

## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 6.12.2016  
C(2016) 7829 final*

*The Lord Boswell of Aynho  
Chair of the European Union  
Select Committee  
House of Lords  
Palace of Westminster  
UK – LONDON SW1A 0PW*

*Dear Chairman,*

*The Commission welcomes the House of Lords' Opinion entitled "Children in Crisis: unaccompanied migrant children in the EU". The Commission takes very seriously the concerns expressed by the House of Lords as regards the situation of unaccompanied migrant children in the EU.*

*The Commission agrees that there are still many complex and urgent issues to be resolved. Critical areas in a number of Member States include appropriate and safe reception conditions offering good quality care, effective guardianship systems and other procedural safeguards, effective and timely procedures, prevention of and responses to unaccompanied children going missing, access to education and other services including psychosocial support and mental health services for victims of trauma.*

*As announced in the Communication of 10 February 2016 on the State of Play of Implementation of the Priority Action under the European Agenda on Migration<sup>1</sup>, the Commission is employing a comprehensive approach to the protection of children in migration, including unaccompanied children. Some of these actions are currently being implemented and new actions have been identified as part of the ongoing process to ensure the protection of all children in migration. Many of these actions were highlighted when the Commission submitted evidence to the House of Lords' Home Affairs Committee Inquiry.*

*Since then, and as briefly mentioned in the Opinion, on 13 July 2016, the Commission published a second package of proposals to reform the Common European Asylum System. The new proposals would strengthen the protection provided to unaccompanied children in key areas raised in the Opinion, notably the assessment of the best interests of the child and the child's right to be heard, reception conditions and guardianship.*

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2016) 85 final.

*The 10<sup>th</sup> European Forum on the rights of the child on 29 and 30 November 2016 addressed the topic of the protection of children in migration, and the Commission also organised a dedicated side-meeting on guardianship on 28 November 2016.<sup>2</sup>*

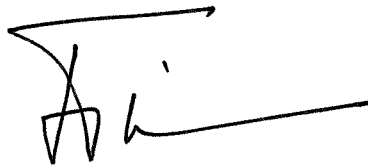
*The Commission's actions are geared towards system-strengthening, in line with the 10 Principles for integrated child protection systems,<sup>3</sup> such as identification and referral, child protection and child safeguarding, reception conditions, prevention of and responses to children going missing, guardianship and other procedural safeguards, durable solutions (integration or return), with a view also to ensuring a structural approach for the medium term, beyond current emergency and humanitarian responses.*

*In response to the more substantive findings in the Opinion, and the more specific recommendations set out therein, the Commission would refer to the attached annex, which provides an update to evidence already submitted and describes what the Commission and the EU Agencies are doing to better protect children in migration.*

*Addressing the current gaps in the protection of children in migration requires concerted efforts from all those involved, pending the entry into force of the newly proposed legislation.*

*The Commission trusts that the clarifications provided in this reply shed light on the ongoing activities of the Commission on the issues raised by the House of Lords.*

*Yours faithfully*



*Frans Timmermans  
First Vice-President*



*Věra Jourová  
Member of the Commission*

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<sup>2</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item\\_id=34456](http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=34456)

<sup>3</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/files/2015\\_forum\\_roc\\_background\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/files/2015_forum_roc_background_en.pdf).

## ANNEX

1. *The Commission has carefully considered the recommendations made by the House of Lords' European Union Select Committee in its Opinion and agrees that gaps in the protection of children, and particularly unaccompanied children, are widespread in Europe. All of the actions described below form part of a comprehensive approach to the protection of all children in migration, building on previous work done under the 2010-2014 Action Plan on unaccompanied minors. In light of the constantly evolving migration context, the process of ensuring the protection of unaccompanied children is predicated on increased coordination and cooperation among EU Member States, EU institutions and agencies, international organisations, NGOs and other actors. The actions set out below are in addition to, or an update of, previous evidence submitted to the House of Lords' Committee, and follow chronologically the issues raised in the report.*

