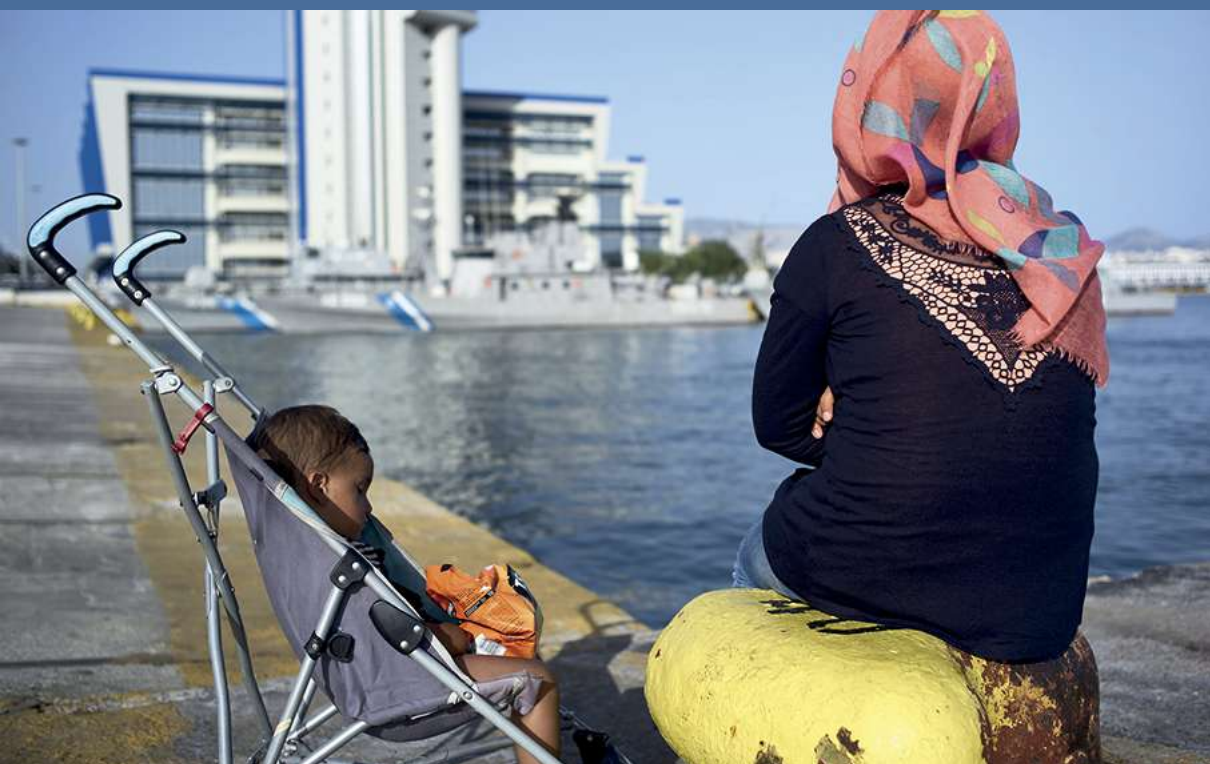


Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021-2025)



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Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021-2025)

French edition:

*Plan d'action du Conseil de l'Europe
sur la protection des personnes vulnérables
dans le contexte des migrations et
de l'asile en Europe (2021-2025)*

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Context

Human rights challenges in the field of refugees¹ and migration have long been a focus of the Council of Europe and in recent years have taken on a new importance. As the root causes of migration (armed conflicts, instability, demographic and economic development, climate change, etc.) have become increasingly present in Europe's neighbouring regions, addressing these challenges remains a priority for the Council of Europe as the continent's leading human rights organisation. This action plan comes at the time of an unprecedented public health crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic, and of increasing migration distress. In such circumstances, vulnerable groups, such as vulnerable persons in the context of migration and asylum, are often the hardest hit. The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities such as access to healthcare and welfare services and to education and employment.

