



Art work made for EGN by Jameel Khan, former UAC in Greece

The European Guardianship Network

Strategy 2026-2028

What is the European Guardianship Network (EGN)?

The **European Guardianship Network (EGN)** was established in September 2018 to enhance collaboration and improve practice in guardianship services for unaccompanied children across Europe. Since 2018, the EGN has grown to a Network currently comprised of 48 actors across the NGO, State and IGO sector located in 23 different EU Member States. Additionally, the EGN includes members in Norway, Switzerland and the UK.

Mission

The mission of the EGN is to safeguard the rights of unaccompanied children by bringing together national stakeholders, EU and UN agencies to strengthen guardianship systems for unaccompanied children in Europe.

Vision

The EGN envisions a Europe where the rights of all unaccompanied children are fully realized, with their best interests as the primary consideration in all decisions that affect them.

All unaccompanied children should be supported by independent, qualified, and well-resourced guardians. To protect the rights and safety of unaccompanied children in the best way, guardians must operate within well-organised guardianship systems which are supported, resourced, and monitored. To strengthen this, guardians should be an integral element of an integrated child protection system, which fosters collaboration between competent authorities, civil society and other relevant actors in a comprehensive and systemic way.

The EGN envisions a Europe in which there is greater solidarity including through cross-border cooperation. Guardianship service providers should be able to work together, and with other relevant stakeholders, across borders to ensure transnational procedures work in a child-centred way.

Children are active rights-holders capable of voicing their needs, preferences, and aspirations as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The EGN gives unaccompanied children a platform for active participation to make sure their voices are heard.

At the heart of the EGN's work is the understanding that no single model of guardianship systems fits all EU Member States, given the diversity of national contexts. Instead, the EGN promotes the EGN Standards of Guardianship, which serve as the guiding principles that should be fulfilled by all guardianship systems. The EGN Standards of Guardianship can be found here. There is also a child-friendly version of the standards available.



Painting by unaccompanied children from Belgium for the 20th anniversary of the Dienst Voogdij, part of EGN artistic booklet.

The EGN's objectives & activities

For the period 2026-2028, the EGN has four objectives which we aim to achieve by four overarching activities. The objectives are interrelated and strengthen each other. A schematic overview is provided in figure 1, and a more detailed description can be found below.

Objectives

1. Strengthen the provision of national guardianship systems for unaccompanied children in EU Member States.

This concerns how systems for guardianship are established and run, including the appointment process, the guardian's role, procedures, support, supervision, and accountability. It also covers how guardianship fits into integrated child protection systems and the monitoring of its effectiveness.

2. Enhance the practice of guardians for unaccompanied children in Europe.

This involves how guardians are equipped with the necessary tools and skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively, including collaborating with intercultural mediators and adopting a culturally sensitive approach when working with unaccompanied children. The EGN will also address key thematic areas such as family tracing, combating trafficking, and providing inclusive support to children from diverse backgrounds, including those who identify as LGBTQ+.

3. Strengthen the participation of unaccompanied children in improving guardianship.

This concerns how (former) unaccompanied children, including all genders and different migrant backgrounds, can be informed, supported and assisted to share their experience, perspectives and ideas for strengthening guardianship.

4. Enhancing European solidarity including through cross border cooperation.

This concerns strengthening the ways in which guardians and guardianship systems can work cross border on specific topics and solidarity efforts, including disappearances of children, trafficking of children, Dublin transfers, relocation, and family reunification.



Overarching activities

The EGN's activities can be divided in four overarching areas which are each carried out by practical activities, examples of which are outlined below:

1. Raising awareness and building knowledge on guardianship systems

Through exchange on developments, challenges and best practices at Network meetings, online thematic meetings and Working groups and by engagement with relevant stakeholders regionally.

2. Contributing to and drawing from European law and policy

So that EU legal obligations and commitments as regards guardianship fulfil the rights of the child. This through sharing expertise, experience, knowledge and recommendations from within the Network during EU consultations, participation in EU expert meetings, and contributing to European reviews on guardianship developments at EU level.

3. Contributing to the development of common resources

on guardianship in Europe, through (1) providing input to consultations by EU and UN agencies who are developing relevant regional guidance, handbooks and training resources or (2) contributing expertise to regional projects organised by members, or other relevant stakeholders, through Project Team expert work and consultations with Network members. The EGN will also add to own developed resources (e.g. Guardianship Assessment Tool and the child-friendly version of the EGN Standards of Guardianship).

4. Encouraging progress and innovation,

through exchange of best practices, incubating solutions to common problems in working groups, with the possibility for study visits between Network members and by improving child participation systems.

Ongoing activities

In 2026-2028, the EGN will organise many activities. The activities can be distinguished between ongoing activities, which the EGN has been running throughout the years, and new plans for the period 2026-2028. Below some examples of both types of activities are included:

- **Network meetings** Two Network meetings will be organised each year in different member states to facilitate mutual learning, exchange of good practices and knowledge sharing between Network members.
- **Online awareness-raising campaigns** about guardianship for UAC in Europe will be developed and disseminated.
- **Provide input to regional consultations and expert discussions** on how guardianship systems can be strengthened, including through better support, supervision and monitoring of guardians. Contribute to EU policy and practical measures which support the inclusion of guardianship in integrated child protection systems.
- **Working groups** Currently the EGN has working groups on the Pact on Migration and Asylum, Child participation, the Guardianship Systems assessment and monitoring, and Cross-border cooperation.
- **Study visits** Network members are invited to initiate a study visit in another member state in the context of mutual learning and sharing of best practices on guardianship national systems or/and strengthening guardianship practices.

New activities 2026-2028

- **Pilot an online consultation board for (former) unaccompanied children** to strengthen child participation within the EGN
- **Online peer network event for guardians:** Up to three online networking events per year will give guardians (including temporary guardians) across Europe the opportunity to connect with others in similar situations and share their experiences.
- **Develop a common resource for guardians for working cross border** within the working group on Cross Border Cooperation.

Intended impact

In the short term, the EGN's activities will strengthen the exchange of knowledge on guardianship, while in the medium and long term, they will contribute to systemic changes that advance equality and inclusion for unaccompanied children. The ultimate beneficiaries of the EGN are therefore unaccompanied children themselves, given that their needs will be better served, and their rights will be protected and promoted through strengthened guardianship throughout Europe.



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