

Transitioning into Adulthood

Improving the transition experience for
applicants for international protection



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for international protection**

January 2026

On 19 January 2022, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) became the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). All references to EASO and to EASO products and bodies should be understood as references to the EUAA.



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About this report

Why was this report created? The mission of the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) is to facilitate and support the activities of EU Member States and associated countries (EU+ countries ⁽¹⁾) in relation to the implementation of the common European asylum system. During EUAA network meetings and other professional exchanges, the determining and reception authorities indicated that they were encountering challenges in providing the relevant support to applicants for international protection approaching the age of 18. This report aims therefore to provide an overview of possible actions to take to strengthen support for this particular group of applicants within the framework of the common European asylum system.

How was this report developed? The content of this mapping report is based on feedback received from EU+ country authorities forming part of four EUAA networks: the Asylum Processes Network, the Network of Dublin Units, the Network of Reception Authorities and the Vulnerability Experts Network. Furthermore, guardians ⁽²⁾, young applicants and young refugees were consulted through the support provided by the European Guardianship Network ⁽³⁾.

Who can benefit from reading this report? The report is primarily intended for those working for and with the asylum and reception authorities, civil-society organisations, policy officers and any other person working or involved in the field of international protection in the EU context.

How to use this report. This report provides a summary of promising practices shared by EU+ countries and Serbia in relation to the topic of working with applicants for international protection close to the age of maturity. The report also provides basic recommendations to the determining and reception authorities on how to strengthen interventions for children transitioning into adulthood.

How does this report relate to national legislation and practice? This is a soft convergence tool. It is not legally binding and reflects practices shared by EUAA network members, first-line officers working in reception and applicants for international protection.

⁽¹⁾ The 27 Member States and Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

⁽²⁾ In this mapping report, the term 'guardian' is used for persons appointed by the authorities to support unaccompanied children throughout the asylum pathway. In some EU+ countries, guardians are referred to as 'representatives'.

⁽³⁾ The network's leadership connected the agency with Red Cross Flanders in Belgium and Hope For Children Convention on the Rights of the Child Policy Center in Cyprus, who enabled this participatory approach to be taken.

How does this report relate to other EUAA tools? This report can be read in conjunction with EUAA guidance relating to applicant children. All EUAA practical tools are publicly available online on the EUAA website: <https://euaa.europa.eu/practical-tools-and-guides>.

Disclaimer

This guide was prepared without prejudice to the principle that only the Court of Justice of the European Union can give an authoritative interpretation of EU law.

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List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
APR	Asylum Procedure Regulation – Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union and repealing Directive 2013/32/EU
EU	European Union
EU+ countries	EU Member States and associated countries
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
RCD	Reception Conditions Directive – Directive (EU) 2024/1346 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child





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Similarly, the support provided by the **European Guardianship Network** and two of their members, Belgian Red Cross Flanders and the **Hope For Children Convention on the Rights of the Child Policy Center** in Cyprus, was very much appreciated. Only thanks to their help was it possible to reach out to guardians and applicant and refugee young people and hear from them on the topic of the transition into adulthood.



Participants in the focus group discussions organised in Belgium.

Source: Belgian Red Cross Flanders



Executive summary

In January 2025, a total of 2 145 unaccompanied children ⁽⁴⁾ applied for international protection for the first time in the European Union (EU), most of them coming from Egypt (380), Syria (360) and Afghanistan (300) ⁽⁵⁾. Across the EU, many unaccompanied children arriving and being registered in a Member State are already close to turning 18 ⁽⁶⁾ and many of them are boys.

At the age of 18, a person obtains adult status in the EU+ countries ⁽⁷⁾, and this applies also to applicants for international protection. In the context of asylum, this transition results in the loss of specific legal protections and procedural guarantees previously available to them. The transition from a child-specific to an adult-oriented system can, in some EU+ countries, take place in a sudden manner. Yet turning 18 does not always reflect a young person's actual level of maturity or their ability to cope with new responsibilities. Hence, this sudden change can place significant pressure both on applicants themselves, who feel overwhelmed and confused, and on service providers, who are trying to manage the complex needs of young adults confronting new legal and social realities ⁽⁸⁾.

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is a complex journey, one that naturally brings both challenges and opportunities. For young asylum seekers and refugees, this period can be even more demanding due to their personal circumstances—having had to leave their homes, often becoming separated from their families, and finding themselves in a new country without a social network to support them in times of need.

Stakeholders such as the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and the European Migration Network highlight, respectively:

- the important role of guardians in preparing children for this transition ⁽⁹⁾;

⁽⁴⁾ The terms 'child' and 'minor' are considered synonyms (covering any person under the age of 18 years), and both terms are used in this document. The preferred term, however, is 'child'. The term 'minor' is used when explicit reference is made to a legal text or specific article that uses it (e.g. the provisions of the EU asylum *acquis*). See the [EUAA website](https://europa.eu/eu-aa) for more on the definition of 'unaccompanied children'.

⁽⁵⁾ Eurostat, '66 800 asylum applications in January 2025', European Commission website, 15 April 2025, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20250415-2>, last accessed 01.12.2025.

⁽⁶⁾ EUAA, 'Data analysis of unaccompanied minors in 2023', *Fact Sheets*, No 29, Valletta, 2024, <https://europa.eu/eu-aa/publications/data-analysis-unaccompanied-minors-2023-fact-sheet-no-29>, last accessed 01.12.2025.

⁽⁷⁾ The 27 EU Member States, plus Norway and Switzerland.

⁽⁸⁾ European Commission, 'Migrant children's transition to adulthood', AMIF-2020-AG-Call-06, EU Funding and Tenders Portal, <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/amif-2020-ag-call-06>, last accessed 01.12.2025.

⁽⁹⁾ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Guardianship Systems for Unaccompanied Children in the European Union – Developments since 2014*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2022, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2022/guardianship-systems-children-update>, last accessed 01.12.2025.



- the challenges arising from and variations in legal frameworks across Member States, which reveal a lack of specific national strategies (European Migration Network) (10).

In addition, calls from international organisations such as the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Council of Europe and non-governmental organisations, as well as growing attention from academia, underscore the need to address the challenges applicants for international protection close to maturity face. Unpreparedness and isolation have emerged as key themes, and disparities in care provision among local authorities intensify these challenges.

This mapping report presents an account of some of the main barriers to providing the necessary support to this population and aims to disseminate some practices shared by participating countries that demonstrate how these can be overcome (11) to ensure that the best interests of the child are considered.

While the report relies mainly on the input of EU+ country authorities, the views of guardians and the voices of young refugees and applicants have been integrated into the report. They complement the information shared by the authorities to create a comprehensive overview of the topic. The young people's feedback focused particularly on needs linked to protection and relevant information (including once they have turned 18) and on how to enhance integration and support physical and emotional well-being throughout the asylum and reception pathway.

By mapping the current landscape and highlighting both gaps and suggestions for a potential way forward, this report aims to support states in reinforcing a coordinated approach to the transition into adulthood for unaccompanied children across Europe and integrating promising practices into their national implementation plans, where applicable.

In summary, the findings suggest that the aim of any administration should be to prevent children from becoming undocumented adults once they reach the age of 18. Hence, our sources pointed out, it is essential that children nearing the age of maturity are adequately prepared for this transition. Clear information on the changes to expect when turning 18 as regards rights and obligations linked to the asylum procedure and other residence permits and information on more general life-related topics (e.g. employment rights, education, housing, health insurance, the culture of the host country) were highlighted as the main needs to be met.

Formalising a phasing-out/transition period for guardians supporting young people during this time was put forward as a possible improvement. This would avoid a cut-off date (the young person's 18th birthday) when all support ceases at once, which only creates distress and a sense of overwhelm and frustration in applicants and consequently can negatively impact their willingness and ability to cooperate with the authorities. Tailored preparation for the

(10) European Migration Network, 'Transition of unaccompanied minors to adulthood', *EMN Inform*, European Commission: Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, Brussels, 2022, <https://emn.ie/publications/transition-of-unaccompanied-minors-to-adulthood-emn-inform/>, last accessed 01.12.2025.

(11) See [Annex 2](#).

transition can help to ensure that these young people can navigate the asylum and reception pathway in an informed manner and can help to foster integration.

Ensuring stable accommodation and the ability to create a social network and enabling participation in regular beneficial activities, including education and employment, were also seen as crucial. The importance of family tracing and family reunification opportunities (12), including as a means of strengthening resilience, was highlighted by all involved.

Finally, it was stressed that authorities should also anticipate the need for some basic support provision not only for those who arrive close to maturity but also for those who arrive aged 18 or slightly above. This group of young adults normally do not receive any additional attention but nevertheless struggle with adjusting to their new reality similarly to their peers who are only a few months younger.

(12) See 'Conclusion and way forward'.

Legal framework

The rights of the child are protected by international law and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (13). As signatories to the UNCRC, EU Member States must respect children's rights, protect children and fulfil their obligations in accordance with the convention.

Article 3 of the UNCRC refers to the obligation of signatories to ensure that, in all actions concerning children, the child's best interests are a primary consideration, which is likewise an obligation under Article 24 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (14). Both texts clarify that this applies whether such actions are taken by public authorities or private institutions. Furthermore, Article 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union establishes the protection and promotion of the rights of the child as a key objective for the EU (15).

