



EU Policies for the Protection of Migrant Children

(with a view to specific COVID-19 challenges)

IOM International Dialogue on Migration 2020

COVID-19 crisis: Reimagining the role of migrants and human mobility for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

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Context: Large numbers of migrant children continue to arrive to Europe

- Children continue to be a notable share of the migrants arriving to Europe: in 2019, from the 123,700 migrants who arrived to the EU via the Mediterranean routes, 27% were children.
- Part of those arrived unaccompanied by adult family members or adults responsible for them. Between January and June 2019, 8,236 children arrived in Greece, Spain, Italy and Bulgaria, of whom 2,794 (34%) were unaccompanied or separated children (UASC). (See UNHCR Factsheet at <file:///C:/Users/atanais/AppData/Local/Temp/1/UNHCR-UNICEF-IOM%20Factsheet%20on%20refugee%20and%20migrant%20children%20Jan-June%202019.pdf>)
- In 2019, 7.1 % of the children applying for asylum in the EU-27 were unaccompanied, standing for 14,100 asylum applications.



Communication on the Protection of Children in Migration (COM(2017)211 final)

1. EU External Action aimed at addressing the **root causes of migration**.
2. Arrival to the EU: swift **identification, registration** and **prise en charge** by the competent authorities.
3. Providing **adequate reception**: accommodation and access to basic services.
4. Access to **status determination procedures** and **procedural safeguards**.
5. Finding and implementing **durable solutions** (integration, return)
- 6. Cross-cutting actions**: training, EU funding, internal child safeguarding policies, provision of information to the children, etc.

Partnership with IOM on the first 5 chapters – examples: IOM in Greece, Bulgaria, etc.



New Pact on Asylum and Migration

- The New Pact on Asylum and Migration underlines that the EU asylum and migration management system needs to provide for the special needs of vulnerable groups, including children.
- The reform of EU rules on asylum and return is an opportunity to strengthen safeguards and protection standards under EU law for migrant children.
- Main elements aimed at strengthening the protection of children:
 - - Best-interests-of-the-child principle rendered more operational.
 - The right for the child to be heard in the context of asylum and migration proceedings.
 - Unaccompanied minors should be appointed a guardian within 15 working.
 - Unaccompanied minors and families with children under 12 years to be exempted from the mandatory border procedure procedure.
 - Develop effective alternatives to detention for children and their families.
 - Rules on evidence required for family reunification simplified.
 - The right to adequate accommodation and assistance, prompt and non-discriminatory access to education, and early access to integration services, will be reinforced.



Specific challenges re. COVID-19

- Temporary disruption of migration and asylum procedures: In April 2020, the European Commission published Guidance to Member States on the implementation of EU rules on asylum and return procedures and on resettlement in the context of the coronavirus pandemic. Objective: to enable some flexibility in the procedures while ensuring the continuity of procedures and the respect of fundamental rights and the EU Charter.
- Migrant child-specific challenges: all already-existing challenges related to access to proper accommodation and care, medical and psychosocial support, education, etc., have been exacerbated by the pandemic.
- Resettlement and return operations were interrupted.
- The pandemic exacerbated xenophobic and racist reactions.