



ROUNDTABLE 1

How to identify and support migrants and refugees with specific needs?

11.00 – 12.30 and 14.00 – 15.30 on 4 December 2023 (DAY 1)

*Structure: 30min of presentations/mini panel plenary + 60min of discussion **in subgroups on unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking and mental health related needs**, engaging participants in exchanging their views, best practices, and solutions.*

Speakers

Carmen Cosentino, Vice-Prefect, Ministry of the Interior (Italy)

Marta D'agosto, Community-based Protection Officer in UNHCR Multi-Country Office for Italy, Holy See and San Marino, UNHCR

Jennifer Zuppiroli, Advocacy and policy advisor children on the move, Save the Children Spain

Sara de Hovre, Director of PAG-ASA

Fatima Awil, Policy & Knowledge Officer, Mental Health Europe

Moderator

Gabriela Agatiello, Head of Programmes and Policy, ICMC Europe/Share Network

Proper migration management needs to take into account the diversity of the profiles and of needs of people migrating. Identifying and addressing specific needs of migrants is essential for migrants themselves, so they can be welcomed and considered humanely and effectively. This is essential as well to any organisations in contact with migrants, national migration authority, public services, local and regional authorities, civil society, etc. to process and respond to migrants' requests in an appropriate and effective manner.

The diversity of specific needs and of situations makes the issue complex, especially as one needs to consider a form intersectionality of the needs. This roundtable focuses on unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking and mental health related needs.

Unaccompanied minors

Protection and care for unaccompanied minors is a key concern of EU policies. The [2017 Communication of children in Migration \(2017\)](#) and its comprehensive recommendations on how to strengthen the protection of migrant children and address protection gaps continue to guide work at EU level.

Over the last years, several Member States reformed and enhanced the capacity of their **guardianship systems** for unaccompanied minors, and among other initiatives, **European Guardianship Network** facilitates the exchange of best practices and help address common challenges.

The EU **agencies (EUAA, FRA, Frontex)** have developed a rich set of guidance and tools on the protection of migrant children, which member State authorities can use to develop and strengthen capacity in this field. Notably **the EUAA and FRA** have also produced a series of practical tools – soon to be published – directly aimed at supporting the work of guardians for children in migration. The different proposals of the Asylum and Migration Pact that are currently under negotiation contain important safeguards for children and especially unaccompanied minors. This includes shorter deadlines for the appointment of representatives, easier access to family reunification for UAMs but also faster access to education.

Under Home funds, the Commission is just finalising two related calls to support reception systems and personnel working with UAMs: one on strengthening guardianship networks (Union programme, EUR 6m) and one for Member States Under Pressure, particularly focussed on reception for Unaccompanied Minors focusing on alternative care arrangements.

At the same time,

- We observe a clear increase in the arrival of unaccompanied children. Numbers were already very high in 2021 (the highest since 2017) and almost doubled in 2022 – and are still increasing for 2023 – including numbers of younger UAMs (as young as 6-8 years old). This is outside the arrivals from Ukraine.
- In 2021 there were 23,000 first-time asylum applications from, then the highest since 2017. In 2022, it was around 42, 200, representing one fifth of child asylum applicants who arrived in 2022.

Victims of trafficking

Every year 7,000 victims of human trafficking on average are registered in the EU, while many more remain undetected. Nearly 50% are non-EU citizens, who fall victims to different forms of trafficking, such as sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and forced begging. Almost every fourth victim of trafficking in the EU is a child. Migrants, especially irregular migrants, are at a higher risk of falling victims of traffickers.

The early identification is key when it comes to victims of trafficking. It will prompt the referral of the victims to appropriate assistance and support services, especially in the cross-border cases. Civil society organisations and local authorities play a crucial role in offering a diverse range of counselling services for potential victims of trafficking, as well as providing protection, shelter, medical, psychological and psychiatric support, legal, social, education and professional care.

Mental health related specific needs

Mental health is critical to migrants' integration. While migrants, especially refugees, may be at higher risk of developing mental health problems due to trauma experienced in their country of origin, difficulties encountered during their migration journey or post-arrival experiences, such as social isolation or discrimination, they often face obstacles in accessing mental health services. Insufficient access to mental health can affect virtually all areas of life, including employment and education. Migrants are confronted with specific persistent barriers to accessing general healthcare and mental

health care services, including administrative hurdles, discrimination, lack of information and lack of familiarity with the healthcare system, as well as linguistic and intercultural obstacles. Migrant women may face additional challenges. The COVID-19 crisis has shown the importance of accessible health services, with adapted communication to ensure effective access by and treatment of migrants. Effective access starts with proper identification of needs, in a manner which is adapted to each person, taking into account other possible specific needs or situation (refugees, victims of sexual violence, unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking etc.). Tailored care should be provided to people in vulnerable situations. Among key obstacles specific to the situation of migrants, the following aspects are often mentioned: lack of information about access to mental healthcare, language and cultural barriers (need for available information in the language that the concerned person can understand, and interpretation), need for training of professional in contact with migrants (for example on diversity management, refugee trauma), in addition to the possible structural challenges that the mental healthcare might face (lack of resources and staff for example).

Discussions will focus on the role of local authorities and civil society organisations can contribute with best practices, challenges and smart solutions on how to identify and support migrants and refugees with specific needs.

- How to support NGOs and LRAs for better support/identification?
- What are the obstacles for better involvement NGOs and LRAs?
- How to ensure more sustainable solutions/ how to transform ad hoc projects into structural improvement?
- How to ensure that general policies take into account the specific needs of unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking and migrants with mental health UAM/VoT etc.?
- Based on your experience, what are the main challenges in detecting cases of trafficking (all forms) and protecting and supporting its victims?
- Could you please share best practices and experiences about multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholders cooperation in detecting trafficking victims?

Links to documents

[2020 Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion](#)

[2021 EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child](#)

[EU Child Guarantee Recommendation](#)

[EU Network of Child Rights Experts,](#)

[European Migration Network on Unaccompanied Minors](#)

[EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings](#)

[Common Anti-Trafficking Plan to address the risks of trafficking in human beings and support potential victims](#)

[Awareness Raising campaign: End Human Trafficking / Break the Invisible Chain](#)

[Commission communication “Comprehensive approach to mental health”](#)

[EU4Health Programme Work Programme](#)

[Social impact of migration: Addressing the challenges of receiving and integrating Ukrainian refugees](#)

[Barriers to employment of displaced Ukrainians](#)