While EU law does not offer specific safeguards relating to the transition into adulthood (yet), the European Commission has addressed this issue in two key documents that reflect a growing awareness of the challenges faced by young migrants at this time in their lives. The Commission, through its communication on the protection of children in migration (16) and the 2021–2027 action plan on integration and inclusion (17), has highlighted the need for durable solutions and acknowledges that recently arrived children, particularly unaccompanied children, may lack the skills to fully integrate into society, especially with regard to education and employment. During this transitional phase, therefore, young people need guidance on and support to undertake continuing education, including accelerated education and vocational training opportunities.

The Commission encourages Member States to cooperate, share good practices and provide financial support for integration projects, emphasising the inclusion of unaccompanied children. Furthermore, it advocates for proactive measures such as educational support, vocational training, the youth guarantee (18) and coaching and mentoring to facilitate a smoother transition from school to work and into adulthood.

(13) Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/crc.pdf>, last accessed 01.12.2025.

(14) Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (OJ C 364, 18.12.200, p. 1, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2000:364:FULL>), last accessed 01.12.2025.

(15) Consolidated version of the [Treaty on European Union](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=oj:JOC_2012_326_R_TOC), (OJ C 326, 26.10.2012, p. 1, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=oj:JOC_2012_326_R_TOC), last accessed 01.12.2025.

(16) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – The protection of children in migration, COM(2017) 211 final of 12 April 2017, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52017DC0211>, last accessed 01.12.2025.

(17) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Action plan on integration and inclusion 2021–2027, COM(2020) 758 final of 24 November 2020, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52020DC0758>, last accessed 01.12.2025.

(18) European Commission, 'The reinforced youth guarantee', European Commission website, accessed 12 September 2025, https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/eu-employment-policies/youth-employment-support/reinforced-youth-guarantee_en, last accessed 01.12.2025.

The pact on migration and asylum, implementation of which begins in June 2026, introduces some new considerations that are relevant when discussing the topic of asylum-seeking children close to the age of majority who arrive in EU+ countries.

Throughout the pact texts, the need to adhere to EU law (including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU) and international law (including the UNCRC) is consistently reaffirmed. The pact on migration and asylum emphasises the obligation of all authorities involved in the initial screening of third-country nationals and throughout the entire asylum procedure and reception pathway to systematically consider the best interests of the child in their decision-making and procedures. This obligation relates also to those children who are close to maturity⁽¹⁹⁾. The pact also mandates that children who have reached the age of majority while in the reception system be guaranteed continued access to secondary education and to ongoing specific health treatment⁽²⁰⁾.

⁽¹⁹⁾ See [Annex 1](#).

⁽²⁰⁾ Refer to Article 16(1) of Directive (EU) 2024/1346 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (OJ L, 2024/1346, 22.5.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1346/oj>) (the RCD) ('Member States shall not withdraw secondary education for the sole reason that the minor has reached the age of majority') and Article 22(2) of the RCD ('Member States shall ensure that the minor children of applicants and applicants who are minors receive the same type of health care as provided to their own nationals who are minors. Member States shall ensure that specific treatment provided in accordance with this Article which started before the minor reached the age of majority and is considered to be necessary, is received without interruption or delay after the minor reaches the age of majority'), last accessed 01.12.2025.



Methodology

A dedicated survey was developed and was disseminated at the end of December 2023 through four European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) networks: the Asylum Processes Network, the Network of Dublin Units, the Network of Reception Authorities and the Vulnerability Experts Network.

Responses were received from professionals from **19 EU+ countries** ⁽²¹⁾ and **Serbia**, who shared their insights on the topic of the transition into adulthood of unaccompanied minors. Their responses were collected in a dataset for analysis.

The areas addressed by the survey included legal frameworks, the asylum procedure, reception measures and support services, age assessment, education, employment, efforts linked to meaningful participation by children in the asylum procedure and in reception, family tracing and family reunification.

The responses were received during the first quarter of 2024. They were analysed, and the results were complemented with additional efforts to gather and enrich information on the topic. In addition to the survey, during 2024 the EUAA conducted:

- **key informant interviews** with guardians working with Red Cross Flanders in Belgium, engaging with a total of nine guardians (five male and four female);
- **focus group discussions** with applicant and refugee young people to explore the views of unaccompanied children (two in Belgium and two in Cyprus), engaging with a total of 26 young people (7 girls and 19 boys);
- a **secondary literature review** to add further relevant information to the findings ⁽²²⁾.

The focus group discussions were facilitated by active members of the European Guardianship Network and supported by interpreters to enable meaningful and safe participation by the young people. The participants originated from Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Somalia, South Africa and Syria.

Those interviewed were young refugees or applicants who had already had their personal interview. This was decided on to avoid raising any expectations in young people who had yet to be interviewed.

⁽²¹⁾ AT, BE, CH, DE, DK, EL, FI, FR, HR, IT, LT, LU, NL, NO, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK.

⁽²²⁾ Refer to 'Key reference works'.

Children's and guardians' perspectives on the discussions

Many young refugees and applicants expressed genuine appreciation for being given the opportunity to participate in the discussions. They noted that taking part not only deepened their understanding of the asylum procedure but also helped them better prepare for potential challenges ahead. The discussions offered opportunities for learning, not only for applicants but also for guardians. This dedicated space and time to talk and the guiding questions touching upon the children's experiences growing up back home allowed guardians to gain a fuller understanding of the young people they support. The realities and stories shared offered guardians important insights into the children's lives before arriving in Europe, helping them form a more holistic and human picture of the individuals standing before them.



Key findings

This chapter presents the main findings from the survey, complemented by the voices of guardians and refugee and applicant young people, where relevant. It is divided into two sections, covering the reception and asylum pathways separately.

Respondents working for the reception and determining authorities came from 17 EU+ countries ⁽²³⁾ and Serbia. In addition, professionals working for six non-governmental and international organisations in six Member States ⁽²⁴⁾ contributed.

Overall, most participants responding to the survey stated that their country had no dedicated legal provision covering the transition into adulthood of applicant children. When the child turns 18, in most countries that participated in the survey, the procedural guarantees that they benefited from as minors end.

When it comes to the provision of accommodation, the situation is slightly different, and certain types of aid can be continued when this is requested through the social welfare office, for example. Participants therefore see a strong and established coordination mechanism with the social welfare authorities as beneficial.

The active involvement and participation of children linked to decisions affecting them, varies somewhat by country. While in some countries the child transitioning into adulthood is directly involved as much as possible through an ongoing dialogue, in others their direct involvement depends on the age, development and maturity of the child. Hence, where the child does not directly participate due to their very young age or other personal circumstances, the child's guardian is involved to ensure that they are heard.

It was highlighted by many respondents that important decisions, such as if a child is relocated or with whom the child will live, are normally taken only after assessing the best interests of the child.

When children arrive alone, the family tracing process is prioritised. While it can happen that tracing ceases if the child turns 18 during the process, many respondents mentioned that if family tracing is initiated when the child is under 18 the process will be continued until the result is received. However, family reunification for young people who have turned 18 may become more challenging and is not always guaranteed.

The protection measures and support services offered to child applicants in reception centres vary based on factors such as their age and the status of their application and are provided by different stakeholders.

⁽²³⁾ AT, BE, CH, DE, DK, EL, FI, HR, IT, LT, LU, NL, NO, PL, SE, SI, SK.

⁽²⁴⁾ AT, DK, EL, FI, FR, PT.

Support provision during the reception pathway



Source: [gettyimages](#)

Many young people arriving in Europe face a combination of legal, financial and social barriers that significantly limit their well-being and integration, particularly when transitioning into adulthood and when they have no family or community network to turn to for support.

Stable and suitable accommodation and support from an early point in their stay is a cornerstone of successful reception and integration for unaccompanied children. Without adequate housing and guidance, the risks of psychological distress, social exclusion, health concerns and exploitation increase, and consequently the young person's ability to pursue education, vocational training or employment is reduced.

Most countries stated that all measures rolled out to provide support to unaccompanied children make the **best interests of the child** a primary consideration. The most common measures implemented for applicants under 18 years are discussed below.

Common support measures for applicants

Guardianship

Respondents indicated that in some countries the representative (or guardian) identified to support the child is not necessarily affiliated with the immigration authorities but may be a professional representative who works for the reception centre or a relative or someone



else entirely. The final appointment of this person must, however, be approved by the relevant authority.

Age-appropriate accommodation

Across the countries responding to the survey, different accommodation models have been developed to meet the needs of unaccompanied children. Foster care, most often used for younger child applicants, offers a family-like environment and emotional support. Although formal arrangements typically end at 18, some foster families continue to provide informal support.

Shared accommodation is another common model, with variations including shared housing for local and foreign young people, intergenerational housing with elderly residents or arrangements with mentors who have successfully navigated the transition to adulthood themselves.

Independent or semi-independent living arrangements, sometimes with other young people, allow the young adults to learn practical skills such as cooking, cleaning and paying bills while receiving guidance from social workers or educators. Temporary housing programmes, offered by housing organisations or social services, provide short-term accommodation with structured support to prepare residents for long-term independent living.

Centres hosting children are usually smaller in terms of size (number of applicants per centre), to make it possible to better monitor the needs of and potential risks to residents. Furthermore, age-appropriate accommodation facilities also take into account children's physical and emotional needs and, besides providing access to a playroom and first aid station, appoint specially trained staff. Some countries reported that their residential youth welfare facilities are required to obtain an operating licence to allow them to host and care for child applicants.

A few Member States reported that unaccompanied children can be placed with an adult relative in an adult reception centre, if the guardian considers it appropriate. The same applies to joint placement of siblings; the guardian assesses how best to keep them together in age-appropriate accommodation.