In the context of the current challenges, not least those emerging in connection with Covid-19, both the Council of Europe and its member states acknowledge the need to work together in placing specific focus on vulnerable persons in the context of migration and asylum in Europe. No country can face these challenges alone.

At its Helsinki Ministerial Session in May 2019, the Committee of Ministers recalled the need to continue to address the challenges arising from global migration. At the end of 2019, the Council of Europe completed the implementation of the Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe (2017-2019) co-ordinated by the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) on Migration and Refugees. Among its achievements are two Committee of Ministers' recommendations ([CM/Rec\(2019\)4](#) on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood and [CM/Rec\(2019\)11](#) on effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in the context of migration), practical guidance on alternatives to immigration detention, Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) courses on refugee and migrant children, and on alternatives to immigration detention, practical tools promoting good practices for communicating with children in a child-friendly manner and in promoting child-friendly approaches in the area of migration and the promotion of practical solutions for facilitating qualification recognition.² The main lessons learned reflected the need for further focus on the national implementation

1. Any reference throughout the text to "refugees" means persons who are recognised as refugees according to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, or have been granted subsidiary protection under European Union or national legislation, although it is encouraged to extend its application to asylum seekers. The provisions of the European convention on Human Rights and its protocols do not contain a right to asylum. States have the right, as a matter of well-established international law and subject to their treaty obligations, to control entry, residence and expulsion of non-nationals (*Hirsi Jamaa and Others*, [GC], no. 27765/09, § 113; *Abdulaziz, Cabales and Balkandali*, 28 May 1985, § 67).
2. For more details on the achievements and lessons learned, see "Refugee and migrant children in Europe" – Final report on the implementation of the Action Plan (2017-2019), [SG/Inf\(2020\)4](#), February 2020.

of results obtained, for inter-agency dialogue and co-ordination and for a reflection about a wider assistance framework on behalf of the Organisation.

The implementation of the Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe (2017-2019) was supported by member states through voluntary contributions and staff secondments. The Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe have taken an active part in the implementation of the plan, while co-operation with international partners including the European Union (EU), the United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) opened a constructive dialogue for synergies and complementarity.

Rationale, scope and duration of the Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021-2025)

The lessons learned from the previous action plan, along with discussions with member states and within the Council of Europe, revealed the need for further action and co-ordination with a wider scope than refugee and migrant children, to maximise the national implementation of results obtained and to integrate a gender equality perspective, in line with existing Council of Europe standards. This action plan has been developed based on internal co-ordination and consultation and on dialogue and feedback from member states based on an initial concept paper, and aims to focus on vulnerable persons in the context of migration and asylum in Europe.

The European Court of Human Rights (“the Court”), as well as Council of Europe steering committees and monitoring bodies have emphasised the special protection that States need to provide to vulnerable persons in the context of asylum and migration.³ In this action plan, “vulnerable persons in the context of migration and asylum” are persons found to have special needs after individual evaluation of their situation and are entitled to call on States’ obligation to provide special protection and assistance.⁴ This is with the understanding that it is for the national authorities, based on national legislation and international obligations, to effectively identify on a case-by-case basis the vulnerabilities of those arrivals and provide, where necessary, the required referral, assistance, information and protection throughout asylum and migration procedures.

3. For example, *M.S.S* [GC], no. 30696/09, §§ 232, 251, ECHR 2011; *Popov*, nos. 39472/07 and 39474/07, §§ 91-103, 19 January 2012; *S.F. and Others* no. 8138/16, §79, ECHR 2017; *Orchowski*, no. 17885/04, 22 October 2009, § 120; *O.M.*, no. 9912/15, 5 July 2016, § 53; *B and C*, nos. 889/19 43987/16, 17 November 2020; European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) Factsheet on immigration detention, *CPT/Inf(2017)3*; Council of Europe factsheet on Protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls (2019). See also “*Legal and Practical aspects of effective alternatives to detention in the context of migration, Analysis by the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH)*”, December 2017; Council of Europe Committee of Ministers *CM/Rec(2019)4* on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood; Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy (2018-2023); European Court of Human Rights, *Guide on the case law of the Convention – Immigration*.
4. In the light of the existing Council of Europe Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025), the scope of the present action plan does not include this group of people.

