

**GR-C presentation of the draft recommendation on
supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood
Main speaking points
Ambassador T. Boček**

31 January 2019

Many of the children who arrived in 2015 have become adults in the meantime.

For them, their 18th birthday is the end of child-protection services, an abrupt and often unprepared change in accessing housing and support, such as welfare, education, health care, information. They are legally treated as adults, although they have not had a normal childhood, they most often have lacked the support of their parents and now need to face an adult life in a foreign and sometimes unfriendly society.

In different countries, there are repeated accounts of teenagers committing suicide after losing hope for a life in safety. Others fall easy prey to criminal groups, to labour and sexual exploitation or even to radicalisation. This puts them at risk and is not good for our societies either.

The **scope** of the recommendation was an arduous topic discussed during the drafting process. The result is a pragmatic compromise.

The recommendation refers to refugees and to beneficiaries of subsidiary protection – meaning those who are to stay in Europe at least for some time. The initial drafts referred to migrants too.

It covers only those who reached Europe as children, as they are seen to be in most need for such support. As children they have already been under the protection of our governments and their profile and needs are generally known before they turn 18.

And finally, the text now does not impose any fixed term or age-limit, leaving it at the discretion of states to determine the duration of support measures.

Why **exactly** do we need such a document for young refugees?

Politically, it is the action to take in order to enhance their social inclusion – which, I repeat, is in the best interest of all of us. It is what we need to do today to make sure they are active members of society and contribute to the improvement of their own situations and those of their host communities. It is an effective way of tackling violent radicalisation and of increasing the capacity of our societies to reject all forms of extremism. Doing nothing is equal to shooting ourselves in the leg. Depriving new comers of linguistic education and trauma victims of mental healthcare is not a luxury we can indulge ourselves on if we are truly serious about building social peace and inclusive societies.

Legally, the text aims to provide opportunities for all young people without discrimination, which is at the heart of Council of Europe's youth policy. Equality is a right, not a privilege.