### **RELOCATION (PARAS 92–93, 356, 358)**

2. *The Commission is in continuous dialogue with Member States urging them to make pledges to relocate unaccompanied children given the poor conditions and the lack of dedicated reception facilities for them, particularly in Greece<sup>4</sup>. The Commission closely monitors the situation in Greece and Italy and has made regular reports<sup>5</sup> notably in the context of the implementation of the relocation and resettlement<sup>6</sup> and of the EU-Turkey Statement.<sup>7</sup>*
3. *As at 9 November 2016, 148 unaccompanied and separated children have been relocated from Greece to other Member States and the situation of unaccompanied children is discussed in detail in the November report.<sup>8</sup>*

### **COMMON EUROPEAN ASYLUM SYSTEM (PARAS 70, 140, 122–123)**

4. *Since the adoption of the European Agenda on Migration<sup>9</sup>, the Commission has been working to implement measures to address both the immediate and the long-term challenges of managing migration flows. On 6 April 2016, the Commission set out its priorities for a structural reform of the European asylum and migration framework in its Communication 'Towards a reform of the Common European Asylum System and enhancing legal avenues to Europe'<sup>10</sup>, outlining the different steps to be taken towards a more humane, fair and efficient European asylum policy as well as a better managed legal migration policy. On 4 May and 13 July 2016, the Commission presented two comprehensive sets of legislative proposals to reform the Common European Asylum*

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<sup>4</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160713/fifth\\_report\\_on\\_relocation\\_and\\_resettlement\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160713/fifth_report_on_relocation_and_resettlement_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> COM(2015) 490 final, COM(2015) 510 final, COM(2015) 678 final, COM(2015) 679 final, COM(2016) 85 final.

<sup>6</sup> COM(2016) 165 final, COM(2016) 222 final, COM(2016) 360 final, COM(2016) 416 final, COM(2016) 480 final, COM(2016) 636 final.

<sup>7</sup> COM(2016) 231 final, COM(2016) 349 final, COM(2016) 634 final.

<sup>8</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20161109/seventh\\_report\\_on\\_relocation\\_and\\_resettlement\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20161109/seventh_report_on_relocation_and_resettlement_en.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> COM(2015) 240 final.

<sup>10</sup> COM(2015) 197 final.

System, including a number of measures to strengthen the protection of children, whether accompanied or not. For ease of reference, an extract of child-specific provisions has been compiled covering proposals on the Eurodac Regulation, the Dublin Regulation, the Asylum Procedures Regulation, the Qualifications Regulation and the Reception Conditions Directive.<sup>11</sup>:

5. Furthermore, on 21 June 2016, the European Parliament, Council and Commission reached an agreement on the Commission's proposal for a Regulation on a European Border and Coast Guard.<sup>12</sup> The European Border and Coast Guard which became operational on 6 October, will consist of the national authorities of Member States which are responsible for border management and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, building on the foundations laid by Frontex, thereby ensuring integrated border management at the external borders with full respect of fundamental rights, with a number of strengthened child protection aspects. The child's best interests are to be a primary consideration in the activities of the Agency (Recital 38).

**THE EU ACTION PLAN ON UNACCOMPANIED MINORS (2010–2014) (PARAS 134, 246, 254, 255, 268)**

6. The Commission's Final Report on the Action Plan on unaccompanied minors (2010-2014) is due to be published by the end of 2016, taking stock of the implementation of the measures underlined by the Action Plan for the period July 2012 to end December 2015. The Final Report will also discuss measures laid down in the Action Plan which have not yet been implemented to a satisfactory degree, and where further action is therefore needed.

