IFSW EUROPE RESOLUTION ON THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN AGE DETERMINATION OF UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

IFSW Europe draws attention to:

– The large number of children under the age of 18 years on the move into and across Europe as a result of war, social conflict and poverty.
– The significant number of unaccompanied child migrants without any formal documentation.
– The need to determine the age of an unaccompanied child migrant in order to decide whether they are eligible for children’s services.
– The absence of any objective way, medically or socially, to determine the age of a child with total certainty.
– The reality that the determination of age is an arbitrary judgement which can have serious adverse personal consequences for the individual.
– The fact that social workers frequently experience ethical and practical dilemmas when involved in age determination.

IFSW Europe therefore resolves that:

– Social workers have an ethical duty to ensure the voice of the child is heard, that children’s best interests are respected and that the rights are protected.
– Age determination must be a multi-professional process.
– Social workers have an ethical duty to enable people to appeal against any adverse decision.
– IFSW Europe calls for a global IFSW position statement and guidance for social workers on age determination, taking account of existing good practice and making explicit reference to the global context for this work.

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