Lost in Migration: Working together in protecting children from disappearance

26-27 January 2017

Verdala Palace, Malta
Definition, data, focus

1. Children in migration: Definition

The term ‘children in migration’ covers all third country national children who migrate from their country of origin to and within the territory of the EU in search of survival, security, improved standards of living, education, economic opportunities, protection from exploitation and abuse, family reunification or a combination of these factors. They may travel with their family or independently or with an extended family or a nonfamily member. They may be seeking international protection, family members, dependents of labour migrants, victims of trafficking, and/or undocumented migrants.¹

Unaccompanied children (also called unaccompanied minors) are children who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.²

Separated children are children who have been separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary care-giver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members.³

A child means every human being below the age of eighteen, as defined in article 1 of the UN Convention on the Right of the Child.

2. Children in migration: Key data

While inconsistent data management and challenges in identification prevents us from knowing exactly how many children arrive in Europe, it has been reported that:

- In 2015, 96,465 unaccompanied children applied for international protection in the EU, which represents almost a tenfold increase compared to 2010 (10,610 applications)⁴. This number does not include unaccompanied children who did not apply for asylum.
- In 2016, one in four people currently seeking asylum in the EU are children⁵. More than half of them are under the age of 14⁶.
- Of the 361,712 people who arrived to Europe by sea, 26% were children; many of them unaccompanied.⁷
- In Italy, children who arrived unaccompanied make up 91% of the population of children and comprise 15% of arrivals to Italy since January 2016. The proportion of children below the age of 12 is increasing in the overall migrant population⁸.

¹ Taken from the background note of the 10th European Forum on the Rights of the Child, see file:///C:/Users/MCE/Downloads/10thEuropeanForumontheRightsoftheChild-Generalbackgroundpaper%20(1).pdf
² Taken from General Comment 6 of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on the treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin, see http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/ crc/docs/GC6.pdf
³ Idem
⁴ Eurostat: Unaccompanied child asylum applicants evolution 2010-2015
⁵ European Commission, Protecting child refugees and migrants, Factsheet, November 2016.
⁷ http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php. In the case of Italy, 87.5% of all children who arrived by sea in 2016 were unaccompanied - see http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/country.php?id=105.
⁸ http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/country.php?id=105

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www.lostinmigration.eu
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Our vision
- All children should be treated as children first, irrespectively of their migration status. All children are entitled to the full protection of their rights.

3. Conference focus: Missing children in migration

The conference ‘Lost in Migration’ will focus on children in migration who go missing. This may include children who are assumed to have left on their own accord (even if, as in other cases the level of choice may be questionable) and children who have, for any reason, been forced to leave care or protection.

While the majority of children missing in migration are understood to be unaccompanied children, it may also include separated children, or children who were first travelling with family. The conference will focus on causes, challenges and risks related to the disappearance of any child in migration.

Our vision
- The disappearance of children in migration is intimately linked with broader underlying protection challenges.

4. Missing children in migration: Key data

According to Europol, at least 10 000 unaccompanied migrant children have disappeared in Europe in 2015 within hours of being registered, and only a handful have been found since. As data is not collected in a systematic, uniform and comparable way, exact figures on the extent of the problem are however not readily available. Various credible sources nevertheless confirm the gravity of the situation.

- In Sweden, 7-8 unaccompanied children are reported missing from their accommodation each week, and some children are reported to end up exploited in prostitution. In the last three and a half years, 1829 asylum-seeking unaccompanied children have disappeared in Sweden, according to a report on Missing Unaccompanied Minors in Sweden. Recent research indicated that 64% of suspected victims of trafficking were unaccompanied children.

- In Slovenia, an estimated 80% of children disappear from the open Asylum Home.

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11 See FRA Regular reviews of migration-related fundamental rights concerns, February 2016 Edition
12 FRA Regular reviews of migration-related fundamental rights concerns, June 2016 Edition
13 See report on Missing Unaccompanied Minors in Sweden
15 FRA Thematic focus: Children (February 2016)
• In Italy, authorities report that 6503 unaccompanied children went missing in the first 10 months of 2016. Oxfam furthermore reported in September 2016 that 28 unaccompanied children go missing in Italy every day.

