

An update on statelessness in Europe



European
Network on
Statelessness

Interview with Christiana Bukalo, ENS Member and founder of statefree.world

ENS caught up with Christiana Bukalo, an active ENS member and stateless person based in Germany who is developing a new website statefree.world. We spoke about her motivations for developing a website on statelessness and what she hopes to achieve, some of the challenges that come with deciding to speak publicly as a stateless person, and some of the future challenges and things that keep her positive looking to the future.



"The mission is to provide a virtual space for people to find relevant information on statelessness and build connection and community at the same time."

- Christiana Bukalo, ENS member & founder of statefree.world

You joined ENS as an individual member in September 2019. Tell us about your work on statelessness and why you decided to join the network.

When joining ENS I didn't actually perceive myself as somebody who is "working" on statelessness, to be honest. I

information on statelessness and build connection and community at the same time. statefree.world will be the first online forum to focus solely on stateless people and their allies. The goal is to create a safe space for people to share their stories, support each other and learn from each other's experiences.

rather felt like a stateless person who was just now starting to realise that statelessness is a widespread problem. This was also the main reason I wanted to join the network. I wanted to learn more about the 'why's and 'how's of statelessness and use that understanding to nurture my initiative. Although I already had a vague idea and vision of the [statefree.world](#) website at that time, the idea was still very fresh and nonconcrete. Nonetheless I knew that I wanted my contribution to be empowering and authentic.

Since then and with support from ENS, you've been getting [statefree.world](#) ready for public use.

What motivated you to create a website about statelessness and what do you hope to achieve?

I have to say the motivation and decision to create the website stemmed from my increasing personal frustration with the topic. As a stateless person I was often confronted with the void of information on the internet. I almost never found the information I needed and oftentimes gave up on finding it. My confusion got even bigger, when I started to realise that there have been people and organisations working to fight statelessness. Why did I, as a stateless person not know that there are people trying to solve the problem for me? There seemed to be a communication gap between those working on statelessness and those affected by it.

The website [statefree.world](#) is a reflection of my decision and desire to close this gap. The mission is to provide a virtual space for people to find relevant

You've been developing [statefree.world](#) in your spare time around full-time work, with some support from friends. Now that you've launched the website, how can others get involved?

Yes, we've launched a first landing page, but this is really only the beginning. The next step is to assure data security and make sure that the platform can keep its promise to its future users. The landing page allows people to sign up already and I would love to see people getting involved by simply joining the journey up until we launch the forum. Joining the journey means to click on the "[register now](#)" button, fill out the form and share and spread the news with other people who might be interested to join the forum as soon as it's launched. We're planning to soon send out regular information and a newsletter to those who already signed up to transparently share with the community what we are working on. Our main aim right now, is to reach as many stateless people and allies as possible. Every connection, every contact is valuable.

Since joining ENS, you've spoken publicly about your experience and [statefree.world](#), including at our recent [webinar](#) on addressing statelessness in Europe. What are some of the challenges you've faced when deciding to speak publicly as a stateless person?

One of the main challenges was deciding how much I wanted to reveal about my personal identity. It's not easy to speak up as a stateless person and I was very scared about what might potentially happen if ...[\[continue reading\]](#)

[READ THE FULL INTERVIEW >>](#)

Spotlight

Galvanising action to address statelessness across Europe and in Spain

Nobody understands the impact of living without a nationality better than stateless people themselves. They also know what solutions are required to better protect stateless people and to stop statelessness from happening in the future. We have been working alongside communities and activists to make sure that policy and decision-making processes involve and are accountable to stateless people themselves.

[Watch this short video](#) and hear from ENS members and stateless activists on how to create new inclusive spaces and involve those most affected by the issue in advocacy and awareness raising.



Following the postponement of our major regional [conference](#) in Alicante, this Autumn we organised a webinar series in partnership with our member [Fundación Cepaim](#). These online events seek to shine a light on the key issues faced by stateless people in Europe today and facilitate a shared space to identify routes to necessary reform.

During the first webinar in the series on 22nd September, **Addressing statelessness in Europe**, we brought together speakers, including Lynn and Christiana featured in the video, to discuss the key issues faced by stateless people in Europe today, and to identify routes to necessary reform. You can now [watch the webinar](#) on our Youtube channel.

We were pleased to be joined by over 180 participants, who heard from ENS Director Chris Nash, Tineke Strik MEP, Christophe Poirel, Director of the Human Rights Directorate at the Council of Europe and four ENS members. Their presentations highlighted what Europe is – or should be - doing to better protect stateless people in our complex and challenging times.

