

UNHCR NEWSLETTER

Separated Children in Europe Programme

April - May 2001

Issue N°4

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***This summary has been prepared from publicly available sources. It does not necessarily reflect UNHCR's views, nor can UNHCR vouch for its accuracy.

News on Separated Children

France: *Le Monde* daily newspaper wrote an article on the discrimination of separated children in France following the Supreme Court decision not to release Stella, a 16 years old Nigerian girl from detention-like waiting zone in Roissy airport.

Le Monde, 4 May 2001, p. 12.

http://recherche.lemonde.fr/search97cqi/s97_cqi

France : The French daily newspaper *Libération* describes the Netherlands as an "Eldorado for Separated Children" and highlights the high number of these children seeking asylum in that country. *Libération*, 27 April 2001. www.liberation.com

Spain : In April, UNHCR Branch Office requested information on national legislation and practice in countries covered by the Separated Children in Europe Programme regarding age assessment of separated children seeking asylum.

Spain: SEPARATED CHILDREN DISAPPEARED. The disappearance of separated children is of serious concern. Recently three separated children disappeared from a special reception center for separated children in Fuerteventura, Canary Islands, where they were being kept pending expulsion. The three were from Sub-Sahara and had arrived by boat in a group of 111. *The Migration News Sheet*, May issue.

Greece: The Ministry of Health and Welfare, with the decision No. P2a/52/5-3-01 Ministerial

Decision, assigned the National Youth Foundation (School Centre in Anoya, Rethymnon-Crete) to be responsible for the reception of separated children. The co-ordination of the transfer of the children from Athens to Anoya, Crete, will also be undertaken by the National Youth Foundation. For any information, please contact the National Youth Foundation : *Center for Vocational Training of the National Youth Foundation* 22c, Marathonos Avenue 19009 Pikermi Greece Tel.: 6038.923-5 Fax: 6036.076 Contact person: Ms. Laura Pappa.
UNHCR Greece

Poland: "CHILDREN FIRST" CONFERENCE
The External Relations Officer accompanied by the Legal Intern attended on 20 April a second "Children First" conference, organised by the Refugee Department and funded by PHARE. The Refugee Department focal points on children reported on the situation of separated children. The speakers also provided similar statements from the Refugee Board, the Emergency Care Unit, the Reception Center in Debak and the Local Family Court in Grodzisk Mazowiecki. Ms. Celina Nowak from the Warsaw Legal Clinic and Mr. Gellert from the Ombudsman Office were also active during the conference.
UNHCR Poland

Poland : UNRELIABLE AGE ASSESSMENT METHODE. Ruslan Umarow, 17 years old wanted to leave his hometown Grosny to be reunited with his mother living in Hambourg. On his way, he got arrested by German border police who sent him back to Poland. In Poland, Ruslan

Umarow spend three months in Pila detention center because age assessment showed he is between 20 and 24 years old. This story covered by the German newspaper, *Die Tageszeitung* on 18.04.01. (See : www.taz.de) reveals the problem of deportation of separated children from Germany to Poland and highlights the unreliability of the age assessment method. This unfortunate case helped to introduce a safeguard into the age assessment clause in the new Aliens Law, Article 34 a :

“If the declared age of the alien claiming to be a minor gives rise to serious doubts, a medical examination may be carried out upon the consent of the alien or a legal guardian appointed to represent that alien for the purpose of establishing the actual age of the alien. The results of the examination shall contain apart from establishment of age the indication showing the admissible margin of incorrectness of the test.”

UNHCR Poland

United Kingdom: Some African teenagers seeking asylum in the UK are being taken by organised gangs and sold as prostitutes in Italy. More than 40 girls, some as young as 14 have disappeared from children's homes in Sussex in the last two years, a BBC documentary has revealed. *The Refugee Daily*, 9 March, a BBC report.

