



Co-funded by  
the European Union

# Practical Toolkit For Guardians Supporting Children Transitioning To Adulthood

MARCH 2026



# This Practical Toolkit was created as part of the My Coming of Age Story project (CO.A.ST).

My Coming of Age Story is a two-year project co-funded by the European Union, through the 2021-2027 Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).

This project was implemented by five partners: the Italian Council for Refugees (Italy), who led a consortium composed of **Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)** (Belgium and Slovakia), European Lawyers in Lesvos (Greece and Poland), the Alliance of Lawyers for Human Rights (France), and PIC – Legal Center for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment (Slovenia).

**The Italian Council for Refugees** is an independent, humanitarian, non-profit organisation, founded in 1990 under the patronage of UNHCR. CIR provides direct services supporting asylum seekers, beneficiaries of international protection and complementary forms of protection. CIR carries out daily advocacy activities aimed at improving legislation, policies, and practices, and ensuring the broadest possible protection for refugees and asylum seekers.

**Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)** specialises in the protection of unaccompanied and separated children. KIND partners with pro bono law firms and nongovernmental organisations to provide children on the move with free, quality legal and psychosocial assistance to ensure their access to protection and justice. These efforts are taking place alongside capacity strengthening activities, technical assistance, and advocacy for systemic and practical reforms grounded in child protection systems to advance the rights of unaccompanied and separated children.

**European Lawyers in Lesvos** is a network of legal professionals providing independent legal information and support to people seeking asylum on the Greek island of Lesvos. The organisation works to promote access to justice, uphold fundamental rights, and monitor asylum procedures in line with European and international law. Through legal assistance, advocacy, and cooperation with local and international partners, ELIL contributes to the protection of refugees and migrants in a complex humanitarian context.

**The Alliance of Lawyers for Human Rights** is a French network of lawyers dedicated to the defence and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The organisation provides legal assistance to vulnerable individuals, engages in strategic litigation, and advocates for the rule of law at national and international levels. Through training, awareness-raising, and partnerships with civil society, AADH works to strengthen access to justice and protect human dignity.

**The Legal Center for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment** is an organization specializing in legal advocacy in the area of human rights and environmental protection in Slovenia. PIC's main objective is to empower individuals to better utilize and advance their position in the society, by providing legal counseling, representation, research analysis and comparative legal studies, drafting of amendments and legislation, and providing training.

**The goal of this project is to improve the support given to guardians of unaccompanied and separated children when they transition to adulthood, in order to ensure that these children have access to their rights and proper information during this critical phase of their life.**

During the My Coming of Age Story project, partners met with young people and child protection actors to understand their needs, and the main challenges they encountered in their roles. This led to a better understanding of good practices and lessons learned across the region, and of the support that guardians need to better assist children as they transition to adulthood.

The aim of this Practical Toolkit is to build on existing materials and on the outputs from My Coming of Age Story to offer practical guidance to guardians on how to best support unaccompanied children, while keeping a child-centred approach in line with children's best interests.

This toolkit is a means to empower all guardians and give them the resources needed to help children as they come of age. It is meant to be accessible to all regardless of the background or training obtained to become a guardian.

**ON THE COVER |** A young refugee from Burundi plays soccer on the football field in the family holiday village with other young refugees who have also come to Germany unaccompanied. Photo by Felix Kästle/picture alliance via Getty Images

This toolkit was published in March 2026.

