

# TURNING 18 WITH CONFIDENCE

A Practical Guide to the  
Council of Europe Recommendation  
on Supporting Young Refugees  
in Transition to Adulthood



Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4  
on Supporting Young Refugees  
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[Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4  
adopted by the Committee of Ministers  
of the Council of Europe on 24 April 2019]

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## **Final edition**

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TURNING 18 WITH CONFIDENCE

*A practical guide to the Council of Europe  
Recommendation on Supporting Young Refugees in  
Transition to Adulthood – CM/Rec(2019)4*

French edition:

ATTEINDRE L'ÂGE DE 18 ANS EN TOUTE  
CONFIANCE

*Guide pratique de la Recommandation du Comité  
des Ministres sur l'aide aux jeunes réfugiés en  
transition vers l'âge adulte - CM/Rec(2019)4*

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# Introduction

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Reaching the age of 18 increases the vulnerability of young refugees, asylum seekers and migrants by making them more open to exclusion, violence, trauma, discrimination, and exploitation. Important challenges are observable in practically all areas of integration, owing to the change in their status and, principally, the fact that they usually lose their access to the services and rights which they were able to access before as children. While young refugees lose the protection of the Convention on the Rights of the Child at 18 years old, their needs in education, employment, healthcare, psychological support, accommodation, and family unification remain the same.

Adopted in 2019, Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states: “Supporting Young Refugees in Transition to Adulthood” (referred to henceforth as the Recommendation) asks member states’ governments to ensure that young refugees receive the additional temporary support after the age of 18 to enable them to access their rights. It also calls for recognition and the strengthening of the role of youthwork and youth sector in promoting better access to these rights, including the use of youth work [and youth sector] to build social cohesion and inclusion.

The Council of Europe Youth Department prepared this Guide to further promote and support the implementation of the Recommendation. This Guide aims to assist and inspire young refugees, youth workers, policymakers, researchers, and other relevant actors to know, apply and support the implementation of the Recommendation in their own contexts and communities.

The Guide simplifies the language of the Recommendation in order to assist various actors and stakeholders in developing a better and clearer understanding of the proposals and policy measures. It also provides indications of how each actor can support the implementation measures proposed in the Recommendation. A range of promising practices are equally incorporated to exemplify how the Recommendation is being put into practice. The Guide closes with a checklist covering various stakeholders and offering specific guidelines as to how different aspects of the Recommendation can be implemented. Finally, concrete proposals for implementation are made in the concluding chapter of this Guide.

Due to the diversity of legal, political and social realities faced by young refugees across Europe, this is not a “ready-to-use” guide on how to implement the Recommendation at national, local and regional levels. Rather, this Guide is a collection of examples, questions and guidelines that can assist policymakers, youth organisations, young people, researchers, and others in supporting young refugees’ transition to adulthood and in promoting the implementation of the Recommendation. All measures taken to

support young refugees in transition to adulthood ought to be contextualised and reflect their specific situation and aspirations, the social and political environment, and the resources available.

In addition to the introduction and conclusion, this Guide is organised into three key sections, the first of which outlines the Recommendation and describes its context while providing examples of good practices which aim to encourage further action. The second section centres on taking actions which focus on promoting, raising awareness for, and implementing the Recommendation. The final section includes tick-box grids to support different stakeholders in verifying their actions and improving their practice to support the implementation of the Recommendation.



# 1. Rationale of the Recommendation

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## 1.1 WHY IS TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD SO IMPORTANT FOR YOUNG REFUGEES?

Being among the most vulnerable, many young refugees experience violence, exploitation and trauma, as well as continued risk of violation of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. When they reach the age of majority, they are no longer under the protection of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This means that, when turning 18, young refugees may no longer have the protection and access to rights and opportunities previously held as children, and they can face an abrupt and dramatic change in the possibility of accessing services and support across many sectors. This is a reality that affects many young people, and it challenges the capacity of our societies to stand up for the most fundamental human rights and dignity, including of course children's rights.

The transition to adulthood of young refugees has been a priority of the Council of Europe over many years. In 2019, the Committee of Ministers adopted [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2019\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states: "Supporting Young Refugees in Transition to Adulthood"](#), recommending that member states' governments ensure that additional temporary support is available to young refugees after the age of 18 to enable them to access their rights. It also acknowledges the important role played by youth work and non-formal education / learning in supporting the inclusion of young refugees, and in developing competences of active citizenship and democratic participation.

” *[The Committee of Ministers] Recommends that the governments of the member States: promote and apply the guidelines proposed in the appendix to this recommendation, aimed at ensuring 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*

## 1.2 OVERVIEW OF CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUNG REFUGEES

Youth transitions refer in a wider sense to the transition from dependency to independence, and living as an adult and autonomous member of society. This usually involves moving out

from one's parents' home and establishing one's own household, cohabiting, and raising children, and moving from the education system to the labour market.<sup>1</sup>

## Individual challenges

The transition to adulthood is particularly challenging for young refugees as they move towards adulthood, partly due to the overnight change in legal status, as a result of moving out of the protection of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but also as many have to adapt to a new culture and for many in an unknown language. As these young people age out of services, they may have specific challenges and needs, such as emotional, and psychological support, access to basic services, education, training and information, employment, financial supports, appropriate accommodation, healthcare, the support of a stable adult, and family reunification. .

### Individual challenges

Examples of the difficulties faced by these young people include:

- Being obliged to change accommodation at 18, or to cover the cost of accommodation themselves
- Primary and secondary education may become harder to access, particularly for those who are over the age of mandatory education, with language barriers, previous education levels, bureaucracy, and discrimination.
- Limited or reduced access to employment and financial supports due to a lack of recognition of previous qualifications but also their legal status which has often been shown to impact on access to the labour market.

## Societal challenges

In addition to these challenges, young refugees in transition to adulthood have been easily forgotten, made invisible and categorised as the 'other', facing discrimination and stigma, rather than priority being given to their status as children transiting to adulthood. As a result, many of these young people also face constraints in their right to participate in the procedures and decision-making which affects them and structures they are in.

## Challenges highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced new challenges and exacerbated previous difficulties that young refugees already faced during their transition to adulthood; in many aspects, they are symptomatic of the vulnerability to which young refugees are exposed to. The report from the 2020 Consultative Meeting on 'Supporting Young Refugees in Transition to Adulthood through Youth Work and Youth Policy' provides an insight into the types of challenges noted by attendees which certain young refugees faced as a result of COVID-19.

The examples presented in the meeting can be put into two categories:

### **Barriers to accessing rights and services**

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- Restrictions implemented at national and regional levels (e.g. border closures, suspension of asylum procedures [either in practice or officially]) reduced the rights of access to asylum, integration processes, and legal procedures such as those relating to age-assessment procedures, civic integration exams and referral, and child protection services. The limited access to supports and services left those transitioning to adulthood at particular risk.
- Travel restrictions and flight cancellations also had an impact on possibilities for family reunification.
- Access to the labour market and job security was negatively impacted, particularly for those working in the informal sector.
- Access to education became more challenging due to the increased move to online platforms. Certain young refugees faced limitations related to accessing online supports, software, Internet connection and equipment, but also limitations due to digital illiteracy.

### **Increased vulnerabilities**

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- Certain young refugees work on the 'front line' (e.g. health-care workers, first responders, food and grocery workers, those providing essential services, volunteers and sanitation workers) and faced higher exposure to COVID-19.
- The limited access to accurate information regarding the pandemic and related restrictions led to increased vulnerabilities.
- Due to increased isolation, mental-health challenges, the closure of services and postponement of migration procedures, the pandemic and related restrictions were reported as increasing young refugees' susceptibility to psychological difficulties. Certain young refugees and newcomers were heavily exposed to particular challenges, for example, people with disabilities, LGBTQ people, stateless youth and pregnant women.
- Xenophobia and discrimination were suggested to be on the rise due to young refugees being, in certain cases, labelled as spreaders of COVID-19.

The various challenges facing young refugees in transition to adulthood were acknowledged by several member states who introduced a number of national measures to tackle the difficulties. The European Migration Network 'Annual report on asylum and migration 2020' outlined several of the measures implemented. To support unaccompanied minors as they age out of care services at 18, France, for instance, suspended their transfer of young people who became adults to adult facilities during the state of emergency. Other member states also introduced specific supports for unaccompanied minors who were transitioning to adulthood. In Finland, from July 2020, young people who had entered the country as unaccompanied minors and were granted a residence permit, gained aftercare entitlements until the age of 25 (previously until 21). Latvia also provided financial and in-kind benefits

for unaccompanied minors transitioning to adulthood. Spain introduced measures which enabled unaccompanied minors who had an authorisation to reside in the country to access employment from aged 16 years (European Migration Network, 2020).

## 1.3 THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND YOUNG REFUGEES

### The Council of Europe's work on Migration

The Council of Europe has focused on migration in several ways. A Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees was appointed in 2016 to “to carry out fact-finding missions, strengthen co-ordination of the relevant activities within the Council of Europe, and establish communication and co-ordination channels with our international partners collect information on the situation facing migrants and refugees and their rights in Europe”. Since 2017, the Council of Europe has been implementing the [European Qualifications Passport for Refugees](#), a document which provides an assessment of the higher education qualifications based on available documentation and a structured interview. In the same year, the first [Council of Europe Action Plan on protecting refugee and migrant children \(2017-2019\)](#) was adopted by the Council of Ministers. This Action Plan included proposed further action of “[p]olicy recommendations on assisting young refugees and migrants, in particular unaccompanied minors, in their transition from childhood to adulthood to be prepared in co-operation with the relevant stakeholders” (Council of Europe, 2017: 18). The [Council of Europe Youth for Democracy programme](#) contributes to the implementation of this Action Plan by promoting young people's access to rights and supporting them in advocating for human rights and democracy education, facilitating young people's autonomy and participation, and engaging young people in peace-building and social cohesion.

The subsequent Action Plan, which takes a wider scope, was introduced in 2021, and aims at addressing the main challenges and opportunities found since the previous plan. [The Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe \(2021-2025\)](#) was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2021. The Action Plan has four pillars: three based on the core mandate of the Council of Europe – human rights, democracy and the rule of law – and a fourth transversal pillar which centres on co-operation.

### The war in Ukraine

The war in Ukraine forced over six million people to flee the country, the vast majority of which are women and children / young people. Throughout the visits to neighbouring countries to Ukraine, the Special Representative on Migration and Refugees of the Council

of Europe confirmed the heightened risk of trafficking, violence and abuse for refugees in situations of vulnerability, for children and young people going missing, and for sexual and labour exploitation. Many young people faced many experienced traumas, and difficulties with access to healthcare and adequate psychological support.

Other barriers, such as access to education in the host countries as the schools were not ready to accommodate so many refugee children and young people, prevent young people from social inclusion and integration.

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. In this reality, the implementation of the Recommendation on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood becomes more urgent than ever.

## The Council of Europe's work on the transition to adulthood

The transition to adulthood of young refugees has been a Council of Europe priority for several years. The Council of Europe youth sector engages in setting and promoting standards to address the challenges faced by young people, and has been central in driving activities related to the transition to adulthood. The Youth Department has run a range of activities targeting young refugees, and for youth workers working with young refugees, which are highlighted below.

### Being a Young Refugee in Europe Today

This seminar was organised by the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council and Europe and the UNHCR as part of the All Different-All Equal campaign in 2006.

**Result:** Out of this training seminar, the international youth network Voices of Young Refugees in Europe (VYRE) was created by, with and for young refugees, and it aims to support the participation and inclusion of young refugees in European societies and in decision-making. Since 2008 when the organisation was established, VYRE has been an important partner of the Council of Europe Youth Department by contributing to consultations and advocacy, and running meetings, seminars and training courses related to the rights and challenges faced by young refugees in Europe.

VYRE also published a report in 2016 on the transition to adulthood of young refugees which recommended that policies and initiatives related to the transition to adulthood be reintroduced as a core focus (Voices of Young Refugees in Europe, 2016).

### **Training seminar, What Future for the Work with Young Refugees, IDPs and Asylum-Seekers?**

This seminar stressed that young refugees, asylum seekers and other youth in need of humanitarian protection aged 18-30 are a group in Europe with specific needs.

**Result:** Two consultative meetings which focused on the social needs and rights of young refugees and asylum seekers during their transition to adulthood followed this seminar.

These meetings, as well as further advocacy actions, led to the report, 'Unaccompanied migrant children: what rights at 18?'. This resulting report and the Resolution 1996 (2014) Migrant Children: What Rights at 18?, were adopted by a Committee on Migration Refugees and Displaced persons (AS/Mig) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The aim of the report and resolution was to develop inter-sectoral co-operation for supporting young refugees and asylum seekers during their transition to adulthood.

### **Statement of the Joint Council on Youth**

In response to the situation faced by thousands of refugees and asylum seekers arriving in Europe and the impact on young people, the Joint Council on Youth adopted a statement on the refugee crisis in October 2015. The statement called for special attention to be given to vulnerable groups (including young refugees, asylum seekers and migrants) through capacity-building opportunities for more inclusive and peaceful societies. The statement also stressed the importance of continuous, coherent, and synergistic efforts among relevant stakeholders to uphold and protect the basic human rights of these vulnerable groups.

**Results:**

- This statement led to further debate on addressing the issues facing young refugees during the transition to adulthood.
- Because of the Joint Council Statement and the subsequent debate, the decision was made to convene a group of experts who would draw up a set of guidelines to be put to the Committee of Ministers or to the Joint Council.

Consequently, a meeting was organised by the Joint Council on Youth<sup>2</sup> as part of the Youth for Democracy programme, which proposed drawing up a set of guidelines on the transition to adulthood for young refugees for member states.

## **1.4 YOUTH WORK WITH YOUNG REFUGEES**

Youth work is difficult to define precisely in a definitive and uniform way across all member states. Recommendation CM/Rec (2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member states on youth work reflects this by proposing a broad and encompassing definition:

Youth work is a broad term, with different focus in different contexts.

It usually covers:

- a variety of activities of a social, cultural, educational, environmental and/or political nature by, with and for young people.
- Such activities can also include sports, leisure-time activities or services for young people.

Youth work is delivered by paid and volunteer youth workers and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes focused on young people and on voluntary participation.

The main objective is to motivate and support young people to find and pursue constructive pathways in life, thus contributing to their personal and social development and to society at large.

Youth work is quintessentially a social practice, working with young people and the societies in which they live, facilitating young people's active participation and inclusion in their communities and in decision making.

While the youth work sector in Europe is extremely diverse, there is a common set of values and elements, with one common feature: a value-based framework founded on principles such as human rights, social inclusion and democracy where, regardless of the residence status of a young person, youth work can support their inclusion from their arrival in the host society.

### **The common elements and values found in European youth work<sup>3</sup>**

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<i>Value-driven</i>	Youth work serves the higher purposes of inclusion and social cohesion.
<i>Youth-centric</i>	Youth work serves key needs and aspirations of youth, identified by young people themselves.
<i>Voluntary</i>	Youth work relies on the voluntary participation of young people.
<i>Developmental</i>	Youth work aims at the personal, social and ethical development of young people.
<i>Self-reflective and critical</i>	Youth work tries to make sure it is doing its best to live up to its mission.
<i>Relational</i>	Youth work seeks authentic communication with young people and to contribute to sustaining viable communities.

An important stakeholder in cross-sectoral co-operation between different services who support refugee integration, youth work must constantly adapt to a range of new emerging social

challenges, including supporting young people who arrive in Europe seeking international protection and support.

### Youth work can support young refugees in a range of ways:

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- It encourages individual empowerment of young refugees.
- It provides opportunities to grow up, socialise and develop interactions with other young people from the host society.
- It provides safe spaces for them to be young, express themselves, participate in society and to be supported in integrating into host societies.
- It can assist young refugees in developing their resilience, self-confidence, trust, and positive social relationships.

### Challenges for youth work with young refugees

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Youth work with young refugees can take many forms. Despite its importance, youth workers and youth organisations may face particular challenges when conducting youth work with these young people. Youth workers need targeted support to tackle a range of complex situations which can arise when working with young refugees, including, for instance, intercultural learning, mental health and psychological well-being, as well as addressing intersectionality (gender, sexual orientation, disability, etc.). It is therefore important to support youth organisations and youth workers in exchanging practices, collaborating with each other and other stakeholders, and building their own capacity across the different thematic areas.

### Relevant resources

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The Council of Europe Youth Department has produced several [resources](#) that support youth work with young refugees across a range of themes.

The [Compass](#) and [Compasito](#) manuals on human rights education with young people and children are the reference manuals for many people involved in value-based youth work and human rights education with diverse target groups, including young refugees. Both publications cover an extensive range of human rights topics, from human rights to inclusion and participation. They provide a coherent set of educational support to a wide range of educators and youth / social workers, with the background materials in easy language and non-formal methodologies. *Compass* is currently available in more than 30 languages. In some countries it has become part of the resources for rights education in schools; in others, it is widely used in youthwork.

[Gender Matters](#) contains accessible non-formal education methods for preventing and addressing gender-based violence with young people. It also provides reflections on gender and gender-based violence and information of the main Council of Europe human rights standards relevant for gender equality and dignity for all. *Gender Matters* is useful

to youth workers, teachers and other educators active in human rights and combating gender inequality.

The [Education Pack All Different – All Equal](#) is one of the most widely used publications of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe on intercultural education; it is very applicable to working with diverse groups of young people on building intercultural competences.

[Bookmarks](#), the manual for combating hate speech through human rights education, presents activities designed for young people aged 13 to 18, but which are also adaptable to other age groups.

The [STEP-by-STEP Together](#) publication provides a range of support, tips, examples and possibilities for youth work with young refugees.

## 1.5 WHAT IS THE RECOMMENDATION ON SUPPORTING YOUNG REFUGEES IN TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD?

The Committee of Ministers is the main decision-making body of the Council of Europe. Among other things, it has the mandate to elaborate recommendations addressed to the governments of member states on matters that concern human rights, democracy or the rule of law.