United Kingdom : “DESTINY’S CHILDREN”. The weekly supplement of the *Guardian*, the *Guardian Weekend* described in a long article the treatment of separated children in the UK through various stories of separated children seeking asylum in the country. *The Guardian Weekend*, 10 March 2001, p. 31. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4149259,00.html>

Dharamsala, India, The influx of Tibetan separated children seeking asylum in India this year has more than doubled in what refugee centre workers here say is a clear sign of increasing Chinese oppression. Nawang Norbu, deputy director of the Reception Centre for Tibetan Refugees in the northern town of Dharamsala, told AFP (Agence France Press) that 1,500 children below the age of 13 had arrived in India in the first four months of the year. (...) (AFP, BBC) *The Refugee Daily*, 1 May

Refugee/Asylum Policy Update

Lithuania : GOVERNMENT APPROVES AMENDMENTS TO REFUGEE LAW. On 23 May the Lithuanian Government approved a

draft Law on Amendments and Supplements to the Law on Refugee Status of 29 June 2000. The draft introduces detailed regulation of detention of asylum seekers, including the applicability of alternatives to detention and additional safeguards for detained asylum seekers. It also provides guarantees for **separated children** asylum seekers by making it possible to exempt them from the admissibility and accelerated procedure; as well as ensures accommodation in the Refugee Reception Centre immediately after admission to the territory; appointment of temporary guardian; and the possibility to submit application for refugee status. Moreover, **separated children** granted refugee status will be able to invite their parents for family reunification in Lithuania. The Draft Law stipulates that the only ground for non-admission to the territory of the state for all applicants can be the application of a safe third country notion. UNHCR views this draft as a very positive step by the Lithuanian Government in further improving the legislation on refugees.

UNHCR Riga

European Asylum Harmonisation

EU COMMISSION PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE ON RECEPTION CONDITIONS. On 4 April the European Commission adopted its proposal for a Directive on minimum standards for reception conditions in EU member states. It includes several specific provisions for separated children ; such as:

- access to the education system under the same conditions as nationals (Article 12);
- that separated children are accommodated together with an adult carer/guardian (Art. 16)
- special health and psychological care needs are met for separated children (Art.20);
- special health and psychological care for minors during other procedures (Art. 21);
- attention to special needs of minors (Art. 23)

Article 24 and 25 deal exclusively with children and include the best interests of the child principle; rehabilitation of victims of abuse, neglect, exploitation, torture, etc; appointment of guardian for separated children, accommodation of separated children; family tracing and training of those working with separated children.

UNHCR Brussels

EU Legislative proposal: In May, the European Parliament Committee on Citizen's Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs has discussed and voted on two important legislative proposals from the European Commission to combat sexual exploitation of children and child

pornography and to combat trafficking in children. These proposals represent the first EU legislation which has children as a target group and uses the new legal base to combat offences against children, agreed in the Amsterdam Treaty. *Save the Children Brussels office Newsletter, May issue. See : http://www.europarl.eu.int/press/index_en.htm*

Meetings

The Institute for the Study of International Migration of the Georgetown University is organising a **Transatlantic Workshop on Unaccompanied/Separated Children**. The workshop will be held **on June 18-19, 2001** in Washington, D.C. For more information, please contact Sarah Malone, tel:+202 687 22 58.

The 12th International Foster Care Conference 15-20 July 2001 in Veldhoven. This event aimed at those involved with foster care, young people in and from care, foster parents, social workers, policy makers, trainers, etc. For more information contact Chris Gardiner at Rasinovo Nabrezi 58, Praha 2, 128 00, Czech Republic. Tel: +420 2 2492 1783. E-mail: chrisgardiner@nexta.cz *Save the Children Brussels Office Newsletter May issue.*

ECRE is organising their Biannual General Meeting in Rotterdam, The Netherlands on **15-17 June** with special focus on the Geneva Refugee Convention. This meeting will include a working group session on separated children in Europe.

Austria: 12-14 October 2001, Conference Childhood and Trauma. The Austrian NGO, *Verein Welt der Kinder* will organise a two-day conference focusing on children with a special workshop on separated children in Austria scheduled for Sunday 13 October. For more information please contact Anton Schneider, Strasse 28, A-6900 Bregenz, e-mail: weltderkinder@vol.at Tel:+43 664 222 0131

Publications and Web-sites

Publications:

- Lansdown, Gerison, **Promoting Children's Participation in Democratic Decision-Making** Series: Innocenti Insight, 6 Publisher: IRC, 2001, Pages: 48. ISBN: 88-85401-73-2. Gerison Lansdown examines the meaning of Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which says that children are entitled to participate in the decisions that affect them.