Without seeking to establish any new definitions or an exhaustive list of criteria of vulnerability, or a new surveillance mechanism, especially for the member states which carry a disproportionate burden of managing migration flows, the action plan proposes a targeted assistance package for Council of Europe member states, enhancing their capacity to identify and address vulnerabilities throughout the asylum and migration procedures through its four main objectives.

The present action plan provides a means to: (i) assist in building stronger asylum and migration systems based on a foundation of human rights and standards in the area (such as relevant Council of Europe conventions, Committee of Ministers' recommendations, recommendations of monitoring bodies and recommendations and resolutions of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly and Congress of Local and Regional Authorities); (ii) place migration at the heart of the transversal action of the Council of Europe and its partners ; (iii) take new action together with member states in priority areas; and (iv) develop further synergies with key international partners, when appropriate.

The key factors that provide a solid rationale for this action plan are: the unique role of the Council of Europe as a standard-setting organisation, its key values and main interventions;⁵ its unique geographic scope encompassing the dynamics of migration across countries of origin, transit and destination; its strong co-operation with external partners such as the European Union and the United Nations; its work with national parliaments through its Parliamentary Assembly and with local and regional authorities through its Congress; the support offered to member states for the implementation of existing standards and response to common challenges, as well as its capacity to address emerging trends and challenges, such as the effects of Covid-19.

The present action plan is scheduled for implementation from 2021 to 2025. This time-frame allows planning and allocation of ordinary budgetary resources, corresponds to our partners' planning instruments in the humanitarian and development field and facilitates proper co-ordination and complementarity with the planned actions.

The structure of the action plan reflects a total of four pillars. Three pillars are based on the core mandate of the Council of Europe – human rights, democracy and the rule of law – and one transversal pillar focuses on co-operation, as follows:

5. The key values of human rights, democracy and rule of law and its main interventions in the areas of standard setting, monitoring and co-operation.

Pillar	Impact/outcome
1. Human rights: ensuring protection and promoting safeguards (by identifying and responding to vulnerability)	Member states strengthen the safeguards and systems in place to prevent and to respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation of and violence against vulnerable persons in the context of migration and asylum
2. Human rights and the rule of law: ensuring access to law and justice	Member states improve access to law and justice, including legal aid and procedures adapted to vulnerable persons in the context of migration and asylum without discrimination and with the appropriate procedural safeguards, in line with relevant Council of Europe standards
3. Human rights and democracy: fostering democratic participation and enhancing inclusion	Member states enhance inclusion and foster democratic participation, in line with relevant Council of Europe standards
4. Transversal support: enhancing co-operation between migration and asylum authorities in Council of Europe member states	Member states fulfil their obligations under Council of Europe standards by enabling inter-agency and trans-border co-operation and peer exchanges through the existing Network of Focal Points on Migration (NFPM)

The actions set out below have been identified through internal co-ordination and consultation with member states. These actions consist of (i) those which are already being carried out under the current programme and budget cycle (2020-2021) and support and advance the aim of this action plan; (ii) those which were initiated in the context of the previous action plan and will be further developed and promoted during the course of this action plan; and (iii) new actions identified as priority areas during the course of the internal and external consultations. The actions proposed aim to ensure sustainability, transparency, accountability and adjustability (see also section 4 below on the transversal approach).

The actions marked * are transversal actions which contribute simultaneously to and therefore appear under several pillars of the present action plan.

Actions marked ** are actions which are already being carried out under the current programme and budget cycle and support and advance the aim of the action plan (this information is based on the situation as of 1 December 2020).