The placement of young applicants in age-appropriate facilities can also take place after they have turned 18 if there is a corresponding need. The continuation of support may vary depending on the outcome of the asylum procedure and the age of the child. For instance, in some Member States, support ends as soon as the child turns 18, even if the outcome of the procedure is still pending, while others provide transition support until a decision is made. Where a negative decision is received while the child is still a minor, some countries ensure that a minimum level of support is continued, which might cover basic needs such as housing, financial assistance and legal support. Examples from Greece and Belgium presented in [Annex 2](#) illustrate how some Member States have established frameworks for semi-independent living or conditional continued reception measure after unaccompanied children reach majority.

Children on mentors and role models

In the focus group discussions, young applicants shared what the concept of 'adulthood' means to them in their own contexts, noting that it is determined not just by age but also by responsibilities and biological changes. For instance, one Syrian participant said adulthood started at 18, while someone from Somalia mentioned 15, based on religion.

Some explained that in their country of origin there is usually no formal preparation for adulthood. Instead, they learn by watching family members, relatives or community role models. In Europe, they continue to rely on parents, when possible, as well as guardians, teachers and reception staff. These role models are extremely important in showing how to handle challenges, stay resilient and work towards personal goals.

Educational opportunities and language courses

Many children arriving do not have proof of any previous education; if they do, it is not always possible to have their qualifications recognised in the host country. Respondents pointed out that, for children of primary and secondary school age, their knowledge is assessed even if they do not possess a diploma or any certificate in education. For those children who have missed several years of education, a few countries provide accelerated learning programmes; others offer bridging years for children who have recently moved to the country and need to reach a certain level in required subjects including the country's language; these bridging years, however, are not the same as an accelerated learning programme. While accelerated learning programmes help a person to catch up with years of education lost, bridging years focus on specific content a child might need support with to enable them to continue their education (maths, a language, etc.). Sweden, for instance, offers bridging years to help recently arrived children reach the required level in key subjects before joining regular classes.

From the feedback received, language courses seem to be the most flexible and accessible programmes for applicants. In Denmark, children and young people with a positive decision are offered intensive Danish language and cultural courses to promote rapid integration, while Greece has established preparatory reception classes focused on language learning as a gateway to mainstream schooling (see [Annex 2](#)).

In most countries, the age at which mandatory school attendance ends is 16. In some Member States, young people are permitted to finish the school year even after they turn 18.

However, once a young person has reached the age of 18, there is often no formalised system in place to support their continuation in education. Early planning and bridging measures are necessary to prevent disruption and help unaccompanied minors remain engaged and achieve school qualifications.



Children on housing, employment and education

Many minors in the focus group discussions saw finding housing and employment after turning 18 as a major concern. They considered that the difficulties are compounded by a lack of formal guidance. Guardians and teenagers interviewed both stressed the need for **continued support after applicants turn 18**, particularly focused on housing and employment, and the need for the provision of relevant advice on how to obtain, for example, a rental agreement or a job that is realistic when taking into account the applicant's personal circumstances such as educational background.

The teenagers also highlighted the importance of a **stable and secure living environment** in reception centres.

Access to education was described as a very important factor in their well-being. Education gives them structure and a sense of progress toward their goals.

Psychological support considered essential, especially for those struggling with trauma or experiencing heightened stress due to uncertainty about their future, social isolation, or similar challenges.

Employment

In general, respondents from most countries stated that the minimum working age was 15 or 16 years and that the same provisions of the law applied to applicants as to children born in the country. This means that from the age of 15 or 16 young people are allowed to work to a limited extent (e.g. part time). There are specific rules and restrictions covering young people under the age of 18 to ensure their protection (e.g. working at night is not allowed). However, respondents from some countries indicated that it is more challenging for third-country nationals who are children to obtain part-time work than it is for children born in the country. This is important to highlight, as respondents observed that slightly more teenagers expressed an interest in working than in continuing with school.

The findings also suggest that support for young applicants should have a stronger focus on vocational training, apprenticeships and mentoring that build practical skills and work experience. Closer cooperation between reception authorities and employers and employment services can help to facilitate access to the labour market for young applicants, as illustrated by initiatives in Germany and Sweden that link training and internships with integration pathways and by employment service programmes in Sweden and Denmark (see [Annex 2](#)).

Recreational and psychosocial support activities

Recreational and psychosocial support activities are widely provided to promote children's well-being and development. The nature of such support activities, however, is project based: once funding ends, activities typically cease, which can disrupt continuity of support and limit the long-term benefits for those involved.

Information provision

The authorities involved in providing information to child applicants vary from country to country. Information is provided not only by the asylum authorities, including legal counsellors and the guardian, but also by the staff in the reception centre, who might be social workers employed by the authorities or people working for civil-society organisations. In a few cases, the information is provided only to the guardian or parents and not to the minor himself or herself. The information provided mainly covers the asylum procedure, related rights and obligations, and details about possible accommodation for the applicants.

However, a few respondents also reported that they proactively provided minors during reception with information focusing on broader life skills they will need as they grow up. This includes guidance on safe social media use, relationships and sexuality, stress management, budgeting, societal norms and values, and prevention of addictions (e.g. to video games, drugs and alcohol). In addition, they inform them about personal risks such as trafficking, exploitation and vulnerability to abuse. Some countries do this by providing individual counselling that includes administrative guidance, access to healthcare and support with personal development (25).

Guardians on information provision

Guardians highlighted information provision as a major factor in **better preparing applicant children for adulthood**. This is relevant throughout the reception and asylum pathway. This preparation should follow a **clear and guided transition plan**. As one guardian stated:

It's important to prepare them for adulthood, max. 6 months before they turn 18. Depending on how old the person is when (s)he gets a guardian, the preparation can be done way before that; it's an ever-evolving process which needs to be dealt with as soon as the guardian is appointed.

Guardians also mentioned that topics such as sexual and reproductive health and sexual behaviour in the context of healthy relationships more generally, addiction, and values and norms in the host country are all important but are not always systematically addressed in the reception setting.

They stressed the importance of building trust in order to discuss these sensitive subjects, especially where cultural taboos are an issue. Conversations about **healthy behaviour, safety and risks** like trafficking or transgressive conduct are sometimes initiated by guardians. Some use a structured checklist to ensure they cover a range of life domains in conversations with a young person before they reach adulthood (see Belgian Red Cross Flanders, [Annex 2](#)).

(25) See [Annex 2](#).



Guardians noted that, while schools and reception centres play a role in informing young people about their rights and obligations, there is no mechanism to ensure that young people receive standardised support. In the end, it is frequently the guardian who ensures that key administrative information is actually understood. This guidance includes practical advice, such as how to organise documents, the purpose of health insurance, and how to manage essential appointments. Guardians also highlighted that when information is provided only through materials like brochures, young people do not always fully comprehend it, nor do they consistently keep or refer back to the materials. To make information provision more effective, a simple complementary personal discussion with a guardian or staff member can significantly increase understanding and awareness.

Access to healthcare

Vaccinations and other health services are accessible for applicants under the age of 18. Respondents noted that minors are given priority and therefore generally do not have to wait to access healthcare, similar to citizens.

Legal counselling and other forms of technical advice

In various Member States, legal counselling to clarify procedural steps, access to advice on how to make complaints, return counselling, initial psychosocial counselling and similar are available to help children understand their rights and navigate the asylum and reception pathway.

Depending on the context, in some countries, third-country nationals who are close to finishing their education may be supported through the transition period as part of measures to promote and protect the rights of the child. And, while asylum and reception authorities may not have any guarantees in place covering the transition period, the local authorities may have in place provisions concerning housing for children with refugee status that continue to apply after they have reached the age of 18.

Main challenges noted by reception authorities

The abrupt change in living conditions when an applicant turns 18 is particularly challenging. Assessing a young person's level of maturity and independence during this transition is equally complex, as it depends heavily on each applicant's personal circumstances.

The requirement to suddenly live independently, a reduction in the support provided, a lack of resources, a lack knowledge about how to take care of practical everyday issues such as getting health insurance, a driving licence and housing (including social housing), and also having an incomplete education – can significantly increase stress levels. Incomplete education can further exacerbate these difficulties. Together, these factors can negatively affect a young person's well-being and hinder their ability to continue integrating into the host community.

Becoming an adult also means making certain decisions for the future and dealing with new obligations and situations. During this period, young applicants may not yet have the capacity to make decisions for themselves without any guidance, and if they do not yet have a final decision on their application, this can further limit their options.

The most **common challenges** that respondents noted are outlined below.

Age-appropriate accommodation

Access to age-appropriate accommodation, which can include apartment-style units, dedicated shelters or family based-care, is not always possible. When age-appropriate accommodation cannot be found for a young applicant, difficulties may arise in ensuring ongoing supervision and specialised support (e.g. by a guardian).

Guardianship

During their stay in the initial reception centre, unaccompanied children often lack holistic support and the care they need. A lack of guardians and a lack of educational opportunities were particularly mentioned by respondents as obstacles to supporting children meaningfully upon their arrival. Respondents stated that the timely appointment of a guardian was often a challenge, with expected waiting times of as much as several months.

The participants also noted that, if there is any doubt about age, a permanent guardian may not always be appointed until the age assessment has been concluded and the individual is confirmed to be a child.

Respondents highlighted this as a potential challenge, since under the Pact on Migration and Asylum, authorities have a maximum of 15 working days after the asylum application is made to appoint a permanent guardian for an unaccompanied child.