• In Germany, the Federal Criminal Police (BKA) reported in August 2016 to have lost trace of 8,991 children registered entering the country as unaccompanied asylum-seekers, including 867 aged 13 or younger.

• In France, almost one in three child refugees who moved from the Calais refugee camp after camp demolition went missing.

• In Greece, the number of unaccompanied children who disappeared from reception facilities has decreased. However, Greece has been reported to detain children in police custody, together with adults and criminal detainees to prevent absconding, pending placement in specialised facilities.

“...the situation is serious, the number of missing children is most probably much higher and the problem needs to be addressed with absolute care if we are really concerned about the welfare of these children,”

Michael Moran, assistant director of Interpol’s Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation Unit, interview with Politico, September 2016

Despite the enormous risks to which unaccompanied migrant children are exposed, their disappearance is usually underreported. Data collected by Missing Children Europe from the network of hotlines for missing children in Europe show that disappearances of unaccompanied children make only 2% of the caseload reported by 116 000 hotlines in 2015. The network registered cases of missing unaccompanied children between the ages 4 and 17, with an average peak age of 15-16. The lack of systematic reporting of missing migrant children however hampers the hotlines from having a clear overview of the scale of the problem.

Our vision

- When children go missing, protection falls. A comprehensive child protection approach is needed to prevent and support children from falling through the protection cracks and going missing.

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16 Rapporto Mensile minori stranieri non accomunpati in Italia published on 31 October 2016, by the Italian Ministry of Labour and Welfare
18 Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung, on 28 August 2016
20 FRA Thematic Focus: Children (February 2016)
23 Hotlines for missing children are operated across Europe through the same telephone number, 116 000, and provide 24/7 free, emotional, psychological legal and administrative support in cases of child disappearances. More information at http://missingchildereuropa.eu/116000hotline

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Missing in migration: underlying causes

Children go missing in migration for various interconnected reasons, including:

1) Poor reception conditions

Across Europe, including in countries of arrival, a large number of children in migration face simply inhumane conditions. Children of all ages are put to live in tents, containers, or warehouses unsuited for their needs. Over 1000 unaccompanied children in Greece are waiting for a placement in a shelter for unaccompanied children, while others are being detained. Children miss out on education and basic medical care, aggravating the trauma and mental health issues faced. With the Balkan route having been closed, scarce and strained emergency provisions have to improvise the long-term facilities required. The rudimentary nature of some reception facilities precludes any efforts to build up trust with unaccompanied children and to allow space to provide reliable information to children, including to counter that of traffickers/smugglers. More than 90% of the arrivals to the EU had been facilitated, mostly by members of a criminal network24.

“Human Rights Watch found, first, that unaccompanied children face routine, arbitrary detention. (...) Second, the report finds that children face unsanitary and degrading conditions and abusive treatment, including detention with adults and ill-treatment by police. (...) Third, the report finds that children detained in police custody are not provided with critical care and services”

24 See joint EuropolINTERPOL Report on Migrant Smuggling Networks, May 2016

2) Lack of information

Guardianship systems provided for by law to safeguard them are, in many countries, poorly organized or non-existent. At all phases and stages of procedures, children lack child-friendly and reliable information on their rights, and feel stranded in a situation of limbo where too often their most trusted source of information will be the smugglers or traffickers who brought them into the country, rather than the authorities. In these conditions, children may consider that they have no other option but to continue their journey in unsafe conditions, and go missing.

“Lack of information, which I personally consider as one of the most important challenges and shortcomings may result in serious limitations of other rights, including family reunification.”

Tomas Böck, Special Representative on Migration and Refugees of Council of Europe, 29 November 2016 – EU Forum on the Rights of the Child, Brussels

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“They’re vulnerable, they’re in a country they don’t speak the language. They don’t know where they are. They don’t know where they’re situated, where they’re going, what’s what. They’re just transferred from one place to the other after going through tremendous difficulties and adverse conditions and obviously they’re very, very susceptible and vulnerable to any type of very well organised criminal attempt and approach.”