Disclaimer:

This toolkit has been drawn up in the framework of the project CO.A.ST – My Coming of Age Story co-financed by the European Union (Project 101141181 CO.A.ST-Amif 2023-TF2-AG-Call)

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Why is the “transition to adulthood” phase of life so crucial?	4
What is the role of a guardian supporting a child turning 18?	6
What can I, as a guardian, do to practically support a child?	8
The Right to International Protection	10
The Right to A Legal Residence	12
The Right to Family Reunification	14
The Right to be Protected against Trafficking and Exploitation	16
The Right to Housing	18
The Right to Healthcare and Physical Well-being	20
The Right to Mental Health and Psychosocial Support	22
The Right to Education	24
The Right to Vocational Training and Employment	26
The Right to Financial Literacy and Access to Financial Services	28
The Right to Aftercare Planning and Support	30
<b>Additional Resources</b>	<b>32</b>

## SECTION 1

# Why is the “transition to adulthood” phase of life so crucial?

When a child approaches 18, they begin the transition to adulthood. This means they have to be prepared to become adults, and for a potential abrupt change in their situation. For most young unaccompanied and separated children, this stage can be much more difficult.

**They often do not have family to rely on, may not fully know the local language, and may have experienced trauma before or during their journey. They may have to make big decisions about housing, education, legal status, and health with little or inconsistent support.**

A very important idea here is the concept of “aging out.” This means that when a child reaches 18, the special protections, safeguards, and services they had as children may end suddenly without any transition period. Guardianship usually ends, they may need to leave their accommodation, and access to child-specific social or psychological support might not continue. The young person may have to manage their life decisions alone, even though they may not yet be truly ready. This is why proper planning and care during the transition period are crucial. When this transition is not supported, young people face real risks such as homelessness, dropping out of education, or social isolation creating fear and insecurity. When it is supported, they can study, find work, build community, and integrate, and become independent in a positive way.

As part of the My Coming of Age Story project, partners conducted research in six countries to identify the main challenges and needs of young people transitioning to adulthood. All partners found that young people feel misinformed, but also that the adults who are supposed to help them sometimes do not take into account their needs and do not have time for them. Young people would like a participative approach, where the role of each professional is clearly explained.

In simple terms, transition to adulthood for unaccompanied and separated children is not just about getting older. It is about shifting from a protected stage of life to one where independent choices must be made. Having an informed and supported guardian alongside them providing them with careful support during and after the age of 18, young people can enter adulthood with dignity, confidence, and a real chance to build a safe and stable life.



# What is the role of a guardian supporting a child turning 18?

Transitioning to adulthood is often a difficult stage in the life of unaccompanied and separated children. Since they do not have a parent or legal caregiver, the State must protect them and put in place certain safeguards for them. One of these safeguards is the appointment of a guardian: an adult who helps the child and ensures their rights are respected.

The guardian is defined by the European Union as “a *natural person or an organisation, including a public body, designated by the competent authorities to assist, represent and act on behalf of an unaccompanied minor, [...] for safeguarding his or her best interests and general well-being*”.<sup>1</sup>

The European Guardianship Network has developed seven standards of guardianship<sup>2</sup> to guide guardians and authorities:

- **Non-discrimination:** Children benefit from equal guardianship services within the State’s territory, irrespective of the place of residence, their age or their immigration status.
- **Responsibility and accountability:** Children can depend on guardianship systems which have a clear basis, a responsible authority, and monitoring and accountability mechanisms in place.
- **Independence and impartiality:** Children can depend on their guardian being independent and impartial when taking decisions in their best interest.
- **Child-centred approach:** Children’s rights are respected, protected and fulfilled.
- **Child participation:** The child’s right to be heard is respected by informing them in a manner they understand about the scope of guardianship arrangements and available services and support, by enabling them to speak out, complain and influence, and by giving due weight to their viewpoint.
- **Quality:** Children are supported and assisted by qualified, continuously trained and well-supported guardians who have sufficient time to respond effectively to their needs.
- **Collaboration and sustainability:** Children can depend on guardianship systems that are an integral part of the national child protection system, allocated sufficient human and financial resources, effectively monitored, and act as a link between the child and other agencies or individuals who are responsible for taking action in their regard.

During the transition to adulthood, a guardian can explain options, help plan future steps, connect the child with services, and make sure they understands their rights.

**GUARDIAN**  
Supports children by safeguarding their best interests, and ensures their rights are protected.

**JUDGE**  
Protects the child ensuring everyone follows the law and solves differences.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT**  
Prosecutes crimes and ensures safety.