Assessing maturity

Guardians discussed the difficulty of assessing maturity in a consistent way. Some young people can exercise their rights and carry out their duties independently, but some are not yet mature enough for that. In practice, some guardians therefore remain available informally after a young person has turned 18 if they still need assistance. Guardians noted that this continuity of support, although outside any formal mandate, is often essential to reduce the risk of challenging situations.

Access to employment

The following points were raised in the responses to the survey:

- Limited language proficiency and lack of work or professional experience can hinder young applicants from securing employment.
- Scarcity of job opportunities for third-country nationals and insufficient guidance on accessing the labour market (e.g., obtaining a tax or social security number, opening



a bank account, or navigating administrative procedures) restrict career entry; career guidance initiatives are also limited.

- Short-term work permits often last only a few months, creating repeated administrative burdens for third-country nationals and employers, and generating employment uncertainty.
- Adapting to European work culture can be challenging, for example, adhering to structured schedules and workplace norms.
- Asylum procedures can create time pressures, requiring applicants to complete vocational training within deadlines that do not always align with the procedure's timeline.
- Discrimination or nationality-based preferences exist, with some applicants often advantaged compared to others, particularly those with darker skin.
- Women arriving from countries where female participation in paid work is traditionally low often face challenges in integrating into and accessing the labour market.

Discrimination

Respondents were aware of discrimination based on immigration status or ethnicity, and in particular of some landlords refusing to rent to applicants for international protection or refugees or imposing higher rents and stricter requirements on them. When public housing or housing support services are available, eligibility can be restricted based on age, residence status or lack of documentation. Cultural unfamiliarity with housing systems, combined with the language barrier, further complicates the process of finding accommodation.

Continuing education

Lastly, barriers to continuing education also arise during the transition to adulthood: those turning 18 may lose the right to remain in the reception system or be relocated, disrupting schooling or vocational training. This not only hinders the young person's social inclusion and language learning but also undermines the investment made by both the minor and the host community in their education.

Procedural guarantees during the asylum pathway



Source: [gettyimages](#)

The majority of respondents indicated that in their country there was a **cut-off age**, set at the age of maturity (18 years), at which procedural guarantees attached to minority status ceased to apply. According to the respondents, some young applicants, although they may have turned 18, are not yet mature enough to navigate the asylum procedure on their own.

The responses show that the **procedural guarantees** available to child applicants close to maturity during the asylum procedure vary across countries. The key safeguards discussed below were mentioned by most of the respondents to the survey.

The support of a guardian

The **presence of a guardian** during the personal interview is **not merely procedural**, it is essential to support the child. Without a trusted adult by their side, children are at risk of under-reporting critical elements of their case or failing to understand their rights.

In the key informant interviews, the guardians agreed that, where possible, they should continue to play a role in supporting applicants as guardians after they turn 18 or transition into the role of legal representative. According to them, the extension of support to those aged 18–21 would be effective in enabling the young adults to reach a higher level of independence.



This would allow for a more gradual transition. They stressed that this **extension should not be automatic but based on individual needs** and would be particularly helpful for those without alternative support networks or with pending asylum procedures.

Common procedural guarantees for applicants

Legal representation and guardianship

The appointment of a guardian is often one of the earliest protections afforded to an applicant under the age of 18. Most countries provide a guardian to an unaccompanied child from an early point in the asylum procedure, since the appointment should be made well before the personal interview (²⁶). The presence of a guardian and a lawyer during the personal interview of an unaccompanied child is mandatory (²⁷). For children accompanied by an adult who is responsible for them, the presence of a lawyer is required but that of a guardian is not mandatory (²⁸). The majority of responding countries provide a guardian if the unaccompanied child is likely to reach the age of 18 before a decision at first instance is taken (²⁹). Most respondents indicated, however, that the support provided by the guardian is not extended if the applicant turns 18 before a decision on their application is issued.

Respondents from some countries noted that, although guardianship ceases at age 18, the guardian may continue to provide informal support on a voluntary basis; in other countries (³⁰), this support is formally extended until a decision is issued. The person may continue in the role of legal representative once the applicant reaches adulthood, unless the applicant renounces the right to such a representative.

Right to information

The findings indicate that information is provided in a child-friendly manner and in a language that the child understands. Respondents mentioned that information is provided to applicant children as early as possible (at the point of the registration) to ensure that they understand their rights and obligations. A guardian should be appointed immediately to support the effective transfer of information to the child applicant. Some countries have invested in producing information materials, have made these available to applicants, including unaccompanied children, and have also published them online for easier access (see [Annex 2](#)).

(²⁶) See Article 25(1)(a) of Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection (recast) or the pact on asylum and migration and Article 23(2)(a) of Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union and repealing Directive 2013/32/EU (the Asylum Procedure Regulation (APR)).

(²⁷) Note also the obligation under the upcoming pact: Article 23(2)(a) and (b) and Article 23(8) of the APR specify that the representative of the unaccompanied child and the legal advisor should be present.

(²⁸) Note also the obligation under the upcoming pact (Article 22(4) of the APR).

(²⁹) AT, BE, CH, DK, EL, FI, FR, HR, IT, LT, NL, NO, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK.

(³⁰) AT, CH, SK.

Generally, respondents mentioned that child applicants receive information on the following topics related to asylum and reception:

- the asylum procedure and the Dublin procedure and how to appeal against a rejection and file a complaint,
- alternative forms of residence permits (including those based on humanitarian grounds),
- family tracing,
- life in a reception centre,
- the guardianship service,
- the age assessment (where applicable),
- trafficking in human beings (where applicable),
- information for girls and women in the asylum procedure.

Interview techniques

In some countries, interviews are conducted in interview rooms specially prepared for children (child-friendly furniture and layout e.g. smaller chairs and tables appropriate for children's size, some toys etc). Furthermore, the interviews are carried out by specialised officers, trained in communicating with children. In a few countries, the age of the applicant affects the way hearings are arranged and conducted.

- In the case of the Netherlands, for instance, younger children are interviewed in specially adapted settings and older children in standard rooms, with adjustments based on age and maturity (for other practices, see [Annex 2](#)).
- Respondents from other countries noted that, for younger children or children lacking education, expectations about the information that will be provided in the interview are lower. In addition, a child's social background and psychological and emotional development are taken into account during the interview. The interview is assessed and the decision made considering the age and level of maturity of the child.
- Age can also be a turning point in a child's participation in the interview; for example, as indicated by one country, 15- to 18-year-olds have the legal right to speak alongside their parents/guardians.

Priority treatment

Applications by unaccompanied children are prioritised for decision-making ⁽³¹⁾.

⁽³¹⁾ BE, CH, HR, IT.



Age assessment

Where an age assessment procedure is used to assess if the applicant is a child or an adult, the applicant is treated as a child until the assessment is complete (presumption of minority) in most countries⁽³²⁾ that participated in the survey. Respondents also stated that the date of birth given in a document presented by an applicant presumed to be a child, such as their passport, birth certificate, ID card, previous refugee identification card or visa, are normally accepted.

Access to legal counselling

In addition to the support provided by the guardian, access to legal counselling, where needed, is seen as of benefit to not only the asylum-seeking child but also those conducting the interview, since a minor who has received legal advice is informed and prepared when they attend the personal interview.

Respondents also noted that, while children accompanied by their parents are covered by the parents' request for asylum, there may be circumstances in which children can be heard and apply for asylum separately, if the child is old enough to present his or her case and wishes to do so.

Dublin procedure

During the **Dublin procedure**, in rare cases, an applicant who was a child at the time of lodging his or her application reaches adulthood. While coming of age does not impact the Dublin procedure, changes may occur in the rights they are entitled to after the applicant has turned 18⁽³³⁾. While no special or additional procedural guarantees were reported, the general guarantees, such as a representative to assist the unaccompanied child and the requirement for the best interests of the minor to be taken into consideration during the procedure⁽³⁴⁾, were emphasised.

It was pointed out that a problem can arise where information on the applicant's date of birth varies from one state to another and the applicant moves from one state to another without any **age assessment** being made in either state. Problems may also arise when the outcome of an age assessment is contested or doubted.

Furthermore, respondents noted that following up on outcomes of a **best interests assessment** once the individual is no longer a child can be challenging, as can the fact that the receiving Member State may reject the incoming request on the grounds that the person has transitioned into adulthood.

⁽³²⁾ AT, BE, CH, DE, DK, EL, FI, FR, HR, IT, LT, LU, NL, NO, PL, PT, RS, SE, SI, SK.

⁽³³⁾ According to Article 7(2) of Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person (recast) (the Dublin III Regulation), the situation obtaining at the time the applicant first lodged the application is decisive, meaning that coming of age does not alter the criteria applied for responsibility determination.

⁽³⁴⁾ Article 6(2) of the Dublin III Regulation.

In addition, respondents indicated that effectively supporting individuals with different kinds of **vulnerabilities** that do not cease when the person turns 18 can also constitute a problem.

Most countries participating did not report any challenges linked to transitioning into adulthood during the Dublin procedure, due to the rather low number of relevant cases processed.

Main challenges noted by determining authorities

Respondents to the survey reported several challenges relating to serving applicants transitioning into adulthood.

Information provision on the asylum system

Children often struggle to fully understand the asylum system. To ensure full understanding, registration officers and other personnel in charge of information provision on the asylum procedure should adopt a more explanatory approach, using contextually relevant examples to help children better grasp the asylum procedure as a whole. Young adults often still need additional support when they take on full responsibility for their procedure and should be given clear guidance on who to turn to for assistance.