Lansdown takes a close look at the full meaning of this Article as a tool that can help children. It is a practical guide to this issue, with clear checklists for child participation in conferences and many concrete examples of recent initiatives. Publication Cost: free. To order, send an e-mail to orders@earthprint.co.uk, fax: +44 1438 74 88 44 or go to <http://www.unicef-icdc.org/> where you can download the document.

- **Daniel Renton, Child Trafficking in Albania** Save the Children UK, March 2001. published a report on Albanian children and young women are being sold into sex slavery across Europe. To order a copy, please contact Liz Kwast Programmes Resource Centre, Save the Children 17 Grove Lane London SE5 8RD, tel: +44 20 77035400 x2505, fax/ 00 44 20 77937626. Email prc@scfuk.org.uk

- **UN Special Session on Children:** The revised draft outcome document, A World Fit for Children is now available in different languages at the UNICEF web site:

<http://www.unicef.org/speciasession>

Save the Children has produced a child-friendly version of the above document. The child-friendly version has been written so that children and young people have the opportunity to express their views on the document itself. For further information contact Clare Feinstein at menebhi@euronet.nl

Save the Children Brussels Office, Newsletter - May 2001

Web sites:

- The new Dutch policy on separated children presented by secretary of State for Justice, Ella Kalsbeek is available (in Dutch only) on the web: www.minjust.nl

- Children's Rights. A BBC World web site where you can hear the children tell their own stories and read analysis of the difficulties they face.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/people/features/childrensrights/>

- **THE GLOBAL MOVEMENT FOR CHILDREN** is a collection of people and organizations around the world dedicated to promoting the rights of the child. The movement is about participation, action and accountability involving everyone.

<http://www.gmfc.org/en/index.html>

- **PLAN INTERNATIONAL** is an international, humanitarian, child-focused development organization. <http://www.plan-international.org>

- **CLABOUR, a mailing list on child labour.** CWIN, the national child rights organisation initiative has developed an E-list on child labour providing a forum for the international communities to facilitate discussion and dialogue as well as to share experience on the issue of child labour. To subscribe, send an e-mail to : majordomo@mos.com.np with the

following message "subscribe labour". For detailed information, please contact Ms. Sumnima Tuladhhar, cwininfo@mos.com.np - <http://european-refugee-fund.org>, the European Refugee Fund Web site provides information and

news on the projects that have been funded by the European Union concerning reception and voluntary repatriation of refugees, displaced persons and asylum seekers. The purposes of the site are to help existing projects achieve their objectives successfully and to provide a catalyst for exchanging information on projects and policies relevant to refugees, displaced persons and asylum seekers in the EU.

- Council of the European Union Latest News :

<http://ue.eu.int/en/summ.htm>

- EU Commission Press Releases Page:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/pr_en.htm

- EU Parliament News Page

http://www.europarl.eu.int/press/index_en.htm

-Europaworld

<http://www.europaworld.org>

- <http://www.ecre.org/> ECRE is an umbrella organisation of 72 refugee-assisting agencies in 28 countries working towards fair and humane policies for the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees.

Programme Update

-The second edition of the Statement of Good Practice, October 2000, is now available in French. Contact Catherine Joppart, joppart@unhcr.ch for copies.

-The 1997 Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum, 1997 has been translated into French. Contact Catherine Joppart for copies.

-Separated Children in Europe Programme Senior Policy Officer, Kate Halvorsen, is back from leave as of 7 June.

Calendar

-June 18-19: The Senior Policy Officer will attend the Transatlantic Workshop on Unaccompanied/Separated Children in Washington, D.C.

-25-27 June: 'Retreat' for all Policy officers for Children and Women/Gender at Headquarter, Geneva.

-3-5 July, Rome : A training of trainers is organised for UNHCR, Government and NGO staff dealing with separated children in France, Germany, Austria, Greece, Spain, Italy and Switzerland.

In the 3rd newsletter issue we presented a report from the Swedish Migration Board on Refugee Children. To get a copy, please E-mail Ms. Berit Olsson: presstjansten@migrationsverket.se from the Information Division at the Swedish Migration Board. Please note that the entire report is only available in Swedish. A summary is available in English.

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