



Children Navigating Migration: Building Stronger Protection for Unaccompanied Children

When: 1 September

Where: EESC (European Economic and Social Committee), Brussels, and online.

Thousands of children arrive each year, alone and seeking safety and a better future in Europe. They face many challenges, including past trauma, smuggling, and an absence of trusted adults... How can they be supported to feel like children again? Guardians are people who can offer them this comfort, but they too face many challenges: lack of knowledge and know-how, high workload, burnout, and difficulties connecting with the child.

On 1 September, the GUIDE project will host an event to explore how Europe can better protect unaccompanied children, particularly those who are more vulnerable, including those with a disability or who have experienced trauma. Bringing together policymakers, EU institutions, practitioners, child rights organisations and experts, the discussion will examine current challenges, identify gaps in protection systems, and present recommendations for strengthening child-centred migration and guardianship policies across Europe.

Bringing testimonials from guardians and children and drawing from findings of the [GUIDE project](#), the event will highlight practical solutions that can help ensure every child has access to protection, inclusion and support from arrival through to durable solutions.

- **Register until 26 August to attend in person (in Brussels):**
<https://forms.gle/RVd2ER9xiPk5JZA79>
- **Register to attend online:** <https://forms.gle/iJAS3VhHW8SjG4mt6>
- **Interpretation will be available** in English, Bulgarian, Greek, Italian, Slovak, Polish, and Ukrainian.

Agenda:

Time	Session	Speakers
14:00-14:30	Registration and Welcome coffee	
14:30-14:35	Opening remarks	Ms. King JOO Chair of the Social Responsibility Board, National Civil Cooperation Fund <i>European Economic and Social Committee</i>
14:35-14:40	Testimonials of a child Setting the context	David and Aleksandra Unaccompanied children from Slovakia

14:40-15:00	Keynote. Unaccompanied children in Europe today • Current trends & key challenges • Particular vulnerabilities of children with disabilities Presentation of the recommendations to strengthen the protection of unaccompanied children in Europe Drawing from the GUIDE project	<i>EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, TBC</i> Lyzaveta Drannikova Project & Policy Officer <i>European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities</i>
15:00-15:45	Panel discussion. Voices from the ground • Exploring challenges that guardians and unaccompanied children (especially those with disabilities) are facing • Role of peer-to-peer support in the guardians' lives (listening circles) • Systems put in place and support delivered by the national/regional bodies • Systems' gaps and possible solutions • Disability-inclusive protection systems • Mental health and trauma support • Transition to adulthood	Moderator: <i>GUIDE partner</i> Speakers: • Alona Kurutova <i>Office of the Commissioner for Children in Slovakia</i> • Diana Dimova, <i>Professional working with guardians in Bulgaria and GUIDE project trainer</i> • Greek guardian/professional working with children • Greek national/regional authority representative
15:45-16:25	Panel discussion. From policy commitments to protection in practice • Guardianship as a child protection tool • Cross-border cooperation • Strengthening guardianship through training, support, and institutional engagement • Legal and policy reform, institutional strengthening, monitoring and evaluation • Coordination and participation in the guardianship system • Sustainability of a multi-level guardianship system • Intersectionality-informed data collection • The European guardianship system	Moderator: Dr. Carine Le Borgne, Child Participation Coordinator <i>Eurochild</i> Speakers: • Isabella Atanasiu Policy officer <i>DG HOME</i> • Mr Terry Smith Project manager <i>European Guardianship Network</i> • Fabiana Adamo Project manager <i>CESIE ETS</i> • Disability People's Organisation
16:25-16:30	Closing remarks	<i>GUIDE partner (TBC)</i>

Background:

The GUIDE – Supporting Guardians of Unaccompanied Children project is an EU-funded initiative under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) aimed at strengthening the capacity of guardians and professionals working with unaccompanied and separated children arriving in Europe, especially those with disabilities. It brings together organisations from several EU Member States (Belgium, Bulgaria, Italy, Greece, Poland, Slovakia) to develop practical resources, training

programmes, and tools that support guardians in providing quality care and protection. Through training of trainers, national manuals, service provider maps, and peer-support mechanisms, the project aims to improve guardianship systems and strengthen cooperation among professionals working with migrant children.

GUIDE project partners:

