



Concerns for the Protection of Children Alone and Families in EU Migration and Asylum Pact

The EU Migration and Asylum [Pact](#), published September 23 by the European Commission, aims to offer new momentum to negotiations between EU Member States on migration policy. It follows years of deadlock on key issues facing the EU, including search and rescue in the Mediterranean Sea and the relocation of asylum seekers from overcrowded camps and facilities on the Greek islands and elsewhere.

KIND and Child Circle welcome the Pact's recognition that *"the reform of EU rules on asylum and return is an opportunity to strengthen safeguards and protection standards under EU law for migrant children."* We also welcome the exemption of unaccompanied children from the proposed punitive new EU border procedures.

However, we are concerned that these stricter EU border procedures proposed for adults and families with children over 12 may place unaccompanied children and children with families seeking protection in the EU at great risk of reduced procedural safeguards and lengthy detention. We also share the alarm expressed by many organisations that the EU plans to help rebuild reception facilities in Lesbos. The small island has a limited capacity to provide proper reception, support, and assistance to vulnerable asylum seekers and migrants. The devastating [fire at the Moria camp which left close to 12,000 asylum seekers homeless](#) is a clear example of why facilities such as these should not be rebuilt.

In addition, the Pact's proposals to increase the returns of persons with failed asylum claims must include proper procedures and safeguards to avoid significant violations of international and national human rights obligations. Child Circle and KIND urge the appointment of a Relocations Coordinator to ensure swift relocation of children and families, a position noticeably absent from the Pact (in contrast with the announcement of the new Return Coordinator by the European Commission).

The complex labyrinth of proposed new and amended EU measures in the Pact is being carefully scrutinized by the Member States, the European Parliament, UNHCR and stakeholders before new rounds of negotiations rapidly begin. In our upcoming report "Advancing protection for unaccompanied children in Europe", KIND and Child Circle will contribute recommendations for the specific EU actions which we see as critical to achieve real improvements. These will focus in particular on strengthening legal assistance and guardianship, improving family reunification and supporting the transnational coordination needed to find and implement the right durable solutions for children in line with their best interests. Together with our partners and in close liaison with stakeholders in Europe, we are working to bring about progress for children.

For more information, please see KIND and Child Circle's [Briefing Paper and Key Recommendations Concerning Measures at EU Borders for Unaccompanied Children](#).

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