

### Children at the Border - Can we do better?

Frontex Fundamental Rights Officer Inmaculada Arnaez Fernandez, who moderated the panel, launched the discussion with data that showed that even though a majority of migrants trying to enter Europe each year are adult men, children account for 15 percent of the irregular migrants, making the issue of their treatment at the borders “According to our risk analysis in 2015, the likelihood of family units crossing the border has increased. So, we need to further develop mechanisms to protect vulnerable groups,” Fernandez said.

During the panel discussion, the subject of Children at the Border was discussed from different perspectives, with speakers from Save the Children, IOM, the Moldovan Police Department and Garda National Immigration Bureau from Ireland.

The speakers stressed the importance of cooperation with different actors in order to be able to deliver better protection to minors. This concerns the cooperation of such actors as the Frontex Agency, the IOM and the UNHCR with NGOs, as well as the cooperation between police and border guards.

Mircea Mocanu, the Head of Office of the International Organisation for Migration Mission in Romania, stressed that only recently border guards have understood the importance of working together. He also underlined the number of challenges faced by border guards - there is limited capacity to deal with a great number of cases, only a short time to determine whether the border guard is dealing with a trafficked child, different referral mechanisms across the EU, different languages spoken by the migrants.

Also Karen Clifford - Detective Sergeant at the Garda National Immigration Bureau agreed that the multi-agency approach is the only way to prevent organised crime. She also spoke about the importance of the establishment of a uniform referral mechanism and stressed that the border guards, as well as immigration officials need to constantly learn, as “no cases of trafficking are the same.”

Carlotta Bellini from Save the Children Italy focused on the child’s perspective, who often face violence, trauma after the long and dangerous journey, as well as language barriers in the new environment. It is this important to cooperate with NGOs that have the expertise in working with children, informing them about what is happening in a child-friendly language and offering psychological support.

Andrei Comerzan from the Moldavian Border Police Department described his experience from the EUBAM Mission, saying that “Criminals and criminal groups use sophisticated methods - psychological pressure on minors and border guards, high-quality counterfeit documents combined with a high level of creativity and gullible stories.” He stressed the value of training, learning new profiling methods, asking the right questions, being able to identify non-typical passports and watching out for risk indicators, as well as gathering information from second-line checks.