**RECEPTION CONDITIONS (PARAS 156–158, 178)**

7. Ensuring adequate reception conditions is the responsibility of the Member States' authorities. The Member State authorities concerned are responsible for the protection and safety of the children arriving, as well as for the relevant use of detention of migrants or asylum seekers.
8. The implementation of hotspots in Italy and Greece is primarily within the responsibility of the Member State concerned, with the support of the Commission and of EU Agencies. Efforts are also underway to ensure that child protection and child safeguarding measures are better embedded in hotspot procedures and facilities.
9. Issues such as smuggling and trafficking of migrants, and in particular of minors, are tackled through multiple interventions: investigation, provision of information, quality of reception, availability of legal channels for the movement among Member States. Among the actions taken by European institutions and EU Agencies, Frontex and Europol are collaborating with Member State police in the identification of potential smugglers and in the analysis of crimes as well as in the increase in the level of security of minors in the hotspots. Information delivered to children by specialised agencies and authorities in

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<sup>11</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/files/rights\\_child/ceas\\_provision\\_on\\_children\\_table\\_updated.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/files/rights_child/ceas_provision_on_children_table_updated.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/09/14-european-border-coast-guard/>

*hotspots may help to convince minors not to abscond but rather to engage in legal, educational and integration procedures.*

10. *It should be noted that the Commission already closely monitors the daily situation in hotspots, through dedicated hotspot teams deployed in Italy and Greece. Resources are also allocated by EU Agencies (e.g. EASO, FRA) in hotspot-related activities. Coordination is already ensured between Commission services and EU Agencies involved, in order to closely monitor the protection of children in the hotspots.*
11. *The EU has also provided significant funding to improve reception conditions, notably for children, in Greece and Italy (see "Resources and Funding" below).*

#### ***AN INTEGRATED APPROACH (PARAS 254–255)***

#### ***European Agenda on Migration and 10 February 2016 Communication***

12. *The Commission welcomes the House of Lords' support for its planned integrated approach for the protection of all migrant children. Some examples of key actions are set out below and efforts will continue to ensure a coherent and comprehensive approach.*
13. *As submitted previously, the Commission does not envisage a separate action plan on unaccompanied children, but a comprehensive approach to the protection of children in migration, as announced in the Commission's 10 February 2016 Communication on the state of play of the implementation of the European Agenda on Migration. Annex 6 of this Communication set out ongoing actions for the protection of children in migration<sup>13</sup>, the implementation of which is underway whilst new actions have been identified as part of this process since the publication of this Communication.*
14. *The identification and sharing of good practice will be a key objective of the 2016 European Forum on the rights of the child at the end of November and should give rise to a compilation covering all aspects of migration, with a focus on the protection of children in migration. Forum discussions will inform future policy decisions.*
15. *The Commission has adopted an Action Plan on the Integration of third-country nationals to support Member States in their integration efforts. The Action Plan includes several initiatives related to the education and integration of migrant children, such as promoting the removal of barriers for the participation of migrant children in early childhood education, online language assessment and learning for newly arrived migrants; supporting inclusive education; and promoting the upgrading of skills or launch of projects to develop intercultural dialogue.*
16. *Frontex will publish in 2016 a new Fundamental Rights Strategy action list (covering 2017-2021), which will include specific training on child-related matters, and will adapt guidance given to airport border guards to detect children at risk so that it can also be*

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<sup>13</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/managing\\_the\\_refugee\\_crisis\\_state\\_of\\_play\\_20160210\\_annex\\_06\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/managing_the_refugee_crisis_state_of_play_20160210_annex_06_en.pdf)

*used at land and sea borders. In the context of the pre-deployment briefing, FRA together with Frontex will produce a video on the protection of children arriving at the borders. The video will be included in the training material of national as well as guest and seconded guest officers that are deployed by Frontex in the hotspots and other operational activities.*

17. *The Commission's post-2016 policy framework on trafficking in human beings will take into account the findings of various studies as well as the Commission's 19.5.2016 report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings under Directive 2011/36/EU<sup>14</sup>. In this regard, the progress report has already identified the key challenges that the EU and Member States need to address, including: to adopt a child-centred approach in all actions and focus on the most vulnerable victims including at-risk children; provide adequate support to child victims; preventing trafficking in human beings by addressing the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation; systematically evaluate national strategies and action plans; and the allocation of adequate resources. Furthermore, the EU Civil Society Platform against Trafficking in Human Beings, ensuring close engagement with civil society including child rights organisations, will continue focusing on child trafficking.*

