

STATEMENT

Brussels, 6th March 2017

MHE's reaction to the new EU return policies

Last week, the [EU Commission published a set of recommendations](#) to Member States on the return and detention of migrants and refugees. The recommendations urge Member States to detain migrants more quickly and for longer periods of time.

MHE is concerned that the recommendations will encourage detention and forced removals without due consideration for human rights. MHE also notes that the recommendation does not make any reference to the safeguarding of the rights of persons with disabilities. Many migrants and refugees who have psychosocial disabilities or have experienced trauma could experience further trauma and other negative impacts on their mental health during detention or forced removal and, furthermore, are unlikely to receive the proper support they need in detention centres.

The [UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recommended that](#) 'the European Union issues guidelines to its agencies and Member States that restrictive detention of persons with disabilities in the context of migration and asylum seeking is not in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities'. Any recommendation on returns should take the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into account.

More than a million migrants and refugees crossed into Europe during the past few years. Many of them have endured physical and emotional trauma, including torture, loss of loved ones, violence and exploitation. Detention and forced removals can also be psychologically damaging. MHE is also concerned about the impact detention and forced removals may have on children. As many [children and migration organisations have already warned the EU](#), forced removals and detention are extremely harmful for children and families. Children should never be detained for immigration purposes, even as a last resort.

The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights also recently published a report on the current migration situation in the EU. It reports that significant numbers of migrants and asylum seekers experience or witness physical and psychological violence, inhuman or degrading treatment, or become victims of violent crimes. For many these experiences took place in their countries of origin but these incidents are also all too common both in transit countries and in the EU. These experiences can trigger or intensify trauma and undermine mental health.

Read MHE's position paper on the mental health of migrants and refugees [HERE](#)

Read MHE's latest article on the mental health of migrants and refugees [HERE](#)

Read the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights latest report on current migration situation in the EU [HERE](#)

This statement was published in MHE's news section as a reaction to the EU Commission new measures on the EU return policy. For more information about this statement please contact:

Ophelie Martin

Mental Health Europe Communications Officer

[ophelie.martin\[a\]mhe-sme.org](mailto:ophelie.martin[a]mhe-sme.org)