Pillar 1 – Ensuring protection and promoting safeguards by identifying and responding to vulnerability (human rights)

An essential component of the relevant standards of the Council of Europe concerns the protection from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence as well as better identification of, and support and assistance to, persons in vulnerable situations throughout asylum and migration procedures. The implementation of the previous action plan showed that there is a need to enhance support and assistance to persons in vulnerable situations in access to asylum procedures, and necessary services. This would require, in particular, vulnerability screening to be part of the reception system and alternatives to detention to be put in place.⁶ Special measures are also needed to ensure access to healthcare and to include such concerned groups in disaster risk reduction and emergency responses, such as Covid-19.

Actions within Pillar 1

1.1. Promoting effective vulnerability screening and safeguards

- ▶ Develop/compile transversally and support the implementation of practical guidance for professionals for the effective identification and referral of vulnerable persons and address vulnerabilities throughout asylum and migration procedures, including reception conditions.*
- ▶ Complete guidelines and draft an explanatory memorandum to guidelines on human rights principles and guidelines on age assessment for children in migration, and develop targeted action on safeguards in age-assessment procedures, including training for practitioners in the field.**
- ▶ Promote good practices in the implementation of the recommendations of the special report of the Committee of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Committee) on children affected by the refugee crisis, with a focus on aspects of missing children and preventive measures.**

6. *Khan*, no. 12267/16, § 88, 28 February 2019; *Popov*, cited above, § 141.



- ▶ Organise an exchange of good practices on implementing at national level the Court judgments concerning vulnerability of accompanied and non-accompanied minors and access to asylum.*
- ▶ Draft a recommendation on migrant and refugee women, on the basis of Recommendation No. R(79)10 of the Committee of Ministers concerning women migrants.**
- ▶ Promote the use of practical tools to ensure women's safety in transit and reception centres.

1.2. Enhancing special assistance, protection and support services

- ▶ Support the practical implementation and piloting of alternatives to immigration detention including through co-operation programmes and awareness-raising.
- ▶ Draft an explanatory memorandum to Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)11 on effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in the context of migration, and develop targeted action to support its implementation.**

1.3. Enhancing access to healthcare, and involvement in disaster risk reduction and emergency measures

- ▶ Develop measures, including support for healthcare literacy, promoting fair access to healthcare for vulnerable groups including in the context of migration and asylum, especially in view of pandemics.**
- ▶ Develop a handbook and guiding principles for professionals working with migrants and refugees in the field of addiction and drug prevention.**



Pillar 2 – Ensuring access to law and justice (human rights and the rule of law)

An essential component of the rule of law is ensuring access to law and justice. Vulnerable persons often face barriers to accessing asylum procedures and justice more generally, including various forms of discrimination. The implementation of the previous action plan showed that there is often a lack of awareness of their specific needs and systems may lack special procedural safeguards and support services to enable them, particularly children, women and other groups with special needs, to co-operate and to engage with the justice system.

Concerning access to law and justice in practice, it is proposed to support vulnerable persons in the context of asylum and migration through the provision of information, legal aid and legal representation. Further clarification of standards and exchange of good practices in this field would contribute to preventing ill-treatment and violence and would ensure remedies as appropriate. The implementation of child-friendly justice in the fields of administrative and migration law would further facilitate decision-making in line with the best interests of the child.

Actions within Pillar 2

2.1. Strengthening procedures and improving decision-making

- ▶ Prepare a thematic factsheet presenting the measures adopted by member states to implement Court judgments related to migration and asylum.
- ▶ Develop guidance on family-based care for unaccompanied and separated children.**
- ▶ Hold thematic discussions on child-friendly approaches and procedures in migration within the Network of Focal Points on Migration and with other stakeholders (including in follow-up to Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2019\)11](#) on effective guardianship).*



- ▶ Identify and promote good practices in respect of legal aid and representation, and access to information and justice for vulnerable people in the context of asylum and migration, and develop related guidelines or policy recommendations.**
- ▶ Implement Council of Europe pledges to the UNHCR campaign to end statelessness (international conference on statelessness, technical meetings on statelessness).**
- ▶ Develop specific guidance on data protection and digital identity in the context of migration, in conformity with the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data and its Additional Protocol.
- ▶ Foster international co-operation and investigative strategies in fighting the smuggling of migrants.⁷