The Committee of Ministers adopts legal texts, including recommendations to the Council of Europe member states on matters concerning human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

While not binding, a recommendation provides a policy framework and proposals that governments can implement in their member states and, more importantly, it presents, in this case, the consensus agreed on action to be taken to uphold and safeguard the human rights and dignity of young refugees across all member states. The Recommendation is therefore addressed primarily to the governments of the Council of Europe member states. However, there are measures and proposals which are relevant for other actors referred to in the Recommendation, including youth workers and youth organisations, researchers, services providers and non-governmental organisations.

The Recommendation aims to safeguard the rights and opportunities of young refugees in transition to adulthood (i.e. young people having reached the age of 18, who arrived in Europe as children and have obtained or qualify for refugee status).

Due to the non-binding nature of recommendations, there can be challenges and differences regarding their implementation by the governments of member states. However, having such an instrument remains important as it highlights the issues facing young refugees in transition to adulthood and encourages the prioritisation of their needs.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the Recommendation is an important advocacy tool for different stakeholders to promote and lobby for the rights of young refugees in transition to adulthood.

## Background to the Recommendation

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There were several steps in drafting, developing and implementing the Recommendation, which can be summarised as follows:

### 1. Expert group

Following the ongoing work of the Council of Europe up to 2017 described above, an expert group met in the autumn of 2017 with the aim of preparing a set of policy guidelines to support refugees in transition to adulthood.<sup>5</sup> The expert group meeting was supported by a literature review and policy brief prepared by the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth. Experts from refugee-led youth organisations made substantial contributions to the meeting and the ensuing guidelines.

### 2. Drafting group of the Joint Council on Youth

The Joint Council on Youth set up a drafting group composed of members of the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) and of the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ); this group was tasked with preparing a draft recommendation based on the guidelines elaborated earlier by the group of experts. In October 2018, the Joint Council on Youth eventually adopted the text of the draft recommendation and submitted it to the Committee of Ministers for adoption.

### 3. Adoption by the Committee of Ministers

In April 2019, the Committee of Ministers adopted Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4 on Supporting Young Refugees in Transition to Adulthood.

### 4. Adoption of the Roadmap for implementation

Later in 2019, the Joint Council on Youth adopted a roadmap<sup>6</sup> for the implementation of the Recommendation, inviting member states, youth organisations and the Council of Europe youth sector to work within their roles and means to make the Recommendation relevant. In this roadmap, the Youth Department is also expected to:

- support capacity-building and awareness-raising activities with relevant stakeholders in the programme of the European Youth Centres and through activities funded by the European Youth Foundation
- support the dissemination of the Recommendation in member states
- include the Recommendation and its principles in other relevant areas of its work (youth policy development and advice, assistance measures to member states) where relevant
- ensure inter-institutional co-operation in the promotion of this Recommendation.

## The role of the Council of Europe in the implementation of the Recommendation

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The Council of Europe member states are expected to implement the Recommendation. However, there are several challenges for implementation, starting with its status as a non-binding document, and that not all member states may want or need to implement all aspects of the Recommendation. Therefore, it remains important to have a centralised commitment to the Recommendation and to showcase member states as duty bearers, reminding them of their role in its implementation. Civil society organisations and the Council of Europe youth sector have a role to play, especially through advocacy and campaigning actions which have proven to be effective for policy change in several countries.

### Promoting awareness

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Since the Recommendation was adopted, the Council of Europe Youth Department has been working to raise awareness and encourage its implementation. This is also contained within the Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021-2025). This action plan states that the measures of the Recommendation should continue to be implemented and proposes targeted measures and activities to enhance the capacity of member states to identify and address vulnerabilities throughout asylum and migration procedures.

Taking into account the recent challenges, including the war in Ukraine, which has resulted in millions of refugees arriving in Europe, especially women with children, the Youth Department of the Council of Europe has stressed the need for wider-spread application of the Recommendation. Part of this includes making the Recommendation available in the official languages of member states. By November 2022, the Recommendation was available in 15 languages, including Czech, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, Slovak and Ukrainian. In order to support civil society actors in advocacy actions, a training course on advocacy for rights and social inclusion of young refugees took place in June 2022 at the European Youth Centre Budapest. The training course increased the capacity of the participants to design and implement advocacy actions, and encouraged them to become active actors of change at local and national levels. The follow-up advocacy projects cover a range of important topics, such as access to education, family reunification, access to social rights in detention centres, access to information, anti-discrimination, adequate medical care, and housing.

### The Long-term training course **Youth.Together**

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The project **Youth.Together** was set up in 2018, with the mission of addressing the risks of social exclusion and violence that young refugees are exposed to, especially those in transition to adulthood. The centrepiece of the project was a long-term training course (LTTC) for

36 youth workers and young refugees. They were active in reception and hosting centres or other social and educational facilities for/or involving young refugees. The course consisted of two residential training courses, building competences in youth work and human rights education, and the practice phase between the two courses, when participants ran individual initiatives at their places of work.

During the practice phase, participants planned and implemented local, national, and international youth projects aimed at assisting vulnerable groups of young refugees, including young people in their transition to adulthood. Six projects in Sweden, Italy, Germany, France, and Malta received institutional and financial support from the Youth Department of the Council of Europe through direct grants, project visits, the provision of educational resources and expert advice.

Through the intensive training process of the LTTC, the participants developed competences in human rights education and youth work in support of, and with, young refugees. This consequently raised the confidence in those young people, the direct and indirect beneficiaries in advocating for human rights and the implementation of recent policy measures in the member states of the Council of Europe. Additionally, the project brought a youth dimension to social work often carried out by the institutions dealing with the reception of young refugees, demonstrating the importance of human rights education as well as youth-led activities in the process.

The project [Youth.Together](#) showcases a unique example of hands-on capacity building that upscaled the youth work competence of young refugees and represented a life-changing experience for many participants. The year spent together as a group enabled a transformation which started in each participant as an individual learning process and led to significant improvements in youth services where youth work and non-formal education had not existed previously. Consequently, the project involved more young refugees contributing to the policy development process of the member states of the Council of Europe.

The project resulted in 32 initiatives which addressed issues facing by young refugees including but not limited to discrimination, lack of access to information and youthwork, employment, health, housing and education, and which aimed to increase self-confidence and resilience of young refugees and youth workers.

### **Workshop – Taking Young Refugees and Asylum Seekers seriously**

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To support the implementation of the Recommendation, as well as youth policy and youth measures by stakeholders in migration, education and youth work fields, the Council of Europe, together with the Vrije Universiteit of Brussels (VUB) and the Flanders Department of Foreign affairs, co-organised a workshop in Brussels to showcase examples of projects and initiatives of the youth sector to support young refugees.

The programme was inspired by the main findings of the research conducted by Minne Huysmans (VUB), “Young newcomers at the crossroads of new beginnings: a contextual

framework on experiences in urban Belgium". The research highlights the importance of social networks, and social support on inclusion of accompanied / unaccompanied minors. Challenges identified in the research included young people having difficulties connecting with the outside world, and the creation of segregated realities. The participants of the of the workshop indicated several key points in relation to the Recommendation, namely:

- Youth work can have a role in supporting young newcomers in building their social network and connecting them with the local community. Youth work also has a role in encouraging and supporting newcomers with their ambition and life projects, raising awareness, and proposing activities to foster relations.
- Reaching 18 is a key challenge and, despite the increasing difficulties in developing social networks beyond 18 years of age, a strong network and access to information is key during this time. Buddy-systems and volunteering are possible ways for creating support systems, and youth work can have a role in developing such networks.
- It is important that co-operation between different sectors is strengthened to facilitate the development of support networks.
- Training youth workers and other support workers on the various tools and instruments available to support young refugees and defend their rights is important.
- Active participation of young people is central to all aspects of programme and policy development.
- The funding and the development of durable, sustainable projects are important for ensuring adequate responses to the needs of young refugees in transition to adulthood.

### Consultative Meeting – **Supporting Young Refugees through Youth Work and Youth Policy**

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This online meeting was organised to identify, prioritise and organise additional ways to support the implementation of the measures proposed by the Recommendation through youth policy and youth work. This meeting also particularly took into account the impact of the COVID-19 crisis and related restrictions on young refugees and youth work.

The meeting resulted in a list of recommendations (conclusions) which were taken forward by the Advisory Council on Youth, communicated to the Joint Council on Youth, and it thus informed the Youth for Democracy programme until the end of 2025.



## 2. The essentials of the Recommendation

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### Scope

The first section of the Recommendation defines its scope and purpose and provides information on how and what are covered by the Recommendation.

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.*

While the Recommendation centres on young people who have been granted international protection, it encourages Council of Europe member states to apply the measures that are laid out to young people who arrived in Europe as children, have since reached the age of 18, and who have applied for refugee status or subsidiary protection. However, migrant children and young people who are undocumented or reside in the member state on another human rights ground than asylum face many of the same challenges and may also benefit from the actions proposed.

### Key principles

#### ***Bridging the European and national levels***

The Recommendation makes European-level recommendations which centre on the individual needs of young refugees while stressing the importance of national level supports for meeting the needs of young refugees and contributing to their positive transition experiences.

#### ***Relevance to various stakeholders***

The provisions the Recommendation provide guidelines to member states and the various relevant stakeholders which can support the needs of young refugees during their transition to adulthood, notably those institutions and stakeholders concerned with child protection, youth, health, education, migration, justice and gender equality, including local and regional authorities.

### **Recognising regional and local policy measures**

The Recommendation recognises the various national and regional policy frameworks and acknowledges that these frameworks are responsible for defining the duration of additional temporary supports. This includes the recognition that adjustments are required to take into account specific national support systems and legal specificities, hence the stressing of “where necessary and adequate”. Additionally, it also recognises that many of the support measures are the remit of local or regional authorities and players – this, where support systems are provided (or not) and where youth work interventions are at their most effective.

### **A starting point, not a limit for further or better measures**

The Recommendation clearly aims to support the rights of young refugees as a particularly vulnerable group. It supports but does not limit the rights of young refugees as adults, nor does it restrict national or international law provisions in place which are more favourable to young refugees than the articles of the Recommendation. In other words, the Recommendation generally refers to the expected minimum standards and should *not* be used to limit rights in cases where the member states already have supports in places for these young people which go over and beyond the guidelines of the Recommendation.

## **Structure of the Recommendation**

The text of the Recommendation consists of two major parts: the Recommendation (including the preamble) and the Appendix with the Guidelines for member states.

The **preamble** provides the rationale and the legal framework of the Recommendation. When reaching the age of 18, and being no longer under the protection of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, young refugees no longer have access to the same rights and opportunities as they had as children, and many of them, as adults, are likely to face an abrupt change in their ability to access services and support across many sectors, including welfare, education, healthcare and psychosocial support, leisure and recreational activities, housing and special accommodation, information on relevant administrative procedures, and other essential services. It underlines that the lack of support and difficulties in accessing their rights may lead young refugees to go into hiding, thus putting their safety at risk, exposing them to violence, exploitation and/or trafficking in human beings. This is especially so for those who are not accompanied or have been separated from their families, and for young women exposed to higher risk of sexual assault, rape and domestic violence.

It also acknowledges the diverse challenges faced by all young people in transition to adulthood and an autonomous life, and highlights the difficulties related to pending claims for asylum and residence, as well as numerous obstacles to successful integration in a new society. Furthermore, it underlines that access to education, accommodation, employment, and healthcare is not only a right but also a pre-condition for the social inclusion of young people into the host community.

The legal framework referring to the existing humanitarian law recalls that the Council of Europe Member states are obliged to ensure respect for human rights and for the right to asylum.

The **operative part** of the Recommendation clearly calls on governments to ensure additional temporary support for young people after reaching the age of 18 in order to enable them to access their rights and to prevent human rights violation. It also recognises the important role of youth work and non-formal education in supporting inclusion of young refugees and in developing competence.

Having outlined the scope and purpose, the Appendix with **Guidelines** lays out two key sections:

- Safeguarding the rights and opportunities of young refugees in transition to adulthood
- Recognising and supporting the role of youth work in assisting young refugees in transition to adulthood in accessing their rights and in furthering their inclusion in society.

The first section on safeguarding rights and opportunities details the recommendations to member states under the following nine themes:

- a) Legal Framework
- b) Non-discrimination and protection
- c) Social services, accommodation, and welfare benefits
- d) Access to education
- e) Healthcare and psychological support
- f) Access to information and legal advice
- g) Right to family reunification
- h) Employment
- i) Life projects.

With the aim of supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood and furthering their inclusion in society, the second section focuses on:

- a) Recognising, promoting, and supporting youth work and doing so through the youth sector
- b) Encouraging the participation of young refugees in society and decision-making processes, and
- c) Conducting and supporting awareness activities and campaigns which highlight the challenges faced by, and the needs of young refugees in transition to adulthood.

## The Recommendation in practice

### For the Council of Europe member states

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The Recommendation provides a policy framework which Council of Europe member states can implement at a national level.

## For non-state actors, including young refugees

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While the Recommendation principally targets national governments, the policy measures provide useful proposals which non-state actors can follow and implement at regional and local levels, including youth organisations working with young refugees and migrant populations. The Recommendation also provides non-state actors, including young refugees themselves, with an advocacy- and awareness-raising tool to support them in campaigning for their rights.

## The actors important for the implementation of this Recommendation

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A wide range of different stakeholders, such as public authorities, youth workers and other professionals working with refugee youth and children, are also called upon to take and support action, especially in dissemination and, where necessary, advocacy. The Recommendation's inclusion of various actors (across different but often interlinking points) demonstrates that, for its successful implementation, it is vital that different stakeholders, including young refugees in transition to adulthood, support each other and collaborate with each other.

## Key actors targeted by the Guide

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## 3. The Recommendation in detail – Safeguarding the rights of young refugees

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The first section of the Guidelines for implementation of the Recommendation focuses on safeguarding the rights and opportunities of young refugees in transition to adulthood. With this purpose, it details the recommendations to member states under nine major themes. These themes are as follows:

1. Legal Frameworks
2. Non-discrimination and protection
3. Social services, accommodation, and welfare benefits
4. Access to education
5. Healthcare and psychological support
6. Access to information and legal advice
7. Right to family reunification
8. Employment
9. Life projects

All these themes and recommendations are equally important for ensuring that young refugees receive the necessary support when they reach the age of 18, and also for enabling them to access their rights.

This chapter is organised according to the following: the rationale behind the Guidelines (*What to know*), recommendations from the Council of Europe regarding the relevant challenges (*What does the Council of Europe recommend?*) and examples from different member states in providing solutions to these challenges (*Promising practices*). All these are briefly explained and discussed in this chapter.

### 3.1 DEVELOPING LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

#### > What to know

The development of a well-established and comprehensive legal framework by member states is a key element in guaranteeing the rights of young refugees in transition to adulthood and in facilitating their integration into societies. Still, in many member states, a major

challenge for young refugees in transition to adulthood is the lack of standardised legal frameworks, even though these play a pivotal role in establishing their residence status, rights, and responsibilities. In particular, aftercare arrangements and organisational set-up for unaccompanied minors turning 18 are fundamental pillars for supporting young refugees in their transition process, which necessitates an inclusive legal framework.

When these mechanisms are not defined accurately, procedural obstacles or discriminatory practices might arise for young refugees in several areas, such as family reunification, integration into employment and education, asylum procedures, reception conditions, and social security.

The development of a legal framework is based on certain stages, including:

- a) identifying and analysing the needs of young refugees in transition to adulthood
- b) considering international norms, standards, and recommendations. There is a comprehensive set of initiatives and documents which contribute to the legal framework for young people, including refugees, in transition to adulthood. These are mainly developed by international actors, including mainly the Council of Europe, the EU, and UN agencies.
- c) comparing national frameworks with international norms and standards, and then identifying gaps
- d) searching for examples of norms from other countries
- e) consulting with refugees, human rights institutions and other relevant NGOs and institutions
- f) setting out the rights of young refugees in transition to adulthood and defining relevant processes and procedures for them.

### > What does the Council of Europe recommend?

<i>Improve</i>	the legal framework for young refugees.
<i>Foster</i>	comprehensive interdisciplinary co-operation between institutions in areas such as child protection, youth, health, education, social protection or welfare, migration, justice, and gender equality



### **RISE UP – Unaccompanied minors transitioning safely into adulthood**

The RISE UP – Unaccompanied Minors Transitioning Safely into Adulthood project was started in 2020 and funded by the EPIM (European Programme for Integration and Migration). The project team collected the relevant data from five different EU countries (Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, and France).

**Actors:** Oxfam Italy, The Greek Council for Refugees, Oxfam Ireland, The Dutch Council for Refugees, ACLI France

**Aim:** The RISE-UP project aimed to influence policies and practices related to the transition from childhood to adulthood of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) living in Europe by encouraging specific support schemes within the national legal frameworks of countries.

**Results:** The project provided data and information about existing legal frameworks in selected case-study countries in Europe by conducting a needs analysis about legal gaps regarding unaccompanied children in transition to adulthood, including those without a secure residence status. Furthermore, the project highlighted critical issues regarding the transition to adulthood and identified good practices.

**Why it is important:** This project is important because it calls for a “unified European approach” by states with regard to young migrants in transition to adulthood, by providing a comparative perspective about different legal frameworks that relate to them and by presenting a data collected as a result of the field work.

**Further information:** [www.oxfamitalia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Teach-us-for-what-is-coming-report.pdf](http://www.oxfamitalia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Teach-us-for-what-is-coming-report.pdf)

## 3.2 NON-DISCRIMINATION AND PROTECTION

### > What to know

Everyday racism and discrimination are a part of many refugees’ lives. Young refugees in transition to adulthood often face discrimination on multiple grounds. Discrimination is considered a fundamental “stressor” on immigrant health and beyond, preventing the integration of young refugees into society, and can cause them mental health difficulties and feelings of isolation.

