

WHAT HAPPENS TO UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN ON ARRIVAL IN EUROPE FOLLOWING STATUS DETERMINATION?

EMN FLASH #1/2018

Introduction to the EMN Study on Approaches to Unaccompanied Minors Following Status Determination in the EU plus Norway

The numbers of children who came to the EU and Norway unaccompanied, i.e. without a parent or another adult responsible for them, to seek asylum, reached unprecedented levels between 2014 and 2017, at almost 220 000.

At the same time, at least another 48 500 unaccompanied children arrived during the same period, and did not seek asylum.

Where did these children come from and which European countries received them? What approaches were taken to address their

situation, once their status was determined? Under what circumstances are such children returned to their countries of origin? And what happens to them, once they reach the age of 18?

The wide reaching EMN Study Approaches to Unaccompanied Minors Following Status Determination in the EU plus Norway covering 25 Member States and Norway, set out to answer these pressing questions. At a glance, the main research findings are introduced below.

Unaccompanied minors requesting asylum in the European Union and Norway 2014 – 2017

Top five countries of origin:

Afghanistan – 82 625
Syria – 34 205
Eritrea – 15 970
Iraq – 10 975
Somalia – 10 385

Top five destination countries:

Germany – 71 675
Sweden – 45 065
Italy – 22 540
Austria – 15 500
Hungary – 10 860



11% of all unaccompanied minors were girls

Unaccompanied minors mostly consisted of young boys of 16 and 17 years of age



Source: Eurostat

Key findings



Unaccompanied minors are treated first and foremost as children and receive the same care as children with national or EU citizenship looked after by the state, commencing prior to status determination.



However, not all unaccompanied minors benefit from the same level of protection, this appears to be higher following status determination and for unaccompanied minors with certain statuses only.



Across the (Member) States, there is a lack of a 'best interests' determination procedure set in law or policy, which takes account of unaccompanied minors' specific need for protection.



About a third of (Member) States appear to have a combination of transition arrangements for those turning 18 years before, during and/ or after their transition to adulthood, however, almost all unaccompanied minors are between the ages of 14 and 17 years, i.e. close to the age of majority.



Unaccompanied minors whose application for a status has been rejected in practice continue to be cared for by the state until departure from a (Member) State.



The number of voluntary and forced returns of unaccompanied minors implemented by (Member) States is generally low, plus at least three (Member) States do not return minors by law or policy.



FIND OUT MORE

About the study: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/00_eu_synthesis_report_unaccompanied_minors_2017_en.pdf

About the national reports: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/studies_en