WEBINAR: Closing protection gaps: Addressing statelessness in Europe



Chris Nash
European Network on
Statelessness



Lynn Khatib
Individual ENS
member and activist



Nina Murray
European Network
on Statelessness



Christiana Bukalo
Individual ENS member &
creator of statefreez.world



Yonous Mohammadi
Greek Forum of
Refugees



Tineke Strik MEP
Member of the
European Parliament



Remzi Medik
Bairiska Svetlina - Centre for
Development of Roma Community



Christophe Poirel
Human Rights Directorate
at the Council of Europe

Following this webinar, a series of online discussions (in Spanish) have been organised to assess and address statelessness in Spain, outlining specific opportunities for law and policy reform in the national context. On 23rd September, Nina Murray, our Head of Policy and Research moderated a discussion on the [Statelessness Index](#) as a tool for addressing statelessness in Spain, and earlier today, actors were brought together to galvanise action around a campaign led by Fundacion Cepaim with support from ENS, to bring the rights of stateless people in line with those afforded to asylum seekers and refugees in Spain. For more information about the last event from our webinar series, please visit the dedicated [web page](#) (in Spanish) hosted by our member and partner Fundación Cepaim.

#StatelessPhotography Project: “Expanding the Frame”

Living without a nationality is experienced in many different ways by those affected. As such, representing statelessness visually can be challenging. Often, images portray the “hardship” of those affected while conveying little of the agency, creativity and personal experiences of stateless people.

At the same time, there is a limited range of photos about statelessness available in the public domain. These often don’t capture the meaning of statelessness as understood by many stateless people. Moreover, individuals directly affected by statelessness have largely been excluded from creating images themselves relating to their situations.



STATELESS PHOTOGRAPHY PROJECT

— EXPANDING THE FRAME —

Our new initiative the [#StatelessPhotography Project: “Expanding the Frame”](#) launched last week, aims to address this gap by generating a stock of images for dissemination within statelessness research, advocacy and wider work around the questions ‘*What does statelessness look like?*’ and ‘*How can statelessness, the “absence of nationality” and their impacts upon people be represented visually through photography?*’

We welcome amateur or professional photographers with personal experience and insight of statelessness to participate in determining their own representation through photography. Visit the dedicated [webpage](#) to find out more information and how to submit your work.

Latest updates

Calling for regional action to ensure every child's right to a nationality in Europe



Through our continued collaboration and engagement with regional forums, we've been working hard to seize new opportunities to further advance regional action on ensuring no child grows up stateless. This week, our Advocacy and Communications Officer, Khadija Badri,

New and updated country information - #StatelessnessINDEX



We have launched six new country briefings and updated existing country briefings as part of our annual [Statelessness Index](#) updates, together with our partners. These country briefings provide a short summary of each country's law, policy and practice and set out recommendations for Governments on

highlighted the need for regional action to prevent statelessness among children in migration, whilst presenting on behalf of the [Initiative for Children in Migration](#) at the annual [European Forum on the Rights of the Child](#). She will also bring the issue to light during a panel on stateless children's right to a nationality at the [European Migration Network Luxembourg Online Conference](#).

Understanding and addressing statelessness in the UK context



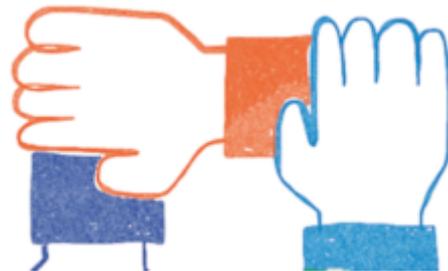
Statelessness has so far received limited attention among child rights and migration advocates in the UK, yet figures show that 5% (1,866) of all children granted British citizenship in 2018 were stateless, mostly registering as British citizens under a special statelessness provision in UK law. Through our new [18-month project](#) funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, ENS aims to evidence and promote the reduction of childhood statelessness in the UK. We are exploring a new approach for ENS by increasing the Secretariat's direct work in a specific national context where a policy window for impact has been identified.

Ukraine adopts law establishing statelessness determination procedure



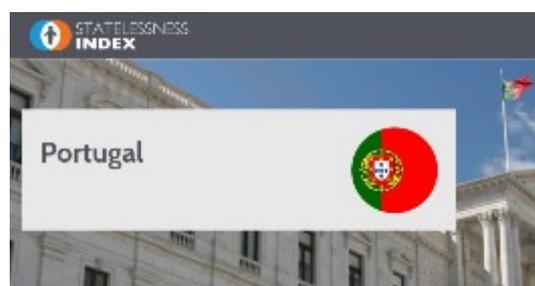
how to improve the protection of stateless people and to prevent and reduce statelessness in their national context. Each briefing is available in both English and the national language. They are designed to be used by national actors in their work to address statelessness.

Welcoming four new members to our network



ENS is pleased to welcome four new members who joined the network this month. Aleksejs Ivashuk is a stateless person from Latvia, who has worked for the Canadian Green Party, U.S. Senate, and at global risk management firms, specialising in citizenship-by-investment programmes. The Bhutanese Community in the Netherlands is an association for all former Bhutanese citizens who arrived in the Netherlands as resettled refugees, some of whom are still stateless. Cynthia Orchard is a human rights lawyer, trainer and policy expert with extensive experience working on statelessness. Denis Neselovskyi started his career at Refugee Law Clinic Bochum and is currently studying and working in the Human Rights Research Center in Paris.