Due to a range of situational and personal factors, being a refugee or asylum seeker might make young people more vulnerable by increasing the possibility of discrimination. Personal factors, such as gender, health status, identity, age, and disability are all elements that might increase these vulnerabilities. While the reasons for discrimination might be based on deeply-set racism, prejudice, ethnocentrism or “fear of the unknown”, some societal factors within host countries, such as rapid urbanisation, economic crises and growing inequalities may also be influential in xenophobic sentiments in which refugees are easy scapegoats. Additionally, those people with refugee / asylum seeker status or irregular status are perceived to be more at risk of discrimination on almost all grounds, such as accessing accommodation, healthcare, and employment, since they may have fewer rights and less access to services when compared to local people. Even if access is equally given, young refugees might be excluded from these services owing to other barriers, such as not having adequate local language skills and a lack of translation support, or simply knowledge of the procedures and being in possession of all the required documents.

In recent years, hate speech in particular has accentuated and legitimised several discriminatory practices and the exclusion of young refugees, especially those in transition to adulthood. The Council of Europe has called for a “speedy and systematic reaction” on hate speech against refugees and asylum seekers by highlighting the situation of refugees in Europe as an important theme of the No Hate Speech Movement youth campaign. The importance of combating hate speech as a violation or abuse of human rights is reaffirmed in the 2022 Committee of Ministers’ Recommendation on combating hate speech, which defines hate speech “as all types of expression that incite, promote, spread or justify violence, hatred or discrimination against a person or group of persons, or that denigrates them, by reason of their real or attributed personal characteristics or status such as ‘race’, colour, language, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation”.<sup>7</sup>

Special groups of young refugees at risk, such as survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, and victims of human trafficking and exploitation, require special measures in order to be protected from discrimination more effectively. While equal treatment with their peers in services and support mechanisms is necessary for all young refugees, these more vulnerable groups should be prioritised and supported in accessing mainstream services, including healthcare and psychological support.

### > What does the Council of Europe recommend?

<i>Provide</i>	young refugees in transition to adulthood with the support and protection they require, without discrimination.
<i>Address</i>	the discriminatory practices faced by young refugees.

### > Promising practice



#### **RAP:I:STAN – Rap music and poetry against discrimination and for integration**

RAP:I:STAN is an awareness-raising project which is designed to prevent discrimination against young refugees. The project was implemented during 2016 and 2017 and funded by the Danish Government (Ministry of Integration and the Agency of Culture and Palaces).

**Actors:** Rapolitics (Non-profit organisation)

**Aim:** The RAP:I:STAN project aims to prevent discrimination by using rap music, storytelling and poetry, and by creating a common meeting platform for young refugees / asylum seekers (mainly unaccompanied and aged between 15 and 25) and Danish youth.

**Results:** The project developed and organised a series of workshops regarding being a refugee and the perception of Denmark by refugees. It also provided coaching on writing

skills and music techniques. The project reached around 1,000 school students in Denmark, organised four concerts, and appeared in newspapers and published blogposts.

**Why it is important:** This project is important because of its aim in breaking stereotypes that cause discrimination, achieving this aim by creating intercultural dialogue between young refugees and local youth, and developing common platforms for bilateral dialogue.

**Further information:** [https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/integration-practice/rapistan-rap-music-and-poetry-against-discrimination-and-integration\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/integration-practice/rapistan-rap-music-and-poetry-against-discrimination-and-integration_en)

### 3.3 SOCIAL SERVICES, ACCOMMODATION, AND WELFARE BENEFITS

#### > What to know

Access to social services and welfare benefits is a component of human rights law, which necessitates that “everyone should enjoy an adequate standard of living”. Providing adequate social services for young refugees also includes their access to accommodation and other welfare benefits. In well-established systems for young refugees, the scope of such social assistance is inclusive and might contain support for developing local language competences and access to vocational education.

However, even access to minimum standards of these services and benefits might be challenging for some young refugees for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, young undocumented refugees in transition to adulthood might lose their rights to freely access social services when they turn 18. Furthermore, a lack of adequate information regarding access to social services, the existence of barriers in states’ internal systems / legal frameworks, representation, or the lack of a residence permit (in particular, for unaccompanied young refugees), might bring additional challenges for them. Therefore, beyond providing these services, a knowledge and consultancy system supported by public bodies and civil society organisations is a key element in providing young refugees access to these services.

Accommodation is a critical field for the integration of young refugees into host societies. Not only providing accommodation but also following up and ensuring its continuity are major requirements in providing better life standards for young refugees in transition to adulthood. Rather than just finding suitable accommodation, adequately designed support systems should be accessible for young refugees which provide an opportunity for them to live together with their local peers, rather than living in separated areas or, worse, isolated from peers or support systems, in temporary facilities and exposed to a variety of risks. Relevant measures should also be taken to avoid placing young refugees in detention facilities and presenting sustainable alternatives for them which are compatible with human dignity and human rights law.

## > What does the Council of Europe recommend?

<b>Ensure</b>	that young refugees in transition to adulthood have access to social services and welfare benefits that provide them with support and assistance to enable effective access to their rights and to mainstream social services, and to maintain an adequate standard of living.
<b>Ensure</b>	that young refugees can access welfare benefits and accommodation throughout their transition period.
<b>Provide</b>	appropriate accommodation and pay due regard to geographic proximity to social and community services.
<b>Avoid</b>	placing young refugees in detention facilities, including <i>de facto</i> detention.

## > Promising practice



### CURANT – House sharing for unaccompanied young refugees with local youngsters in Antwerp

The CURANT project, which began in 2016, is co-ordinated by the Social Welfare Department of the city of Antwerp, Belgium, and funded by the EU's European Regional Development Fund through the Urban Innovative Actions Initiative. The project is based on the housing problems of young refugees and involves initiatives and activities to contribute to their integration through accommodation support.

**Actors:** Social Welfare Department of the city of Antwerp (public institution), The Centre for Migration and Intercultural Studies of the University of Antwerp (University)

**Aim:** The CURANT project aims to provide housing opportunities for young refugees together with young Flemish people.

**Results:** By 2019 CURANT provided affordable accommodation through 66 co-housing units for refugees and their Flemish flatmates. Additionally, the project created a network for refugees to provide peer support. The project also provided support and guidance to young refugees in the areas of social networking and integration, education, independent living, language learning, leisure activities, psychological counselling, and careers.

**Why it is important:** This project is important as a co-operation between a public institution and higher education institution for providing housing for young refugees by bringing them together with local youth in the same living space.

**Further information:** [www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/antwerp](http://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/antwerp)

## 3.4 ACCESS TO EDUCATION

### > What to know

Education is a key element in the integration of migrants, including refugees, since it opens the door to other areas of integration, such as employment and a social life. However, access to education is still a challenge for many young people. While continuing education is identified as a critical factor that facilitates young refugees' transition to adulthood, refugees may be directly or indirectly excluded from the educational systems of some member states owing to the age limit for compulsory schooling or required educational level for entering the regular schooling system in the country of arrival. Therefore, young refugees might also face additional challenges concerning continuing education when they reach the age of 18.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also confirms that access to education for refugees is "limited, uneven and generally of a very low quality" and "not serving its protective function due to a lack of focus on learning". Around 50% of all school-age refugee children are out of school, while only 3% of refugee students are currently enrolled in higher education.<sup>8</sup>

The enrolment of young refugees in higher education is low in many host countries when compared with local youth. These lower rates among young refugees means that "a gateway to upward social and economic mobility" is limited for them when compared with their peers.<sup>9</sup> There are a number of reasons for this, such as a lack of guidance and information, economic pressures, lack of adequate financial sponsorship, and limited language proficiency. In addition to these challenges, missing qualifications and evaluation of credentials, interrupted education / gaps in learning, and legislative challenges exclude many young refugees from higher education. To be able to continue their education from the level that they deserve and to have access to the employment market, transferability and recognition of young refugees' prior educational experience is very important. The recognition of qualifications has been a key area of interest for the Council of Europe for many years. As part of these efforts, the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (the Lisbon Recognition Convention) was drafted and adopted with the co-operation of the Council of Europe and UNESCO in 1997 (Council of Europe, 2021a). Based on the principles of this Convention, the Council of Europe led an initiative entitled The European Qualifications Passport for Refugees, which is a standardised document issued for certifying "the highest qualification(s) achieved, academic discipline, other relevant qualifications, as well as relevant job experience and language proficiency".<sup>10</sup>

### > What does the Council of Europe recommend?

**Provide** | young refugees with education in accordance with their national laws and regulations.

<b>Ensure</b>	continued access to educational paths for young refugees.
<b>Continue</b>	to provide language education and, if possible, certify language competences of young refugees.
<b>Provide</b>	opportunities for young refugees to benefit from European educational programmes.
<b>Provide</b>	access to and opportunities for vocational training and apprenticeships for young refugees.
<b>Recognise and Certify</b>	young refugees' previous education experience and qualifications.

### > Promising practice



#### Refugee Education Initiatives (REIs)

REIs was initiated with funding from the Erasmus+ Social Inclusion programme to address the challenges of refugees in accessing higher education and to foster their inclusion through facilitating their enrolment in universities. After the completion of the first programme between 2016 and 2019 (entitled REIs1), a second phase was started as REIs2 with the same purposes.

**Actors:** Central European University, Open Education Limited (Hungary), Bard College Berlin (Germany), University of East London (United Kingdom), University of Vienna (Austria), Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece).

**Aim:** This project aims at addressing inequality regarding the access of refugees to higher education and facilitating their entry to higher education.

**Results:** These initiatives developed and delivered part-time and full-time preparation programmes for the integration of young refugees into higher education, including a full-time university preparatory programme, a five-month intensive programme, a full-time course of study, a two-stage programme preparing students for post-graduate study in English, and weekend courses on academic subjects and English. Beyond producing these programmes, the initiative achieved the enrolment of more than 120 students to these programmes with scholarships

**Why it is important:** This project is important for providing opportunities for young refugees to be integrated into higher education. It also advocates for changes to the assessment of the backgrounds of refugees, more inclusive practices at universities, and more scholarships for refugees.

**Further information:** [www.refugeeeducationinitiatives.org](http://www.refugeeeducationinitiatives.org)

## 3.5 ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

### > What to know

Insufficient measures to guarantee young refugees' access to healthcare services might deprive them of one of their social rights and increase their vulnerabilities. Young refugees' residence status and age are the fundamental factors determining the limits of the healthcare services from which they can benefit. For instance, a child's entitlement to healthcare services in Portugal is restricted after the age of 16.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, a duality dependent on residence status is observable in some states even before the transition to adulthood. For example, in France, unaccompanied children can access mainstream healthcare facilities while undocumented adults are not entitled to these rights.

Beyond providing access to basic healthcare facilities, relevant measures should guarantee three major elements which are vital for the lives of young refugees in transition to adulthood. Firstly, psychological health services should be provided for all young refugees since psychological support is not included in the range of services offered by many countries when refugees turn 18. After all, the often traumatic pasts of young refugees might strongly influence their mental health. Their journeys might have included leaving their family and friends behind, and experiencing conflict and war, together with loss and/or harassment during the journey. Furthermore, living conditions, uncertainty, problems concerning family reunification, cultural pressures, discrimination, and long waiting times for transition in the country of arrival might complicate their problems. In its report, 'A Global Review: UNHCR's Engagement with Displaced Youth', the UNHCR indicates that "emotional / psychological scars in most cases go unaddressed because young refugees are either 'not visible' or resources are not there to address them".<sup>12</sup> In addition, forced migration might also exacerbate common challenges concerning the normal developmental stages of childhood, possibly causing depression and mental stress disorders, anxiety disorders or psychological distress. Adequate measures must be taken to eliminate direct or indirect barriers to young refugees' full access to healthcare services. For instance, language barriers during the consultancy and treatment processes might exclude young refugees from benefiting from these services. Therefore, translation services and cultural mediator support become equally important for refugees in accessing these services.

Finally, the scope of healthcare support should be interpreted comprehensively for young refugees by also considering maternal health, infectious diseases, HIV and reproductive health, and the impact of leisure time activities and sports / physical activities on their well-being and mental health.

## > What does the Council of Europe recommend?

<i>Provide</i>	young refugees in transition to adulthood with free and comprehensive healthcare, including mental healthcare.
<i>Provide</i>	psychological support for young refugees on the same terms as for nationals, including specialised mental health services.
<i>Pay attention</i>	to the health and psychological needs of young refugees who have arrived as unaccompanied and separated children.
<i>Provide</i>	young refugees with access to education relating to sexual and reproductive health.

## > Promising Practice



### AMORAY – Assessment of Mental Health of Refugees and Asylum Seekers by Youth Workers

AMORAY was a project co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme for the period between 2019 and 2022. The main themes of the project are issues relating to young refugees, youth participation, health, and well-being. The project was implemented by a partnership of five organisations from four European countries.

**Actors:** Metanoia Institute (UK), IASIS (Greece), Asociación La Bien Pagá Espacio Escénico (Spain), Institut Corse de Formation et Recherche en Travail Social (France) and the Refugee Council (UK)

**Aim:** The aim of this project was to develop and implement a training programme for youth workers with the purpose of recognising the role of youth workers in the provision of mental health services to young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

**Results:** The AMORAY project developed a training curriculum for mental health assessment of refugee and asylum seekers by youth workers. It also created an online platform to provide access to the training content and a gateway to relevant psycho-educational material. The project trained 100 youth workers and is targeted to access for at least 500 young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers who will be able to benefit from mental health assessments and tailored psychosocial interventions.

**Why it is important:** This project is important since it aimed at developing the capacities and competences of youth workers who might act as important mediators and facilitators in supporting young migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in mental health and well-being issues. Furthermore, it develops training programmes by following the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), and is set up to ensure that the training can lead to vocational certification at EU level.

**Further information:** <https://amoray-project.eu>

## 3.6 INFORMATION AND LEGAL ADVICE

### > What to know

Access to information is a key element for young people in designing their lives since they need to know about changes regarding their residence status, their rights, and responsibilities when they reach the age of 18. The transfer of information should be facilitated by considering accessibility and with “age-appropriate language”. Transparent, relevant, context-specific, and clear information is particularly necessary for young refugees in certain areas, such as those relating to legal status, society, services provided, and how to access these services.

However, there are significant specific barriers for young refugees in accessing information. Language and other communication problems can result in limited access to information by young refugees, especially regarding administrative processes, documents, and forms used during the process. Lack of information regarding the legal system in their domicile country or the complexity of this system, and lack of relevant staff and/or mediators to transfer information in a sensitive approach that young refugees need, might also prevent them from accessing their rights. Therefore, in addition to states, civil society and universities can facilitate communication by making the language used understandable and transparent for young people.

Legal advice is an essential need for young refugees, starting from before they reach the age of 18. This is because they may well have to go through complicated processes, in particular regarding their residence status and right to stay in a specific country. The major areas of required legal advice might include support for administrative and judicial proceedings concerning their right to stay, or seeking international protection, the appointment of a legal guardian (if they are unaccompanied), violations of their rights, and incidents of discrimination. Guardians, lawyers, social workers, and service providers can also function as key sources of information, while civil society and youth work organisations play a prominent role in the provision of legal advice. Consequently, these actors’ capacity on how to communicate with young refugees and their level of information on the rights of young refugees are equally important.

### > What does the Council of Europe recommend?

<b>Provide</b>	young refugees with timely, clear, and transparent information about any changes in or consequences for their rights and responsibilities.
<b>Make</b>	all information and advice available in an accessible form that is gender- and culture-sensitive, and provided in a language that is understood by the individuals concerned.
<b>Provide</b>	young refugees with access to free legal advice on their immigration status and access to rights.

## > Promising practice



### The Migrant Children's Project

The Migrant Children's Project is an ongoing project that has been co-ordinated and implemented for more than 10 years by CORAM CLC Children's Legal Centre in the United Kingdom. It is implemented with the support of several organisations, including the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, The Pears Foundation, Trust for London, Comic Relief, Esmee Fairbairn, The Legal Education Foundation, The Big Lottery and The Strategic Legal Fund for Vulnerable Young Migrants.

**Actors:** CORAM CLC Children's Legal Centre (co-ordinator)

**Aim:** The Migrant Children's Project (MCP) aims to promote the rights of refugee and migrant children, young people, and families by providing them with legal advice to guarantee that they receive the protection and support they need.

**Major elements:** The project has established an advice line which provides free advice on the rights of young migrants and refugees. It has also developed training courses which are delivered to professionals and practitioners to help them support children and young refugees more effectively. The project has also produced more than 30 fact sheets and a guide on legal issues.

**Why it is important:** This project is important as a sustainable initiative with a holistic approach to providing free and confidential advice regarding the rights of young migrants and refugees.

**Further information:** [www.childrenslegalcentre.com](http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com)

## 3.7 RIGHT TO FAMILY REUNIFICATION

### > What to know

Family separation due to the displacement process causes a loss of ties, emotional problems, and feelings of isolation for young refugees. Risks for children who are separated from their families include exploitation (sexual and labour), human trafficking, and violence. Owing to such vulnerabilities, family reunification is identified as an obligation by international human rights law and must be guaranteed for young refugees. This right is also interlinked and empowered by a right to information and legal advice. [The Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), [the Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), [the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), and [the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) clearly refer to the rights of family reunification. At EU level, the [EU Dublin Regulation \(No 604/2013\)](#), the [Family Reunification Directive](#), and the [Qualification Directive](#) regulate family reunification.

Family reunification has also been a key area of concern for the Council of Europe. It has published an issue paper, including 36 recommendations, entitled 'Realising the Right to Family Reunification of Refugees in Europe'. Concerning the transition to adulthood, the paper underlines that "applications brought by children should not be terminated when the child turns 18 and should recognise the particular protection needs of young adults who have fled as unaccompanied minors".

In 2020, a handbook, entitled 'Family reunification for refugee and migrant children – standards and promising practices', was also published by the Council of Europe, which was prepared in line with the targets of the [Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe 2017-2019](#).

