

EU child refugee protection policy welcomed by UN agencies

12 April 2017 – New policy guidance from the European Commission aimed at improving the protection of migrant and refugee children has been welcomed by the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) and the UN refugee agency.

“It is the first EU policy to address the situation and rights of all children in migration – refugee and migrant children, children alone and with their families – linking migration, asylum and child protection,” Noala Skinner, Director of UNICEF’s Brussels Office said.

The guidelines include boosting child protection at all levels, improving data collection to ensure children are properly tracked and the appointment of guardians for children. The guidelines also encourage member States to refrain from invasive age assessments and to increase cooperation among states.

Dianne Goodman, Deputy Director of the Europe Bureau of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) said: “These important guidelines will help EU States better respond to the needs of refugee and migrant children. We strongly hope that these guidelines will contribute, in a very concrete manner, to the protection of the many children who arrive to Europe after having been forced to flee their homes due to violence, war and conflict. Many have suffered incredible hardship while on their journey and afterwards.”

In a [joint press release](#), the two UN agencies stressed that children should never be detained, irrespective of their legal or migratory status, or that of their parents. They also welcomed the EU’s policy commitment to prioritise national child protection systems for children displaced beyond European borders.

According to UNHCR, children make up over half of the world’s refugee population. Both agencies are looking forward to the policy’s implementation and an end to the violence and poverty that often precipitates displacement.