

FIRST CIRCULAR – CALL FOR PAPERS

The Institute for Social Studies of the Science and Research Centre of the *University of Primorska* (Slovenia), *University of Vienna* (Austria), *University of Brighton* (United Kingdom), *The National Center for Scientific Research* (France) and *Slovene Philanthropy* (Slovenia) are organising an

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ON THE MOVE: towards a more precise definition of their best interests

The conference will be held in *Portorož* (Slovenia), on **19 and 20 November 2015**.

The Conference brings together the research community and professionals to discuss the ‘best interests’ concept by reference to unaccompanied migrant children and youth.

The aim of the Conference is to assess past developments, analyse current situations and explore issues concerning the best interests of unaccompanied migrant children and youth across jurisdictions. This will be done from a variety of perspectives, with attention being paid to social, cultural, legal, health, housing and other relevant aspects.

Keynote speakers at the conference will be:

prof. Ravi KS Kohli (UK, University of Bedfordshire), Ms. Jyothi Kanics (CH, University of Lucern, previously UNICEF) and Ms. Marina Uzelac (SI, Slovene Philanthropy).

Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provides that the **best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children**. The best interests principle applies to all children, including migrant children, regardless of their immigration or asylum status or situation of statelessness. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child considers the best interests of the child as three-fold concept: a substantive right; a fundamental legal principle; and a rule of procedure (see UNCRC GC n° 14 (2013), para. 6).

When it comes to **unaccompanied migrant children and youth**, State authorities in most European Union countries seem to be ignoring this basic Human Rights principle as they prioritise their target of controlling migratory flows and fear that their Children Welfare systems might act as a pull factor. Many children who migrate on their own are often detained at the point of entering an EU Member State, even when an alternative solution to detention could have been implemented. Access to adequate shelter often fails to be guaranteed during the minor’s identification process and certain categories of children are likely to be definitively excluded from any care provision in certain contexts (age-disputed cases, children not seeking asylum, children over 16 years old, etc.). Guardians or independent legal representatives are not systematically appointed. Last but not least, contrary to the recommendations expressed by the UNHCR and a number of international agencies, in most cases States fail to undertake a formal best interests determination process in order to identify a suitable durable solution to respond to every unaccompanied child’s situation and needs.



The main aim of this conference is to undertake an updated assessment on how the best interests principle is being interpreted and implemented by State or local authorities dealing with unaccompanied migrant children and youth at the different stages of their reception process, since their first identification to the determination of a durable solution. Along with denouncing potential violations of the BIC principle concerning migrant children and youth within the European context and beyond, a particular focus of the conference will be on spreading examples of good practice at national, regional or local levels. Disseminating theoretical models aiming to clarify the boundaries of the best interests notion applied to children migrating alone will be another key objective of the conference.

We therefore invite scholars and practitioners from different disciplines to submit a paper proposal on the theme of the conference, taking the form of a *title* and *one-page long abstract* (350–500 words). This, along with a completed **registration form**, must be sent to the Organizing Committee by **8 June 2015**. The feedback information will be sent by **29 June 2015**.

The intention is to produce at least one book from the conference proceedings. Authors interested in having their paper published will be required to submit their revised manuscript by **18 January 2016**. The book editors will review the submissions received and select articles for the book. Were there scope for two publications, we shall look at proposing a special issue to the *Annales, Series Historia et Sociologia* scientific journal, ISSN: 1408-5348.

You can submit your abstract/paper [here](#).

The **conference fee** is set at **€ 150** and includes programme materials, the book of abstracts, admission to all sessions, coffee breaks, and the social dinner. The conference fee will not include other items, such as excursions and other possible activities/events.

Doctoral and post-doctoral students/researchers are welcome to give an oral paper or to display a poster. Their conference fee is reduced to € 50.

For more information about the conference, visit: <http://minasproject.eu/conference/>.

The **Second Circular** with details concerning the preliminary conference programme, the payment procedure, the site of the conference and the accommodation possibilities will be forwarded to registered participants in **May 2015**.

The Scientific Board of the Conference: *Mateja Sedmak (University of Primorska, Slovenia), Daniel Senovilla Hernández (National Center for Scientific Research, France), Marie-Bénédicte Dembour (University of Brighton, UK), Marina Uzelac (Slovene Philanthropy, Slovenia), Birgit Sauer (University of Vienna)*

For further information please contact via E-mail, Fax or Mail the Conference Office (*Conference Secretary: Ms. Maja Zadel*) at the Science and Research Centre, University of Primorska, Garibaldijska 1, SI-6000 KOPER/CAPODISTRIA, Slovenia; Tel.: **386 5 663 7729; Fax.: ** 386 5 663 7710; **e-mail: maja.zadel@zrs.upr.si**.