Clear rules and procedures are necessary for the family reunification of unaccompanied children and young refugees. Based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on the Rights of the Child embraced four general principles to follow:

- the best interests of the child
- non-discrimination
- the right to life, survival and development
- respect for the views of the child.

These principles can function as the basis for designing rules and procedures for family reunification. Furthermore, cross-border co-operation among different actors, in particular state institutions and international organisations, is necessary for the proper and timely implementation of this process for young refugees. Grounded in the processes for child protection in international law, the scope of this co-operation can include the following: co-operation among member states; co-operation with third states; co-operation for the co-ordination of co-operative arrangements, networks and NGOs; co-operation between central authorities and other authorities working in this field.

### > What does the Council of Europe recommend?

<i>Safeguard</i>	the right to family reunification.
<i>Strive</i>	for efficient administrative procedures to ensure this right.

### > Promising practice

#### SAFE PASSAGE INTERNATIONAL



Safe Passage was established as a charity centre by volunteers who travelled to Calais, France, to help refugees in 2015. In order to help unaccompanied children to access their right to family reunion, they have been developing activities and initiatives by co-operating with lawyers, community organisers, and other relevant stakeholders.

**Actors:** International Charity (Safe Passage International)

**Aim:** Safe Passage aims to reunite unaccompanied children living in the United Kingdom with their families and relatives who seek asylum in Europe.

**Results:** Safe Passage has contributed to the family reunification process of over 1,800 child refugees by providing legal support, political advocacy, and grass-roots campaigning activities.

**Why it is important:** This initiative is important because it provides a comprehensive and holistic approach to the family reunification of young refugees, including political advocacy and assistance all over Europe. It is also the only organisational initiative “working with children at risk on the ground in both the country they find themselves in and the country they wish to reach”.

**Further information:** [www.safepassage.org.uk](http://www.safepassage.org.uk)

## 3.8 EMPLOYMENT

### > What to know

The transition to adulthood brings with it a need for financial and economic independency for most young refugees since they often lose the relevant support that they had before the age of 18. Therefore, the transition to adulthood might create feelings of insecurity for them. To prevent this, young refugees need legal provisions and extra measures to facilitate their integration into the labour market. Access to the labour market is a pre-condition for economic sustainability of young refugees, and one which minimises the risk of parallel or illegal forms of economic activity for survival and possible exploitation.

However, refugees are at a disadvantage when accessing the employment market and other opportunities. In general, access to employment and access to education are interconnected. Young refugees mostly have problems with school enrolment, or they have to drop out because they need to work. As a result, a lack of education can cause their exclusion from the employment market.

There are a number of other reasons that create disadvantages, including discrimination in the job market, lack of opportunities for the certification and recognition of their previous professional experiences, residence status issues, and gender-based problems. As a result, most young refugees who gain employment resign themselves to low-skilled, temporary, insecure and/or unregistered jobs. More importantly, they can find themselves in neither education, nor employment, nor in training, even in states with high welfare standards. This situation can hinder their integration into host societies and increases the likelihood of marginalisation.

Opportunities for increasing the digital skills and ICT competences of young refugees are equally valuable in supporting their integration into the labour market, since the digital economy might open the gates of employment for them.

### > What does the Council of Europe recommend?

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>Provide</b> | access to the labour market for young refugees on the same conditions as nationals.   |
| <b>Provide</b> | young refugees with employment information, guidance, opportunities for skills development, including ICT and digital skills, and other support in seeking and securing employment. |

### > Promising practice

#### SIAMO UMANI



SIAMO is a non-profit, social co-operative in Italy which has been working since 2014 to provide solutions for the needs of young refugees living in Italy. The organisation follows a social business model for ensuring the socio-economic integration of young refugees. Local youth and young refugees have been working together in the organisation to provide solutions for employment problems.

**Actors:** SIAMO, Youth Centre – Salesians of Don Bosco, Jesuit Refugee Service, Alveare che dice sì

**Aim:** The project aims to create and promote skills training and employment opportunities for contributing to the social and labour market inclusion of young, predominantly female, refugees.

**Results:** The project has created training opportunities for promoting entrepreneurship among young refugees and the acquisition and improvement of business skills. Local Italian youth and young refugees have been producing art products together and selling them by using entrepreneurial skills. In two years, the project connected young refugees' products with around 120 clients. They also created the SIAMO Umani Business Lab, which consists of a 35-hour training course given to 15 young people (10 refugees and five locals). The project created employment opportunities for 18 youth refugees.

**Why it is important:** This project is important because it facilitates the integration of young refugees into the labour market and demonstrates that these young people are an asset that can enrich host communities.

**Further information:** [www.siamocoop.it](http://www.siamocoop.it)

## 3.9 LIFE PROJECTS

### > What to know

Transition into adulthood is a critical stage of young refugees' lives, yet several challenges can prevent them making plans for their futures. Therefore, all actors within the process should strive to provide facilities for young refugees, to build their "life projects" through different strategies. A life project is defined as "a plan, drawn up and negotiated between the minor and the authorities in the host country, represented by a designated professional, with contributions from a variety of other professionals".

Based on this background, the Council of Europe adopted a recommendation in 2007 on life projects for unaccompanied migrant minors (CM/Rec(2007)9). The recommendation defines the aim of life projects as "to develop the capacities of minors allowing them to acquire and strengthen the skills necessary to become independent, responsible and active in society [...] by pursuing objectives relating to the social integration of minors, personal development, cultural development, housing, health, education and vocational training, and employment".

Accordingly, a life project is a tool based on "a comprehensive, integrated and therefore multidisciplinary approach". The Council of Europe recommendation lists the elements that should be a part of this "holistic approach" as:

- the minor's personal profile
- the minor's migration itinerary
- the minor's family environment and particularly the nature of their family relationships
- the minor's expectations, wishes and perceptions
- the situation in the country of origin
- special guarantees afforded to unaccompanied children seeking asylum in the host country.

For young refugees in transition to adulthood to develop a successful life project, the role of stakeholders and their active engagement in the process is essential. The major stakeholders include carers (when they are minors), educators, trainers, legal representatives, and, in some cases, health professionals. Beyond these individuals, NGOs, international organisations, and governments can influence the design and implementation of life projects.

### > What does the Council of Europe recommend?

**To contribute** | to the development of life projects for young refugees in transition to adulthood.

## > Promising practice



### UPGRAD\_ME 2.0: Game of Skills

UpGrad\_Me 2.0 Game of Skills is a project funded by the European Commission, and started in 2020. The project is designed as a continuation of UpGrad\_Me project, which “promoted self-branding through a video CV using a mobile phone”.

**Actors:** African Media Association (Malta), Solidaridad Sin Fronteras (Spain), Arciragazzi Portici Utopa Attanasio (Italy), Center for Advancement of Research and Development in Educational Technology Ltd CARDET (Cyprus).

**Aim:** This project aims to contribute to the career plans of young migrants and refugees by promoting labour orientation and providing career counselling.

**Results:** The project developed a tool for the gamification experience for young migrants and refugees, which helps them to discover their competences and skills. It provided career counselling and guidance to 200 migrant youth, newcomers, asylum seekers, and refugees. A career guidance handbook to help practitioners working with young people was prepared as part of the project.

**Why it is important:** The project is important, firstly, because of its contribution to the life project designs of young migrants and refugees through providing career counselling, as well as by enabling them to do this through innovative methodologies, such as using video games and gamification.

**Further information:** <https://upgradme.eu>



## 4. The Recommendation in detail – The role of youth work

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This chapter lays out Articles 31 to 43 of the Guidelines of the Recommendation. It also contains suggestions and ideas for how the state can support young refugees, youth organisations and youth work practitioners in taking action to support the transition to adulthood in relation to the recommendations outlined in these articles. Finally, the chapter provides good practice examples of how these stakeholders can assist in the implementation of the Recommendation.

The Council of Europe plays an active role in supporting youth and youth work in several ways:

1. The Council of Europe Youth Department works on guidelines, programmes, and legal instruments to support the development of youth policies at different levels, the most important currently being the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on Youth Work.
2. Quality standards are also developed, applied and made available in non-formal education / learning activities at the European Youth Centres, including the training of multipliers, youth leaders and youth workers.
3. Financial support is also provided to youth organisations for their projects and activities on youth work – local, national or international – and activities to support young refugees (and other vulnerable youth groups).

The main decision-making body of the Youth Department is the Joint Council of Youth a co-managed body which consists of the European Steering Committee for Youth where representatives of ministries or institutions responsible for youth issues come together, and the Advisory Council on Youth. The Advisory Council on Youth includes 30 representatives from non-governmental youth organisations and networks who can provide input and perspectives on youth sector activities and policy.<sup>13</sup> Youth participation is central to the policy and work of the youth sector, including a unique decision-making process based on co-management. Youth organisations representing young refugees are regularly represented in the Advisory Council on Youth since 2010. Young people, youth workers and youth organisations play an important role in the implementation of the Recommendation. The importance of the role of youth participation is demonstrated by the significant section of the Recommendation' guidelines (Articles 31 to 43) focusing on supporting young refugees in participat in decision-making and society. These articles are directed at member states

and relate to their role in supporting and promoting the youth sector in their work with young refugees in transition to adulthood.

## 4.1 MOBILISING THE POTENTIAL OF YOUTH WORK TO MEET THE NEEDS OF YOUNG REFUGEES

Article 31 promotes the inclusion and integration of young refugees in transition to adulthood by mobilising the potential of youth work based on all-inclusive approaches which support young refugees' personal and social development as well as their intercultural competences. It also encourages member states and other youth sector stakeholders to learn more about and understand the situation better, to learn about the experiences and aspirations of young refugees in transition to adulthood, and how the youth sector can support them.

### > Promising practice



#### VOICIFY

The Voicify project, which integrates the different elements outlined in Article 31, was developed by Voices of Young Refugees in Europe and The Young Republic, two international, Europe-based youth organisations, and it is funded by the European Programme for Integration and Migration.

**Aim:** Voicify promotes the inclusion, integration, and participation of young refugees, exiled, migrants, asylum seekers and undocumented young people (YREMASUD) through training and mentorship of YREMASUD advocates to build their political power, and strengthen their own organisations through a long-term, online capacity-building and mentorship programme.

**Description:** The programme covers topics such as human rights, participation, advocacy, and organisational development, along with reflection and mentorship sessions. Voicify and its partners also aim to lead a Europe-wide consultation of YREMASUD from which policy recommendations on key EU policies that directly affect YREMASUD will be produced.

**Results:** The project is ongoing and therefore only limited results / outcomes are available to date. However, between September and November 2021, Voicify and its partners carried out the first consultation of YREMASUD-led organisations across the EU. The report identified a range of main challenges to political participation, including organisational challenges, individual and collective struggles, shrinking space for YREMASUD organisations, systemic racism, nationalism, perpetuating status quo, European supremacy and other forms of dis-

crimination. The report also made several key recommendations to different stakeholders at local, national and European levels.

**Why it is important:** The project has been creating a strong network of YREMASUD supporters and allies. This network supports the advocates in disseminating and advocating for the policy recommendations nationally, and towards the relevant EU bodies and institutions. It amplifies the voices of YREMASUD across Europe.

**Further information:** [www.voicify-eu.org](http://www.voicify-eu.org)

## 4.2 SUPPORTING YOUTH WORK TARGETED AT YOUNG REFUGEES

The government of member states are encouraged to promote and support youth work and non-formal education / learning targeted at young refugees in transition to adulthood that aim to:

- provide opportunities for education in democratic citizenship and human rights education in both formal and non-formal education / learning settings
- develop the skills and competences of young refugees for intercultural and inter-religious dialogue and social inclusion
- develop digital and information literacy and leadership
- support the development of language and communication skills
- support young refugees' expression in cultural or social projects and initiate self-led projects
- provide opportunities for mentoring and peer education / learning
- provide opportunities for sports, culture, art, drama and recreational activities
- make use of and develop young people's competence in using online learning
- develop long-term strategies for young refugees' inclusion based on equal opportunities
- develop their confidence, resilience and trust in building positive relationships
- enable access to national and European learning and mobility programmes.

Some of these aims are common to all youth work provisions, regardless of the status of the young people who are the beneficiaries. The need for specific provisions derives not only from specific needs of young refugees, such as language learning and socialising, but also, and in particular, the importance of adapting the modes of delivery to the specific situation of young refugees. This may imply adaptation of approaches by youth workers and specific programmes and measures to make sure that youth work actually reaches out to young refugees (including basic accessibility conditions, such as youth workers being able to enter into contact with young refugees).

## > Promising practices



### Youth Refugee Women Social Inclusion Academy

The 'Youth Refugee Women Social Inclusion Academy' training course targeted young refugee women of 16-20 years old living in Baku, Azerbaijan.

**Aim:** The training aimed to equip these women with competences in human rights and project management, and to foster social inclusion of young refugee women at the local level.

**Description:** As residents of social care institutions, the young women participating had suffered from numerous acts of violence and discrimination in the past, and were lacking self-confidence and basic knowledge of human dignity and human rights.

**Results:** This training raised the confidence and competences of the young women participating in the project by providing them with support for getting out of the safe house, organising social events and by helping them to enlarge their support circle.

**Why it is important:** Although the project was implemented on a small, local scale and was originally designed as a longer-term project, the training course encouraged young refugee women to create youth-initiated and youth-led projects about interculturalism, gender equality, and social inclusion, and to play an active role in the local community.

**Further information:** [www.coe.int/en/web/youth-peace-dialogue](http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-peace-dialogue)

## 4.3 SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Article 33 of the Guidelines of the Recommendation responds to challenges faced by young refugees when they are settling in host communities, and also in terms of their previous experiences. Challenges in the host society include constraints in access to services and supports, as well as barriers to inclusion, with the transition to adulthood often marked by a loss of rights. This article acknowledges the various challenges that young refugees face with regard to their mental health and psychosocial well-being and the need for youth work organisations and initiatives to include opportunities to access mental health supports to young people in migration. While youth workers and organisations are not expected to provide this support themselves, member states can assist in creating awareness of the challenges faced, and can support youth workers and organisations in ensuring that referral mechanisms are in place for young people to access relevant services. Youth work organisations may also seek to provide targeted activities which aim to support the emotional well-being of young refugees and newcomers, as demonstrated in the promising practices below.

## > What does the Council of Europe recommend?

Ensure that youth work activities with young refugees in transition to adulthood support their mental well-being. The article mentions the need to be aware of the possible emotional challenges resulting from past experiences, and those involved in integrating into a new society, and states that “where necessary, young refugees in transition to adulthood should be referred to structures which are able to provide such support”.

## > Promising practices

### Tackling social isolation and mental health risks (France)



Two youth organisations in Lille, France, developed several activities for tackling social isolation and for supporting the psychological well-being of young refugees and newcomers during the COVID-19 restrictions.

**Aim:** These projects aimed to support young refugees and newcomers in staying connected with other people and share activities together.

**Examples of actions:** Association Mitrajectoires is a non-governmental organisation that aims to improve the living conditions of people in migration, particularly young people, by supporting young refugees and newcomers, as well as young people from host communities, to come together to develop local actions. During the pandemic, the organisation set up free online workshops for newcomers and young refugees to keep in touch and participate in different activities, for instance, organising debates about films and virtual exhibitions DEEP France (Dialogue, Empathie & Engagement pour la Paix), another non-governmental organisation based in Lille, creates spaces which promote dialogue, meeting ‘the other’, interculturality and peace. During the restrictions, DEEP organised an online group for sharing member activities during the quarantine, and providing weekly video-calling open to all members for them to be able to reassure and support each other.

**Further information:** <http://mitrajectoires.org/lassociation>, [www.deepfrance.fr](http://www.deepfrance.fr)

## 4.4 TARGETED SUPPORT FOR YOUTH ORGANISATIONS AND YOUTH WORK

Youth workers may face challenges in supporting young refugees during the transition to adulthood due to the varied and complex situations that may develop. Despite these challenges, the arrival of young newcomers brings opportunities and, throughout Europe, youth workers have demonstrated their commitment to making a positive difference in the lives of these young people and the wider society. For youth work, the challenge is then “to help young refugees equip themselves to take advantage of new opportunities

which their new country of reception may offer them, the most beneficial being related to education and training".<sup>14</sup>

### > What does the Council of Europe recommend?

Member states should support youth organisations and youth work, through both funding and training, to build its capacity to meet the needs of these young people.

Youth workers should receive specific training, including training in mental health first aid, to enable them to respond to the particular needs of young refugees in transition to adulthood and provide them with appropriate support.

Governments should support youth organisations and youth work offering non-formal education / learning opportunities for young refugees in transition to adulthood. They should provide this support through the funding of programmes and projects as well as the creation of specific and relevant training opportunities for youth workers, including peer learning and the exchange of practices.

### > Promising practice



#### Empowering Youth Workers to Reach Out to Young Migrants and Refugees

This project recognised that social workers and youth workers play an important role in helping migrants in overcoming problems they encounter in a new society and in their integration. The project also acknowledged that youth workers need additional tools and support in this endeavour. They need to understand their target group, their problems, needs and expectations. The Reach-Out project started in September 2016 and ended in September 2018. There were several partners on this project, namely: Yaşar University (Turkey) (Co-ordinating Institution), Formazione Co&So Network (Italy), Eski Avrupa Gönüllü Hizmeti Gönüllüleri Gençlik Derneği (Turkey), Jugend Am Werk Steiermark (Austria), United Societies of Balkans (Greece), and Istanbul Valiliği (Turkey).

**Aim:** The aim of this project is to develop and test an innovative training curriculum for youth workers to support them in reaching out to young migrants and refugees, increasing youth workers' competences, and fostering their professional development.

**Description:** In addition to meetings, local testing sessions and joint staff training, three kinds of output developed during this project included the need analyses, training curriculum and materials, and a handbook for trainers containing training resources.

**Results:** In order to share the intellectual output of a project with a wider audience, five multiplier events were organised: one local event in each country (Turkey, Austria, Italy and Greece) but additionally, an international joint multiplier event was organised in İstanbul, Turkey with the participation of all partners and local and international stakeholders.