2.2. Empowering vulnerable groups to access their rights

- ▶ Translate and promote the Council of Europe's handbook on child-friendly information for children in migration.
- ▶ Promote the practical implementation of Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2019\)4](#) on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood.**

7. Council of Europe Action Plan on Fostering International Co-operation and Investigative Strategies in Fighting the Smuggling of Migrants ([CDPC\(2019\)9-Fin](#)).



Pillar 3 – Fostering democratic participation and enhancing inclusion (human rights and democracy)

The essential components of democracy include promoting human rights and dignity, strengthening democratic governance, fostering innovation and promoting participation and diversity. These aims can be furthered by member states by strengthening social inclusion in education, building trust in local communities and reshaping the narratives on migration.

Actions within Pillar 3

3.1. Promoting non-discrimination and diversity

- ▶ Continue and support the national implementation of HELP courses on refugee and migrant children, alternatives to immigration detention, asylum and the European Convention on Human Rights, the fight against racism and xenophobia, and radicalisation prevention.
- ▶ Promote the use of dedicated resources and capacity-building activities to support the linguistic integration of migrants and refugees.**
- ▶ Support the practical implementation of a literacy framework for migrants and refugees with a non - or low - literate background.**
- ▶ Develop a practical guide and training to support educators in schools with refugee children to ensure their inclusion in the education system and society.**
- ▶ Develop co-operation with the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) on supporting sports integration of refugees and migrants based on the existing platform of sports projects.**

3.2. Promoting democratic participation and inclusion

- ▶ Develop a multilevel policy framework for intercultural integration taking as a starting point Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2015\)1](#) on intercultural integration and the results of the Intercultural Cities Programme and its Inclusive Integration Policy Lab.**



- ▶ Promote the practical implementation of Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2019\)4](#) on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood.**
- ▶ Support participation of young refugees in youth work and youth participation platforms, including refugee-led organisations and their role in social inclusion.**
- ▶ Promote the integration of refugees by enhancing their access to education and employment, by facilitating the recognition of their qualifications through the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees and by fostering linguistic integration through education.**
- ▶ Develop a training course for public authorities' press services on alternative narratives and positive intercultural communication.**



Pillar 4 – Enhancing co-operation between migration and asylum authorities in Council of Europe member states (Transversal Support)

The lessons learned from the previous action plan indicated the positive impact of co-ordination and dialogue among multiple agencies involved in the protection of human rights in the field of migration. The Council of Europe Network of Focal Points on Migration (NFPM), created in 2019, pursues a direct dialogue with migration and asylum authorities in Council of Europe member states with the purpose of enabling inter-sectoral and cross-border exchanges. The NFPM was set up with the aim of exchanging good practices and enhancing co-operation between the different stakeholders, including facilitating the sharing of information on relevant Council of Europe activities in the context of migration.

In view of the Network's mandate and potential to foster peer-to-peer exchanges and thematic discussions, it has a central role in enabling co-operation and dialogue among migration and asylum authorities in Council of Europe member states, with Council of Europe intergovernmental committees and monitoring bodies, and also with other specialised authorities in Council of Europe member states involved in the protection of vulnerable persons in the context of asylum and migration. The actions within Pillar 4.1 have been identified as those involving the NFPM as a way to develop and reinforce the direct dialogue on human rights of the Council of Europe with authorities in member states responsible for asylum and migration issues and with a view to promoting a better understanding of the current and emerging challenges faced by member states.