Time and deadlines

The short time available for the examination procedure was reported as a twofold challenge, since it affects case officers' ability, first, to build a relationship of trust with the child applicant and, second, to adequately explain the procedure and related rights. This can result in misconceptions on the part of the young applicant about what the procedure entails.

Family tracing

For unaccompanied children close to maturity, there may be little or no time left for them to trace family members and/or apply for family reunification. This issue is exacerbated by potential delays in registering/lodging applications and conducting interviews, during which applicants sometimes turn 18.

Risk assessment

As far as the decision on their international protection application is concerned, if the applicant has turned 18 at the time of issuing the decision, this is taken into account when assessing the risk and the well-founded fear of serious harm in the future. Hence, the reasons for protection may no longer be present for them due to their age.



Case officers in the context of the personal interview

Other challenges raised by respondents that particularly affect case officers working with this target group were linked to a potential emotional dilemma for case officers (35). It is difficult to set aside the fact that, even though the young applicant is an adult now, the events he or she experienced in his or her country took place when the person was still a minor. Case officers may find themselves in a dilemma about how to conduct a risk assessment (36). The risk assessment is future-oriented and is based on the information available, including country of origin information, at the time when the decision is made. The fact that the applicant was a child when the initial facts happened may or may not be relevant for the risk assessment, depending on the specificities of the case.

Lastly, and with regard to young people who arrived as children with family members, it was mentioned that delays in the procedure can be a concern. For accompanied children, if the grounds for international protection were previously presented by the child's parents or even if the applicant was heard separately when he or she was a child, this may not be sufficient when the application of the child – now an adult – is considered on its merits. In other words, the need to hold a separate personal interview may arise because the applicant has turned 18. This can delay the process.

Heavy caseloads for guardians

Guardians report that, in terms of preparation, it is important to explain to the asylum-seeking child the asylum procedure and the steps that it entails. This requires guardians to adapt the information to the minor's **age, level of maturity, education and background**, and some of the information may need to be repeated in different formats. Guardians expressed concern that children often do not retain the information effectively, due to stress, low literacy levels, or limited digital access.

Based on their experience, guardians observe that children can **misunderstand key procedural elements**, such as the potential consequences of a negative decision. It is therefore essential to ensure that the child fully understands the procedure.

However, guardians stressed that caseloads are often too heavy to allow for in-depth preparation with each child. While some young people benefit from external services, guardians mentioned that the current **demand far exceeds availability** (37).

(35) See EUAA, *Mental health and well-being of applicants for international protection: Part III – Toolbox to support those working in the first line*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2024, <https://euaa.europa.eu/publications/mental-health-well-being-applicants-part-iii-toolbox>, p. 31, which provides information for case officers on how to engage with applicants who present with trauma and therefore have difficulties in presenting a coherent story in the asylum interview. See also EUAA, *The Job of the Case Officer*, 2024, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, <https://euaa.europa.eu/publications/job-case-officer>, last accessed 01.12.2025.

(36) See EUAA, *Practical Guide on Evidence and Risk Assessment*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2024, <https://euaa.europa.eu/publications/practical-guide-evidence-and-risk-assessment>, last accessed 01.12.2025.

(37) The RCD, under Article 27(1)(b) and Article 27(7), specifies that the number of unaccompanied minors per guardian/representative is to be no more than 30, with a maximum of 50 in the event of a disproportionate number of applications made.

Anxiety among young people

Like any teenager, asylum applicants face the challenge of balancing the opportunities and responsibilities of adulthood, particularly when they lack a strong support network of family or friends. One teenager stated, “It gives us stress that we do not have our guardian and social assistant after the age of 18. Who will help us? Where can we go with our questions? We do not know yet!”





Conclusion and way forward



Source: [gettyimages](#)

It becomes apparent, when looking at the findings from the EUAA survey, the literature review and the contributions from guardians and unaccompanied children, that the current asylum and reception systems across many countries face some challenges in adequately supporting young applicants in their transition to adulthood. Interestingly, the authorities, guardians and unaccompanied children are largely in agreement on the concerns and needs in this regard.

Concerns raised include:

- the **immediate loss of procedural guarantees** attached to a child's age, including the support of a guardian, when the child turns 18;
- **transitioning from child-specific to adult reception** and the negative impact this can have on the overall well-being of the young person;
- the **reduction or abrupt cessation of support** provided by the guardian;
- the **expectation that the young applicant**, having transitioned into adulthood, will **understand and take responsibility for the asylum procedure** despite lacking relevant information on their rights and obligations;



- **difficulties** for young applicants in **understanding the implications of turning 18**, particularly regarding asylum status, the impact of delays on family reunification, the possible rejection of the application and the Dublin procedure;
- **disruption in access** to education, training opportunities, or employment.
- **lack of access** to free legal aid for obtaining a new type of residence permit.
- **reduced access** to healthcare and other essential services;
- administrative **challenges in family reunification** and difficulties in building social networks;
- heavy caseloads for guardians, **limiting their capacity to adequately prepare children** approaching adulthood;
- situations where **children arriving alone do not seek asylum**, either because they are unaware of the benefits of international protection or because **they claim to be adults**, believing that adulthood brings greater rights and advantages.

Some of the current practices shared by the respondents to the survey ⁽³⁸⁾ and the feedback received from guardians and applicant young people can be seen as contributing to a more supportive transition period for applicants in Europe close to maturity. Hence, addressing the challenges calls for a comprehensive approach that recognises the needs of young applicants as they approach maturity as well as soon after they have reached it ⁽³⁹⁾.

Based on the analysis of the findings and the practices shared, six key areas for improvement have emerged. Suggestions for each of these areas are outlined below. If implemented systematically, they have the potential to significantly improve the transition experience of unaccompanied applicant children (Figure 1).

⁽³⁸⁾ Refer to [Annex 2](#).

⁽³⁹⁾ See also [Annex 1](#) for more on the provisions introduced under the pact on migration and asylum that emphasise the need for safeguards and procedural guarantees for children (e.g. the importance of the best interests of the child, access to education, employment and healthcare, to mention a few).



Figure 1: Facilitating a supportive transition into adulthood for applicants for international protection



1. Considering the best interests of the child

The best interests of the child is a fundamental principle that is to be considered throughout the entire asylum and reception pathway. In all decisions made in the absence of parents, best-interests considerations for applicants approaching maturity should be central, taking into account their safety, well-being, and both immediate and long-term future.

For example, making applications by unaccompanied children a priority means ensuring a child-centred approach, with the child's best interests in mind ⁽⁴⁰⁾. While timely examination of applications is important, it is equally crucial to consider and assess the child's overall personal circumstances, including their physical, emotional, and psychological capacity to participate in the asylum procedure at that time.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ In its General Comment No 6 (2005) on the treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child provided guidance on how to take into consideration the best interests of the child as a mainstream rule of procedure through specific procedural guarantees (paragraph 66).

2. Structured pre-transition support and a coordinated phasing-out of guardianship

A dedicated transition preparation programme would ideally begin **at least six months** before the 18th birthday of an applicant child. Such support could include tailored information sessions on:

- **the asylum procedure**, including the potential changes to expect in terms of rights and obligations once the child has turned 18 (refer to [Annex 2](#) for national-level practices shared by respondents).
- **support and services** that may no longer be accessible after the child turns 18 and how to access alternative support (e.g. through social services), where applicable and needed.
- **practical life skills**, such as how to stay safe and healthy, sexual and reproductive health, the norms and values of the host community, how to get insurance etc. and psychosocial support, adapted to the developmental level of each child.

In addition to cultural background and age, **gender** may influence the types of support, engagement strategies, or communication approaches required.

To ensure an effective transition, support from guardians for applicants in need or with vulnerabilities should be formally extended. This would not constitute an extension of guardianship per se, but rather the provision of assistance based on the young person's needs. Based on the data collected for this mapping report, such support should continue until the age of 21⁽⁴⁾.

Continuity in youth care and psychosocial support, where appropriate, can be especially beneficial for vulnerable applicants, such as those experiencing psychological distress or those with specific healthcare needs.

Additionally, extending certain information sessions and tailored support to applicants who arrive as young adults (18 or 19 years old) could be valuable, as they may face similar challenges in managing the obligations of the asylum procedure. Such support can enhance their capacity to participate meaningfully in the procedure and cooperate effectively with the authorities from an early stage.

⁽⁴⁾ As seen in some Member States, supervised accommodation for young people up to the age of 21 or flexible youth support programmes can bridge the gap effectively and help this group become independent (see 'Legal representation and guardianship' in 'Procedural guarantees as part of the asylum pathway'). Furthermore, the European Migration Network confirms that a number of EU Member States do already have certain aftercare services in place to support unaccompanied minors who have transitioned into adulthood (European Migration Network, 'Transition of unaccompanied minors to adulthood', *EMN Inform*, European Commission: Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, Brussels, 2022, <https://emn.ie/publications/transition-of-unaccompanied-minors-to-adulthood-emn-inform/>), last accessed 01.12.2025.



3. Stability in placement and accommodation

Transition should not automatically mean a sudden relocation from child to adult accommodation⁽⁴²⁾. The child may have formed social connections or started school, training activities, or work, all of which positively support their continued integration and pursuit of educational and employment opportunities.

A sudden change in accommodation, often involving relocation, risks forcing the applicant to start over and may delay or hinder the integration process. Allowing for flexibility within accommodation facilities, so that rooms in the same facilities in which they have been staying as children can be allocated to young people just over the age of 18, could be one option. A final decision on placement should preferably be discussed with the applicant and their guardian before a potential transfer, taking the applicant's personal circumstances into account.