This project had a wide outreach with the total number of people reached via dissemination activities in all partner countries at more than 150,000 people. A large number of youth workers also engaged with this project: 130 youth workers responded to the need analysis survey during the local testing sessions, 49 youth workers were consulted during the local testing sessions, and 20 youth workers participated in a one-day short-term joint staff training event. In addition, 212 participants engaged with the local multiplier events organised in Izmir, Florence, Thessaloniki and Graz, and 102 people participated in the Joint Multiplier Event.

**Further information:** <https://reachout.yasar.edu.tr>



### The City of Sanctuary UK

The City of Sanctuary is an important example of the benefit of member states and local authorities supporting initiatives which target young refugees and newcomers. The organisation was set up in Sheffield in October 2005 with support from the Sheffield city council and a range of local community organisations. Since 2005, a network of local groups has developed under the City of Sanctuary umbrella, with several projects run with young refugees and youth workers. One such project was run by Durham City of Sanctuary, with the title, Year of Cultural Diversity.

**Aim:** This project aimed to support the positive impact of refugee communities on cultural diversity.

**Description:** The target group of the project were young asylum seekers and refugees who were actively involved in the social life of the Ukrainian community in Sheffield. During the project, young asylum seekers and refugees were involved in a training course to develop their soft skills. The objectives of the project were to raise awareness about young refugees and locals using non-/formal education methods, develop the intercultural learning skills of young people, support the development of communication skills and public speaking competences of the participating young people, and motivate young refugees in being active in their communities.

**Results:** The project reached out to approximately 200 participants from August 2019 to May 2020, with activities involving training courses for the young refugees on being facilitators in the community, human rights workshops, communication workshops for young leaders, public speaking workshops and intercultural learning workshops.

**Further information:** <https://durham.cityofsanctuary.org>

## 4.5 LEISURE AND RECREATION

While service provision often focuses on the basic needs and services of young refugees, it is important not to forget the benefits and the need for recreational activities for young refugees during the transition to adulthood, essential for their personal and social growth, well-being and inclusion. Article 36 centres on this aspect of youth work and recommends that member states support and encourage youth organisations and youth workers in including leisure and recreation as activities with young refugees during their transition to adulthood.

### > What does the Council of Europe recommend?

Governments should support and encourage youth organisations and youth work providers to deliver appropriate leisure and recreational activities for young refugees in transition to adulthood which support their growth, development, mental well-being and integration into society.

### > Promising practice



#### Connecting People (Asylkoordination Österreich, Austria)

This example was selected as a good practice in the 2015 European Migration Network Synthesis Report, 'Policies, practices and data on unaccompanied minors in EU Member States and Norway'.

**Aims:** The aim of connecting people is to attract, train and accompany adult Austrians who sponsor an unaccompanied minor refugee.

**Description:** Connecting People supports the integration of children who reach 18, and who are separated from family [and/or friends], who have applied for asylum or who have been granted international protection, by linking them with Austrian sponsors. These sponsors support them in a range of ways, including educational support, leisure activities and assistance with administration.<sup>15</sup> The focus is on establishing a long-term stable relationship between the 'sponsor' and the young person.

**Results:** Connecting people is organised within the framework of project groups. In a project group, up to a maximum of 20 sponsorships are arranged. Since the beginning of Connecting People in 2001, up to May 2016, 25 project groups have been set up.

**Further information:** [www.asyl.at/de](http://www.asyl.at/de), [www.connectingpeople.at](http://www.connectingpeople.at)

## 4.6 ACCESSIBILITY, OUTREACH AND INFORMATION OF YOUTH WORK

Young refugees often face a range of constraints and barriers to accessing youth organisations and youth services, particularly during their transition to adulthood. For example, it has been noted that early in the COVID-19 pandemic, youth workers had difficulties reaching young refugees and adjusting to online work. Recognising the importance of the inclusion of young refugees in youth work during their transition to adulthood, Articles 37 to 41 aim to tackle such difficulties by focusing on the accessibility of youth work and information regarding the role of youth work and the various activities.

There are various spaces in which youth work can take place and it is important that member states recognise and encourage the need for accessibility in youth work activities. Outreach is an important aspect of accessibility as it can help to ensure that young refugees in different situations have opportunities to participate in youth work activities and initiatives. Through outreach, it may be possible to reach those who may wish to participate but who may face difficulties accessing youth work activities, and to reach those who may be traumatised or have psychosocial challenges which prevent them from joining activities.

### > What does the Council of Europe recommend?

Governments should promote and facilitate the involvement of young refugees in transition to adulthood, including those held in detention centres, in *all youth work and non-formal education / learning activities for young people*, without discrimination and irrespective of their legal status. Member states are also reminded to ensure that access to such programmes and activities is unrestricted.

Additionally, because refugees are rarely where the information is and because little information is designed with young refugees in mind, it is fundamental that *information is made available and accessible across different channels*, in a gender- and culturally-sensitive way, and in different languages to ensure young refugees have opportunities to understand the role of youth work and to engage with the youth sector and its activities. Governments and public institutions should also promote and make available *information about the role of youth work and non-formal education / learning in nurturing social inclusion and participation of young refugees in transition to adulthood among the institutions and organisations concerned*. The same information should be accessible to young refugees themselves, in accessible forms that are gender- and culture- sensitive and in languages understood by the individuals concerned.

Governments are asked to provide *spaces* to carry out youth work in or near all places where young refugees in transition to adulthood reside, no matter how transitional such arrangements might be. Whenever such facilities are unavailable, young refugees should benefit from the support of a mobile team of youth workers.

Effective access of national and European youth programmes and schemes to young refugees is of crucial importance as a non-discrimination measure and as support to social inclusion. Governments should thus ensure that national and European youth programmes are effectively accessible, and that they are also created to suit the needs of young refugees in transition to adulthood. This includes making information about these programmes available to young refugees so that they are encouraged to apply.

### > Promising practices



#### Young, Paperless and Powerful

The Young, Paperless and Powerful youth project was set up by the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland in 2015.

**Aim:** This project, based in Dublin, aimed to create a safe haven for undocumented young people to get together, share stories and participate in a creative youth project which involved art, music and films.

**Description:** In addition to creating a safe space for youth engagement, the project also supported the young people in creating awareness and speaking about their lives and the impact that growing up in Ireland undocumented had on them. These young people also led a nation-wide campaign which seeks a pathway to regularisation for undocumented young people. They have been supported by a range of organisations across Ireland, including youth work and children's rights organisations, and student and teacher unions.

**Results:** In 2019, the Prime Minister of Ireland, Leo Varadkar, committed to regularise undocumented children and young people. This project provides an excellent example of types of projects and programmes which member states and other actors can support and initiate in order to assist in the implementation of the Recommendation.

**Further information:** [www.mrci.ie/young-paperless-powerful/g](http://www.mrci.ie/young-paperless-powerful/g)



#### Voices of life (Armenia)

The Federation of Youth Clubs of Armenia unites youth professional and regional clubs, centres, and organisations throughout Armenia, thus becoming the largest Armenian youth organisation.

**Aim:** The project Voices of Life aimed to foster the inclusion of young refugees and migrants residing in Armenia through different cultural events from March to August 2019.

**Description:** This project organised the events in different spaces and settings which helped to support different young people in participating, no matter their situations. It also recognised the diversity of young refugees, and focused on implementing inclusive activities.

The first event was an art exhibition focusing on groups at risk of social exclusion, with a migration component aimed at raising awareness on discrimination. The second initiative, an outdoor hiking activity in the mountains, aimed to promote diversity by uniting refugees, migrants and the locals. The activity included sharing experiences and a number of activities from Compass. Hiking was very well perceived by all groups involved: young local Armenians, Syrian Armenians, and refugees with diverse backgrounds.

**Results:** These events and activities had a wide outreach, with, for example, approximately 100 people attending. A training course was also planned as a follow-up to this project.

**Further information:** [www.coe.int/en/web/youth-peace-dialogue](http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-peace-dialogue)

### Across Europe: the Council of Europe Youth Department



The work of the Youth Department and its partnership with youth organisations, with the aim of promoting and sharing information on the role of youth work and non-formal learning, provides a key example of types of initiatives that could be adapted at local and national levels. The Council of Europe Youth Department has been working for several years on promoting and making available information on the role of youth work and non-formal education / learning through the publication of manuals but also through various study sessions, workshops and consultative meetings, often in partnership with international youth organisations.

**Example:** In 2017, in partnership with the International Falcon Movement – Socialist Educational International, the Youth Department organised a study session on [Children on the Move – How Youth Organisations can Support Young Refugees and Migrants](#). In addition to reflecting on power structures and considering the historical and current contexts regarding migration, the study session aimed to develop ideas and tools, and plan actions on how child and youth organisations can include young asylum seekers, migrants and refugees, particularly unaccompanied minors.

### Danish Refugee Council



The Danish Refugee Council in collaboration with Amnesty International developed a website with COVID-19 information. The website is funded by and is in co-operation with the Danish Health Authority.

**Aim:** To provide up-to-date and accessible information from the Danish authorities on the Coronavirus/COVID-19 situation in Denmark to immigrants and refugees.

**Description:** In 2020, the Danish Refugee Council established a telephone hotline which is accessible daily and a website where migrants and refugees in Denmark can find the latest

information regarding COVID-19 and related restrictions in their own language. It included a 24/7 messaging service which provides information within 24 hours.

**Results:** The project was set up with funding from Novo Nordisk from March 2020 until June 2020 in 24 languages. From December 2020 until September 2021, there was funding from the National Board of Health, and the project ran in 12 languages.

From December 2020 to May 2021, the hotline responded to 3,722 inquiries, with roughly equal numbers of men and women calling the hotline. At mid-term status on 1 March 2021, the average was 133 inquiries per week. The vast majority of hotline questions fell within the category “health professional questions” and included questions regarding tests, vaccines, and questions related to entry to, and exit from Denmark. Inquiries were made in all languages available, with Polish and English being the most common, followed by Urdu, Kurmanji, Bosnian, Romanian and Arabic. In the same period, the website [www.coronadenmark.dk](http://www.coronadenmark.dk) had 8,862 unique users and 11,403 visits.

The project currently runs in six languages and is funded by the National Board of Health.

**Further information:** <https://coronadenmark.dk>



### Train the trainer (Austria)

This project provides an example of how youth organisations and programmes can better understand the needs of young refugees in transition to adulthood, by including the young refugees themselves in the development of youth activities and by making the activities accessible to them.

KAMA Graz organises courses led by asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. By teaching the local communities about topics such as language, music, crafting or cooking, the educational encounter avoids placing the young refugees and asylum seekers in the role of people in need. Instead, young refugees contribute to the community in the roles of teachers and cultural mediators. Such initiatives could be used to increase the understanding of the needs of young refugees and help incorporate their needs into different programmes.

**Aim:** The project Train the Trainer aimed at making this existing organisation more inclusive by empowering the young teachers to take charge of organisational tasks.

**Description:** In January 2019, a group of teachers took part in a Train the Trainer workshop in order to learn how to facilitate classes themselves in a non-formal education setting and thereby gain more independence from the organisational team. In the workshop, they shared their teaching experience, assessed their interests, and learned about online tools to advertise and document classes. They were also introduced to [Compass](#) and to the Human Rights Education approach. Drawing from their experience, the teachers also discussed criteria for a successful class and how such classes can benefit from the Human Rights Education and non-formal methodology.

**Results:** Ultimately, some teachers started working independently. From February to May, they facilitated seven cultural classes and 18 units of sports classes.

The classes attracted a large audience of local people and refugees, and became a starting point in the social inclusion of young refugees. After the project, teachers trained groups of other refugees to become teachers. The experience was evaluated as a successful practice that should be repeated by other colleagues in the organisation. The project could also be adapted at national and European levels to develop inclusive youth programmes which meet the needs of young refugees.

**Further information:** [www.coe.int/en/web/youth-peace-dialogue/participants-and-projects](http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-peace-dialogue/participants-and-projects)

## 4.7 COLLABORATION AND CO-OPERATION

The nature of the needs of young refugees and the specificity of their situation can rarely be addressed by one institution or stakeholder alone. Give the variety of statuses, resources and competences of the institutions and service providers, experience shows that inter-service co-operation and communication are essential in order to prevent gaps in support, protection, services and follow-up.

### > What does the Council of Europe recommend?

Two Guidelines of the Recommendation focus specifically on collaboration and co-operation, calling on governments of member states to work with relevant stakeholders to exchange good practices of youth work and non-formal education, and to encourage co-operation between these stakeholders to ensure that young refugees are provided with the appropriate services.

Co-operation between youth work / policy, migration, and other relevant sectors must also be promoted in order to deliver appropriate services to young refugees in transition to adulthood; too often, each sector tends to ignore the specific roles and competences of others.

### > Promising practices

#### Children's Research Network Special Interest Group on Children and Youth in Migration (Ireland)



Formed in October 2019, the Child and Youth Migration Special Interest Group (CYMSIG) of the Children's Research Network (CRN) provides a platform for people working on or interested in related research, evidence-informed practice and policy to build networks, collaborate, and promote best practice on all matters related to child and youth migration.

**Aim:** The aims of the CYMSIG are:

- to contribute to, collaborate on, produce and apply research and other output

- to share resources, research and knowledge
- to organise specific activities (conferences, workshops, youth-centred activities)
- to use research to influence policy.

**Main elements:** The Children’s Research Network is a members’ organisation bringing together a broad range of professionals with an interest in research and evidence-based policy and practice for children and young people on the island of Ireland. Membership of the CYMSIG is made up of members of CRN and represents a range of sectors, including academia / independent research, NGOs, youth organisations and youth workers, government / statutory bodies, community members, voluntary and social enterprise entities, and service providers.

**Results:** While there are no specific outcomes, the CYMSIG has been growing in membership since it began, bringing together a range of actors. In 2021, the group also organised two lunchtime seminars on different topics related to children and youth in migration, and have published a research bulletin. Updates and information are shared on the situation of migrant youth and children in Ireland and on the various events / output developed related to the situation.

**Further information:** [www.childrensresearchnetwork.org/network/groups/childmigrationsig](http://www.childrensresearchnetwork.org/network/groups/childmigrationsig)

## > Promising practice



### Collaborations between local government and youth organisations (Belgium)

In Flanders, Belgium, the local government and civil society collaborated to develop several responses to support young refugees and newcomers during the COVID-19 crisis.

#### **Examples:**

- Local government created measures which aimed at providing all families in Flanders with access to computers and the Internet.
- Youth organisations developed digital activities, distributed play packages to young refugees and newcomers, and conducted outreach through individual talks, awareness-raising in small groups and telephone calls. Many organisations also opened up their facilities to provide young refugees and newcomers with a space to complete their homework.
- The Flanders authorities developed an action plan for young people with fewer opportunities. A significant part of the budget was allocated to supporting initiatives with young refugees and asylum seekers. The funding was easily accessible and straightforward, with few administrative burdens, aiming to support organisations in reacting faster during the pandemic. Six actions were funded under the action plan:
  1. Delivering packages and handouts
  2. Restarting recreational activities in youth-care facilities

3. Homework guidance by volunteers
4. Chatline and online support for violence and abuse
5. Assistance to youth organisations already experienced in digital youth work to support other organisations
6. Targeted project call for actions by youth organisations, and for collaborations with schools etc., who work with disadvantaged youth.

**Further information:** [www.vlaanderen.be/cjm/nl/jeugd](http://www.vlaanderen.be/cjm/nl/jeugd)

## 4.8 PARTICIPATION AND DECISION-MAKING

According to the [Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life](#), participation in the democratic life of any community is about more than voting or standing for election, although these are important elements. Participation and active citizenship are about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and – where necessary – the support to participate in and influence decisions and engaging in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society. There are two main forms of participation in decision-making:

- Direct participation: political decisions are influenced directly and structural links to political decision-making processes are enabled
- Indirect forms of participation: reaching out to citizens and encouraging them to support certain issues and positions, also enabling discussions and opinion-building, as well as campaigning..

Participation should enable youth-centred and targeted actions, which is also a condition for their effectiveness and relevance. Applying these principles, new realities and understandings can be developed for both the young people and decision-makers. Participation of young refugees will also improve dialogue and mutual understanding between young refugees and decision-makers and, more importantly, dispel the sense of powerlessness and exclusion that many young refugees experience.

There is recognition of the importance of promoting and encouraging youth participation across the Council of Europe and its member states, of which the best known is probably the [Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life](#). This Guide does not aim to describe youth participation in detail, as the revised charter and the 'Have Your Say!' have already done such a task, and this can be a supplement for anyone aiming to support young people, including young refugees, in actively participating in society and decision-making processes.

Refugee and migrant youth engagement in different aspects of the community – though unions, youth organisations and other civil society organisations – and in shaping policy-

making and implementation, should be promoted by policymakers and practitioners as it is key for their participation and inclusion in community life.

However, according to the UN's Global Refugee Youth Consultations, Final Report 2016, 'We believe in Youth',<sup>16</sup> these young people often lack opportunities to engage meaningfully in decision-making that concerns them, including in analysing issues, devising solutions, sharing their perspectives with decision-makers and being heard. In the report, refugee youth described feeling frustrated with not being able to share their opinions, with a lack of consideration for their views and a lack of follow-up action when consulted. The same report identifies a range of factors which may limit the participation of refugee youth, including, "remote geographic locations, nationality, sex, age, mobility, a lack of confidence, and lack of family approval as undercurrents that limit youth engagement".

### > What does the Council of Europe recommend?

Governments of member states are requested to help build the capacity of young refugees in transition to adulthood by providing spaces where these young people can:

- organise and express themselves
- interact with other young people
- participate in a meaningful way, including by supporting the creation of refugee youth-led organisations.

Additionally, governments are also recommended to consider providing specific support to encourage and enable the participation of those young refugees in transition to adulthood who may be less active, invisible, or subject to harassment or discrimination.

