

## Press Release

### Stakeholders Discuss Policy Reform on Unaccompanied Minor Asylum Seekers

On 6 May, with the support of the Voices Foundation, **aditus foundation** held ‘Unaccompanied Minor Asylum Seekers in Malta: A Technical Workshop on Age Assessment and Legal Guardianship Procedures’. According to UNHCR, 25% of sea arrivals to Malta in 2013 were found to be unaccompanied minors (UAMs) — meaning persons younger than 18 who had made the journey alone. That percentage is expected to grow.

The workshop facilitated a constructive discussion on age assessment and legal guardianship procedures among key stakeholders working locally with UAMs. The participants included Maltese government representatives, UNHCR, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and local and international NGOs.

The workshop coincided with ongoing government reforms of law and policy relating to UAMs. The Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (AWAS) is currently in the process of reviewing the age assessment procedure, and the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity presented a *Child Protection Act* to Parliament in March, which is currently in its second reading. The *Act* contains revised provisions on the guardianship of children, including UAMs.

“We are glad for the government’s current attention to UAMs,” said Pauline Hilmy, Project Officer with **aditus foundation**. “However reforms must ensure that UAMs have access to the full spectrum of rights to which they are entitled according to regional and international standards.”

The technical workshop began with brief presentations from the Jesuit Refugee Service Malta (JRS), AWAS, EASO, **aditus** and the Nidos Foundation, a Dutch NGO which presented on best practices in the Netherlands. These were followed by a structured discussion on possible areas for legal and policy reform of age assessment and guardianship procedures.

The workshop was organised as part of a broader programme currently being implemented by **aditus foundation**, ‘Supporting the Fulfilment of Rights of Specific Asylum-Seeking Groups’. The program aims for a deeper and more accurate understanding of the extent of UAMs’ fundamental rights access in Malta’s migration-asylum regime and supports sustainable services for UAM asylum seekers.

At the end of May, **aditus foundation** will publish a report examining the current and proposed procedures in light of regional and international standards, and presenting detailed recommendations for reform. For further information on the project, please visit [http://www.aditus.org.mt/aditus\\_foundation/VOICES.html](http://www.aditus.org.mt/aditus_foundation/VOICES.html).



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**aditus** is an independent, voluntary & non-profit organisation established with the intention to monitor & act & report on access to fundamental human rights by individuals & groups.

**aditus** believes in the universality, interdependence & indivisibility of all human rights & strives to promote their understanding & application. While aditus’ focus is Malta, it works towards highlighting the regional & international dimensions of national human rights issues.