4. Access to education, employment and mentorship programmes

Having an income to ensure that family members left behind also have a better life and developing one's own skills are big motivations for young people arriving. People who are close to becoming young adults often become more focused on the future. Most applicants of this age are ready to work and learn but still need some guidance.

To maintain well-being and foster cooperation and smoother inclusion, authorities should:

- ensure continuity in education by allowing young applicants to complete schooling and obtain recognised qualifications after turning 18⁽⁴³⁾;
- provide access to pre-employment support such as an assessment of the skills and interests of the young person, help with writing a curriculum vitae (CV) and practice

⁽⁴²⁾ See also EASO, *Guidance on Reception Conditions for Unaccompanied Children: Operational standards and indicators*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2018, <https://europa.eu/publications/guidance-reception-conditions-unaccompanied-children>, **Indicator 15.4:** 'Unaccompanied children who have reached the age of majority should be allowed to stay in the same place/area if possible. Special measures should take place when transferring unaccompanied children reaching the age of majority to an adult reception facility. The transfer should be carefully organised together with both reception facilities and the unaccompanied children', last accessed 01.12.2025.

⁽⁴³⁾ See EASO, *Guidance on Reception Conditions for Unaccompanied Children: Operational standards and indicators*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2018, <https://europa.eu/publications/guidance-reception-conditions-unaccompanied-children>, **Standard 15:** 'Ensure that special needs are taken into account when (re-)allocating a particular housing to unaccompanied children', last accessed 01.12.2025.

job interviews, which can nurture resilience and empower young people to proactively seek employment (⁴⁴);

- proactively coordinate with stakeholders from social services and those supporting employment and vocational skills training;
- facilitate young applicants' access to employment by offering internships, access to summer jobs during school breaks, vocational training, apprenticeships and mentoring schemes in cooperation with employers and job services;
- provide accelerated educational programmes, which can benefit those children who might have missed some years of education due to lengthy journeys, or bridging years, which help applicants to catch up in specific subjects or on particular content.

5. Opportunities for exchange, including with the host community

- Role models were seen as a source of resilience; therefore, invest in mentorship, life coaching and peer-to-peer initiatives to strengthen young applicants' resilience.
 - While mentors and coaches can be applicants, some will already have refugee status and can advise young applicants on the asylum procedure. Sometimes mentors who are part of the community of applicants and refugees are more trusted than officers working in reception or with the determining authorities. While it is important to nurture such community-based support mechanisms, cross-checking information shared is advised to ensure accuracy.
 - Refugees who are already integrated into and knowledgeable about the host community, and who understand its culture and values, can provide additional necessary guidance to young applicants and the authorities.
 - In some instances, peer-to-peer initiatives can also be organised in collaboration with young people from the host community, boosting the understanding that young people, no matter where they come from, have similar wishes, needs and hopes.
- Promote early and active participation in host community activities (e.g., sports, cultural events, youth groups, or volunteer initiatives) to build trust, foster acceptance, and encourage meaningful mutual understanding and inclusion. Early engagement not only helps young applicants feel connected and valued but also enables members of the host community to better understand their experiences and aspirations. Such initiatives can significantly reduce the risk of discrimination, misconceptions, and social isolation—

(⁴⁴) For more community-based interventions rolled out in EU+ countries to support resilience in applicants, refer to EUAA, *Mental health and well-being of applicants for international protection: Part II – Practical guide for implementing mental health and psychosocial support – for officers working in the first line*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2024, <https://euaa.europa.eu/publications/mental-health-well-being-applicants-part-ii-first-line-officers>, p. 73, last accessed 01.12.2025.



both from and toward the host community—and contribute to a more cohesive, respectful, and peaceful co-existence.

6. Family tracing and family reunification opportunities

Family tracing is key to fulfilling the right of the child to maintain personal relations and direct contact with their family members. It is also important in ensuring that Member States comply with their obligation to preserve these relations when it is in the child's best interests. Experience suggests that regular contact between the guardian or representative and the family members during family tracing or reunification procedures can significantly benefit the outcome. Involving the family abroad in these procedures through online communication can reduce the pressure on the applicant and help manage the family's expectations (45). Overall, family provides emotional stability and a sense of belonging that the host society, guardians and mentors alone cannot and should not try to replace.

Concluding remarks

Ensuring a smooth and safe transition to adulthood for unaccompanied and separated children requires policies that look beyond chronological age and focus instead on individual needs, vulnerabilities, and ambitions. A child-centred, best-interests approach throughout the asylum and reception pathway helps safeguard young people's well-being, strengthens their ability to participate meaningfully in procedures, and supports long-term integration.

Structured pre-transition preparation, continuity in accommodation and care, sustained access to education and employment pathways, and opportunities for mentorship and community engagement all contribute to stability and resilience during this critical period. Family tracing and reunification remain essential elements in preserving emotional security and connection.

Ultimately, aligning migration and residence policies with the holistic needs of children and young adults can prevent abrupt loss of status at age 18 and promote fair, humane, and future-oriented outcomes.

(45) See also EUAA, *Practical Guide on Family Tracing*, 2nd edition, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2025, <https://euaa.europa.eu/publications/practical-guide-family-tracing-part-i-principles-practices>, last accessed 01.12.2025.

Annex 1. The pact on migration and asylum

The pact on migration and asylum specifies that access to education must be ensured for all children as soon as possible and within two months from lodging an application for international protection at the latest, while access to healthcare must match that of minors who are nationals.

Hence, the reception and determining authorities are asked to ensure that they can provide for minors physical and mental healthcare, education ⁽⁴⁶⁾ and early integration measures ⁽⁴⁷⁾, including access to the labour market and information ⁽⁴⁸⁾, alongside protecting the rights of children ⁽⁴⁹⁾. These measures are important for all asylum-seeking children but particularly for those who are close to the age of maturity.

The European Commission's common implementation plan ⁽⁵⁰⁾, which outlines how the pact on migration and asylum will be implemented, makes specific reference to the need to ensure safeguards and the fundamental rights of applicants for international protection and particularly children. The newly introduced provisions include:

- new and **strengthened information rights** for applicants for international protection (regarding information on their rights and obligations) must be ensured and the information is to be provided in a child-friendly manner using different formats;
- a **support person** (a temporary representative/guardian) is to be appointed as soon as possible for all child applicants who arrive alone, and a permanent representative/guardian is to be appointed within 15 working days from the making of the application;

⁽⁴⁶⁾ Article 16(1) of the RCD discusses the importance of ensuring that the **specific needs of minors**, particularly in relation to education and healthcare are considered, specifying that **education of minors** must, as a rule, be integrated with that of Member States' own nationals and of the same quality. Article 22(2) of the RCD indicates that Member States must ensure that the minor children of applicants and applicants who are minors receive the same type of **healthcare** as provided to their own nationals who are minors. Member States must ensure that specific treatment provided in accordance with Article 22(2) which started before the minor reached the **age of majority** and is considered to be necessary is received without interruption or delay after the minor reaches the age of majority.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ In recitals 52 and 53 of the RCD, reference is made to the importance of **access to the labour market**, including to **increase integration prospects** and the self-sufficiency of applicants; earlier access to the labour market is particularly encouraged where applications are likely to be well founded. It is also highlighted that, once applicants are granted access to the labour market, they should be entitled to a common set of rights based on equal treatment with the nationals of the Member State concerned.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ Article 27(5)(a)–(c) of the RCD highlights that any **information** provided to a child has to be provided in an **age-appropriate** manner which ensures that the minor understands that information.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ Article 27(9) and (10) of the RCD discusses **appropriateness of placement** and specifies that 'changes of residence of unaccompanied minors shall be limited to a minimum', emphasising the importance of tracing family members of unaccompanied minors where necessary while protecting the best interests of the child.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Common implementation plan for the pact on migration and asylum, COM(2024) 251 final of 12 June 2024, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52024DC0251>, last accessed 01.12.2025.



- there is a new right to **free legal counselling** for applicants for international protection in the administrative phase of the procedure (including the border procedure, from which unaccompanied children are automatically excluded, with a few exceptions, such as a child posing a threat to national security or public order);
- there is to be **earlier identification of vulnerabilities** and special procedural and reception **needs**, with clearer deadlines for first and individual assessments and fast follow-up for victims of torture or violence;
- stronger guarantees are to be introduced to ensure that **detention** is used as a **measure of last resort**, following an individual assessment (e.g. to identify vulnerabilities and assess the likely impact of detention on the physical and mental health of applicants and to examine if alternatives to detention are available; **children as a rule should not be detained**);
- Member States must always ensure the centrality of child protection, and the **best interests of the child** have to be a **primary consideration** for Member States;
- **sufficient and adequately trained staff** must be available throughout the asylum procedure to conduct best interests of the child assessments and follow up as necessary;
- the Asylum Procedure Regulation (Article 23(3)) now provides that the **personal interview of a minor** must be **conducted by a person who has the necessary knowledge** of the rights and special needs of minors, and it must be conducted in a child-sensitive and context-appropriate manner, taking into consideration the age and maturity of the child.

Annex 2. National-level practices

Reception

The **support provided** to child applicants during the **reception pathway** varies across participating countries. This section presents some examples of current practices shared by respondents to the survey that touch upon housing, education, employment and general guidance.

Reception conditions

Examples from Belgium

In **Belgium**, the reception of **unaccompanied children** is structured as a **trajectory** consisting of three stages.

