

Separated Children in Europe Programme (SCEP)

In 1998, UNHCR and Save the Children launched the [Separated Children in Europe Programme \(SCEP\)](#) to promote the rights and best interests of separated children seeking asylum in Europe, by establishing a shared policy and commitment to best practice at national and European levels.

The programme is based on the complementary mandates and areas of expertise of the two organisations. UNHCR's responsibility is to ensure the protection of those seeking asylum, including refugee children and adolescents. The concern of the Save the Children Alliance is to see the full realisation of the rights of all children. Thus, SCEP provides advocacy, capacity-building and awareness-raising activities in a joint effort to change policies and practices concerning separated children in the asylum process.

Sources:

- Wendy Ayotte (2000) Statement of Good Practice, 2nd Edition October 2000. SCEP, Copenhagen
- UNHCR (2002) Summary Note on UNHCR's Strategy and Activities concerning Refugee Children. UNHCR, Geneva
- www.separated-children-europe-programme.org

Definitions used by SCEP

1. "Separated children" are children under the age of 18 years of age who are outside their country of origin and separated from both parents, or their previous legal/customary primary caregiver. Some children are totally alone while others, who are also the concern of the SCEP, may be living with extended family members. All such children are separated children and entitled to international protection under a broad range of international and regional instruments. Separated children may be seeking asylum because of fear of persecution or the lack of protection due to human rights violations, armed conflict or disturbances in their own country. They may be victims of trafficking for sexual or other exploitation, or they may have travelled to Europe to escape conditions of serious deprivation.

2. The Separated Children in Europe Programme uses the word "separated" rather than "unaccompanied" because it better defines the essential problem that such children face. Namely, **they are without the care and protection of their parents or legal guardian and, as a consequence, suffer socially and psychologically from this separation.** While some separated children appear to be "accompanied" when they arrive in Europe, the accompanying adults are not necessarily able or suitable to assume responsibility for their care.

3. "International protection" is necessary because separated children have left their home community and country and have travelled into or across Europe. A solution to their situation is likely to require attention in their home country and current country of domicile. Protection through internationally agreed standards and under international law is therefore essential.

4. "Europe" for this programme includes: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom.

In October 2000, the Programme revised the Statement of Good Practice, to incorporate recent developments in international law, including the adoption of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Detailed studies have been completed summarising the situation of refugee and asylum-seeking separated children in 17 Western European countries, and 11 Central European and Baltic States in 2000 and 2001. This is supported by a network of NGO and UNHCR representatives in each of the 28 countries currently covered by the Programme. The network meets regularly and members participate in various training workshops, seminars or conferences at regional, sub-regional and national level aimed at exchanging good practices in meeting the protection needs of separated children in Europe.

(Reference materials may be obtained from the following sites:

www.unhcr.org

www.savethechildren.net

www.separated-children-europe-programme.org)