This should be accompanied by developing sustainable short-, mid- and long-term state-supported programmes which link young refugees in transition to adulthood with the local population, especially young people.

Young refugees should also be supported in becoming culturally, politically, and socially active and visible, including by fostering their participation in various forums and civil society initiatives, particularly on issues that directly concern them.

### > Promising practice



#### ALL-YOUTH – All Youth Want to Rule their World (Finland)

The University of Tampere, Finland, is currently running a multidisciplinary research project to explore the capacities of young people (aged between 16 and 25) and the obstacles that hinder their engagement with society.

**Aim:** Overall, the project aims to create possibilities and facilitate the participation of young people in creating their own communities and in society.

**Description:** In the project, young people (including young refugees) are involved in actively

carrying out research together, supported by professional researchers. The objectives of the project include assessing the legal and policy barriers for participation, developing theoretically-grounded participatory action research methods, and creating new kinds of digital models for youth participation. The project is funded by the Strategic Research Council (SRC) which provides funding for long-term and programme-based research aimed at finding solutions to the major challenges facing Finnish society. The visions of youth regarding a sustainable future, growth and well-being are also explored.

**Results:** While the project is still ongoing, there are already a number of positive results and contributions from this project which demonstrate the benefits and importance of engaging young people in all aspects of the research process. Firstly, presentations were given and a masterclass was held at The Rule of Law 2019 conference in February of that year, where participants produced [recommendations](#) in small working groups to the Finnish government. A [webinar series](#) also ran from September to December 2020 and showcased various outputs based on the exploratory and experimental collaborations of the ALL-YOUTH research project. The aim of this series was to make the scientific and artistic collaboration with various partners and groups of young people visible.

**Further information:** [www.allyouthstn.fi/en/all-youth-2](http://www.allyouthstn.fi/en/all-youth-2)



### Not Alone in Europe (Sweden)

The project Not Alone in Europe is a promising and practical example of types of activities that can help to build the capacity of young refugees and migrants. The project, which started in 2019, is being implemented by several partners, namely:

- AHEAD – Association of Human Rights Educators (Spain)
- Noorteorganisatsioon Trajectorya (Estonia)
- UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Turkey)
- Jesuit Refugee Service (Serbia)
- Cassero LGBT Center (Italy)
- Allileggie Solidarity Now (Greece)
- the co-ordinating organisation, RSFL Ungdom (Sweden).

**Aim:** Through capacity-building training courses, multiplier events and the development of resources, the project aimed to contribute to the social inclusion of young LGBTQI migrants, refugees and asylum seekers (YLMRA) and encourage them to be the actors of change.

**Description:** Training was given on the LGBTQI+ paradigms to different stakeholders who develop their work in contact with young LGBTQI+ migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, including young people, social workers, educators, community mediators, as well as young LGBTQI+ migrants, refugees and asylum seekers themselves.

The first part of the project, which was the capacity-building course held in Sweden in

October 2019, hosted more than 40 practitioners and YLMRA. The aim of the course was to prepare participants for the organisation of subsequent activities in their countries of origin through the methods of non-formal education; this was to cover the theoretical foundation of LGBTQI+ issues including terminology, human rights issues, legal framework and asylum rights, as well as accessing the target group. At the end of the activity, participants had acquired enough skills to implement multiplier activities in each of their countries.

**Results:** The multiplier events in seven partner countries are ongoing and the intellectual output on intersectionality in youth work is being developed. The project has also supported the creation of synergies for networking and co-operation strategy among the youth organisations working with young LGBTQI+ migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Europe.

**Further information:** <https://newcomeryouth.se/not-alone-in-europe>



### Babbelbuddies (Belgium)

Babbelbuddies matched young newcomers with Belgian nationals.

**Aim:** The aim of the project was to support newcomers in continuing to develop their language skills and tackle social isolation and loneliness.

**Description:** The project started during the second week of COVID-19 restrictions in Belgium and was replicated by many organisations. Supported by the Flanders local authorities, Babbelbuddies used previously-made connections in both the youth and migration sectors. Organisations contacted those who wanted to get involved, and registered students. Local collaborations were also developed.

**Results:** 260 young people were matched in total (130 pairs).



### Youth Empowerment Seminar: Building Community Initiatives (Ukraine)

While not directly supported by the state, this project can provide inspiration for member states and other stakeholders who wish to develop projects which connect local youth with young refugees. In 2018, the United National High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Ukraine and Council of Europe Youth Department ran a joint training seminar in Kiev, Ukraine.

**Aim:** The aim of the event was to create a joint platform and link minority youth, including young refugees, with young people from local hosting communities.

**Description:** The seminar brought together 46 young people aged 16-25 from across Ukraine. It followed an intense programme based on non-formal education methodologies that combined peer-to-peer learning, group discussions, debates and presentations. The

programme supported the young participants in acquiring knowledge on human rights and inclusion, and trained them in how to conduct needs analyses and develop community projects aimed at improving local integration.

**Results:** The project supported youth as multipliers and several local follow-up projects were funded by the UNHCR.

**Further information:** [www.unhcr.org/ua/en](http://www.unhcr.org/ua/en)



### Across Europe: COVID-19 Response

Many young refugees actively engaged in their local communities supporting member states during the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance as essential workers or on various projects and initiatives.

#### **Examples:**

- In Germany young refugees got involved in supporting service provision during the pandemic by creating a platform of newcomers and young refugees to provide services during lockdown. They contributed in several ways, including making masks, doing shopping for others, and providing translation services.
- In Portugal, the government sought to involve young refugees and newcomers in local responses which targeted communities impacted by COVID-19. In Braga, for instance, young refugees helped out in kitchens and cafeterias to distribute food to people in need.

## 4.9 THE ROLE OF NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCILS AND YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

While it is important for young refugees to participate in decision-making, national youth councils and youth organisations also have a key role in the design and implementation of national policies and measures which address the transition to adulthood of young refugees. This is of particular importance because young refugees are seldom organised, or because their organisations – often informal in nature – are not recognised or members of youth councils, or because mainstream youth organisations do not have specific approaches to reach out to young refugees.

### > What does the Council of Europe recommend?

The final two articles in this section, Articles 48 and 49, call on member states to support, consult, collaborate with and encourage national youth councils and youth organisations when developing youth policies, programmes and projects affecting, or directed towards, young refugees in transition to adulthood.

Additionally, it invites governments to encourage national youth councils and youth organisations to include young refugees in transition to adulthood in their programmes and within their organisations.

### > Promising practice



#### Voices of Young Refugees in Europe (France)

The international youth organisation, Voices of Young Refugees in Europe (VYRE), was created by, with and for young refugees. VYRE held a study session, “Local participation and inclusion of unaccompanied minor refugees”, at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg from 23 to 29 May 2016, with the support of the Council of Europe.

**Aim:** The study session empowered young people, including unaccompanied minors, to be active participants in their local communities by linking unaccompanied minors with local youth and NGO activists in supporting their social inclusion through active participation.

**Description:** The week-long non-formal education event brought together unaccompanied minors and young people (those in transition to adulthood), young people from the host countries and civil society organisations (including youth organisations) to reflect on the situation of unaccompanied minors and start developing local initiatives and an international action plan. Participants joined from 12 Council of Europe member states.

**Results:** A report on the study session and its outcomes was published. In this, the challenges faced by unaccompanied minor refugees when they turn 18 were found to remain one of the most pertinent, yet one of least addressed by member states. VYRE and the study session participants thus recommended that the Council of Europe bring the issue back on the political agenda and focus on initiatives to improve the situation of this vulnerable group. This study session and report contributed to the process which resulted in Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4 on Supporting Young Refugees in Transition to Adulthood.

**Further information:** <https://rm.coe.int/16807031ae>

### > Promising practice



#### The Advisory Council on Youth and co-management (Council of Europe)

While not at national level, or focused specifically on young refugees, youth organisations and national youth councils, the co-management structure of the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) can provide inspiration for including different actors from the youth sector, including young refugees themselves in decision-making and policy formation.

**Aim:** The CCJ helps to ensure youth policies are mainstreamed into the Council of Europe’s programme of activities by providing perspectives and proposals to all the Organisation’s

bodies. It also ensures that young people are involved in other activities of the Council of Europe and promotes the policies outside of the Council of Europe.

**Description:** The CCJ is the non-governmental partner in the co-management structure which establishes the standards and work priorities of the Council of Europe's youth sector and makes recommendations for future priorities, programmes and budgets. It consists of 30 representatives from youth NGOs and networks in Europe and its principal mission is to advise the Committee of Ministers on all questions relating to youth. The Advisory Council on Youth promotes the co-management system in decision-making processes at all levels as a good practice for youth participation, democracy and inclusion, whilst preparing and encouraging young generations to take responsibility for building their desired society. Young refugees are regularly represented at the CCJ through international youth organisations such as VYRE or The Young Republic. This organisation mandated young refugees active at international and community level to lead the work on social inclusion of young refugees in the Youth Department. This work obviously resulted in the Recommendation, and at a more practical level, in a number of educational youth activities in the Youth for Democracy Programme.

**Results:** The work of the Advisory Council and the co-management system have supported the implementation of several recommendations, including this Recommendation. In addition, the CCJ not only represent and provide advice on behalf of youth within the Council of Europe member states, but, with the European Steering Committee for Youth, they decide on all programmes of the Youth Department as well as the grants of the European Youth Foundation.

**Further information:** [www.coe.int/en/web/youth/advisory-council-on-youth](http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/advisory-council-on-youth)

## 4.10 AWARENESS-RAISING

The Council of Europe, its member states and the youth sector have been involved in awareness-raising and campaigns which aim to tackle discrimination, misinformation and other challenges faced by young refugees in transition to adulthood. While many of these campaigns have directly addressed issues faced by young refugees, there are also many examples of successful campaigns which tackle general issues which may be faced by young refugees and that may support in developing, implementing, and evaluating awareness-raising activities and campaigns.

The Council of Europe has published a number of resources which can support such activities including the following:

The Council of Europe manual [We Can!](#) supports young people, youth workers and youth organisations in taking action against hate speech through counter- and alternative narratives. This manual provides a guide as to how to take action through online and offline campaigns, such as the very successful No Hate Speech Movement campaign, as well as to the challenges that may be faced.

To gain a step-by-step understanding of how to take actions to raise awareness and to do so through campaigns, the [Bookmarks manual](#) provides support to developing campaigns which tackle issues that may be faced by young refugees, such as xenophobia and racism. For example, the 'Action and Campaigning Step-by-Step' activity in the manual is a particularly useful activity for supporting youth workers, young people and youth organisations in taking action to gain the competences needed for awareness-raising activities and campaigns for promoting the rights of, and tackling the challenges faced by, young refugees.

The *Compass* and *Compasito* manuals on Human Rights Education have a section on migration which aims to support educators and youth workers in delivering quality human rights education with young people. Besides that, this section, paired with general concise input on human rights, helps build understanding and arguments for human rights discourse on migration and the rights of young refugees.

### > What does the Council of Europe recommend?

The Recommendation calls for awareness-raising campaigns because the social inclusion of young refugees and the sentiments of solidarity, apathy or sympathy towards their situation by the hosting society cannot be addressed by legal or practical measures alone. Awareness-raising is important for providing information, generating solidarity, mobilising and galvanising support for the protection of the human rights of young refugees, and for combating xenophobic and racist tendencies.

The Recommendation asks member states to undertake and support awareness-raising activities or campaigns to combat misconceptions, stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination against young refugees. This should be accompanied by intercultural and interreligious approaches that support a deeper understanding of the specific situation and realities of young refugees in transition to adulthood.

### > Promising practice



#### No Hate Speech Movement

While not solely focusing on young refugees, the No Hate Speech Movement youth campaign is an example of a promising practice of raising awareness and of a campaign run across member states.

**Aim:** The Campaign aimed to:

- “support human rights education activities for action against hate speech and the risks it poses to democracy and the well-being of young people
- develop and disseminate tools and mechanisms for reporting hate speech, especially online, including at national level
- mobilise national and European partners to prevent and counter hate speech and intolerance online and offline

- promote media literacy and digital citizenship, and support young people's participation in Internet governance".

**Description:** This campaign was a youth-led campaign that sought to mobilise young people to combat hate speech and promote human rights online. The project was based on youth participation and co-management by young people with the support of national youth institutions. A range of tools was used including national campaigns, 270 resources, educational tools, a guide to human rights for internet users and platforms to report hate speech.

**Results:** Launched in 2013, the Campaign was rolled out at the national and local levels through national campaigns in 45 countries. The movement has remained active beyond 2017 through the work of various national campaigns, online activists and partners. This was the first broad international action which aimed to tackle hate speech and address it as a human rights issue. The Campaign succeeded, among its other achievements, in raising the awareness of young people and of society as a whole of the extent and risk of hate speech, equipping thousands of educators, youth workers and youth leaders with the competences they need to empower young people, through human rights education, to recognising, reporting and reacting to hate speech, as well as to mobilising youth organisations and young people across Europe and beyond to take a stand and fight against hate speech online.

An important thematic focus of the Campaign was about combating hate speech and fake news about refugees and asylum seekers, with one common action day on 20 June (World Refugee Day) about solidarity with refugees. This has been one of the most followed and successful action days of the Campaign.

**Further information:** [www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign](http://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign)

### Un Passo in Più (Italy)



This project is run in partnership with Association Storia Nel Futuro and Association degli Studenti migrant. The project started in February 2020 has continued as a voluntary initiative in Bologna.

**Aim:** The Un Passo in Più ('a step forward') project aims to create visibility to individual success stories of refugees living in Italy. Storytelling events also aim to provide a space for young refugees and migrants to gain information on available career opportunities and resources.

**Description:** These young refugees hope to serve as role models for other migrants and refugees who struggle to value their competences by supporting them in building their self-esteem and (hopefully) beginning to achieve their future career aspirations. Further educational activities are also incorporated into this project, such as group consultations, guidance and counselling classes, and non-formal education activities for supporting these young people in developing and strengthening their competences.

**Results:** The project has been successful in several ways: it created a group of active young refugees, students and young entrepreneurs, and meetings were organised with 30 newcomers. Throughout the project, other partnerships including with Caritas Sanruffilo and the UNCHR were developed. Constant communication with partners and beneficiaries was supported through a pre-established Telegram channel.

**Further information:** [www.coe.int/en/web/youth-peace-dialogue/participants-and-projects](http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-peace-dialogue/participants-and-projects)

# 5. Conclusion

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## 5.1 CHALLENGES DURING THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

As explained in detail during the previous sections of this Guide, the specific challenges which should be addressed for the empowerment of these young people in their transition to adulthood may be summarised under nine areas. These are:

1. establishing a uniform and comprehensive legal framework
2. guaranteeing non-discrimination and protection
3. providing access to social services, accommodation and welfare benefit
4. education
5. healthcare and psychological support
6. providing information and legal advice
7. the right to family reunification
8. facilitating employment
9. supporting life projects for young refugees.

In addition to these areas, societal challenges may increase the vulnerability of young refugees since they may face discrimination and stigma in their host societies. The lack of an adequate level of access to information resources is another critical issue for young migrants and refugees. Giving access to a certain area of integration does not always guarantee that migrants can actually benefit from those services since there can be several direct or indirect obstacles in doing so, such as a lack of sufficient, clear, transparent and specific information. For instance, a lack of local language competences can deprive young refugees from accessing specific healthcare since often they cannot explain their problems in context. The COVID-19 pandemic process has demonstrated again the importance of providing proper and timely information since many refugees can only be informed about the process with the help of language support and translation. This necessity applies to all areas of life for young refugees since being informed is a vital issue for them, both before reaching the age of 18 and then during the transition stage.

Another prominent issue is the impossibility of being prepared for the transition stage of young refugees into adulthood. Reaching the age of majority does not necessarily mean a direct and safe passage to the new phase of their life, and this process also requires tailor-made and elaborative policies and strategies. Young refugees find themselves with a strong need for a mentor or other type of support to plan for future education and careers. However, most resources are very limited or dedicated to the period of childhood. As a result,

young refugees are left financially and socially alone and unstable during the transition stage. The low level of preparedness amongst young refugees for the management of this new stage of life should be understood, and required measures should be developed and presented to them, even before reaching the age of 18.

## 5.2 THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND THE RECOMMENDATION

For many years, young refugees in the transition to adulthood have been a key concern for the Council of Europe. As summarised in this Guide, the Council of Europe has developed and implemented several initiatives by engaging, in particular, states and the youth sector to promote standards for addressing the challenges faced by young refugees. In line with this purpose, the Committee of Ministers adopted [the Recommendation on Supporting Young Refugees in Transition to Adulthood - CM/Rec\(2019\)4](#), which aims to “safeguard the rights and opportunities of young refugees in transition to adulthood (i.e. young people having reached the age of 18, who arrived in Europe as children and have obtained or qualify for refugee status”. While the Recommendation provides a policy framework which member states can implement at a national level, it also presents proposals which non-state actors can follow and implement at regional and local levels, including youth organisations working with young refugee populations in the youth sector, and young refugees themselves. The Recommendation primarily makes proposals for relevant stakeholders, while it also provides useful advocacy and awareness-raising tools to support them in their campaigns.

In addition to the Recommendation, the Council of Europe has prepared this Guide to further promote and support the implementation of the Recommendation by assisting young refugees, youth workers, policy-makers, researchers, and other relevant actors. This Guide calls for and encourages a range of stakeholders to collaborate, co-operate, and support each other for the implementation of the Recommendation. However, beyond member state level practices and policies, multidisciplinary, well-structured and multisectoral support mechanisms are essential for facilitating this transition stage and helping young refugees to build their lives.

The Recommendation and also this Guide represent a clear call to all relevant actors for taking and supporting action to improve the situation of young refugees in their transition to adulthood. The active engagement and collaboration of these actors is vital in increasing awareness regarding the needs of young refugees, in encouraging authorities to take further action concerning these challenges, and in implementing the Recommendation successfully.