#### **MISSING UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN (PARA 222)**

18. *The Commission will make a legislative proposal later this year to introduce a new sub-category of alert in the Schengen Information System (SIS) on missing unaccompanied children. The opportunities of using biometric data to trace missing children and enhance their protection are currently also examined by FRA in a comparative research on biometrics.*

#### **AGE ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES**

19. *Article 24 of the proposed Asylum Procedures Regulation addresses medical age assessments. It underlines the presumption of childhood as well as the relevance of psychosocial assessments.*
20. *As to the age of child victims of trafficking, Article 13(2) of Directive 2011/36/EU establishes a presumption of childhood (i.e. being under the age of 18 years old) in order to receive immediate access to assistance, support and protection prescribed for child victims under the same Directive. The Commission currently assesses the transposition of the Directive by the Member States and will submit a report to the European Parliament and the Council before the end of 2016.*
21. *Please refer to the Asylum Procedures Regulation proposal for other changes.*

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<sup>14</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/eu-policy/first-report-progress-made-fight-against-trafficking-human-beings-2016\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/eu-policy/first-report-progress-made-fight-against-trafficking-human-beings-2016_en)

**BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD (PARAS 111, 261, 262, 267, 268, 357)**

22. *The best interests of the child principle and the child's right to be heard have been reinforced in the 4 May and 13 July Common European Asylum System proposals and in the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation.*
23. *The best interests of the child are enshrined throughout the provisions on protection and assistance to child victims under Directive 2011/36/EU. As mentioned earlier, the Commission is in the process of assessing the national measures notified by the Member States and will report by the end of 2016.*

**TAKING CHILDREN'S VIEWS INTO ACCOUNT (PARAS 267, 268, 340, 341)**

24. *The child's right to a personal asylum interview is reinforced in Article 21 of the proposal for an Asylum Procedures Regulation, as the child's right to be heard is an integral part of any best interests assessment.*

**BETTER DATA (PARAS 237, 238, 273–276, 294)**

25. *The revision of the Guidelines for data collection under Article 6 of the Statistics Regulation<sup>15</sup> in 2011 enabled Eurostat to collect more data, which also included data on non-asylum related migration of children<sup>16</sup>. The EU agencies have also been working to improve their databases regarding unaccompanied minors.*
26. *In view of the very fragmented data on unaccompanied children, the Commission is considering:*
- *to include the issue in the next tri-annual report to the European Parliament and the Council on the statistics compiled pursuant to the Regulation (EP) 862/2007 and their quality;*
  - *to include the issue in the work on the new framework population and migration regulation;*
27. *The Commission initiated a discussion with Member States on 19 October 2016 on the need for better data on children in migration. In 2017, the first results should be visible in better disaggregated data for statistics already collected.*
28. *Rapidly growing needs with regard to data reporting have to be balanced against Member States' limited capacity to increase the collection of ever more detailed statistics in times when these capacities are already spread thin in response to the migration crisis.*
29. *In the context of the evaluation of the application of the Schengen acquis on return conducted on the basis of Council Regulation (EU) No 1053/2013 establishing an*

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<sup>15</sup> Regulation (EC) No 862/2007

<sup>16</sup> Eurostat, First permits issued for other reasons by reason, length of validity and citizenship [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr\\_resoth](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_resoth)

*evaluation and monitoring mechanism to verify the application of the Schengen acquis<sup>17</sup>, the evaluation team composed of Commission and Member States' representatives regularly monitors the system for the return of unaccompanied minors and collects the available information and data.*

30. *Based on the Commission's report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking of human beings (2016), the EU and its Member States need to devote efforts and resources to improve data collection in the field of trafficking in human beings.*

**RESOURCES AND FUNDING (PARAS 246, 341, 366)**

31. *For ease of reference, a summary of funding for the protection of children in migration, and in particular for unaccompanied children has been made.<sup>18</sup>*

