

FRA Press Release
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Effective guardianship is key to better protect unaccompanied children

Guardians are key to ensure children’s well-being and that their best interests are taken into account. But the EU and its Member States continue to face many challenges to provide for full and effective guardianship for unaccompanied children arriving in Europe, reveals the latest report from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA).

“EU and international standards guarantee unequivocal support for unaccompanied children. Yet, the gap between theory and practice leaves many of these vulnerable children without the guardian they need,” says FRA Director [Michael O’Flaherty](#). “EU countries should make guardianship systems more effective to ensure all children enjoy the support, services and protection which they are entitled to.”

The ‘[Guardianship systems for unaccompanied children in the EU](#)’ report looks at key developments since 2014. It builds on [earlier FRA research](#) and suggests how to address challenges and improve the diverse guardianship systems in the EU. As a priority, EU countries should:

- **Protect all children equally:** The support, and the type of protection offered, depends in practice on the child’s status. Countries should allocate sufficient resources to provide guardians for unaccompanied children, as part of overall national child protection schemes, no matter their status. This also derives from the obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by all EU countries.
- **Act in the child’s best interest:** Guardians need to cover all aspects of a child’s well-being to ensure their social, health, psychological, material and educational needs are met. But they are not always fully involved in all decisions affecting children.
- **Proper training:** Guardians continue to lack training support. They need systematic training and on-going support to effectively carry out their important work.

Guardianship systems vary greatly across and within EU countries with local authorities, social work centres or reception centres being responsible for providing guardianship. This can lead to inconsistent approaches. It can also result in conflicts of interest if the guardian’s duties overlap with day-care responsibilities. Guardians can be responsible for between three to 50 children. There can also be delays in appointing guardians.

The EU is improving the effectiveness of guardianship systems for unaccompanied children. It set up a [European Guardianship Network](#). Some countries introduced protocols, guidance and training for new guardians. Some improved the independence of guardians and increased the participation of children in decisions that affected them.

In addition, the [EU’s Child Rights](#) and [Anti-trafficking](#) strategies, and proposed [Migration and Asylum Pact](#) should help standardise protection measures and reinforce efforts to protect migrant children.



This report focuses on unaccompanied children from non-EU countries. It covers the 27 EU countries, North Macedonia and Serbia.

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