Stage 1 – Observation and Orientation Centre. In this centre, an initial medical, psychological and social profile of the minor is created with the aim of detecting vulnerabilities and facilitating the right placement of the minor. At this stage, minors are also informed about their rights related to asylum and other residence procedures, how to stay safe and reception options. The identification of a long-term solution for the child, that will ensure the child's best interest, and the appointment of a guardian are part of this stage. Minors are also prepared here for compulsory education and the second stage of reception. The Observation and Orientation Centre also organises integration classes on values and norms, public transport, hygiene, etc.

Stage 2 – Stay in reception. During their stay in reception, minors receive access to other and more intense guidance on different topics that are relevant to them, including programmes for young people with psychological problems.

Stage 3 – National projects. National projects addressing themes concerning young people but also broader topics such as safe residence and initiatives around human trafficking / people smuggling etc. are implemented.

In **Belgium**, once a child turns 18, the right to material assistance (reception) is no longer guaranteed but depends on the residence procedure.

- Unaccompanied children who have not yet received a decision about their residence move to a reception facility for adults. They will follow the procedure for adult applicants for international protection, and their guardian is no longer responsible for them.
- Unaccompanied children who have received a negative decision must leave the reception facility when they reach the age of 18.
- Unaccompanied children who have received a positive decision and are older than 15 may be eligible for assisted independent living.



- Unaccompanied children who have turned 18 and have received a positive decision have to leave the reception facility within two months. If necessary, they can ask for social aid provided by the Public Centres for Social Welfare, such as financial support.
- Unaccompanied children who did not apply for asylum or another residence status lose their right to reception when they reach majority.

Unaccompanied children who turn 18 while residing in the youth care facilities of the communities can rely on extended support services as young adults (the conditions differ depending on the community concerned).

Independent living

Examples from Greece

The General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection noted that new legislation pertaining to the establishment of the national guardianship system and accommodation framework for unaccompanied children (Law 4960/2022, *Government Gazette A* 145) provides for the operation of **supervised apartments for semi-independent living**, which are apartments used as long-term accommodation facilities for unaccompanied children over 16 years of age.

Moreover, the operating framework for accommodation facilities for unaccompanied children, and in particular the standard operating procedures for supervised apartments for semi-independent living, has recently been reviewed and re-established under Ministerial Decision No 138529 of 17 March 2023. This ministerial decision provides for a **gradual departure process** from the apartment as part of the minor's transition to autonomy.

This process, with the **participation of the minor**, entails detailed planning of the actions and the time frame required for a smooth transition to adult life, provision of up-to-date information regarding the availability of and access to support services beyond the protection framework for unaccompanied children, connection to employability support services, and proper closure and handover of the minor's case file, looking at representation, legal status, vulnerability assessment, health issues, education or vocational training and referral to the support framework for autonomous living for adults, if there is availability and if the prerequisites in terms of admissibility are met.

The **Helios Junior programme**, implemented by the Directorate of Social Integration of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, targets **former unaccompanied minors aged 18–21**. Its aim is to facilitate their **social inclusion** and to support their transition from reception facilities to **independent living**.

In total, the programme supports **2 000 beneficiaries**, offering counselling by integration advisors, the development of an individual integration plan, mandatory participation in Greek language courses or vocational training, and additional referral and interpretation services. Through this integrated approach, young adults are empowered to gain the skills and opportunities required for an autonomous and dignified life in Greece.

The **Compass programme** is implemented under the coordination of the ecumenical refugee programme (**SynYparxis**), with the supervision and support of the **General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection**. The programme has established five specialised support centres in Athens, Thessaloniki, Ioannina, Larissa and Lesbos, targeting unaccompanied minors and young people in transition to adulthood (aged 18–21). Staffed by multidisciplinary professionals, the centres provide tailored mental healthcare, legal counselling and representation, educational support and skills development workshops, along with psychosocial assistance and practical facilities. By combining specialised services with everyday support, the Compass programme aims to safeguard the rights of minors and those who have recently reached the age of majority while fostering social inclusion and independent living.

Residence

Examples from Greece

In **Greece**, with regard to the legal status and social integration of unaccompanied children coming of age, on 29 March 2023 Law 5038/2023 (Migration Code) was adopted by the Hellenic Parliament. The law introduces a new provision under Article 161 that specifically guarantees the right to grant a **10-year residence permit** to adult third-country nationals or stateless persons **who entered Greece as unaccompanied children** and have **successfully completed at least three secondary education classes** in a school in Greece before reaching the age of 23.

Currently, another legal provision has been put forward and is about to be introduced granting legal status to adults aged 18–21 who were formerly unaccompanied children under the national protection system.

Guidance and preparation

Example from the Netherlands

Minors stay in **separate accommodation** and receive **24/7 guidance**. In addition to recreational activities, they are also offered **competency-oriented activities** (e.g. learning to cook, travelling by public transport).

If unaccompanied child applicants are 17.5 years old upon arrival in the Netherlands, they stay in **specific accommodation**, where they are **prepared for adulthood**. They are, once they turn 18, immediately transferred to a facility for adults.



Education

Examples from Denmark and Sweden

Children and young people who have applied for international protection in **Denmark** and have received a positive decision are offered tuition in advanced Danish. This service is offered to promote rapid integration. In addition to intensive language learning, they are also offered education in Danish culture and Danish social conditions. The intensive language learning course consists of 25 hours per week and can either be conducted by the operators of the accommodation centre or be carried out in collaboration with other partners. The teaching must use standard teaching materials and must be organised according to a continuous intake model, so that, once applicant has been granted asylum and the accommodation facility has been informed of this, teaching can begin as soon as possible.

Most municipalities in **Sweden** offer special bridging years for children who have recently moved to Sweden and need to reach a certain required level in Swedish, English and mathematics in order to be taught the regular school curriculum with children of the same age.

Sweden also has a [website with information for new arrivals](#) on education for different age groups.

Training offers and internships

Examples from Germany, Sweden and Serbia

In **Germany**, the various ministries have developed **entry-level vocational qualifications** and training courses for the target group of young applicants to support them in the transition from school to work. One ministry, for example, offers **Pflege integriert!**, an 'integrated educational measure for vocational preparation (BzB) in part-time form and training to become a state-recognized geriatric care assistant (APH) in part-time form'. Participation in the programme enables trainees to obtain a secondary school leaving certificate after taking classes at a vocational school and at the same time complete vocational training as a state-recognized geriatric care assistant at the geriatric nursing school. Following the training, it may be possible to start training as a specialist. In addition, there are numerous other options for graduates from integration through connection and graduation (**InteA**) courses to join entry-level vocational training programmes, such as **Wirtschaft integriert**, and receive related support offered by the Federal Employment Agency.

In addition to entirely school-based training courses, the **dual training system** is particularly popular in Germany. Here, the employer and trainee sign a contract governing the training and the trainee receives a monthly salary. The school-based part of the training usually takes place on certain days of the week. School attendance is compulsory for the trainee.

Germany also shared a link to a training initiative called [Arrivo Berlin](#), which provides information on and preparation for training.

In **Sweden**, all students in grades 8 and 9 (aged 14–16 years) do a two-week **internship** as part of their school curriculum. There are also programmes for older young people that provide summer internships. Many initiatives are run through the municipalities in **collaboration with the private sector**.

Serbia has taken the following steps to support the hiring of applicants for international protection and their integration into the labour market:

- mapping of companies with a practice of hiring applicants (the management of these companies and their employees are already familiar with the rights and obligations of applicants and cultural differences);
- organisation of information sessions for employers on the rights and obligations of employers and applicants and the cultural diversity of applicants;
- cooperation between the authorities and the private sector, and between non-governmental organisations, applicants' representatives and the private sector;
- development of information materials (leaflets, brochures and web pages) on the rights and obligations of employers and applicants for international protection on important topics related to the working environment for applicants

Employment

Example from Sweden

Sweden shared a link to [the website of the Swedish Public Employment Service](#), which runs a job guarantee programme for young people and provides information about the labour market.

Language

Examples from Greece

With Law 4415/2016, a training programme called reception facilities for refugee education (DYEP) was established. 'Reception facilities' here refers to reception classes or other educational measures. This educational programme aims to prepare child applicants through a year of afternoon classes for integration into mainstream classes in Greek schools.

Classes for refugee children aged 6–15 and residing in accommodation centres take place in public schools, with a special focus on the Greek language. For children aged 4–5, the programme has established nursery school departments that function within accommodation centres.

Ministerial Decision No 131024/Δ1/2016 defines as educational priority zones all primary and secondary education regional directorates where reception classes for refugee children can be hosted. Reception classes aim to support the education of migrant and refugee children by teaching Greek as a second language for 15 hours a week, while the children attend classes in the rest of the school subjects with their Greek classmates.



In line with Ministerial Decision No 187634/23, all unaccompanied minors hosted in reception centres for unaccompanied minors or in semi-independent living apartments are provided with a minimum of six hours of Greek language instruction per week. This structured provision of language education is designed to ensure that unaccompanied minors acquire the necessary linguistic skills at an early stage in their stay. Thus, it substantially facilitates their smooth integration into both the school system and the wider social environment of the host community.

Information provision

Example from the Netherlands

The Netherlands shared two information provision booklets explaining reception and the asylum procedure to children.

- *Levensboek* (*Life Book*). This book, given to children by the Nidos Foundation child protection officers who are in charge of reception in the central reception centre for young people, explains life in the Netherlands, the asylum procedure, Nidos's position and the protection it provides.
- *Ik woon gewoon* (*I Live Normally*). This booklet is given to children aged 10 and above upon their arrival at the housing facility run by the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers. It explains their rights, the asylum procedure and life in the Netherlands.