## 5.3 CHALLENGES RELATED TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATION

Due to the non-binding nature of the Recommendation, there can be challenges regarding its implementation. In addition to the challenges explained in detail in previous sections of this Guide, there are also several systematic and structural problems which increase the vulnerability of young refugees in their transition to adulthood.

First and foremost, there is still a high level of diversity and disparity among member states in terms of legal frameworks, the number of initiatives, the quality of policies, and awareness, as explained in the Chapter 3 of this Guide, 'Developing Legal Frameworks'. The Council of Europe has been encouraging member states to identify their legal frameworks regarding services and opportunities provided to young refugees in transition to adulthood. However, differences among member states in terms of their legal frameworks and a lack of standardisation is still a challenge for refugee children when they reach the age of 18 and try to make plans for their lives. Therefore, efforts and awareness to establish standards regarding services for young migrants, including refugees, in their transition to adulthood in member states are crucially necessary.

Another problem is the allocation of limited financial resources, which is a general challenge in the current global international protection system, owing to the reluctance of states concerning burden-sharing, solidarity and taking responsibility. Disparity in welfare standards around the world, inequality of opportunities, low levels of resources, and ongoing conflicts continue to cause the forced displacement of many people. However, the number of initiatives and the level of dedicated financial resources have not been increasing at an equal rate in line with the increasing numbers of refugees.

As underlined in the Recommendation, the youth sector and youth work have a central role for supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood. However, there are several challenges for youth workers while supporting these young people in their transition to adulthood, in particular regarding capacity building and training to deliver better services. Finally, challenges regarding sustainability may also be considered a key element for initiatives, policies and other kinds of support mechanisms which are designed and implemented for young refugees in transition to adulthood. For example, problems regarding financial sustainability may prevent long-term initiatives by civil society organisations and youth organisations from being carried out.

## 5.4 OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATION

There are also several windows of opportunity and previous experience to provide better support mechanisms for young refugees in their transition to adulthood and to encourage implementation of the Recommendation. Through the leadership of international organisations, principally the Council of Europe, the European Union and UNHCR, there is a growing body of norms and principles about managing young refugees' situations and their transition to adulthood. These tools have been playing a prominent role in increasing the awareness of member states. Although it is not binding, the Recommendation, which this Guide addresses, is one of the most useful tools for raising awareness amongst stakeholders of the key principles and possible actions available, for young refugees and young migrants alike. As described throughout this Guide, the Council of Europe also supports these processes through seminars, capacity-building activities for organisations, and awareness-raising activities for member states. The [Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe \(2021-2025\)](#) was also adopted in 2021. Young refugees in transition to adulthood is a key element of this plan, both in the 2nd Action (Empowering vulnerable groups to access their rights) of the 2nd Pillar (Ensuring access to law and justice – human rights and the rule of law), and also in the 2nd Action (Promoting democratic participation and inclusion) of the 3rd Pillar (Fostering democratic participation and enhancing inclusion – human rights and democracy). Under these Pillars, this Action Plan clearly calls all states and other relevant stakeholders to promote the practical implementation of Recommendation.

Another important opportunity is the existence of several initiatives developed and implemented under youth work programmes regarding young refugees in the transition to adulthood. As demonstrated in many of these “promising practices”, youth workers and youth organisations have been producing demonstrable outcomes and energising stakeholders through different initiatives and projects. The activities of youth organisations focus on several challenges and areas of intervention which are explained and analysed in this Guide. The initiatives included in this Guide also show that there is a growing number of projects involving multidisciplinary and multisectoral co-operation to manage and change the situation of young refugees. Such co-operation mostly occurs among civil society organisations – youth organisations, public bodies and universities - and produces positive solutions for young refugees in their transition to adulthood. The initiatives and projects developed by youth work programmes play an active and central role in encouraging the participation of young refugees in society and in the decision-making processes. Furthermore, youth sector programmes actively develop and encourage awareness-raising activities and campaigns against discrimination, misinformation and other challenges faced by young refugees in transition to adulthood.

Considering all these challenges and opportunities, the essential needs for ensuring a better transition period for young refugees and for supporting them regarding their life projects can be summarised under three headings. These needs also point out the major tiers of future agenda concerning the projects, activities and initiatives for young refugees in transition to adulthood. These needs are:

- increased number of initiatives for promoting awareness and advocacy, and encouraging the implementation of the Recommendation at both state and international level
- more capacity-building opportunities for youth workers and youth work programmes
- greater involvement of young people themselves, and an increase in the number of refugee-led organisations and initiatives.



# 6. Measuring level and progress

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## 6.1 SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

This section provides stakeholders and, especially, institutions tasked with supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood, with a benchmarking / self-assessment opportunity to understand their “level” of contribution to the situation of young refugees.

Six assessment grids are proposed below for use by the following:

- Youth Organisations and Youth Workers
- Civil Society Organisations
- University and Research Organisations
- Public Bodies and Local Administrations
- Governmental authorities
- International Organisations

## 6.2 HOW TO USE THESE GRIDS?

The assessment grids are prepared based on both the content of the Recommendation and by considering the common aspects of promising practices set out in this Guide. These grids may be used as guidelines and, rather than a “one-size-fits-all” idea, they are flexible / adaptable. Although the grids include “yes” and “no” questions, it is strongly recommended that all stakeholders consider “How?” after answering “yes”, and “How could this be done in the future?” when answering “no”.

Stakeholders / organisations may use these grids as a tool of self-development through:

- comparing their policies and practices with the elements in the grid and by identifying possible gaps to be further developed.
- embedding these elements in their internal strategies, activities and projects.
- taking inspiration from the grids and promising practices when designing activities, strategies, initiatives and projects which address young refugees in their transition to adulthood.
- creating awareness by sharing with their members / partners and other stakeholders.

YOUTH WORKERS AND YOUTH ORGANISATIONS		NO	YES	HOW?...
1	Do you prioritise activities concerning young refugees in your institutional initiatives and strategies?			
2	Do you organise awareness-raising and information campaigns concerning young refugees?			
3	Do you bring local youth and young refugees together in your activities and initiatives?			
4	Do you provide special training for your workers and volunteers regarding young refugees?			
5	Do you plan your activities with the active involvement and participation of young refugees?			
6	Do you have programmes and activities aimed at the empowerment of young refugees?			
7	Do you conduct situation and needs analyses regarding young refugees before planning your activities?			
8	Do you communicate and co-operate with other relevant stakeholders while planning and implementing your activities addressing young refugees in transition to adulthood?			
9	Are you aware of the activities and initiatives targeting young refugees run by other relevant local / national / European stakeholders?			
10	Do you consider the accessibility of young refugees when developing and implementing your activities / services?			
11	Do you provide for the participation and active engagement of young refugees in your decision-making processes?			

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS		NO	YES	HOW?...
1	Do you prioritise activities concerning young refugees in your institutional initiatives and strategies?			
2	Do you organise awareness-raising and information campaigns concerning young refugees?			
3	Do you bring local youth and young refugees together in your activities and initiatives?			
4	Do you provide special training for your workers and volunteers regarding young refugees?			
5	Do you plan your activities with the active involvement and participation of young refugees?			
6	Do you have programmes and activities aimed at the empowerment of young refugees?			
7	Do you conduct situation and needs analyses regarding young refugees before planning your activities?			
8	Do you communicate and co-operate with other relevant stakeholders while planning and implementing your activities addressing young refugees in transition to adulthood?			
9	Are you aware of the activities and initiatives targeting young refugees run by other relevant local / national / European stakeholders?			
10	Do you provide assistance to young refugees for communicating with other stakeholders when necessary?			
11	Do you consider the accessibility of young refugees when developing and implementing your activities / services?			
12	Do you provide for the participation and active engagement of young refugees in your decision-making processes?			

UNIVERSITY AND RESEARCH ORGANISATIONS		NO	YES	HOW?...
1	Do you conduct or encourage research, studies and/or other projects related to transition to adulthood?			
2	Do you make analyses to provide data regarding the situations and needs of young refugees?			
3	Do you have initiatives which aim to develop the knowledge and skills of young refugees?			
4	Do you have any initiatives / procedures which aim to support the recognition and certification of young refugees' skills and previous learning and/or professional experiences?			
5	Do you make your education / training opportunities available for young refugees and/or do you design special education / training programmes for them?			
6	Do you organise information and/or awareness-raising activities regarding young refugees which target your students and/or the public in general?			
7	Do you have initiatives to facilitate the integration of young refugees into the employment market?			
8	Do you maintain communication with other relevant stakeholders concerning young refugees while planning and implementing your activities?			
9	Are you aware of the activities and initiatives of other stakeholders regarding young refugees in your ecosystem?			
10	Do you consider the accessibility of young refugees when developing and implementing your activities / services?			
12	Do you provide access opportunities to your research data to young refugees and stakeholders working for young refugees?			

PUBLIC BODIES and LOCAL ADMINISTRATIONS		NO	YES	HOW?...
1	Do you consider the accessibility of young refugees when developing and implementing your activities / services?			
2	Do you make specific provisions for the needs of young refugees when designing and providing your services?			
3	Are you aware of the activities and initiatives of other stakeholders regarding young refugees in your ecosystem?			
4	Do you have policies and activities to prevent discrimination, racism and xenophobia?			
5	Do you have measures to support young refugees for accessing necessary healthcare (e.g. psychosocial support, physical health services, etc.)?			
6	Do you bring local youth and young refugees together in your activities and initiatives?			
7	Do you provide a platform and/or support mechanism for youth work and civil society organisations working for and with young refugees?			
8	Do you provide for the participation and active engagement of young refugees in your decision-making processes?			
9	Do you have any initiatives to improve the legal framework for young refugees in your fields of action and/or responsibility?			
10	Do you guarantee to prevent any kind of discriminatory practices targeting young refugees?			

GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITIES		NO	YES	HOW?...
1	Do you have policies and initiatives to improve the legal framework for young refugees?			
2	Do you provide young refugees with the support and protection they require, without discrimination, and give due consideration to the needs of all young refugees at risk, such as survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking or exploitation?			
3	Do you ensure equal access of young refugees to social services by providing them with support and assistance for accessing their rights and mainstream social services?			
4	Do you provide young refugees with education to support their integration and inclusion into society?			
5	Do you provide young refugees with timely, clear and transparent information about any changes in or impacts on their rights and responsibilities as a result of reaching the age of 18?			
6	Do you promote the inclusion and integration of young refugees by mobilising the potential of youth work, based on holistic approaches, to support these young people's personal and social development, and their intercultural competences?			
7	Do you provide young refugees with free and comprehensive healthcare, including mental healthcare?			
8	Do you safeguard the right to family reunification for young refugees in accordance with your obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights and international law, and strive for efficient administrative procedures to ensure this right?			
9	Do you provide access to the labour market for young refugees under the same conditions as nationals? Are any specific measures (e.g. targeted supports and programmes) available to ensure equal access of young refugees to the labour market?			
10	Do you provide or keep age-segregated data about refugees, including young refugees?			

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS		NO	YES	HOW?...
1	Do you provide or keep age-segregated data regarding young refugees?			
2	Do you have special initiatives and strategies for young refugees' transition to adulthood?			
3	Do you guide member states about the initiatives that they can undertake for young refugees?			
4	Do you provide recommendations to relevant stakeholders about the initiatives that they can undertake to support young refugees' transitioning into adulthood?			
5	Do you contribute to the reinforcement of youth work programmes for young refugees?			
6	Do you have policies and activities to prevent discrimination, racism and xenophobia?			
7	Do you work with member states and/or guide them to improve the legal framework for young refugees?			
8	Do you work with civil society organisations in order to reach out to larger cohorts of young refugees?			
9	Do you design and implement activities to raise awareness about the needs of young refugees transitioning into adulthood?			
10	Do you have monitoring initiatives and activities about the situation of young refugees?			

## Endnotes

- 1 More information on Council of Europe policy on youth work and youth transitions available from Youth Work Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 and explanatory memorandum: <https://rm.coe.int/cmrec-2017-4-and-explanatory-memorandum-youth-work-web/16808ff0d1>.
- 2 The Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) is a co-decision-making body which comprises of the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) and the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ). The role of the CMJ is to establish the youth sector's priorities, objectives and budgets and it is tasked with developing a shared position on the youth sector's overall priorities, annual/pluriannual objectives, main budget envelopes and necessary budget specifications, within the political and budgetary framework established by the Committee of Ministers. The CMJ also gives input into the effective mainstreaming of youth policies into the Council of Europe's programme of activities. For more information see: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/joint-council-on-youth>.
- 3 (Henriques and Lyamouri, 2018)
- 4 Although the Recommendation focusses on refugees, migrant children and young people who are undocumented or reside in the country on another human rights ground than asylum face many of the same challenges. See for instance, PICUM, 2022, Turning 18 and undocumented: Supporting children in their transition into adulthood; Oxfam and Greek Council for Refugees, 2021, [Teach us for what is coming. The transition into adulthood of foreign unaccompanied minors in Europe: case studies from France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, and the Netherlands](#)
- 5 More information on the expert group meeting and participants available at: <https://rm.coe.int/-2017-report-group-of-expert-on-guidelines-minors-in-transition/168075f95a>.
- 6 For more information on the roadmap please see: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/young-refugees>.
- 7 CM/Rec(2022)16
- 8 UNCHR Education Report, 2021
- 9 (Ferede, 2018)
- 10 <https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/recognition-of-refugees-qualifications>
- 11 (UNICEF, 2017)
- 12 (Evans et al., 2013)
- 13 For more information on the work of the Council of Europe Youth Department see: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/about-us>.
- 14 Briggs and Cordero Verdugo (2018, 40):
- 15 This example was provided in the 2015 European Migration Network Synthesis Report Policies, practices and data on unaccompanied minors in EU Member States and Norway. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/what-we-do/networks/european\\_migration\\_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/emn\\_study\\_policies\\_practices\\_and\\_data\\_on\\_unaccompanied\\_minors\\_in\\_the\\_eu\\_member\\_states\\_and\\_norway\\_synthesis\\_report\\_final\\_eu\\_2015.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/emn_study_policies_practices_and_data_on_unaccompanied_minors_in_the_eu_member_states_and_norway_synthesis_report_final_eu_2015.pdf).
- 16 <https://www.unhcr.org/afr/59f9843b7.pdf>

# Appendices

## List of further resources and tools

This Appendix provides some resources for relevant stakeholders intended to remedy deficiencies and develop their capacities.

NAME OF THE TOOL	TYPE	INSTITUTION	TARGET GROUP	WEBPAGE
GloBall – A toolkit for youth workers working with young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers	Interactive Handbook / Guide	JINT vzw (Becoming part of Europe)	Youth Workers	<a href="http://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/global-a-toolkit-for-youth-workers-working-with-young-migrants-refugees-and-asylum-seekers.2359">www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/global-a-toolkit-for-youth-workers-working-with-young-migrants-refugees-and-asylum-seekers.2359</a>
LEARNING ZONE – new approaches to language courses for migrants and refugees	Guide	Learning Zone Consortium CAZALLA Intercultural (Spain) (Salto)	Teachers, Trainers, Educators, Psychologists, Volunteers	<a href="http://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/learning-zone-new-approaches-to-language-courses-for-migrants-and-refugees.2379">www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/learning-zone-new-approaches-to-language-courses-for-migrants-and-refugees.2379</a>
Working with Migrants and Refugees – Guidelines, Tools and Methods	Guide, Toolkit	International Young Naturefriends (Salto)	Youth Workers	<a href="http://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/working-with-migrants-and-refugees-guidelines-tools-and-methods.2213">www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/working-with-migrants-and-refugees-guidelines-tools-and-methods.2213</a>
Innovative ways to include and integrate young migrants and refugees	Handbook, Toolkit	Salto	Youth Workers, Trainers, Project Managers, Volunteers	<a href="http://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/innovative-ways-to-include-and-integrate-young-migrants-and-refugees.2570">www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/innovative-ways-to-include-and-integrate-young-migrants-and-refugees.2570</a>
KEY manual: Language learning as a tool for integration of young migrants	Guide	Salto	Language Teachers, Volunteers	<a href="http://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/key-manual-language-learning-as-a-tool-for-integration-of-young-migrants.2870">www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/key-manual-language-learning-as-a-tool-for-integration-of-young-migrants.2870</a>
Between insecurity and hope. Reflections on youth work with young refugees	Booklet (Best Practices)	Council of Europe	Youth Workers, Social Workers	<a href="https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/between-insecurity-and-hope">https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/between-insecurity-and-hope</a>
Diversity Toolkit: A Guide to Discussing Identity, Power and Privilege	Toolkit	University of South Carolina	Youth Workers, Youth Leaders, Social Workers	<a href="https://msw.usc.edu/mswusc-blog/diversity-workshop-guide-to-discussing-identity-power-and-privilege">https://msw.usc.edu/mswusc-blog/diversity-workshop-guide-to-discussing-identity-power-and-privilege</a>

