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EU must put rights of children first

Migrant children

The European Commission is due to address the European Parliament today on how to tackle the disappearance of migrant children in Europe. Almost 90,000 unaccompanied children applied for asylum in the EU in 2015, with 2016 figures expected to be higher. The Greens/EFA group is calling on the Commission and Member States to put the rights of children first, regardless of their migration status.

Commenting ahead of the debate, Green migration spokesperson **Jean Lambert** said:

"It is shameful that the European Commission and member states are continuing to drag their feet on the protection of vulnerable children. The existing EU policies on asylum and migration are contributing to children, who have often travelled great distances to flee awful situations at home, being pushed out of the system with terrible consequences. We have to start putting the needs of children first, regardless of their migration status. The necessary support needs to be in place for unaccompanied children from the moment they arrive to ensure that they are safe throughout the asylum process and that their rights are upheld.

"In particular, family reunification procedures need to be clear, fast and effective. The failure of the current procedures for reuniting children with their families pushes many children into the services of smugglers – as we have seen in the situation in Calais. Beyond ensuring that children are safe and with either family or a supportive guardian, we need to do more to invest in them, and empower them to fulfil their potential as equal participants in our communities. Crucial to this is access to education for all asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children, as soon as possible from the moment they arrive in Europe."

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Responsible MEPs



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