Resolution on the protection of children in migration

2018/2666(RSP) - 03/05/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the protection of children in migration.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the EPP, S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL groups.

According to UNICEF, there are an estimated 5.4 million migrant children living in Europe. Almost half of those who arrived in recent years were unaccompanied or separated children. The majority of Member States neither provide nor systematically collect data on children in immigration detention. Moreover, the lack of reliable information, and lengthy family reunification and guardian appointment procedures, together with the fear of being detained, sent back or transferred, is resulting in children absconding, leaving them exposed them to trafficking, violence and exploitation.

The resolution underlined the fact that all children, irrespective of their migration or refugee status, are first and foremost entitled to all the rights enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Commission should assist Member States in adopting and properly implementing a **holistic rights-based approach** in all child-related policies.

Member States are urged to:

- implement the principle of the **best interests of the child** for all decisions concerning children, regardless of their status;
- speed up procedures for appointing guardians or temporary guardians for unaccompanied children upon their arrival;
- ensure that all children have access to child protection officers upon their arrival, including in hotspots and facilities hosting children and at border-entry points;
- guarantee that everyone, and unaccompanied children in particular, has access to dignified accommodation, healthcare, formal and inclusive education under the same conditions as national children;
- build capacity and **allocate adequate resources** for the reception of migrant children, in particular unaccompanied children;
- allocate adequate and continued funding and support to local and regional authorities, and to ensure access to European funding, such as the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF);
- proceed with all pending family reunification procedures without further delay;
- urgently invest in psychological and psychiatric support and rehabilitation for the purposes of addressing children’s mental health issues;
- step up efforts and cross-border cooperation among law-enforcement and child-protection authorities to find and protect missing children;
- step up efforts to jointly tackle various forms of organised crime, including child trafficking, to combat impunity, and to ensure that the perpetrators of such crimes, be they EU or non-EU nationals, are swiftly prosecuted.

Emphasising that **children must not be detained for immigration purposes**, Member States are called on to accommodate all children and families with children in non-custodial, community-based placements while their immigration status is processed. Unaccompanied children should be hosted in **separate facilities from adults** in order to avoid any risk of violence and sexual abuse.

Members also stressed that the creation of **new safe and legal routes** would enable the Union and the Member States to better address protection needs, particularly for children, and to undermine the business model of smugglers.

They underlined the importance of establishing a **robust identification and registration system** based on the best interests of the child, in order to ensure that children enter and stay in national protection systems, with a child-focused approach throughout the entire procedure. Member States shall **not use coercion** for the purposes of taking children's biometric data and they shall ensure that all actors working with children must not have a verified criminal record, especially with regard to any child-related crimes or offences.