NAME OF THE TOOL	TYPE	INSTITUTION	TARGET GROUP	WEBPAGE
All Different All Equal Ireland: An Anti-Racist and Intercultural Education Resource for Youth Workers	Guide, Toolkit	National Youth Council Ireland	Youth Workers	<a href="http://www.youth.ie/documents/all-different-all-equal-ireland-2006">www.youth.ie/documents/all-different-all-equal-ireland-2006</a>
One Hundred & Ten Percent	Video To Stimulate Discussion	Youth & Education Service for Refugees & Migrants	Youth Workers	<a href="https://separatedchildrenservice.wordpress.com/resources">https://separatedchildrenservice.wordpress.com/resources</a>
Being Your Host: Better INclusion of YOUNg Refugees in Hosting SocieTies TOOLBOX	Toolkit	PRISM – Promozione Internazionale Sicilia Mondo	Youth Workers, Social Workers, Teachers	<a href="http://www.associazioneprism.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/TOOLBOX_Being-your-Host.pdf">www.associazioneprism.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/TOOLBOX_Being-your-Host.pdf</a>
Intercultural and Pre-Employment Guiding pack	Toolkit, Training guide	Refugee Employment and Work Integration Programme (Erasmus+ KA2)	Youth Workers, Social Workers	<a href="http://www.rewip.eu/?page_id=175">www.rewip.eu/?page_id=175</a>
Training for Youth professionals working in multicultural settings	Toolkit, Guide	Youth Connection (Erasmus+ KA2) Merseyside Expanding Horizons LTD. (Coord.)	Youth Workers, Social Workers, Teachers	<a href="http://www.youth-connection.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Training-Modules-for-youth-professionals-working-in-multicultural-settings-ENG.pdf">www.youth-connection.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Training-Modules-for-youth-professionals-working-in-multicultural-settings-ENG.pdf</a>
Papyrus Training Kit	Training Guide	Papyrus Project (Erasmus+ KA2)	Youth Workers, Educators	<a href="https://papyrus-project.org/#trainingkit">https://papyrus-project.org/#trainingkit</a>
Toolkit for Consulting with Youth	Guide For Interviewing YRs and Assessing Needs	UNHCR	Youth Workers, Social Workers, Policy Advisors	<a href="http://www.unhcr.org/59f986967">www.unhcr.org/59f986967</a>
Disabilities Among Refugees and Conflict-Affected Populations: Resource Kit for Fieldworkers	Toolkit, Guide	Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children	Field Workers	<a href="http://www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/25417.pdf">www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/25417.pdf</a>

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# Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4 on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood – full text as adopted

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 24 April 2019 at the 1344th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe, Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its members, for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage;

Reaffirming the principle of equal dignity of all human beings and the principle of full and equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by anyone subject to a State's jurisdiction, regardless of his or her nationality, migration, residence or other status;

Having regard to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ETS No. 5) and the protocols thereto, the European Social Charter (ETS No. 35 and its revised version, ETS No. 163), the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (CETS No. 197), the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (CETS No. 201), the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210), and other European and international legal instruments;

Having regard to States' obligations towards children and young people, as defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol;

Having regard to the Joint General Comment No. 3 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 22 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the general principles regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration; and the Joint General Comment No. 4 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 23 (2017) of the Committee on

the Rights of the Child on State obligations regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return;

Recalling Resolution *CM/Res(2008)23* on the youth policy of the Council of Europe, Recommendation *CM/Rec(2017)4* on youth work, Recommendation *CM/Rec(2016)7* on young people's access to rights, and Recommendation *CM/Rec(2010)7* on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education;

Recalling Recommendation *CM/Rec(2007)9* on life projects for unaccompanied migrant minors;

Recalling Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 1810 (2011) "Unaccompanied children in Europe: issues of arrival, stay and return", Resolution 1996 (2014) "Migrant children: what rights at 18?", Resolution 2136 (2016) on harmonising the protection of unaccompanied minors in Europe, and Resolution 2159 (2017) on protecting refugee women and girls from gender-based violence;

Bearing in mind the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021), the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023 and the Statement by the Council of Europe Joint Council on Youth on the refugee crisis in Europe (2015);

Recalling also the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (2016), the United Nations Resolution A/RES/70/1 "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" and the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goals 4, 5 and 16, and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security and Resolution 2250 (2015) on youth, peace and security;

Considering the Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe (2017-2019);

Acknowledging the importance of achieving coherence and synergy with the efforts of all relevant stakeholders, in particular with the European Union;

Deeply concerned that young refugees are among the most vulnerable groups, due to experiences that may have involved violence, exploitation and trauma, as well as the continuing risk of violation of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular those who are not accompanied or have been separated from their families;

Deeply concerned that young refugee women are at a higher risk of human rights violations, given their higher vulnerability to different forms of violence against women, such as rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation;

Deeply concerned that, on reaching the age of majority, being no longer under the protection of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, young refugees no longer have access to the same rights and opportunities as they had as children and that many of them, as adults, are likely to face an abrupt change in their ability to access services and support across many sectors, including welfare, education, health care and psychosocial support, leisure and recreational activities, housing and special accommodation, information on relevant administrative procedures, and other essential services;

Conscious that the lack of support and difficulties in accessing their rights may lead young refugees to go into hiding, thus putting their safety at risk, exposing them to violence, exploitation and/or trafficking in human beings;

Conscious that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in any decisions concerning children until the age of 18, and that after this age a young person's best interests may cease to be the primary consideration;

Acknowledging the challenges faced by all young people in transition to adulthood and an autonomous life, and noting the particular demands and difficulties facing young refugees, notably the uncertainty over pending claims for asylum and future residence status, as well as numerous obstacles to

successful integration in a new society, often including harassment and discrimination;

Noting that education, accommodation, employment and health care, including access to psychosocial support, are not only rights but also serve to facilitate social inclusion of young people and help reduce their risk of exposure to violence, exploitation and abuse, including gender-based violence and discrimination;

Recalling that member States are under obligations to ensure respect for all human rights, as well as for other rights under national and international law, and these obligations extend to young refugees in their jurisdiction;

Noting that the Council of Europe's youth policy aims to provide opportunities for all young people, without discrimination or preconditions and on an equal basis, to participate fully in all aspects of society, and noting the need for co-ordinated responses to the treatment of young refugees in transition to adulthood;

Aware of the important role played by youth work and non-formal education/ learning in supporting the inclusion of young refugees, and in developing competences of active citizenship and democratic participation,

Recommends that the governments of the member States:

1. promote and apply the guidelines proposed in the appendix to this recommendation, aimed at ensuring 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;
2. take due consideration to the specific needs and situations of young women and of young men in the implementation of these guidelines;
3. take into consideration these guidelines, where appropriate, when reviewing domestic legislation, policies and practices to advance the necessary reforms to implement this recommendation;

4. widely disseminate these guidelines throughout the youth sector and among relevant national authorities, professionals and stakeholders, in particular those working for and with children and young people;
5. make use of existing mechanisms or, where

appropriate, establish new ones, both nationally and at European level, to promote, review and share progress on the implementation of these guidelines, involving organisations that work with refugees and young people in the process.

## **Appendix to Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood Guidelines**

### **I. Scope and purpose**

1. For the purpose of this recommendation, “young refugees in transition to adulthood” refers to 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.

2. Member States are also encouraged to apply this recommendation to young people having reached the age of 18 who arrived in Europe as children and who have applied for refugee status under the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, or for subsidiary protection under European Union or national legislation.

3. The duration of additional temporary support should be defined in accordance with national or regional policy frameworks and according to the individual needs of the young refugees concerned.

4. Nothing in the present recommendation shall affect any provisions contained in national law or international law in force in the member States which are more favourable to young refugees, nor shall it prejudice the exercise of young refugees’ rights as adults.

### **II. Safeguarding the rights and opportunities of young refugees in transition to adulthood**

#### **Legal framework**

5. Member States are encouraged to improve the legal framework for young refugees in transition to adulthood.

6. In order to plan and facilitate the transition of young refugees to adulthood, member States should, when necessary, foster comprehensive interdisciplinary co-operation between institutions in areas such as child protection, youth, health, education, social protection or welfare, migration, justice and gender equality, including between national, local and regional authorities, as appropriate. Information sharing between these institutions should improve the co-ordination of services and young people’s access to the services they need.

#### **Non-discrimination and protection**

7. Member States should provide young refugees in transition to adulthood the support and protection they require, without discrimination, and should give due consideration to the needs of all young refugees at risk, such as survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking in human beings or exploitation. Member States should adequately address the discriminatory practices faced by young refugees in transition to adulthood.

#### **Social services, accommodation and welfare benefits**

8. Where appropriate and necessary, member States should ensure that young refugees in transition to adulthood have access to social services that provide them with support and assistance to enable effective access to their rights and to mainstream social services. Such support and assistance should include cultural and gender-sensitive considerations, as relevant, and where possible ensure the continuity of the relationship with the contact person, in accordance with the views of the young refugees themselves.

9. Member States should ensure that young refugees, where necessary, can access welfare benefits and accommodation throughout their transition period so that they benefit from an adequate standard of living.

10. Appropriate accommodation, with all necessary facilities, should be provided with due regard to respect for privacy and the necessity to protect young refugees in transition to adulthood from all forms of violence. Such accommodation should allow access to adequate educational opportunities and foster social integration, including in family or community-based accommodation, where this is appropriate and in accordance with the wishes of all parties involved.

11. Before placing young refugees in transition to adulthood in accommodation, member States are encouraged to pay due regard to geographic proximity to social and community ties established during their time in child-care accommodation.

12. Member States should, in accordance with their national law, avoid placing young refugees in transition to adulthood in detention facilities, including *de facto* detention.

### **Access to education**

13. Member States should provide young refugees in transition to adulthood with education in accordance with their national laws and regulations, to support their integration and inclusion into society.

14. Member States should, in accordance with their national laws and regulations, ensure continued access to educational paths for young refugees in transition to adulthood in which they enrolled as children, and prevent school dropout.

15. Member States should, in accordance with their national laws and regulations, continue to provide language education and, if possible, certify language competences of young refugees throughout the transition period, according to their needs and in order to facilitate their integration and inclusion in society.

16. Member States are encouraged to provide, in compliance with their national laws and regulations,

opportunities for young refugees in transition to adulthood to benefit from European educational programmes, including, where these involve travel, by providing the appropriate travel documents.

17. Member States should provide, in accordance with their national laws and regulations, access to and opportunities for vocational training and apprenticeship for young refugees in transition to adulthood, as a means of furthering skills development and learning and ensuring greater employability.

18. Member States should recognise and certify, in accordance with their national laws and regulations, young refugees' previous education experience and qualifications, in line with established systems for recognition and Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee Recommendation on Recognition of Qualifications held by Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-like Situation.

19. Member States should, in accordance with their national laws and regulations, provide opportunities for young refugees in transition to adulthood to receive education for democratic citizenship and human rights education in both formal and non-formal education/learning settings.

### **Health care and psychological support**

20. Member States should provide young refugees in transition to adulthood with free and comprehensive health care, including mental health care, in accordance with their national laws and regulations.

21. Member States should provide psychological support for young refugees in the same conditions as nationals, including specialised mental health services, with particular attention to the stress of displacement, experience of gender-based violence, the uncertainty of the asylum procedures, in addition to the difficulties experienced in their transition to adulthood.

22. Member States should pay particular attention to the health and psychological needs of young refugees who arrived in Europe as unaccompanied and separated children, due to their particular vulnerability.

23. Member States should provide young refugees in transition to adulthood with access to education relating to sexual and reproductive health.

#### **Access to information and legal advice**

24. Member States should provide young refugees with timely, clear and transparent information about any changes in or consequences for their rights and responsibilities as a result of reaching the age of majority, including all the rights referred to in the present recommendation.

25. Member States should make all such information and advice available in an accessible form that is gender and culture sensitive and provided in a language that is understood by the individuals concerned; support or counselling should be offered, where appropriate.

26. Member States should, when necessary, provide young refugees in transition to adulthood with access to free legal advice on their immigration status and access to rights.

#### **Right to family reunification**

27. Member States should safeguard the right to family reunification for young refugees in accordance with their obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights and international law, and strive for efficient administrative procedures to ensure this right.

#### **Employment**

28. Member States should, in accordance with their national law, provide access to the labour market for young refugees in transition to adulthood in the same conditions as nationals.

29. Member States should, where appropriate, and in accordance with their national law, provide young refugees in transition to adulthood with employment information, guidance, opportunities for skills development, including ICT and digital skills, and other support in seeking and securing employment.

#### **Life projects**

30. Where young refugees in transition to adulthood have developed a life project before attaining the

age of majority, they should as a starting point be able to complete it under the conditions laid out in Recommendation *CM/Rec(2007)9* on life projects for unaccompanied migrant minors.

### **III. Recognising and supporting the role of youth work in assisting young refugees in transition to adulthood to access their rights and in furthering their inclusion in society**

#### **Recognising and supporting the role of youth work**

31. Member States should promote the inclusion and integration of young refugees in transition to adulthood by mobilising the potential of youth work, based on holistic approaches which support their personal and social development and their intercultural competences. Member States and other youth sector stakeholders are encouraged to learn more about and understand better the situation, experiences and aspirations of young refugees in transition to adulthood and how the youth sector can support them.

32. Member States are encouraged to promote and support youth work and non-formal education/learning targeted at young refugees in transition to adulthood that aim to:

- i. provide opportunities for education in democratic citizenship and human rights education in both formal and non-formal education/ learning settings;
- ii. develop their skills and competences for intercultural and interreligious dialogue and social inclusion in diverse societies;
- iii. develop digital and information literacy and leadership;
- iv. support the development of language and communication skills;
- v. support their expression in cultural or social projects and initiate self-led projects;
- vi. provide opportunities for mentoring and peer education/learning;
- viii. provide opportunities for sports, culture, art, drama and recreational activities; make use of and develop young people's competence in using online learning;
- ix. develop long-term strategies for their inclusion based on equal opportunities;

- x. develop their confidence, resilience and trust in building positive relationships;
- xi. enable access to national and European learning and mobility programmes.

33. Member States should ensure that youth work activities with young refugees in transition to adulthood support their mental well-being, bearing in mind the possible emotional challenges resulting from past experiences, and those involved in integrating into a new society. Where necessary, young refugees in transition to adulthood should be referred to structures which are able to provide such support.

34. Youth workers should, in accordance with national laws and regulations, receive specific training, including in mental health first aid, to enable them to respond to the particular needs of young refugees in transition to adulthood and provide them with appropriate support.

35. Member States are encouraged to support youth organisations and youth work offering non-formal education/learning opportunities for young refugees in transition to adulthood, through the funding of programmes and projects and the creation of specific and relevant training opportunities for youth workers, including peer learning and the exchange of practices.

36. Youth organisations and youth work should be supported and encouraged to deliver appropriate leisure and recreational activities for young refugees in transition to adulthood which support their growth, development, mental well-being and integration into society.

37. Member States are encouraged to promote and facilitate the involvement of young refugees in transition to adulthood, including those held in detention centres, in all youth work and non-formal education/learning activities for young people, without discrimination and irrespective of their legal status, and should ensure that access to such programmes and activities is unhindered.

38. Member States are encouraged to provide spaces to carry out youth work in or near all places where young refugees in transition to adulthood reside, no matter how transitional such arrangements might be; whenever such facilities are not available, young refugees should benefit from the support of a mo-

bile team of youth workers, if and where appropriate.

39. Member States should promote and make available information about the role of youth work and non-formal education/learning in fostering social inclusion and participation of young refugees in transition to adulthood among the institutions and organisations concerned.

40. Member States are encouraged to provide information on youth work and non-formal education/learning opportunities to young refugees in an accessible form that is gender and culture sensitive and in a language that is understood by the individuals concerned.

41. Member States should make sure that national and European youth programmes are effectively accessible, and also tailored to the needs of young refugees in transition to adulthood where relevant, in order to develop their skills and capabilities and engage them in the wider society. Information about these programmes should be made available to young refugees in transition to adulthood, who should be supported and encouraged to apply.

42. Member States should work together with relevant youth organisations, youth work providers, local authorities and other institutions involved with young people and non-formal education/learning to exchange good practice examples of youth work and non-formal education/learning targeted at young refugees in transition to adulthood.

43. Member States should encourage co-operation between youth work, migration and other sectors, as relevant, in order to deliver appropriate services to young refugees in transition to adulthood.

***Participation in society and decision-making processes***

44. Member States and other youth work and youth policy stakeholders should help build, according to national legislation and practice, the capacity of young refugees in transition to adulthood by providing spaces where they can organise and express themselves, interact with young people of the hosting country and participate in a meaningful way, including by supporting the establishment of organisations led by them.

45. Specific support should be considered to enable the participation of young refugees in transition to adulthood that may be less active, invisible or subject to harassment or discrimination.

46. Member States and local authorities should aim at developing sustain-able short-, mid- and long-term programmes which link young refugees in transition to adulthood with the local population in order to promote their inclusion and participation in the local community.

47. Governmental and non-governmental youth policy stakeholders and other State authorities are encouraged to actively engage with young refugees in transition to adulthood and to support them to become culturally, politically and socially active, including by fostering their participation in various forums and civil society initiatives, particularly on issues that directly concern them.

48. When designing policies and projects affecting, or directed towards, young refugees in transition to adulthood, member States should consult and involve national youth councils and youth organisations, including those representing young refugees themselves.

49. National youth councils and youth organisations should be encouraged to include young refugees in transition to adulthood in their programmes and within their organisations.

#### ***Awareness raising***

50. Member States are encouraged to undertake and support awareness-raising activities or campaigns to combat misconceptions, stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination against young refugees, and to foster an intercultural and interreligious approach to a deeper understanding of the specific situation of young refugees in transition to adulthood.

Being among the most vulnerable, many young refugees experience violence, exploitation and trauma, as well as continued risk of violation of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. When they reach the age of 18, they are no longer under the protection of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This means that, from this point, young refugees may no longer have the protection and access to rights and opportunities previously held as children, and they can face an abrupt and dramatic change in the possibility of accessing services and support across many sectors.

The rights of young refugees in transition to adulthood has been a priority of the Council of Europe over many years. In 2019, the Committee of Ministers adopted Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4 on Supporting Young Refugees in Transition to Adulthood, recommending that member states' governments ensure that additional temporary support is available to young refugees after the age of 18 to enable them to access their rights. The Recommendation also acknowledges the important role played by youth work and non-formal education / learning in supporting the inclusion of young refugees, and in developing competences for active citizenship and democratic participation.

The Council of Europe prepared this Guide to further promote and support the implementation of the Recommendation. The Guide should inspire young refugees, youth workers, policymakers, researchers and other relevant actors to familiarise themselves with, apply and support the implementation of the Recommendation in their own contexts and communities. The Guide simplifies the language of the Recommendation in order to assist various actors and stakeholders in developing a better and clearer understanding of the proposals and policy measures. A range of promising practices are likewise incorporated to exemplify how the Recommendation is being put into practice.

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