Actions within Pillar 4

4.1. Promoting inter-agency co-operation

Use the Network of Focal Points on Migration to:

- ▶ Develop/compile transversally and support the implementation of practical guidance for professionals for the effective identification and referral of vulnerable persons and address vulnerabilities throughout asylum and migration procedures, including reception conditions.*
- ▶ Hold thematic discussions on child-friendly approaches and procedures in migration in the NFPM and with other stakeholders (including in follow-up to [CM/Rec\(2019\)11](#) on effective guardianship).*

4.2. Fostering peer-to-peer exchanges

- ▶ Organise an exchange of good practices on implementing at national level the Court judgments concerning the vulnerability of accompanied and non-accompanied minors and access to asylum.*

Transversal approach

The action plan relies significantly on transversal action, themes and implementation modalities. It proposes comprehensive interventions which address the multi-fold objectives of the action plan (policy recommendations and training) on cross-cutting themes such as the rights of refugee and migrant children, women's rights, youth work, intercultural integration and democratic participation. Many of the action plan's activities are normally managed by the relevant specialist departments, intergovernmental committees⁸ and monitoring bodies.⁹ The proposed implementation modalities promote numerous synergies inside the Organisation as well as dialogue with the NFPM. For this reason, many activities respond to several objectives and/or may concern several target groups and require the joint effort of several sectors. In addition, the proposed interventions are to build transversally on the findings of the European Court of Human Rights and key Council of Europe monitoring bodies, the work of the Commissioner for Human Rights, Parliamentary Assembly and Congress reports, resolutions and recommendations, and Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) on Migration and Refugees mission reports, with the purpose of bringing even closer the monitoring, standard-setting and co-operation pillars of the Council of Europe activities.

The action plan is complementary and supports the implementation of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021) and the Gender Equality Strategy (2018-2023), and will inform the priorities of the next Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027). The action plan fosters synergies with other strategic documents, such as the Strategic Action Plan on Human Rights and Technologies in Biomedicine (2020-2025) which addresses the equity of access to healthcare, including in the context of a pandemic, and health literacy among its priorities, and the Action Plan on Fostering International Co-operation and Investigative Strategies in Fighting the Smuggling of Migrants, notably through its criminalisation and prosecution of smugglers.

-
8. Such as the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH), the European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ), the European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC), the Council of Europe Committee on Counter-Terrorism (CDCT), the Co-operation Group to Combat Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in Drugs (Pompidou Group), the Steering Committee for Education Policy and Practice (CDPPE), the Committee on Bioethics (DH-BIO), the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI), the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI), the Gender Equality Commission (GEC), the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF), and the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ).
 9. Such as the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR), the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), and the Committee of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Committee).

The transversal approach of the action plan builds on but also seeks to further bring closer the work and values of the Council of Europe and the activities of the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB). The CEB's Development Plan (2020-2022) has three strategic lines of action that reflect its social mandate of support for vulnerable groups, and these include migrants and refugees. The priorities of the action plan can serve as guidance for the identification of projects in need of the CEB financial support. The Financial Framework Partnership Agreement (FFPA) signed in 2020 between the CEB and the European Commission also aims to pursue concrete actions ranging from support for social infrastructure and migrant and refugee solutions to climate change mitigation and adaptation. The CEB remains an important contributor to supporting Council of Europe's values in the field of migration and asylum.

Multilateral co-operation

The action plan enhances multilateral co-operation on migration and creates new synergies with key international partners, such as the EU, UNHCR, OHCHR, IOM and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR). The action plan aims to contribute to reinforced co-operation and co-ordination with international organisations.

Protecting and upholding human rights in the context of asylum and migration in Europe is a shared priority of the Council of Europe and the European Union.¹⁰ The current practice of consultation, co-operation and synergies can be further strengthened through legal and programmatic co-operation to enhance the coherence and convergence of standards, and the complementarity of policies. Information sharing and regular consultations with respect to all four pillars of the action plan remain pivotal to ensure coherence in normative work, as also foreseen by the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024 and the proposed EU Pact on Migration and Asylum.

