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The prominence of the body as an instrument of border control

Assessing the age of unaccompanied migrant children
in the European Union

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Abstract

The premises of the research are rooted in the debate about human rights of migrants and securitisation of borders in the European Union. In this context the body is in the spotlight, since a key component in the reinforcement of external borders has been represented by the growing use of biometric data that is derived from the human body. The paper aims at investigating how and to what extent the human body is considered as an instrument of border control in the European Union.

After providing an overview on the relevant EU legislation, the paper explains which human rights implications are entailed by the use of biometrics in the management of migration and asylum. It then introduces the case study of age assessment for unaccompanied migrant children, illustrating in particular the human rights that can be at stake with regard to medical age examinations. Through the analysis of the selected case study it makes clear the crucial role that the human body plays in the strategies of border control. Eventually the paper argues that, through the deployment of such techniques, States are expressing their power on the body of migrants in order to exclude and not to include them.

Table of Contents

Introduction..... 1

Chapter I – Seeking evidences in migration proceedings in the EU

1. The human body as a source of evidence in migration proceedings 5

2. An overview on EU Policy on Migration and Asylum..... 7

 2.1 EU’s approach to migration..... 8

 2.2 The legislative framework 9

 2.3 The Common European Asylum System (CEAS) 11

3. Where is the truth? The use of data in migration management 16

Chapter II – The body as an instrument of border control

1. Foreword..... 18

2. Biometric data and its use in the fight against irregular migration..... 18

 2.1 What biometrics? 19

 2.2 Biometrics and migration in the EU 20

 2.2.1 When fundamental rights collide with security needs:
the EURODAC system 22

 2.3 Biometrics and human rights implications 24

3. Border control and human body: a controversial relationship..... 28

 3.1 The body as a ‘medium’ between competing interests..... 29

Chapter III – Human body and border control: the case of age assessment of unaccompanied migrant children in the EU

1. The age assessment of unaccompanied migrant children as a case study 33

 1.1 Why is age assessment relevant?..... 34

Table of contents

2. Conceptual clarifications	37
2.1 Unaccompanied migrant children.....	38
2.2 Age assessment.....	40
3. Sources for age assessment at International and European level	42
4. State of the play in the field of age assessment in the EU	44
4.1 Current practices in EU Member States	45
4.1.1 Belgium	46
4.1.1.1 ‘Triple Test’	48
4.2 The need for a common EU policy on age assessment.....	50
5. The body of unaccompanied migrant children in the spotlight	52

Chapter IV – Assessing the truth from the body: conclusions from the selected case study

1. A disputed assessment	55
2. Belgium’s ‘Triple Test’: a critical analysis.....	56
2.1 Procedure	58
2.2 Accuracy of age assessment	61
2.3 Human Rights Implications	63
3. Towards a human rights based approach to age assessment.....	69
3.1 Re-thinking the concept of age.....	71
4. The body as an instrument of border control: drawing some conclusions from the selected case study	72
Conclusion	75
Bibliography	77
Annex.....	114