

# PROGUARD



## **Towards safe, effective and consistent ways of delivering high quality, child rights based, and accessible guardianship services: results of ProGuard**

### INTRODUCTION



Within Europe, there is an increasing awareness and focus on the need for robust national systems of guardianship of unaccompanied and separated children from third countries.

There is also an increasing awareness of the need to improve cross border cooperation on cases of children of interest to more than one country (e.g. in Dublin transfer cases, or in cases of trafficking), with the involvement of guardians/guardianship authorities.

At EU level, guardianship has been the focus of attention and resources, in the ongoing legislative reform of the common European asylum system (in which proposals have been made for reinforced provisions), through the recent important guidance on guardianship from the Fundamental Rights Agency and the Commission, and the work of European Asylum Support Office in capacity building initiatives. The EU has funded the development of an European Guardianship Network as well as a range of projects in the area. The Council of Europe is also developing recommendations on guardianship.

Against this background, the ProGuard project aimed to contribute to improve guardianship across Europe. The project was implemented from 2017 to 2019 in eight European countries: Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia and the Netherlands. The project was carried out by Nidos (NL, coordinator) and partners Center for Missing and Exploited Children (HR), Danish Red Cross (DK), National Institute for Health and Welfare (FI), Jugendhilfe Süd-Niedersachsen (DE), METAdrasi (HE), Amici dei Bambini (IT), Orphan's Court Latvia, (LV), Council of the Baltic Sea States, Missing Children Europe and Child Circle. ProGuard was co-funded through the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the Commission's Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUSTICE), which aims to promote and strengthen the rights of children in EU Member States.

### DELIVERABLES



The project delivered an online toolkit for guardians which includes a train-the-trainer programme ([www.guardianstoolkit.eu](http://www.guardianstoolkit.eu)), the Pilot Assessment system (PAS) and a recommendation report. Both the PAS and the recommendation report are available through the website of the European Guardianship Network, [www.egnetwork.eu](http://www.egnetwork.eu)).

The toolkit supports guardians in their daily work. It consists of information, tools and best practices related to guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children and aims at protecting and implementing children's rights for this special group of children in Europe. The toolkit is available in Croatian, Danish, English, Finnish, French, German, Italian and Greek and includes a train-the-trainer programme to enable training on the toolkit in different contexts.

The PAS can be used by Member States and national actors to assess whether their own system fulfils common and transparently defined European standards on guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in migration and reflect on opportunities for progress.

The recommendation report It aims to provide guardians working with unaccompanied and separated children, as well as policymakers and governments, with information on the current state of the art and with recommendations on both how to further develop policies regarding guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in Europe and how these can be used in practice.

## THE RESULTS IN A NUTSHELL

Guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children still has many different faces in the European context. This is also visible in project partner countries. The recommendation report provides country-by-country recommendations on further development of the guardianship systems in these countries. It also provides general recommendations for guardianship systems in Europe, linking them to the related principles used in the PAS tool (see annex).

Most of the children who were involved in the project appeared to understand what guardianship means and were quite satisfied with their guardians and the support they gave them. Children mostly appreciate the fact that they get a guardian and that they have someone who takes care of them. Several children mentioned that they would like to see their guardian more often. Some of the children also mentioned that they would like to stay in contact with their guardian after they turn 18.

The outcomes and deliverables of the ProGuard project were transferred to the European Guardianship Network (EGN) on 23 September 2019. It was agreed that the Network will further discuss the way that the results of ProGuard can contribute to the network's mission to develop safe, effective and consistent ways of delivering high quality, child rights based, and accessible guardianship services in the near future.

Co-funded by the  
REC programme of  
the European Union



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This project is co-funded by the European Union under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014-2020. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use, which may be made of the information contained therein.

## Annex: Overview of the general recommendations for guardianship systems that the project delivered

Recommendation	Related principles from PAS
All unaccompanied children should have a guardian from arrival	Non-discrimination
One authority should be responsible for guardianship	Accountability and responsibility
Law and policy should spell out the details of guardianship	Accountability and responsibility
Guardians should be enabled to give feedback on a regular basis on how the system is working	Accountability and responsibility
Guardians should be enabled to take responsibility for ensuring the child's overall well-being (e.g. safety, education, healthcare and housing)	Independence and impartiality
Durable solutions should be systematic and part of the organisational structure	Child rights centred
Guardians should be systematically involved in needs assessments and durable solutions	Child rights centred
Guardians should ensure that every decision concerning the child is based on a multi-disciplinary needs assessment	Child rights centred
Guardians should have direct contact with the family members of the child more often	Child rights centred
Children should be enabled to benefit from extended support after the age of 18	Child rights centred
Children should be included in regular monitoring of the guardianship system	Child participation
Children should be enabled to provide feedback and to make a complaint	Child participation
Vetting procedures for guardians should be in place	Quality
Guardians should receive appropriate training	Quality
Resources for guardianship should match the needs and rights of children	Quality
Guardians should have sufficient support and time to deal with each child	Quality
There should be a national register or pool of guardians	Sustainability and collaboration
Each child should experience fewer changes of guardian	Sustainability and collaboration
National and local actors working with the guardian should understand and recognise the guardian's role	Sustainability and collaboration
Multi-disciplinary needs and risk assessments for children should be part of the guardianship system	Sustainability and collaboration Child rights centred
Guardians should be involved in the multi-disciplinary needs and risk assessments for children	Sustainability and collaboration Child rights centred