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2.1 Safety, qualified staff, application

Safety

Throughout the asylum procedures, children have to be protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. Asylum officials have to take into consideration and be alert to possible indicators of vulnerabilities and risks, in order to ensure the safety of the child throughout the asylum procedures (see Vulnerabilities and risks indicators section).

Information on the well-being of the child, and any protection or safety concerns should be collected. Collecting such information and giving due weight to it can contribute to ensuring the protection of the child, for example from falling in the hands or contact with persons who have abused, harmed or trafficked the child. The responsible officer should be careful as to the source of this information and how much weight can be placed on it, given that much will depend on the individual circumstances of the case.

Qualified staff

Asylum officials engaging with children should be qualified, experienced in working with children and appropriately trained. Decisions on a child's application for international protection must be taken by a competent authority fully versed also in all legal instruments relating to children's rights, trafficking and other relevant protection matters.

The officials dealing directly with the child should be trained on the use of child-friendly interview techniques (56). EU+ States should appoint trained and qualified specialised staff to deal with children's cases and provide continuous capacity building to their staff. The interpreters should also be trained on and familiar with interpreting for children.

Applying for international protection

The child should be assisted with making an informed decision to apply for international protection. Applying for asylum is a fundamental right of every child and its exercise is not subject to a prior assessment on the side of the authorities. The child's views on applying for international protection should be obtained. The latter should be taken into consideration as per the age and maturity of the child.

After the application has already been lodged, the child/representative might consequently decide to withdraw the application where there are other legal avenues that serve the individual child's best interests better and the application or the possible consequences of being recognised as a refugee might not be in the individual child's best interests at that point of time. When the child understands that their views are taken into consideration, they may be more willing to cooperate, which is further beneficial for the procedure.

(56) The EASO Training module ‘Interviewing Children’ is an interactive module for asylum case officers, aimed at enhancing their knowledge and skills in interviewing children, taking into consideration the age and maturity of the child, cultural variances and effects of trauma and/or distress. More information about the EASO Training Curriculum and the module is available at https://www.easo.europa.eu/training

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