

How old do you think I am?

Legal-psychological challenges in multidisciplinary age assessment across European asylum procedures



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Introduction

Recent EUAA guidelines recommend a shift toward multidisciplinary age assessment in asylum procedures across Europe. These frameworks prioritize less-invasive, non-medical approaches—including interviews, psychosocial evaluations, and observational assessments—while reserving forensic medical methods as a last resort. We examine key challenges inherent in age assessments.

Methodology



Commentary paper

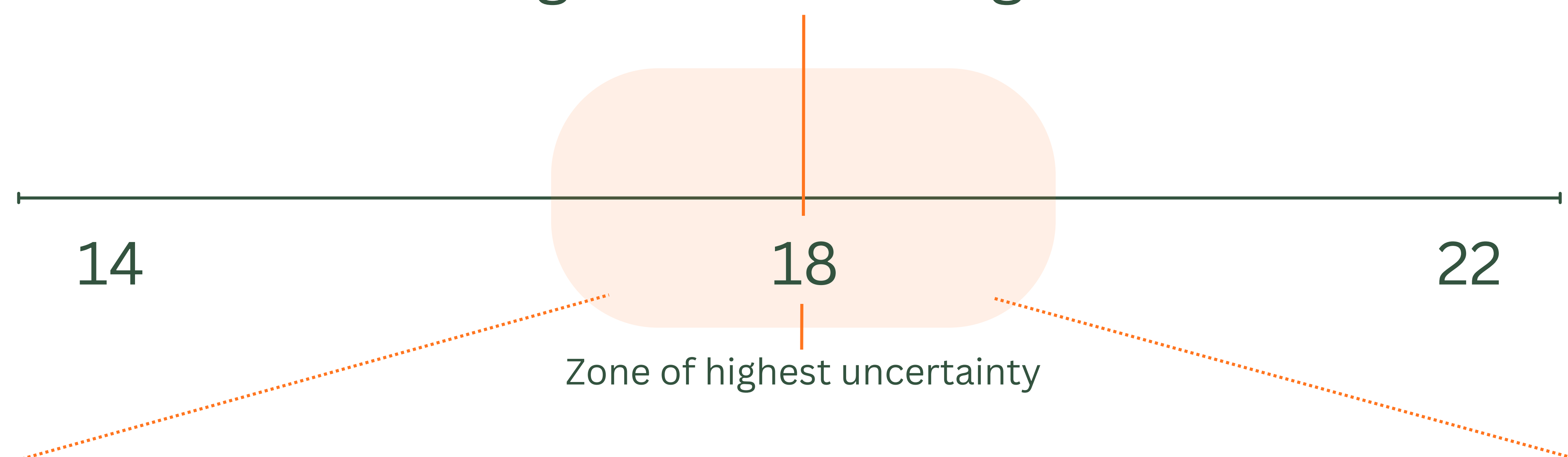


Forthcoming reviews:
Medical and non-medical



Preregistered reviews,
deposit extracted data

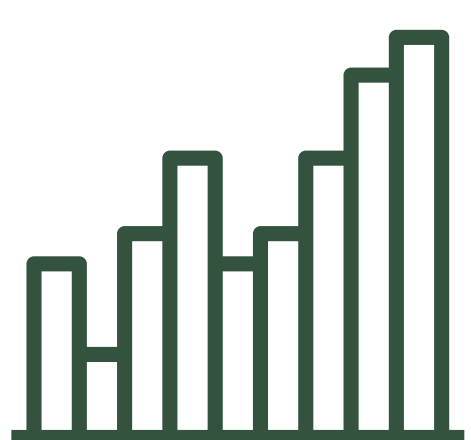
Legal threshold: age 18



Biological
variation

Cognitive
bias

Four core challenges



Group vs individual
Population evidence
does not generalize to
one person



Cognitive bias
Anchoring,
overconfidence,
consistency heuristics



Cultural variability
Trauma, education,
development
differ by context



False certainty
Combining
methods can mask
their limitations

Conclusion

Structured, evidence-based decision framework

Explicit validity, error margins, and evidentiary weight for decision-makers



Benefit of the doubt
Consequences are asymmetric:
wrongly classifying a minor as
an adult carries greater harm
than the reverse

- Age assessment is inevitably uncertain and interpretive
- Reliability depends on recognizing methodological limitations and margins of error
- Requires multidisciplinary collaboration and combined psychological and cultural expertise
- Process must be designed to minimize bias, so the assessment stays scientifically and ethically sound