**OPEN Summary of EMN Ad-Hoc Query**

# Asylum - Improving Communication Between Authorities & Minors

# Part I

August 13th 2019, prepared by NO EMN NCP

# key points to note

* This query provides us with detailed lists of highly relevant topics deemed important by many for this target group and identifies educational issues that have influenced the development of information programs and/or materials. Sad to say, some MS feel the need to educate children about fighting abuse, violence and trafficking.
* *There are a number of links to useful materials in English which can be easily adapted.*
* 6 MS (BE, BG, FI, NL, SE, NO) provide information for children not only through written materials including brochures, comics and simple flow charts, but through videos, games and activities: SE has started testing an app. These MS have routines for conveying information suitable for children in families as well as UM seeking asylum verbally through professionals. BE has also developed guidelines for parents.
* In addition to written materials, NL and NO also have separate websites especially dedicated to children which provide information through videos about the asylum process and related matters important to children. NL also has a vlog and adult run activities in reception centers aimed at providing information to children about their situation. A number of other MS have posted relevant information and/ or links to brochures and videos on their homepage.
* Many of the remaining reporting MS have reflected over the special information needs of UM in the asylum process and do provide some written material in a number of languages and provide verbal orientation from trained staff – but only for UM. FR includes accompanied children in their vulnerability considerations. Some MS rely on parents to relay information to their children (DE, LU, PL). Several MS report that they do not have age-appropriate information for any children because there are so few minors seeking asylum.
* Several MS (EL, IT, FI, NL, UK) have outsourced this work to specialists or projects; the UK has an especially comprehensive approach for information to UM.

# background and context

On the 4th of May 2019, the NO NCP launched an ad-hoc query on asylum and improving communication between authorities and minors.

The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) has launched a new website to explain the asylum process in Norway to unaccompanied minors as well as children whose families are seeking asylum and wanted to benefit from other’s experience with the same. A wide array of information regarding the asylum process in Norway, in many languages, is presented in a child-friendly manner on the new website asylbarn.no/. The next step for the project is to publish information also meant for children about forced and voluntary return processes as well as receiving a negative decision.

Children and unaccompanied asylum seekers represent a large percentage of those who apply for asylum in Norway. In 2018, over 40 per cent of the asylum seekers of Norway were children. In keeping with this data, UDI has incorporated contributions from the children asylum seekers to make all information regarding asylum process the best possible. Because of the large number of children involved in the asylum process, this project is important for the Norwegian authorities.

# Questions

1. Does your MS systematically distribute any information about the asylum process that is specifically suited to children; where children are the recipients ? YES/ NO
2. If your MS has an information program for children, please briefly explain how your MS informs minors about the asylum process: through human interaction, the written word, videos, audio files, games etc.
3. If your MS does have an information program for children, please list which topics minors get information about and please note if you have received any feedback about the selection of topics: are some topics of more interest than others, if so which ones?
4. When preparing information of this nature, what kinds of issues does your MS take into consideration?
5. Have your information materials been evaluated, or has your MS received ad hoc feedback that was useful that could be shared? Please note we are interested in feedback from professionals as well as from children and their guardians. Please briefly describe and or exemplify.
6. Has your MS considered the possibility of creating any kind of website with simplified language in order to improve communication among children and to facilitate their understanding of the asylum process in your country? YES/NO Briefly describe.

# MAIN FINDINGS

Responses from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria (only part I), Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, Norway (24 in Total).

We received a number of very useful responses from this EMN AHQ. Several MS have developed highly interesting materials and approaches to providing appropriate information to children seeking asylum. Detailed information is available in the compilation.

8 reporting MS (AT, CY, FR, EL, IT, LU, MT, UK) use information materials suitable for UM seeking asylum including brochures, animated videos and some use materials published by UNHCR or the Dublin Information Leaflet. 10 reporting MS produce materials in a number of foreign languages. Most reporting MS provide verbal orientation to children through a trained professional; in Italy IOM and UNHCR inform minors about the asylum process through human interaction and frontal lessons that takes place in reception centers. Though some do leave it up to the parents to provide children with information about the asylum process. 6 MS reported that they do not have an information program tailored to minors, some of these MS reported that children seeking asylum were very few number.

The UK has a Refugee Council Children’s Advice Project which provides unaccompanied minors with an adviser to guide them through the asylum process. The project is encompassing and provides advice and information, help to access legal representation, the designated representative accompanies the minor to asylum interviews, immigration tribunal as well as appeal hearings. The UK is also developing a ‘point of claim’ leaflet to be distributed to unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) and will provide information on the asylum process and a link to a web page which holds a second leaflet with additional information.

**Important topics identified:**

* procedure for requesting international protection and legal requirements, asylum or subsidiary protection, Dublin Regulation;
* roles of various authorities & stakeholders, guardianship; uncertainty around the roles and responsibilities of key professionals;
* experts (legal advisor and representative), how legal aid works;
* timeframes;
* host country’s expectations: consequences of non-compliance or refusal to cooperate;
* arrival - identification & registration process, assignment of guardian;
* arrival at reception centre;
* interviews, interview setting: meaning and the consequences of the personal interview;
* UMs rights, children’s rights (schooling, health care, right to be heard, right to legal counsel) and obligations;
* age assessment;
* Legal orientation regarding the entry and stay conditions (i.e different types of residence permits, right to work; the Dublin Regulation);
* negative decision, processing an appeal; final decision on asylum application;
* relevant addresses and organizations;
* guides for parents;
* hygiene
* UM brochure & (video);
* medical and health services and how to receive them;
* attending school
* Specific information regarding legal status as unaccompanied minors;
* Life/ culture in country X (housing, school, taking care of yourself, free time, values, (water) safety, rules/ regulations, love & friendship);
* how to deal with aggression;
* Information about NGOs or charities that could help;
* stress and uncertainty of waiting for a decision and how it can affect a person’s mental health;
* consequences of an explicit or implicit withdrawal of the application;
* protecting children against abuse in reception centers; peer violence and inappropriate behavior on the part of adults and how to respond to them; prevention of human trafficking and labour and sexual exploitation

**Important considerations identified:**

* age of the child, ability of the child to comprehend content of the information and special needs like traumas, educational level, emotional stability etc.
* statistical data such as the number of UAMs applicants for international protection;
* country of origin;
* overcoming language barriers;
* style & “register” of information presented;
* various tools for different age groups to create trust (games, comics, vlogs, social interaction, game-afternoons);
* information about what is going on at reception center;
* cultural sensitivity and gender sensitivity;
* texts are adjusted/simplified;
* supplement already existing materials;
* use a communication method suitable to maturity level;
* provide information in a child-friendly manner;
* can child obtain further support if they have further queries and concerns;
* size of font;