Identifying gaps & good practice in Portugal's statelessness law, policy and practice



In June, the Ukrainian parliament [adopted a law](#) establishing a statelessness determination procedure, and which brings the legal definition of statelessness in Ukraine in line with 1954 Convention. The law stipulates no lawful stay requirement, allows applicants to submit the application in any language, and a shared burden of proof. If implemented in practice, the law also means that recognised stateless persons in Ukraine will be able to obtain a permanent residence permit two years after recognition and apply for Ukrainian nationality five years after this.

The need for a residence permit for stateless people in Belgium



The main issue for stateless people in Belgium remains the absence of the automatic granting of a residence permit to those recognised as stateless by the judiciary, as well as the lack of a (temporary) residence permit for the duration of the statelessness determination procedure. ENS member NANSEN is [calling for a new legislative initiative](#) to grant a residence permit and 1954 Convention rights to all people recognised as stateless, as well as a temporary residence permit and protection during the judicial procedure to determine statelessness, and the procedure before the Immigration Office to acquire a residence permit.

The Portuguese Refugee Council [partnered with ENS](#) to add a [country profile page](#) on Portugal to the Statelessness Index. The identification of stateless individuals stands out as one of the most significant gaps, as Portugal does not have a dedicated statelessness determination procedure and there is significant room for improvement with regard to immigration detention. However, Portugal demonstrates good practice regarding the prevention and reduction of statelessness, particularly regarding birth registration and withdrawal of nationality.

Equating the rights of stateless people with refugees in Spain



Whilst Spain's law on asylum provides asylum seekers with a set of rights, those applying for stateless status are [not granted such protection](#). Among other disparities, refugees benefit from a shorter lawful residence requirement of five years to apply for Spanish nationality, while stateless people must adhere to the general rule of ten years for foreigners. Fundación Cepaim is campaigning for reforms to Spain's asylum law to include stateless people in order to create a new law on international protection and statelessness that equates the rights of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection with the rights of applicants for stateless status and recognised stateless persons.

Recent publications

- ([UNHCR](#)) [Establishing Statelessness Determination Procedures to Protect Stateless Persons, Good Practices Paper, Action 6](#) - updated good practices paper outlining good practices to provide practical guidance to States that are considering the establishment of SDPs, includes examples from Europe.
- ([UNHCR](#)) [Access of Stateless Persons to Medical Care during the COVID-19 and Assessment of the Economic and Social Impact of the Lockdown Measures](#) - Provides an overview in Ukraine, based on survey data collected by ENS member Right to Protection
- ([UNHCR](#)) [The Campaign to End Statelessness: April-June 2020 Update](#) - includes campaign updates from Italy, Russia, Sweden and Ukraine
- ([UNHCR](#)) [Background note on gender equality, nationality laws and statelessness](#) - annual background note providing the most up to date information available to UNHCR as of 14 July 2020 on gender equality in legal provisions in nationality laws which relate to conferral of nationality to children
- ([UNHCR](#)) [An Analysis of the Legal Framework Concerning Stateless Persons and Persons at Risk of Statelessness in Croatia](#) - provides an overview and analysis of Croatia's legal framework. Available in English and Croatian.
- ([Bronwen Manby](#)) [Nationality and statelessness among persons of Western Saharan origin. Tottel's Journal of Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Law](#) - explores the nationality status of those connected to the territory of Western Sahara
- ([Peter McMullin Centre on Statelessness and the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion](#)) [Third edition of the Statelessness and Citizenship Review](#) - Includes articles on statelessness in the European Union and a case note from the UK
- ([Fionnuala Ni Aolain and Anne Charbord, Just Security](#)) [Judgement in the Begum Case: A Good Day for the Protection of Human Rights](#) - analyses the United Kingdom's Court of Appeal judgement in the case of Shamima Begum and its recognition of the necessity for procedurally fair process in the deprivation of citizenship
- ([Ana Luquerna, Chicago Journal of International Law](#)) [The Children of ISIS: Statelessness and Eligibility for Asylum under International Law](#) - focuses on the foreign children indefinitely detained at al-Hol camp in Northern Syria due to their perceived affiliation with ISIS and explores whether stateless children who lived under the ISIS regime and cannot repatriate are eligible for asylum under international law
- ([Aron Lund, The New Humanitarian](#)) [No papers, no rights: Understanding Syria's civil documentation crisis](#) - highlights the problems Syrians face in accessing civil documentation and its impact on access to rights and services
- ([Andrew D'Anieri, Atlantic Council](#)) [The Coronavirus Crisis and Statelessness in Ukraine](#) - highlights the heightened risk stateless people in Ukraine have faced as a result of COVID-19 measures, and their lack of access to services

Events and opportunities

- **Webinar - Access to Spanish Citizenship for Stateless People: A required Civil Code reform on naturalisation.** Wednesday 7th October 11:00 CET. Organised by Fundación Cepaim in collaboration with the European Network on Statelessness (in Spanish). Register [here](#).
- **Webinar - Together We Can: A consortium to protect the stateless in times of COVID-19.** Thursday 8th October 15:00 CET. Organised by the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion. Register [here](#).



"Everyone has the right to a nationality"

European Network on Statelessness

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