



PLATFORM FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS

**PICUM is a non-governmental organisation that promotes respect for the human rights of undocumented migrants.**



Defending the human rights of people whose precarious immigration status exposes them to exploitation, abuse, discrimination and violence is at the heart of PICUM's work.



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Undocumented migrants take shelter in a church in Brussels.

Founded as an initiative of grassroots organisations to mobilise civil society support for undocumented migrants at the European level, PICUM promotes recognition of their fundamental rights within the development of EU and member states' policies on migration management.

**PICUM seeks to guarantee dignity, equality and non-discrimination for undocumented migrants by increasing awareness of the human rights concerns caused by their unprotected status.**

Numerous international human rights instruments ratified by EU member states affirm the human rights of everyone regardless of their status, yet the laws and practices existing at the national level often deviate from these obligations. Across Europe, undocumented migrants are excluded from basic social services in the areas of health care, housing, and education. They are more vulnerable to exploitation, poverty and social exclusion.

PICUM works to empower civil society advocates to bridge local expertise on the realities facing undocumented migrants by bringing their voices and experiences to the policy level where laws and procedures concerning irregular migration are developed.

PICUM systematically reports on violations of undocumented migrants' fundamental rights across Europe and

uses this evidence base to promote the realisation of fair and more informed migration systems and policies. At the European and international levels, PICUM lobbies for the inclusion of this vulnerable group within basic services and advocates for accountability regarding violations and abuses against them.

The thematic areas addressed by PICUM have been developed in response to the most pressing human rights issues facing undocumented migrants in their daily lives, namely, access to health care and education, adequate housing conditions and fair working conditions.

**PICUM leads a growing network of more than 200 concerned organisations and individuals across Europe and beyond committed to ensuring real sustainable change for undocumented migrants by informing and engaging policy makers.**

Member states of the European Union are obliged to adhere to certain regional and international human rights standards. PICUM was established to ensure that EU policies aimed at migration management conform to these obligations.

To meet its objectives, PICUM has developed the following activity areas:

- **MONITORING AND REPORTING** to improve the understanding of human rights issues affecting undocumented migrants.
- **AWARENESS-RAISING** through in depth research and analysis to better inform policy makers of the living and working conditions of undocumented migrants and to promote recognition of the urgent need to protect their fundamental rights.
- **CAPACITY-BUILDING** to strengthen and support the work of NGOs and other actors working to prevent discrimination against migrants based on migration status.
- **ADVOCACY** to ensure undocumented migrants' issues and concerns are mainstreamed within EU debates on justice, human rights, social affairs, employment, public health and education.
- **GLOBAL ACTION** to provide local experts working with undocumented migrants with a voice in international fora on migration and on human rights.

Undocumented migrant workers are employed across the European Union, the United States and other global regions and contribute considerably to these economies.



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Undocumented families face significant administrative barriers to access their fundamental rights.

PICUM promotes respect for the basic human rights of undocumented migrants in accordance with principles of universality and non-discrimination.

- **THE RIGHT TO HEALTH is a fundamental human right and key to the realisation of other rights.** Access to health care is an urgent priority for undocumented migrants in Europe as they face serious barriers to obtain services. Information about undocumented migrants' entitlements is often inaccessible with many legal and administrative barriers in place. As a result, undocumented migrants are more likely to experience a worsening of their physical and mental condition.
- **THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION promotes integration and social development.** Both compulsory education and higher education can be difficult for undocumented migrants or their children to access. In some countries, they are refused access to schools while in others, the authorities may use the educational system to detect undocumented families.
- **THE RIGHT TO FAIR WORKING CONDITIONS in Europe is under inherent threat from the ongoing exploitation of undocumented workers.** Undocumented migrants often work in dangerous and unhygienic conditions. Many do not receive their wages or receive less than was agreed upon. They are often dismissed without due notice and if a work accident occurs, it is often impossible to obtain workers' compensation. Undocumented workers are often deported without being able to claim their wages.
- **THE RIGHT TO HOUSING is essential to the achievement of a decent standard of living.** Due to the uncertainty of their income and fear of the authorities, many undocumented migrants are forced to share accommodation with family or friends, sublet or rent on the unofficial housing market. For them, housing can be very expensive and, quite frequently, overcrowded. Undocumented migrants are generally fearful to file a complaint against bad housing conditions and in many EU countries, are ill informed about support or complaint measures that would offer redress.