Piji Protopsaltis, Head of the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, The Smile of the Child, Greece, in an interview with Euranet in April 2016

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“The issue of missing unaccompanied children is a serious one that is linked to many other aspects, starting with identification and registration … Another aspect is the provision to children of reliable and accessible information, including to counter whatever they might have been told by traffickers.”


3) Slow and complex procedures for protection

Professionals interviewed in a Missing Children Europe and University of Portsmouth study on safeguarding missing unaccompanied children in 2016 (‘SUMMIT’ study) stated that in many cases, children go missing as they are discouraged by the length and complexity of legal procedures that would allow them, for instance, to be reunified with their families. While the procedures exist, their implementation is too slow.

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26 See http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=34456
28 See http://publications.parliament.uk/pa/id201617/idselect/dieucom/34/34.pdf
29 See
http://missingchildeneurope.eu/Portals/0/Docs/Best%20practices%20and%20key%20challenges%20for%20interagency%20cooperation%20to%20safeguard%20unaccompanied%20migrant%20children%20from%20going%20missing.pdf
“The bureaucratic process takes too long and contributes to the phenomenon of missing children. In many cases, they land in the hands of traffickers. (...) Many of these children who were hoping to find survival are exploited in the darkest ways we can imagine.”

Lucio Melandri, UNICEF’s Refugee and Migrant Cell Coordinator in Geneva in a radio interview with Euronet

Other children go missing out of fear of being sent back or transferred to the first country of arrival. According to Save the Children, the rate of disappearance in Sweden substantially decreased when Dublin transfers to Greece were suspended, which demonstrates the impact of these impending transfers on disappearances. Dublin transfers to Greece are planned to resume from March 2017 onwards, despite the poor reception conditions, prolonged detention, lack of primary and specialised healthcare, delay in asylum and other procedures, and slow identification and protection procedures that continue to affect unaccompanied children in Greece. The Commission’s recent proposal for a review of the Dublin directive does not provide for an alternative solution. The impact on children going missing remains to be seen, in particular from March onwards when transfers to Greece will be resumed.

4) Lack of training

Missing Children Europe’s aforementioned research also highlighted the lack of training of frontline professionals across the 7 countries researched. For instance, none of the interviewed law enforcement representatives participating in the study recalled having received training in preventing or responding to missing unaccompanied children. 22% of the guardians or carers interviewed having been trained in prevention, with only 12% of them having been trained in responding to missing unaccompanied children. Guidelines, training modules and evidence-based good practices have been identified. They however too often do not reach the beneficiaries for which they were compiled.

“Professionals working on cases of missing children, especially law enforcement agencies, would additionally benefit from receiving specific training in relation to unaccompanied children, the problem of “missing” and what the general procedures are in response to the disappearances of children in the country where they work. This could help reduce bias against the disappearances of migrant children and improve staff’s knowledge and skills to react to these types of disappearance.”

Dr. Karen Shalev-Greene, Director of the Centre for Missing Persons, University of Portsmouth, blogpost “Lost in migration”

5) Lack of coordination at national and cross-border level

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The SUMMIT study furthermore underlined a general lack of systematic and consistent procedures to prevent the disappearance of unaccompanied migrant children: where procedures exist, they mostly only apply locally, and are often not sufficiently known or understood by those concerned. This includes the absence of systematic risk assessments for children arriving, which are needed to design and adapt care plans and prevent disappearances. Procedures for reporting disappearances are furthermore simply not known or too time consuming – with many missing unaccompanied either not being reported, or reported too late. Biometric and alphanumerical data may be incomplete, hampering any potential attempts to find a missing child. When reported, follow-up on the case including investigation is not systematic – and in many cases tools in place for all missing children, such as the network of hotlines for missing children, the SIS or Interpol Yellow notices are not being tapped into for this specific group. Clear ownership of missing children cases and cross border procedures need to be defined, to facilitate prevention and response: while some of the children might very well have been found or have found protection in another country, no-one knows.

“The head of the Malmö border police once told me ‘we only look for the missing refugees whose asylum request has been rejected, as those are the ones we want to find.’ They simply don’t care much,”
Katja Wagner, co-author of a book on refugees, interviewed by POLITICO, September 2016

Cooperation also needs to be reviewed for cross-border exchange; when a child leave the country, efforts to exchange information and continue the search are rarely undertaken. If an unaccompanied child who has gone missing leaves the country, all efforts usually stop.

