

Annual General Conference 2022, 28 June, Brussels

Asylum in Europe: Strategies for Resistance and Resilience

Rue du Parnasse 19, 1050 Bruxelles

Workshop 6: Lisbon room 14h to 15h30

Title: Unaccompanied Children in Transit: challenges and supporting their rights

Lead organisation(s): Caritas Europa

Objectives:

1. Increase understanding of the situation in which unaccompanied minors (UAC) in transit find themselves and the challenges they face along their migratory journey, with examples from the ground and people directly concerned. (e.g. RLO, Xtra MENA project implemented in Brussels which provides support and legal information to UAC in transit in Brussels).
2. Discuss actions and strategies put in place in countries along the migratory route (e.g. Belgium, UK, France) to provide diverse services and legal counselling, promote their rights, and facilitate family reunification.
3. Discuss the post-Brexit challenges in what concerns family reunification, transiting from Dublin III to the “regular” UK family reunification rules and propose recommendations.

Moderator: Laetitia Van der Vennet, advocacy officer at PICUM (Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants)

Speakers:

1. **Jeanne Nechelput, Project Officer [Xtra MENA project](#) – unaccompanied minors in transit, at Caritas Belgium and Lorenzo De Lucia, Social street worker at SOS Jeunes:** Overview on the situation of UAC in transit in Brussels and the support provided to them and advocacy being done to bolster their rights.
2. **Yagoub Kibeda, Executive Director, Mosaico** Situation and challenges for UAC in Northern Italy and at the Italy-France border, and actions to support them.
3. **Nina Roox, Advisor, Cabinet of Sammy Mahdi, State Secretary for Asylum and Migration, Belgium.** Government response, protecting UAC in transit.
4. **Rebecca O Donnell, Director, Child Circle:** Recommendations derived from the overview of the challenges for UAC in transit in Europe from a child organisation perspective.

Structure/method: roundtable: panel discussion followed by a Q&A

Description:

In a context of increased crossings’ attempts across the Channel and worsening situation for people trying to reach the UK from Belgium and France, the situation of UAC in transit has gained visibility in the last few years. UAC in transit typically are going through extremely

challenging [experiences](#) and obstacles along the journey, which is too often marked by abuses and violence.

This panel discussion will bring to light the situation and challenges they face, after having fled from countries like Eritrea, Sudan or Ethiopia- and for many of them transited through Libya and Italy- in a journey that can last for years. Due to the presence of family or diaspora members, perceived better opportunities or lack of accurate information on legal possibilities and rights, the UK often represents for them the Eldorado to reach, regardless of the challenges and violence that the journey entails.

The topic will be illustrated by the [Xtra MENA project](#) (see also the [report](#)) implemented by Caritas Belgium and partners which provides support and legal information to UAC in transit in Brussels -who often fall in the cracks of the system, ending up in a state of great vulnerability- and advocates for more structural and legal support to UAC, as well as by personal experience from people on the move. Situations elsewhere in Europe, and notably in the north of Italy, will also be examined. Finally, an recommendations for action will derived from the particular case and overview of the situation in Europe.