

TAKE ACTION!

WHAT YOUR ORGANISATION CAN DO TO ADDRESS IMMIGRATION DETENTION OF CHILDREN

The issue:

There is little public awareness of the detention of children and families for immigration purposes across Europe. Immigration detention is harmful for the mental and physical health and development of children, even for very short periods including in facilities which governments refer to as ‘child friendly’.

Children in immigration detention centres cannot learn and thrive in a safe environment as they do in schools in the community.

There are alternatives to detention for children to stay with their families in the community but they are hardly explored by governments.

States publicise very limited data on how many children are detained for immigration purposes, on the length of their detention as well as continuing to limit or deny media and civil society access to immigration detention centres. Alternatives to detention such as placement and follow up in the community remain underexplored and underused.

Who to target:

- Policymakers at national and regional levels
- Local authorities
- Ombudspersons
- Teacher associations and unions
- Service providers working for the well-being of children (i.e. health care professionals)
- Media
- Citizens



*Photo: Newly built facility to detain children and families in Belgium.
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What your organisation can do:

- **Share the [statement](#)** on your website, social media and within your network with the hash tags #EndChildDetention #BackToSchool #FamiliesBelongTogether #ACagelsACage (see suggested social media posts below).
- **Connect with organisations** working on immigration detention and children's rights in your country.
- **Get involved with the [NextGen Index](#).** This is a scorecard which ranks states on their progress in ending child immigration detention. Share your expertise on child detention in your country and receive tools, resources and regular updates about opportunities for collective advocacy and action.
- **Join the End Immigration Detention of Children campaign:**
<https://endchilddetention.org/join-global-campaign-end-child-detention/>
- **Ask for data:** Demand your government to collect and regularly publicise data on how many children are detained for immigration purposes, with or without their family, on the length of their detention, how many children and families were deported and what efforts are made to end child detention for immigration purposes.
- **Collect and share testimonies:**
The voices of children and parents who are detained in European countries are rarely heard but are crucial to raise public awareness. Collect soundbites and testimonies through your work to document conditions and negative impacts of the detention of children and families. You can share testimonies in different formats (quotes, written texts, creative work such as drawings etc.) with us at:
communications@picum.org
"We were living in a small room and they locked it. And you cannot do anything. You stand and sometimes you sit down but you are not able to sit the same way all the day. I have been there 17 days without taking bath, without changing clothes and they allow me to go to the toilet two times, in the morning and in the night. After that, I hated my life."
- Abdi 16, detained at an airport detention centre in Greece
- **Inform media:** In many countries, journalists have little or no access to detention centres which is one reason why there is hardly any public debate about detention of

children. Use media contacts you have to inform journalists about detention for immigration purposes, its impact and the need to implement alternatives.

- **Share resources** (see also list below) including the NextGen Index as well as this call to action among your network partners.
- **Mobilise citizens:** organize your own awareness raising actions to engage citizens.

Suggested social media posts which you may also adapt or translate:

- #BackToSchool: Not all #children are back in the classroom, some are detained for #immigration purposes #EndChildDetention #BackToSchool #FamiliesBelongTogether #ACagelsACage + <http://picum.org/not-all-children-return-to-school-some-are-detained/>
- Check out @childdetention's NextGen Index to see where your country ranks in terms of #detention of migrant #children <http://next-gen-index.org/wp/en/> #EndChildDetention #BackToSchool #FamiliesBelongTogether
- Many children and young people like Abdi are detained across Europe but not heard. Help to #EndChildDetention #BackToSchool #FamiliesBelongTogether #ACagelsACage <http://picum.org/not-all-children-return-to-school-some-are-detained/> + for example an image text banner with the quote of Abdi
- Join the global campaign to #EndChildDetention: <https://endchilddetention.org/join-global-campaign-end-child-detention/> #BackToSchool #FamiliesBelongTogether
- See what you can do as an organisation to help #EndChildDetention + [link call to action \(this document\)](#)
- #Immigration detention of #migrantchildren is not only happening in #Manus & #Nauru #Australia and the #USA. It is also happening in #Europe but kept out of the public eye #ACagelsACage <http://picum.org/not-all-children-return-to-school-some-are-detained/> #EndChildDetention #FamiliesBelongTogether

Resources:

- [NextGen Index](#) ranking states on their progress in ending child immigration detention.
- [Media factsheet. Ending immigration detention of children and alternatives to detention](#), PICUM, 2017.

- [*European legal and policy framework on immigration detention of children*](#), EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), 2017.
- General Comments from the UN Child Rights Committee and the Migrant Workers Committee ([GC no. 22](#) and [GC no. 23](#)).
- Council of Europe, End Immigration Detention of Children: [*A study of immigration detention practices and the use of alternatives to immigration detention of children*](#) (2017)
- *Untold Stories. Immigration Detention and Deportation*, in [English](#) and [Spanish](#), PICUM, 2017.

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