“There can often be frustrating delays around cross-border cooperation. Sometimes countries hide behind the bureaucracy and need formal notification before they do anything and this takes time to make sure everything is completed correctly, and it means you’re losing information and the opportunity to potentially locate the child. I’m certainly aware of frustration about the speed with which some countries respond.”
Law enforcement officer from the UK, quote from the study Best practice and key challenges for interagency cooperation to safeguard unaccompanied migrant children from going missing

““We cannot work with the authorities of other countries, and this is Europe. We know that children are going to these countries but we never have the proof that they arrived. As legal guardian, if we could just get a call to say the child has arrived, it would be ok.”
A Belgian guardian, quote from the study Best practice and key challenges for interagency cooperation to safeguard unaccompanied migrant children from going missing

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**Missing in migration: symptom of a malfunctioning system**

38 See http://missingchildreuneurope.eu/catalog/categoryid/9/documentid/348
39 See http://missingchildreuneurope.eu/catalog/categoryid/9/documentid/348
The problem of children missing in migration is intimately connected to underlying and preventable problems. Efforts are needed to tackle these in a coordinated and integrated manner, and to provide children in migration with the basic protection required for any child.

Credit: IOM, Western Balkan Route

**Risks of trafficking and exploitation**

Some children may go missing to pursue their own migration plan towards the north of Europe or to join their family in other countries. However, data shows that children do not only go missing in countries of first arrival, but also in Germany, the UK and Sweden. Protection gaps when missing remain extremely high in all cases: during the time outside the protection system, children may face situations of exploitation, violence, starvation, homelessness and be exposed to serious risks for their mental and physical health. Considering the lack of reporting of cases of missing unaccompanied children, the problems related to data collection and the lack of an appropriate follow up on the disappearances, any assumption and underestimation is extremely dangerous for the children involved.

“The number of unaccompanied children who disappeared [in Sweden] is equivalent to 2 classes of children disappearing every month. What sort of society would accept this?”

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40 According to a risk analysis by the Swedish national authorities, 20 % to 30 % of unaccompanied children show signs of mental health issues, says FRA in the Regular overview of migration-related fundamental rights concerns, May 2016 Edition
Amir Hashemi-Nik, Development Manager at the Stockholm County Administrative Board, see the national study on missing unaccompanied children in Sweden, November 2016

Of specific concern is the link between going missing and exploitation, which may take various forms, including trafficking for sexual or labour exploitation.

- At European level, the Europol report on Human Smuggling, published in May 2016, says that children are increasingly targeted by traffickers and that unaccompanied children specifically are increasingly victims of facilitators coercing them into criminal activities and exploitation. In 2015, 20% of the smugglers identified by Europol were also linked to trafficking in human beings. This cross-over between smuggling and trafficking represents a huge risk for all children, including those who went missing with as an aim to reach family or other acquaintances in another country. These concerns find confirmation also in the European Commission Report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings (2016), stating that recently child trafficking increased sharply due to the migration crisis.

- In the UK, the report “Heading back to Harm” from ECPAT UK and Missing People, the UK member of Missing Children Europe, again confirms the links between trafficking and children going missing. The researchers report that local authorities who accommodate these children are aware of their trafficked/unaccompanied status, but are not obliged to record the numbers of these children on their systems, or to report the numbers to any national agencies. Similarly, ineffective recording also leads to the problem that police forces are not all able to count how many of the children who are reported missing to them are trafficked and/or unaccompanied. It is as such difficult to know how many trafficked and unaccompanied children are looked after in the UK, and how many of them are in danger. This is confirmed by the fact that while the most recent National Crime Agency report suggests that 113 children went missing in 2014-15 because they were asylum-seekers or because they were trafficked, the research found that in reality 167 trafficked and 593 unaccompanied children went missing in a similar time period, and considers this as an underestimate. In addition, only 45 of 217 local authorities could tell the researchers how many of their trafficked and unaccompanied children had gone missing from care and not been found. Across these 45 areas, 207 children remained missing, and many of the others were missing for long time.