“Solidarity with undocumented migrants”: a participant at a demonstration publicly affirms her support of migrants whose irregular status often confines them to the margins of society.

**THE CRIMINALISATION OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE is being used against organisations and individuals offering support to undocumented migrants.**

Recent developments in migration control have tended to criminalise the provision of social and humanitarian assistance such as food, housing and healthcare to undocumented migrants. There is an inherent risk in penalising individuals and civil society organisations for alleviating human suffering and guaranteeing a basic level of rights for this excluded and vulnerable minority.

**UNDOCUMENTED CHILDREN are in a position of triple vulnerability as children, migrants and undocumented.** The policies of many member states to control irregular migration often limit undocumented children’s access to their basic social rights. Across Europe, these children are increasingly being detained in clear violations of international law.

**UNDOCUMENTED WOMEN are often disempowered by migration control policies which limit their independence and access to basic rights.** Existing migration policies can increase migrant women’s chances of becoming undocumented: those whose regular status is dependent on the good-will of an employer, spouse or partner are often tied to an unfair power imbalance. Women residing in an irregular situation may face arrest or deportation if they make contact with the police. In Europe, undocumented women’s sexual and reproductive health needs are hugely under-addressed and their tendency to be hired in gender-defined jobs increases their susceptibility to abuse and exploitation.

**REGULARISATION AND IMPROVED ACCESS TO REGULAR CHANNELS for migration are some of policy solutions that can address the situation of undocumented migrants.** PICUM advocates for humane systems of migration and policies which respond to and protect the rights of undocumented migrants.

"The routes to becoming undocumented are complex and often the result of arbitrary policies and procedures over which the migrant has little or no control. Once in an unregulated status, migrants are excluded from basic social services that help to meet a decent standard of living in the areas of health care, housing, and education. The growing linkage between migration control and the provision of social services means that a high percentage of undocumented migrants do not access their rights even if they are entitled".

- *PICUM Director Ms. Michele LeVoy.*

## Those who support PICUM's objectives are invited to join its network.

### Membership of PICUM includes many benefits:

#### RESOURCES and SUPPORT

- Subscription to PICUM's monthly newsletter available in seven languages.
- Access to the members only section of PICUM's website.
- Obtain PICUM's expertise on the policies, practices and other issues facing your organisation.

#### NETWORK and INFORMATION EXCHANGE

- PICUM encourages the exchange of information and practical solutions among its members.
- Assistance to identify and connect with organisations facing similar issues in other regions.
- Inclusion in Europe's largest network with expertise on undocumented migrants.

#### GOVERNANCE

- Contribute to the general management and long-term planning of PICUM and participate in the Board election process at the Annual General Assembly.
- Opportunity to contribute to the thematic focus of PICUM to its annual action plans and long range plans.

#### RECOGNITION

- PICUM members are readily identified as experts on the human rights of undocumented migrants.
- Projects conducted by PICUM promote the work of its members and prioritise them for partnership.
- Members are frequently invited by PICUM to represent the network at national, European and international policy levels.

#### EVENTS

- Priority attendance and discounted registration fees for PICUM's workshops and conferences.
- Invitations to participate in PICUM strategy meetings and interfaces with policy makers.
- All PICUM events incorporate networking time to promote active learning among organisations.

Visit [www.picum.org](http://www.picum.org) to access a wide range of information on undocumented migrants, subscribe to PICUM's monthly newsletter, make a donation, or register to become a member of PICUM.

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