Additional feedback

Respondents reported that the extent of a young adult's autonomy is linked to the success of their exit from reception, which makes this an extremely delicate phase for both the young adult and reception staff, requiring awareness and preparation. Therefore, supporting the young person in acquiring, for example, the necessary language level to take part in educational or employment-related opportunities is important, as is enabling them to deal efficiently and effectively with the challenges of everyday life, on both an individual and a social level. Several responding countries ⁽⁵¹⁾ also indicated the importance and availability of accelerated education and learning programmes to enable those applicants who have lost years of education during their flight to catch up.

While individual support is important, useful daytime activities and workshops covering different topics such as sexuality and relationships, social media, budgeting, norms and values and mental health, to name a few, were seen by respondents as helpful in fostering independence. Semi-autonomous housing arrangements can help in providing the necessary guidance while allowing for young people's independent development.

⁽⁵¹⁾ AT, EL, FI, FR, HR, IT, PT, RS, SI.

Asylum procedure

The **support provided** to child applicants during the **asylum pathway** varies across participating countries. This section presents some examples of current practices shared by respondents to the survey that touch upon creating a trusting and **welcoming atmosphere**, **guardianship** and **information provision**, to name a few of the topics covered.

A welcoming atmosphere

Example from Belgium

The **rooms used to interview children** are organised in a child-friendly and comfortable manner:

- a less formal set-up with a sofa and chair,
- availability of paper, crayons and puppets,
- Use of visuals and images to help the children tell their asylum story.

Support persons are available and involved:

- presence of the guardian during the hearing,
- availability of a lawyer,
- protection officers specifically trained to hear minors.

The personal interview

Example from the Netherlands

Unaccompanied children aged 6–11 are interviewed in a special child-friendly setting, by specially trained staff. The interview is filmed to analyse information shared by the child during the interview and a copy of the video is added to the digital file. Review of the video is strictly regulated (52).

Unaccompanied children aged 12 or older are usually interviewed in the normal interview rooms. All unaccompanied children are interviewed by staff who have completed the EUAA training course ‘Interviewing children’ and they will consider any special needs necessary for a successful interview, for example relating to the child’s age, development (social, emotional and intellectual), education and cultural background.

Accompanied minors who arrive with their parents submit their own application for international protection and are interviewed if they are 15 or older. This is done by staff members of the Immigration and Naturalisation Service in the normal interview rooms.

Minors who have not reached the age of 15 are usually included in the application of their mother if both parents are together in the Netherlands. However, it is possible to interview a minor separately from the age of 12. Parents are informed during the registration interview and in writing that they can request that their child aged 12 or over be interviewed.

(52) It should be noted that, under the pact on migration and asylum and in the context of the APR, video recording is not discussed.



Legal aid

Example from Finland

Finland provides legal aid through its [national system](#), which gives access to legal aid free of charge. Substantial support and expertise is also provided by non-governmental organisations such as the [Finnish Refugee Council](#).

Guardianship

Example from Sweden

Sweden reported that when an applicant is an unaccompanied child at the time of the application for international protection, a legal representative and a legal guardian are appointed. The child is also provided with accommodation by social services. The national legislation covering these rights does not limit them to a particular stage of the Dublin procedure. When the applicant is close to 18 years old, the applicant and their legal guardian are informed that the right to a legal guardian and accommodation will, as a rule, cease. However, both the social services and the Board of Supervisors may prolong the young person's accommodation in children's housing and the appointment period for the legal guardian. Regarding the legal representative, the Swedish Migration Agency decides whether there are grounds for retaining a legal representative even after the applicant has become adult.

Information provision material

Examples from Finland and Norway and the Netherlands

Some countries have invested in making information available to applicants, including unaccompanied children, on relevant websites, in various languages and using pictures and video (see, for instance, examples from [Finland](#) and [Norway](#)). The information provided on the website is normally in addition to information provided orally, usually during registration and the personal interview.

As mentioned previously, **the Netherlands** shared with the EUAA two information provision booklets that explain reception and the asylum procedure to children directly.

Participation

Example from Greece

According to Greek asylum legislation (as mentioned above), a minor applicant who is at least 15 years old may, if he or she so wishes, represent himself or herself during the whole asylum procedure. His or her opinion is always taken into account. According to Article 66 of Law 4939/2022, the Unaccompanied Children Guardianship Board is to resolve any disagreement between the minor applicant and his or her guardian on decision-making concerning their life.

Additional feedback

Respondents also stated that, when organising the personal interview with minors, **more than one meeting** with the applicant is advised to build rapport, to support the smooth running of the interview process and to reduce tension on the part of the minor applicant.

Legal counselling to prepare minors for their interview and clarify expectations was seen as beneficial for asylum-seeking children, as it can help to reduce uncertainty and anxiety.

Lastly, it was stated that efforts are aimed at finding a **long-term solution** for the child. Legislation in some countries provides for different options to be considered, such as:

- **family reunification** (priority is given to the parents, where possible, but other close family members may also be considered);
- return to the child's **country of origin** or to **a third country** where the child has a right of residence, with guarantees of adequate reception and care;
- **permission to remain** in the host country.

Additional practices

The information below was shared during the online launch meeting held on 15 October 2025, in which some key findings of the report were presented to EUAA network members.



The '[Supporting youth of Ukraine making informed decisions' \(You Decide\) project](#) (by **Missing Children Europe**) focuses on transitions into adulthood for unaccompanied children across Budapest, Prague and Warsaw. It highlights that hobbies and personal interests play a key role in young people's lives, alongside traditionally targeted areas such as housing, education, work and health.

The factsheet '[Coming of age of unaccompanied foreign minors in six European countries](#)' presents research carried out as part of the EU project '[My coming of age story \(CO.A.ST\)](#)' (by **Kids in Need of Defense**), conducted in six Member States: Greece, France, Italy, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia. It explores how each national system supports unaccompanied children during their transition to adulthood.

The Belgian [Red Cross](#)' transition-into-adulthood guide for guardians' helps guide this process. It covers nine key areas: self-care; health; work and education; budget management and income provision; administration and engaging with authorities; day-to-day and leisure activities; network; mobility and transportation, and future orientation.

Annex 3. Additional resources



Related EUAA guidance and tools

On reception

EUAA, [*Guidance on Reception – Operational standards and indicators*](#), 2024; and [*Guidance on Reception Conditions for Unaccompanied Children: Operational standards and indicators*](#), 2018.

EUAA, [*animation on safety rules for accompanied and unaccompanied children*](#), 2023.

EUAA, [*animation on rights and obligations of accompanied and unaccompanied children in reception*](#), 2023.

On vulnerability

EUAA, [*Practical Tool for Guardians – Transnational procedures in the framework of international protection*](#), 2024.

EUAA, [*Practical Guide on Family Tracing*](#), Part I, 2025.

EUAA self-help tools for children and parents (all 2023):

[*How can I support my child during difficult times? A self-help tool for parents*](#),

[*How can I deal with situations in which my parents seem sad, worried, or angry? A self-help tool for children*](#),

[*How to handle situations when my friend or sibling is sad, angry or does dangerous things? A self-help tool for peer-support*](#).

EUAA, [*Rolling out psychoeducational material on psychological distress to parents and children – Instructions for first line officers working in reception*](#), 2023.

On mental health and well-being

EUAA, [*Mental health and well-being of applicants for international protection, Part II*](#) and [*Part III*](#), 2024 (refer to the sections on children).

On the asylum procedure

EUAA, [*Practical guide on information provision in the asylum procedure*](#), 2024.

EUAA, [*Practical Guide on Evidence and Risk Assessment*](#), 2024.

EUAA, [*Guidance on Asylum Procedure: Operational standards and indicators*](#), 2019.

EUAA, [*The Job of the Case Officer*](#), 2024.



On the Dublin procedure

EUAA, [*Practical Guide on Family Tracing – Part II: Tracing and identifying family members under the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation*](#), 2025.

Information provision material

EUAA, [Let's Speak Asylum](#) platform.

See also [Annex 2](#) on national-level practices.



Key reference works

Legislation and related documents

Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (OJ C 364, 18.12.200, p. 1, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2000:364:FULL>).

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – [The protection of children in migration](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52017DC0211), COM(2017) 211 final of 12 April 2017, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52017DC0211>.

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Action plan on integration and inclusion 2021–2027, COM(2020) 758 final of 24 November 2020, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52020DC0758>.

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Common implementation plan for the pact on migration and asylum, COM(2024) 251 final of 12 June 2024, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52024DC0251>.

Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/crc.pdf>.

Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union (OJ C 326, 26.10.2012, p. 1, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=oj:JOC_2012_326_R_TOC).

Other works

European Commission, ‘Migrant children’s transition to adulthood’, AMIF-2020-AG-Call-06, EU Funding and Tenders Portal, 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/amif-2020-ag-call-06>.

European Commission, ‘The reinforced youth guarantee’, European Commission website, accessed 12 September 2025, https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/eu-employment-policies/youth-employment-support/reinforced-youth-guarantee_en.

European Migration Network, ‘Transition of unaccompanied minors to adulthood’, *EMN Inform*, European Commission: Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, Brussels, 2022, <https://emn.ie/publications/transition-of-unaccompanied-minors-to-adulthood-emn-inform/>.

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Guardianship Systems for Unaccompanied Children in the European Union – Developments since 2014*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2022, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2022/guardianship-systems-children-update>.