- In Sweden, according to FRA human trafficking rapidly increased during the first half of 2016, primarily for suspected sexual exploitation, but also forced labour and forced begging. About a third of the reported cases concerns children.

“The evidence we have received suggests that, across the EU, the high-level issues discussed in the previous chapter intersect to create a complex set of very tangible, practical challenges for unaccompanied migrant children. These fall into four broad categories:
- the deplorable reception conditions they face;
- the phenomenon of ‘living in limbo’;

44 See http://www.missingpeople.org.uk/about-us/about-the-issue/research/836-heading-back-to-harm2.html
45 See FRA Regular overviews of migration-related fundamental rights concerns, October 2016 edition
- vulnerability to smugglers and traffickers;
- and large numbers of missing children.

From the perspective of the authorities, there is a fifth key challenge: the inability to capture, record and analyse good quality data. This undermines the ability of the authorities, whether at national or EU level, effectively to address the ongoing crisis.”


### Missing in migration and at risk of exploitation

- Too often, the disappearance of children in migration is seen as a voluntary act of the child, with little or no assessment of risks or of safer alternatives for the child to reach his / her destination. Children missing in migration face many risks, including those related to trafficking and exploitation, and efforts are needed to facilitate safe alternatives, in the best interests of the child.

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Credit: Nicholas Millet, Be Aware and Share, Greece

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46 See [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/palid201617/idselect/idcom/34/34.pdf](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/palid201617/idselect/idcom/34/34.pdf)
**EU response to protect children in migration**

The European Union has responded to the migration crisis with a variety of actions and initiatives, including to some extent challenges related to children in migration.

- The number “116 000” was reserved for the purpose of a [European hotline for missing children](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/files/rights_child/10_principles_for_integrated_child_protection_systems.pdf) by the European Commission in 2007. Today, the network of missing children hotlines is operated by national NGOs in 27 EU Member States, Albania, Serbia and Switzerland. Children and families calling the 116 000 European hotline for missing children receive free and immediate emotional, psychological, social, legal and administrative support 24 / 7 in cases of child disappearances. The hotlines offer high quality services for missing children and their families before, during and after a child disappearance. The hotlines also cooperate with law enforcement authorities in many countries through official protocols of cooperation, thus acting as the contact point for families of missing children and the police officers responsible for investigations alike. The EC funded SUMMIT looked at improving cooperation between actors which primarily deal with the care of unaccompanied children and those which focus on disappearances of children, including law enforcement and hotlines for missing children.

- Closer ties need to be forged between authorities working on asylum and migration and those on child protection. To this end, in April 2015 the European Commission has proposed [10 principles for integrated child protection systems](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf). These principles represent a contribution to ensuring that national child protection systems form a protective environment around all children in all settings, responding to all forms of physical and mental violence as listed under Article 19 of the UNCRC, and provide a framework for the protection of children in migration.

- The [European Agenda for Migration](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf) launched in May 2015 emphasised the need to protect children and to follow up on the Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors (2010-2014), and announced the development by the European Commission of a “a comprehensive strategy” – essential to set the objectives of the European Union in ensuring an effective protection of children in migration in policies and law. Annex 6 of the Communication from the Commission on the State of Play of Implementation of the Priority Actions under the European Agenda on Migration[47] provides an overview of ongoing actions contributing to the protection of children in migration. The announced “comprehensive strategy” has, to date, still not been published.

- In 2015, the [European Commission furthermore proposed to relocate 160 000](http://ec.europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-5698_en.htm) people in clear need of international protection from Member States under extreme pressure to other Member States of the European Union – showing concrete solidarity between EU Member States. At the same time, with a view to addressing the global migratory crisis comprehensively and to show solidarity with third countries equally affected, the Commission recommended an EU resettlement scheme for 20 000 people in need of international protection. Despite commitments adopted by the Council in July and September 2015, only 148 unaccompanied and separated children had been relocated from Greece at the end of November 2016, and none from Italy. However, as at 7 December 2016, only 71

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[^48]: [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf)


