The European Union (EU) is a region of destination for many individuals, leaving their country for various reasons: refugees, displaced persons, unaccompanied minors, families, students, daughters of migrant workers; some of them might also be undocumented. Girls will always be part of the migrating population, and have specific needs that must be recognised and met. Under the Istanbul Convention (Art. 3) it is noted that “women” includes girls under the age of 18 and yet girls’ needs are inconsistently mainstreamed in new laws, policies and supports. These must be in addition to standard responses for women and for migrant/refugee children, and girls’ ability to access services must never be compromised due to societal status or cultural practices.

To date, the European Union has increased investment in the area of migration but this investment has focused on ‘security’, i.e., the supposed challenge to the safety and wellbeing of current EU citizens by migration flows. This ignores much research showing the net benefit of migration and that investment into integration and education is a key way to prevent isolation but rather facilitate the social and economic contributions of migrant communities who are in search of a brighter future.

To stay true to its core values of human dignity and human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law, we call on the EU to respect the human rights and dignity of girls who are seeking safety within our border, and to put humanitarian action at the core of its response to migration.
The European Network of Migrant Women (ENoMW) is the largest umbrella organisation of migrant-led women's non-governmental organisations within the European Union (EU), working to promote migrant women's rights, the concerns, needs and interests of migrant women in the European Union. www.migrantwomennetwork.org  @ENoMW

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) is the largest umbrella organisation of women's associations in the European Union (EU), working to promote women's rights and gender equality between women and men. For a feminist Europe. www.womenlobby.org @EuropeanWomen

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**Funding:** While there has been a significant increase to planned EU spending on migration, the focus on ‘borders and security’ is of significant concern: a humanitarian approach to this issue is essential to align our approach with European values, value the benefits of migration to Europe and ensure no deaths or suffering are caused by a ‘Fortress Europe’ approach to migration. It is also crucial to increase support for local women's groups to participate meaningfully in humanitarian action.

**Data:** Clearer, up-to-date information about the experiences faced by girls on the move is crucial, with sex-disaggregated data that goes beyond the experiences of “children” and “unaccompanied minors” so that we can provide appropriate services and responses to girls.

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**Migrant/refugee girls’ legal framework** should be developed and defined as according to existing frameworks on women’s rights, children’s rights and migrant people’s rights.

**Law and policy implementation under CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention** should include mainstreaming the needs of children and migrant/refugee women and girls.

**Reform asylum processes:** The EU must recognise the impact of their return policies on the safety and lives of those seeking asylum. Child and gender appropriate accommodation, in line with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines for Integrating GBV Interventions in Humanitarian Action (2015), must be provided as a priority both in emergency settings and throughout the asylum process.

**Combating men’s violence against women and girls:** The EU and all member states and acceding/candidate countries must ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention, without bias or reservation as to migrant, refugee and undocumented women.

**Reinstate effective humanitarian search and rescue operations** at sea including an international agreement on fair and balanced acceptance of those saved to ensure meeting of responsibilities under Dublin Regulations.

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**Access to Education:** Every child has the right to access education, yet many girls are left without while moving through the asylum process due to inappropriate reception centres that are not fit for purpose. Where education is available, specific efforts must be made to ensure girls are enabled to attend.

**Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights:** Girls’ SRHR needs and rights must be recognised – refugee and migrant girls are at high risk of sexual violence, rape and pregnancy yet their SRHR needs are often forgotten in service development, particularly in specific children’s supports.

**Train** all staff, guardians and foster families on increased risk of sex trafficking and prostitution, child marriage, sexual violence, FGM and traditional harmful practices for unaccompanied girls.

**Combatting sexual exploitation:** Trafficking of girls is often under the umbrella of ‘child trafficking’ or ‘trafficking of WAG for sexual exploitation’, meaning the data on prevalence and specific responses to trafficking of girls are lacking. Migrant and refugee girls are a high-risk group for grooming, trafficking and forced marriage: training, prevention and response programmes must be implemented on all of these issues, particularly for those working in frontlines and in combating the sex trade.