrant and refugee children and young people
6. National human rights bodies and institutions.

Participant in the seminar should also be:

- a) resident in one of the state parties to the European Cultural Convention² (exceptions can be made if justified).
- b) committed to uphold and advocate for the rights of young migrants and refugees.
- c) be knowledgeable and motivated to share practices with other actors in the field.
- d) be under 30 years of age (for youth leaders only - exceptions can be made in justified cases).
- e) able to work autonomously in English
- f) affiliated with a relevant youth organisation, youth centre, NGO or public institution.

The Council of Europe welcomes applications from all candidates who fulfil the specific profile of participants irrespective of gender, disability, marital or parental status, racial, ethnic or social origin, religion, belief or sexual orientation.

Financial and practical conditions of participation

Travel expenses

Travel expenses and visa fees for the seminar in Strasbourg will be reimbursed according to the rules of the Council of Europe. Only the participants who attend the entire seminar can be reimbursed. Participants are expected to arrive on 27 April or 28 April before 14:30 and depart on 30 April after 16:30 or on 1 May (Bank Holiday in France).

² <https://www.coe.int/en/web/sport/state-parties-european-cultural-convention>

Accommodation

Board and lodging for the seminar will be provided and paid for by the Council of Europe at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg. The European Youth Centres are accessible to people with disabilities and can take measures to accommodate for any access needs of participants in this respect. Please provide the necessary information in your application form.

Working languages

English will be the working languages of the seminar. Participants are required to be able to express themselves autonomously in English.

How to apply

Everyone interested in taking part in the seminar must apply by filling in the online form AT <https://forms.office.com/e/6h49PGwG2Q> before **5 April 2026 23:59 CET**. Information on selection results will be communicated to all applicants by 9 April 2026.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For any questions, please write to the Youth Department of the Council of Europe at eyc.programme@coe.int.

