

Abstract

The issue of unaccompanied migrant children (UAM) in the European Union is one of the most acknowledged and one of the most under researched topics. Close to 100,000 minors arrived in Europe in 2015 alone, without parents or guardians. And more than 10,000 disappeared shortly after. These children have been and continue to be under high risk of human trafficking, child labour, sexual and physical abuse, and exploitation of some other kinds.

It has been 6 years since the initial crisis, but the statistics are not getting better. Tendency remains as close to 19,000 UAMs have perished in the past 3 years, which accounts to 17 disappearances a day.

Despite the European Union's commitment to protect the rights of UAMs, the conditions of these children are dire. In some member states the situation is so much poorer, that basic human rights are violated. This raises the following questions:

Q1: Why does the EU struggle to adopt common policies on unaccompanied migrant children?

Q2: How does the EU contribute to the disappearance of UAMs?

Qualitative and quantitative data, as well as large amount of primary and secondary sources help navigate through the problem of UAMs. Content analysis of European media contributes to the illustration of perceptions towards migration and unaccompanied children. Social Construction of Target Populations and Cultural Backlash Theory are the framework through which the topic is analysed.

It was found that cooperation and solidarity among member states is on decline, as is European societies' attitudes towards migration. On the other hand, anti-immigration parties (right-wing populist) have been on the rise since 2015. They have used the crisis to their gain and advanced their domestic ambitions. And while doing so, they challenged EU's unity and cross-border collaboration.

Keywords: The European Union; Unaccompanied Migrant Children; Right-wing Populism; Anti-immigration Parties; Social Constructions; Cooperation; Solidarity