

Call for proposals: Consultant to do visionary research on time horizons in best interests assessments, decisions and procedures

July 2025

Context and background

The [Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants](#) (PICUM) is seeking an external consultant to support PICUM's strategic work around best interests of the child procedures, feeding into the work on transition into adulthood and the safeguarding of children's rights in EU migration law.

PICUM is a Brussels-based network of 155 organisations spread across Europe and beyond – from Portugal to Ukraine, from Finland to Togo. In just over twenty years, it has developed into a complex, purpose-driven organisation committed to achieving social justice for undocumented people and people seeking to come to Europe. It does so through research, advocacy, strategic communications, network building, and work with and support to its members.

Time horizons in best interests assessments

Best interests of the child assessments are a crucial part of any policy or procedure that affects children. In a migration context, member states should have procedures in place [to identify durable solutions](#) for children in migration based on a consideration of their best interests. And in the EU context, the [Migration and Asylum Pact and its common implementation plan](#) require that children's best interests are assessed, and the child treated in line with that assessment. In addition, member states should assess whether return is in the best interests of a child before issuing a return decision to them or their parents (this remains the case in the Commission's March 2025 proposal to create a common return framework). However, to date, no European country has developed a

separate procedures that meets the necessary safeguards identified by IOM, Unicef, UN Human Rights, Child Circle, ECRE, Save the Children and PICUM in 2019.

Some policy makers and practitioners doubt whether member states should also consider what happens to the child after they turn 18 when assessing a child's best interests and identifying a durable solution. As a consequence, some permits issued to children (especially unaccompanied children) are only valid until the child turns 18, often resulting in the child becoming undocumented and without access to a secure residence status/permit.

The objectives of the assignment focus on this intersection: they are to analyse and present legal arguments and legal precedents in best interests of the child rulings with suggestions about how to expand it beyond the age of 18, as well as its opposing argument.

Overview of the work, methodology and expected outcomes

The assignment must take place between **mid-August and mid-December 2025**.

PICUM proposes a process with three distinct outcomes:

1. **Drafting of an internal document for PICUM members and allies.**

Deadline: mid-October 2025. Preparation from mid-August to mid-October.

- The briefing will **identify concrete legal arguments** on the following two questions, looking at opposing arguments:
 - a) Why best interests assessments should consider the long-term impact of the decision, and more specifically: the fulfilment of fundamental rights in adulthood (post 18 years old)
 - b) Why best interests assessments should only consider the child's wellbeing up until 18 years old
- The briefing will respond to these questions taking inspiration from (international) legal standards and norms and national and international case law in the areas of migration, child protection and disability, and other relevant fields (in EU and beyond).
- The internal briefing will be 8 to 12 pages long.
- **The preparation of this briefing will draw on at least 5 bilateral interviews with child rights and legal scholars**, to map out arguments for and against, identify opportunities and discuss which role PICUM could play without duplicating existing work by partners organisations.
- The briefing should include a **list of relevant case law**, legal references and norms (PICUM can provide a list of relevant ECHR and CJEU case law up until 2019 as a basis to complete).

2. **Design and facilitate an online meeting of legal, child rights and child development experts to discuss the findings.**

Meeting to be held in November 2025. Preparation work from September to November.

- The online, closed-door meeting will explore the findings of the research and arguments for and against considering long-term impacts on the child.

- The consultant will prepare a first draft of the agenda in close collaboration with PICUM's Senior Advocacy Officer and will prepare and facilitate the meeting.
- The consultant will work with PICUM to determine a list of experts (to be invited by PICUM) from the legal, child rights, disability and/or child development fields.

3. Final report.

Deadline: 14 December 2025.

- The final report should be between 8 and 12 pages long.
- The final report should be on why best interests assessments **should consider the long-term impact of the decision** (post 18 years old), based on the results of the desk research, bilateral interviews, internal briefing and meeting.
- The report should include at least **between five and ten distinct arguments** that can be used by PICUM, its members and allies.
- The report should list **at least 7 recommendations for future action** for PICUM and its members to make sure (future) best interests assessments to identify a durable solution consider the long-term impact of the decision (post 18 years old). The recommendations cover both legal and non-legal actions.

During the implementation of the project, the advisor will hold regular meetings with PICUM's Senior Advocacy Officer.

The advisor is invited to further specify or recommend data collection methods and to set out the different phases of the assignment and activities within each phase.

Application process:

Candidates are requested to submit their proposal to laetitia.vandervennet@picum.org by **Monday 4 August 2025, 9:00 CET**. The proposal must set out rationale, activities, timeline and proposed budget, including a daily rate and other expenses, and a curriculum vitae (2 pages). Note that the assignment should take place from mid-August to mid-December 2025.

Proposals will be reviewed during the week of 4 August 2025.



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For further information please consult: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/easi>. The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission.