

CHILDREN IN DISPLACEMENT



Refugee Rights Europe's research has documented a worrying number of untreated health concerns amongst children and unaccompanied minors, who often lack access to education and information alongside safe and secure shelter. The lack of legal advice, guidance and adequate safeguarding mechanisms for displaced children in Europe puts them at heightened risk of exploitation and abuse and can often lead to them taking life-threatening journeys or falling into the hands of traffickers.

PARIS, FRANCE

Research conducted in January 2018:

- 84.5% of the children we interviewed were unaccompanied. With more than three-quarters of minors living on the streets in Paris, 44.8% did not feel safe at all.
- 31% of minors reported having experienced police violence while in Paris. 83.3% said they were regularly subject to tear gas, while 24.1% of minors reported having been arrested or detained in France.
- 42.6% of minors reported suffering from health problems, with a whole 73.9% of minors lacking access to any medical care.

CALAIS, FRANCE

Research conducted in October 2017:

- At the time of research, 40% of respondents in the area were minors, while 78.2% were unaccompanied.
- 94.6% of minors said they 'didn't feel safe' or 'didn't feel safe at all' in Calais.
- A staggering 93.6% had experienced police violence in Calais. 72% of minors had been arrested or detained, with several explaining they had been physically abused while in detention.
- - Only 17.6% of minors had access to information about their rights and opportunities to change their situation.

VENTIMIGLIA, ITALY

Research conducted in August 2017:

- 91.7% of minors interviewed were unaccompanied. Living conditions were wholly inadequate, with many sleeping by the river without access to enough food every day.
- Only 16.7% of minors reported being able to access medical care, despite citing a number of mental and physical health concerns.
- More than half of the minors interviewed had experienced citizen and police violence.
- In addition, a number of minors reported being pushed-back at the border into Italy. It is Refugee Rights Europe's understanding that this constitutes an illegal push-back under international law - minors arriving on French soil should become the concern of the French authorities.

Policy recommendations:

All children must be provided with adequate shelter while their age is being assessed. The detention of children must end under all circumstances.

The European refugee response must acknowledge and under all circumstances uphold the rights of the child enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe 2017-2019. As a matter of priority, the European Commission, through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and other relevant funding mechanisms, should contribute meaningfully to ensuring that sufficient resources are in place for child protection shelters with trained staff, social workers, therapists and overall sufficient capacity.

Governments through their relevant agencies must provide training for border control officials and police forces to ensure compliance with international human rights obligations and child protection. Individual member States must take steps to accelerate claims made under the Dublin regulation for family reunification and ensure that they are processed fairly and in a transparent manner.