[^50]: 40,000 from Greece and Italy in the first implementation package and 120,000 from Greece, Italy and Hungary in the second implementation package, see [i.a. http://ec.europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-5698_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-5698_en.htm)
unaccompanied children and 100 separated children had been relocated from Greece and one separated child had been relocated from Italy to the Netherlands.\(^\text{51}\) In December 2016, the European Council called on Member States to further intensify their efforts to accelerate relocation, in particular for unaccompanied children.\(^\text{52}\)

- A number of **key European instruments are currently undergoing a review.** In May 2016, the European Commission presented a new proposal to amend the Dublin Regulation. Completing the reform of the Common European Asylum System, the European Commission presented a proposal for the creation of a common procedure for international protection, uniform standards for protection and rights granted to beneficiaries of international protection and the further harmonisation of reception conditions in the EU on the 13 July 2016.\(^\text{53}\) The proposed replacement of the Asylum Procedures Directive with a Regulation and stronger provisions in the Reception Conditions Directive acknowledge, among others, that disparities among Member States regarding guardianship systems for unaccompanied children leads exposure to risk and disappearances, and proposes strengthened provisions on guardianship.

- The **Maltese Presidency** is set to raise some of these issues, as announced in the 18 month programme of the Council, with particular attention to “the ‘smart borders’ package and the implementation of the actions identified in the Commission’s Communication on a European Agenda on migration of May 2015 and in the June and October 2015 EC conclusions, including work on the future development of the Common European Asylum System, efforts on relocation and resettlement, return and readmission, border management, stepping up the fight against human smuggling, and taking forward work in relation to legal migration.”\(^\text{54}\)

- In November 2016, the **EU Forum on the Rights of the Child** focussed specifically on the protection of children in migration, including high level commitments and breakout sessions on identification and protection, reception and asylum procedures and durable solutions. A side event was also organised on guardianship.\(^\text{55}\) The event brought together over 300 participants from across Europe, and included a clear call for action to protect children in migration.

**No time to waste**

- Vision, guidance and leadership are needed to prevent uncoordinated and fragmented action which puts children at risk. To that end, the comprehensive strategy on children in migration promised by the EU Agenda on Migration is urgently needed.

- Unaccompanied and separated children are among the most vulnerable migrants. Member States are failing them day by day when not committing and implementing relocation of these children, and increasing chances of disappearance.


\(^\text{55}\)Webstreamed sessions, background documents and data collected in view of the Forum are available at http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=34456

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Lost in migration  
Background note January 2017  

The President’s Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society
Call for a comprehensive approach for all children in migration

Ahead of the EU Forum on the Rights of the Child, over 80 civil society organisations co-signed a joint statement urging EU leadership and immediate action, in cooperation with civil society, in the following priority areas:

1. **Adoption of an EU Action Plan on all refugee and migrant** children to ensure that children, both alone and with their families and regardless of status, are protected throughout their migratory journey and upon arrival to their country of destination.

2. **Reforming the asylum legislation** to improve the situation of refugee and asylum-seeking children by:
   - maintaining and strengthening the proposed provisions on guardianship, best interests’ assessment and determination, the definition of family, age assessment; criteria for obtaining international protection and access to education.
   - Paying due attention to harmonising and speeding up the processes of family reunification, resettlement and relocation, identification and registration
   - Reviewing and changing the proposals to punish secondary movements as well as to reinstate the concept of sending children to the country of first arrival or a third country.

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3. **Prioritising children in all migration and asylum policies** including by ensuring that every decision concerning a child is based on comprehensive assessment and determination of the best interests of the child, which includes substantive family tracing when in the best interests of the child and must never include detention. Unaccompanied and separated migrant and refugee children should be provided quality guardianship and placed in family and/or community based settings where their individual needs will be met.

4. **Funding the strengthening of child protection systems, to match policies with resources.**

5. **Addressing refugee and migrant children in all areas**, including justice, health, education, human rights, development and youth employment to systematically include the specific situation of all refugee and migrant children, and advance their equal access to protection, public services (e.g. education, health) and justice.

6. **Protecting children across borders** by investing in transnational child protection to prevent children from going missing, to identify children at risk of exploitation and trafficking, and to support children to move safely and regularly from one country to another when in their best interests.

7. **Ensuring and using quality data and evidence** to enable the EU to develop policies and tools to better address children’s needs.

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