



“None of Europe’s Children Should be Stateless”

This statement was presented and discussed during the closing session of the European Network on Statelessness conference “[None of Europe’s children should be stateless](#)” which was held in Budapest on 2-3 June 2015 and brought together 100 participants from over 30 European countries. The conclusions below relate to five conference guiding questions, and are intended to help guide joint efforts to end childhood statelessness in Europe. For more information email info@statelessness.eu

1. Shaping a research agenda to further understand the causes and consequences of childhood statelessness

- Build on the existing body of country-level research on childhood statelessness by prioritising research where initial analysis suggests gaps in the national legal framework or where there exist innovative good practices in addressing it.
- Continue to explore the normative framework in respect of the avoidance of statelessness, in particular in order to identify where further standard-setting or doctrinal guidance may be needed, including to support advocacy or litigation efforts.
- Explore thematic issues which have emerged within, but cut across, different national contexts and require a greater depth of understanding – including from a longitudinal perspective and by stimulating further collaboration with academics. Key thematic issues identified include:
 - The attribution of nationality to children and the (mis)use of the label “unknown nationality” as a factor in the non-implementation of safeguards against statelessness;
 - The interaction between birth registration and acquisition of nationality by birth;
 - The enjoyment of nationality and prevention of statelessness for children of refugees;
 - The avoidance of statelessness for children in emerging contexts of nationality contention (e.g. commercial surrogacy, same-sex partnerships and “baby boxes”).
- Identify any misconceptions, myths or fears surrounding the issue and conduct research that can help to deflate these. Ensure that all research is carried out diligently, to build a solid knowledge base that could also be used, for instance, as evidence in litigation.
- Design and implement research projects in such a way as to enable these to generate different types and format of product, for different audiences and purposes, including integrating storytelling or multimedia components as appropriate.

2. Improving data on children’s access to nationality and birth registration, and on the scale and impact of childhood statelessness

- Encourage relevant government bodies to review and improve their data collection relating to childhood statelessness, including through national census exercises and municipal/population registries. Ensure that such data is disaggregated, by sex and age in order to be effective.
- Utilise the state party reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and other human rights bodies, as well as mechanisms within the EU framework, to promote the systematic generation of reliable data on children’s access to nationality and birth registration.
- Facilitate the extraction, analysis and sharing of relevant data that is captured by civil society, UN and other organisations in the course of their programmes, including in particular data generated through paralegal and other relevant community outreach activities.
- Work with UNICEF, Plan and other child rights organisations to identify gaps in data on access to birth registration in Europe and to explore methodologies for addressing those gaps.

3. Creating the public and political space to more effectively respond to childhood statelessness through awareness raising and social mobilisation

- Develop an integrated strategic response that builds on the growing knowledge base by disseminating it more widely, including to support effective advocacy on childhood statelessness and the building of public pressure in support of political action.



- Recognise and harness the power of (social) media and public engagement in order to create societal and political pressure to address childhood statelessness. Tailor messaging to non-expert audiences and build communications around stories and facts, not abstract concepts.
- Employ a social media strategy that uses existing research/data to create bespoke content suitable for social media audiences, and that includes user-generated components to maximise societal mobilisation and promote greater and more sustained engagement.
- Grow partnerships between civil society and UNHCR for joint awareness raising and social mobilisation around ending statelessness for children and youth as both a component of the #ibelong campaign and the ENS/other civil society campaigns and initiatives.

4. Mobilising actors at the national level to improve law, policy and practice around the prevention of childhood statelessness

- Strengthen engagement of and collaboration between relevant national stakeholders, including government bodies, civil society organisations, academia, UNHCR, UNICEF, Ombudspersons for Children, National Human Rights Institutions and journalists.
- Engage and provide technical support to different government bodies, with a particular focus on (decentralised) authorities responsible for birth registration, population registration and nationality procedures, as well as on the judiciary.
- Build stronger engagement in individual casework on childhood statelessness through the development of legal assistance, paralegal and strategic litigation projects targeting this issue.
- Create opportunities – such as trainings, conferences and study visits – for peer-to-peer learning and sharing of good practices between countries. Integrate statelessness components within existing training nexuses e.g. relating to civil registration, refugee law or Roma rights.
- Report systematically to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, National Human Rights Institutions and (Children’s) Ombudspersons, as well as other human rights mechanisms.
- Participate in the development and implementation, as appropriate, of National Action Plans adopted under the auspices of UNHCR’s #ibelong campaign to ensure that ending childhood statelessness is sufficiently prioritised.

5. Engaging actors at the regional and international level to promote solutions to childhood statelessness

- Promote synergy between different regional and international actors to enhance and maintain momentum. For example, utilise the European Network on Ombudspersons for Children to create a common position and generate momentum for EU-level engagement on the issue.
- Advocate towards Ministries of Foreign Affairs and permanent representations in Geneva/Brussels to identify ways in which childhood statelessness can be raised higher on the international/regional agenda.
- Encourage and support the development of further tools and doctrinal interpretation by international and regional bodies that can provide authoritative guidance – including by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and by relevant Council of Europe and EU institutions.
- Through a coordinated pan-European strategy, enhance the use of strategic litigation to address childhood statelessness issues emerging through research and which encounter political resistance to reform. Utilise existing networks to identify and pursue suitable cases.
- Explore and develop avenues for direct interaction between persons affected by childhood statelessness (children and parents) and relevant regional and international bodies in order to promote a better understanding of the issue, its urgency and the appetite for reform.
- Consolidate and build on efforts to engage regional and international child rights organisations with campaigning on the issue of childhood statelessness. At the EU level, seek to mainstream this issue in the upcoming renewal of the EU child rights agenda, the Forum on the Rights of the Child, the Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and the Commission’s Investing in Children Recommendations.