Partnerships developed with the UNHCR have enhanced the spread of Council of Europe human rights standards in the field of asylum and migration and remain essential for Council of Europe work on monitoring and development of standards. Further co-operation with the OHCHR, IOM, OSCE/ODIHR and other organisations is key for further convergence on standards without duplication of programmatic activities. The action plan reflects priority actions which are either implemented in partnership with international organisations or which represent the Council of Europe's official commitments, such as its pledges to the Global Refugee Forum (continued support for facilitating recognition of qualification and education credentials of refugees through the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees) or the pledges made to the UNHCR campaign to end statelessness.

Relations with national human rights institutions, the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions, ombudspersons institutions and civil society are strongly embedded in the priorities outlined in the action plan and are part of its objectives and means to achieve expected results.

10. Council of the European Union, "Council Conclusions on EU priorities for co-operation with the Council of Europe in 2020-2022", paragraph 17, adopted 13 July 2020.

Implementation modalities

Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRS) on Migration and Refugees. As outlined in the mandate,¹¹ the SRS has a co-ordination role in the implementation of this action plan, intended to secure fluid communication inside the Organisation and with member states, and effective engagement with external key partners. The SRS will be responsible for running a co-ordination mechanism and for leading the preparation of action plan reports and reviews, where necessary. The SRS will have an advisory role on migration in all action plan-related interventions, providing political support for their implementation and content contribution to their development, where necessary. In addition, the SRS will take the lead in organising thematic discussions and in involving the Network of Focal Points on Migration (NFPM) in the implementation of the action plan.

Network of Focal Points on Migration (NFPM). Composed of representatives of migration and asylum authorities in member states, the NFPM is a new Council of Europe body in the field of migration. Set up in 2019, its main role is to facilitate the sharing of information addressing human rights challenges in the field of migration, to enhance the co-ordination between different institutions or agencies responsible for migration issues within the member states, to liaise with other Council of Europe intergovernmental and expert monitoring bodies and to exchange good practices in the field of migration. Its working methods were approved on 1 July 2020. In connection with the action plan, the NFPM will serve as a forum for consultations and for sharing good practices, but also as an interlocutor for various multi-disciplinary interventions relying on direct dialogue with national authorities.

Specialist departments, monitoring bodies and intergovernmental committees. Holding the ownership of specialist knowledge in their fields, the relevant departments, monitoring bodies and intergovernmental committees will manage activities, as follows from their working plans and terms of reference and have full control of these activities.

Review. The Committee of Ministers will receive regular updates on the progress and results of the action plan through interim and final reports. The Secretary General will submit interim reports to the Committee of Ministers in mid-2022 and in mid-2024, and a final report by the end of 2025. The interim reports and biennial programming cycles of the Council of Europe will serve as opportunities for the Committee of Ministers to take stock of, evaluate and adapt the action plan, if necessary. An internal evaluation will be carried out by the Office of the SRS on Migration and Refugees following the term of the action plan.

11. As updated on 1 July 2020.

Co-operation projects. The action plan is designed to enhance synergies between related activities so that they combine to support implementation, and optimise new initiatives or co-operation. The potential for more programmatic co-operation is outlined in particular in: (i) areas where the Council of Europe plays a strong role throughout the region deriving from its mandate on human rights, democracy and the rule of law and (ii) countries all across the region of the Council of Europe, especially outside EU member states.

Human rights challenges in the field of migration and asylum policies have long been a focus of the Council of Europe and in recent years they have taken on a renewed importance. As the root causes of migration (armed conflicts, instability, demographic and economic development, climate change, etc.) have become increasingly present in Europe's neighbouring regions, addressing these challenges remains a priority for the Council of Europe.

The "Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021-2025)" aims at addressing the main challenges and opportunities identified after the previous action plan, focusing on children, was completed in 2019. This new action plan proposes targeted measures and activities to enhance the capacity of member states to identify and address vulnerabilities throughout asylum and migration procedures. The action plan is composed of four pillars: three of them based on the core mandate of the Council of Europe – human rights, democracy and the rule of law – and a fourth transversal pillar focusing on co-operation.

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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