**DURABLE SOLUTIONS (PARAS 199, 280–282)**

32. *On 7 June 2016, the Commission adopted its Action Plan on Integration<sup>19</sup>, outlining a number of actions relevant to children, particularly in the area of education and early childhood education and care. In addition, the Commission can support the integration of migrant children through the European Social Fund and the ERDF, as well as others, in the context of general social inclusion and education measures (e.g. investments in provision of social, health, education, housing, childcare services and relevant infrastructure – see above). In addition, in 2016, the FRA will publish a comparative report of integration policies.*

33. *Taking into consideration the best interests of the child in the course of return is an underlying principle binding on those Member States that apply the Return Directive. In the context of the enforcement of the Return Directive, it is essential to continue ensuring that safeguards and standards to protect children are adhered to and ensure primary consideration of their best interests during the whole procedure. In September 2015, the Commission published the Return Handbook<sup>20</sup> which contains detailed guidance, best practices and recommendations in the field of return, including with regard to what constitutes adequate reception in the country of return. The Handbook refers in this context to the standards of the UN Guidelines for the alternative care of children. The Commission will continue monitoring the correct implementation of the Return Directive and will promote the use of the Return Handbook. In addition, Frontex has consolidated good practices and provided operational guidance on the treatment of children during*

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<sup>17</sup> OJ L 295, 6.11.2013, p. 27.

<sup>18</sup> See background paper on funding posted here: [http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item\\_id=34456](http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=34456)

<sup>19</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication\\_action\\_plan\\_integration\\_third-country\\_nationals\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication_action_plan_integration_third-country_nationals_en.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/return\\_handbook\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/return_handbook_en.pdf)



return operations and they are available in the recently published Frontex guide on joint operations by air<sup>21</sup>.

#### **FAMILY REUNIFICATION (PARAS. 127, 205, 290)**

34. *Directive 2003/86/EC on the right to family reunification<sup>22</sup> determines the conditions for family reunification for third-country nationals residing lawfully in EU Member States. It entitles unaccompanied minors who are recognised as refugees to be reunited with their parents and, in the absence of parents, optionally with other guardians or family members. The Directive requires the best interests of children to be considered when examining family reunification applications. In addition, all the provisions have to be interpreted in accordance with the right to family life and the rights of the child. In the guidance provided by the Commission in 2014 on the application of the Directive<sup>23</sup> Member States are encouraged to set and maintain more favourable conditions for family reunification of refugees than what is required by the Directive. They are equally encouraged to grant beneficiaries of subsidiary protection similar rights as refugees, regardless of the former group not being covered by the Directive. The proper implementation of the Directive across Member States is subject to continuous monitoring and, moreover, the Commission is in the process of conducting a horizontal assessment of the whole EU acquis on legal migration. See also the provisions on family reunification in the proposed revised Dublin Regulation.*

#### **RETURN (PARAS. 194, 294)**

35. *As stated above, the Commission monitors the implementation of the Return Directive and promotes the use of the 2015 Return Handbook. Respect for child protection safeguards are an important aspect of evaluations of Member States' compliance with the Schengen acquis. The Commission has invited FRA to provide fundamental rights expertise during such Schengen evaluations. FRA has been requested to submit an annual risk analysis and to accompany on-site missions as an observer*
36. *The monitoring and gathering of data on returned migrants, including minors, takes places in line with the obligations contained in the Return Directive and in the Statistics Regulation. Such obligations do not extend to monitoring those individuals who have been successfully returned to their countries of origin. Member States are nevertheless free to do so as a matter of national policy choice.*
37. *With regard to return, the new European Border and Coast Guard Regulation provides that the Agency acts in accordance with the respect of fundamental rights and general principles of Union and international law, including children's rights (Article 27). When assisting in return operations involving minors, the Agency will establish pools of forced-return monitors, forced return escorts and return specialists with specific*

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<sup>21</sup> [http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/General/Guide\\_for\\_Joint\\_Return\\_Operations\\_by\\_Air\\_coordinated\\_by\\_Frontex.pdf](http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/General/Guide_for_Joint_Return_Operations_by_Air_coordinated_by_Frontex.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> [Directive 2003/86/EC on the right to family reunification, OJ L 251, 3.10.2003, p. 12](#)

<sup>23</sup> [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on guidance for application of Directive 2003/86/EC on the right to family reunification \(COM/2014/0210 final\)](#)

*expertise in child protection (Article 29-31). As part of future training on return, the Agency will pay attention to the specific situation of children and other groups considered as vulnerable (Article 36).*

#### **GUARDIANSHIP (PARA. 320)**

38. *In its proposal of 13 July 2016 on asylum procedures, the Commission proposed a number of new provisions relating to guardians and guardianship. , including on the role of the guardian, deadlines for appointment, monitoring, and reasonable case-load.<sup>24</sup> As mentioned in Section 5.1 above, this is also prioritised in funding. As stated above, on 28 November a side meeting to the European Forum on the rights of the child will focus on guardianship of unaccompanied children.<sup>25</sup>*

#### **Working together (para. 334, 335)**

39. *In the first instance, the Commission will continue to increase the discussion fora on the protection of children in migration to try to bridge the gaps among all those who play a role, taking account also of decentralised systems. The Forum results will also inform future policy decisions.*

#### **Solidarity among Member States (356, 357)**

40. *Addressed under other points above.*

#### **EU Agencies, guidance and training**

41. *FRA experts are deployed in Greece to support EU actors and national authorities with expertise in areas such as child protection, gender issues and the identification and referral of vulnerable people. FRA regularly reports to the Commission on the situation on the ground, and publishes regular overviews of its research on the migration crisis on its website.<sup>26</sup> One thematic focus of these reports has been child protection. In addition, as stated above, in 2016, the FRA will publish a comparative report on integration policies.*

42. *In light of the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement<sup>27</sup>, EASO has deployed teams of experts with specific expertise on working with asylum-seeking children and vulnerable applicants.*

43. *In May 2016, EASO developed the EASO Best Interests Assessment tool for the Purpose of Relocation, a short guide on the best interests of the child in the context of the relocation procedure.*

44. *EASO has now published the Practical guide on family tracing<sup>28</sup> to support national authorities in tracing the family of unaccompanied children.*

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<sup>24</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/files/rights\\_child/ceas\\_provision\\_on\\_children\\_table\\_updated.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/files/rights_child/ceas_provision_on_children_table_updated.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item\\_id=34456](http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=34456)

<sup>26</sup> <http://fra.europa.eu/en/theme/asylum-migration-borders/overviews>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18-eu-turkey-statement/>

45. *As part of its core activities, EASO delivers specific training to Member States on vulnerable groups, including children, through the EASO Training Curriculum.<sup>29</sup> In particular, the interviewing children module is an advanced training module for case officers, aimed at enhancing their knowledge and skills in interviewing children.*
46. *In addition, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency requires that staff with expertise in child protection be included in the forced return monitor pool, the forced return escort pool, and the return specialist pool. In hotspot areas, the migration management support teams shall, where necessary, include staff with expertise in child protection.*
47. *With regard to training, the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation stipulates that the Agency, in cooperation with the appropriate training entities of Member States, EASO and FRA, should develop specific training tools, including specific training in the protection of children (Article 36).*
48. *The Schengen Borders Code also provides that training curricula for border guards include specialised training for detecting and dealing with situations involving vulnerable persons, such as unaccompanied children. As far as border checks are concerned, the Schengen Borders Code (Annex VII (6)) requires that border guards pay particular attention to children whether travelling accompanied or unaccompanied. They shall be subject to the same checks on entry and exit as adults. In case of unaccompanied children, border guards shall ensure, by means of thorough checks on travel documents and supporting documents that children do not leave the territory against the wishes of the holder of parental responsibility over them. In case of doubt whether a child who is a citizen of the EU or a third-country national legally residing in the EU, is authorised to cross the border on exit, the Practical Handbook for Border Guards (Schengen Handbook) foresees that the relevant national contact point for consultation on children (notified under the Schengen Borders Code) should be contacted.*

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/public/EASO%20Practical%20Guide%20on%20Family%20Tracing.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.easo.europa.eu/training>