**LAWYER**  
Defends the child and advises on the law.

**AUTHORITIES**  
Represents the State in charge of official processes.

**SOCIAL SERVICES**  
Assesses a child’s needs ensuring access to public services.



Guardians need to support children according to their best interests. This means looking beyond short-term needs to consider the child’s safety, well-being, development, and long-term future. This is an interdisciplinary process; guardians need to understand which professionals will remain involved with a child after they turn 18, and which professionals will change or fall away. Best interests need to be assessed by several professionals that work with the child, the guardian coordinates these assessments and protects the child’s interests in all processes.

Guardians also ensure that children are able to participate actively in all processes. Every child has the right to express their views and take part in decisions that affect their life, and guardians must actively support this. Child participation means listening to the child’s wishes, explaining options in a language they understand, and giving them space to ask questions or disagree. When participation and best interests are combined, children feel empowered, and child protection actors can make decisions that truly help the child grow into a healthy, confident, and independent adult.

# What can I, as a guardian, do to practically support a child?

In this section, the toolkit will be split into eleven topics that are particularly relevant to children transitioning to adulthood. Each topic will detail the legal basis and what a guardian should consider and prioritise when supporting a young person turning 18.

Throughout this section, we follow two children whose stories reflect common experiences of unaccompanied and separated children:

### Lucia

Lucia is a 16-year-old girl from the Democratic Republic of the Congo who fled her home country when she was 13 with her aunt to travel to Europe in search of a safe place to live. Lucia was separated from her mother and brother before fleeing. She has a moderate visual impairment and needs specific treatment, care, and support.



### Gabriel

Gabriel is a 17-year-old boy from Venezuela, who travelled with a group of boys that he did not know to Europe. He has not been in touch with his family since leaving his country but would like to be reunited with them. He is currently studying to become a baker but still needs to complete two years of training before getting his qualification.

Our goal will be to answer their questions as clearly and simply as we can, and to ensure they receive the support they need!



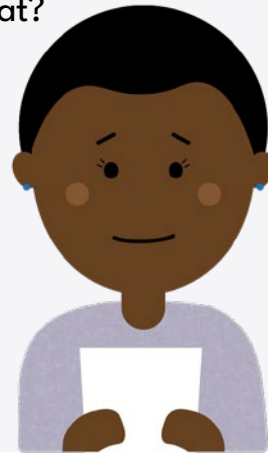
# The Right to International Protection

## Lucia

“One of my friends from the Democratic Republic of the Congo applied for asylum at the same time as me. She received her decision, and I did not, why is that? Can I still get asylum if I turn 18 before receiving the decision?”

**Lucia is referring here to the right to seek asylum or international protection.<sup>3</sup>**

In Europe, a person can receive refugee status, subsidiary protection, or temporary protection.<sup>4</sup> Some countries offer additional protection at the national level to children, such as a residence permit based on their age or other protection and humanitarian reasons. Each country has a procedure for processing claims for international protection. Accessing specialist legal assistance is important to determine the best form of protection for each child.



**Where a child’s age is disputed, they should be presumed to be a child and access these specific protection measures pending the age assessment process.**

### What happens when a child turns 18?

**When a child turns 18, they may not have applied for international protection yet or may have submitted an application and are waiting for a decision, like Lucia.** A child may also be appealing a negative decision or have received a temporary form of protection linked to their age.

For most children, like Lucia, who are waiting for a decision within a procedure that has started, they will remain within the procedure but may need to complete additional administrative tasks to do so. Lucia’s reception conditions may change, and she may be moved from specific facilities for children into accommodation for adults. Lucia may no longer be able to ask for special safeguards within the determination procedure.

### How do you, as a guardian, support a child who is turning 18?

**The toolkits on international protection mentioned above and asylum procedure set out the guardian’s role in identifying the best pathway for a child.<sup>5</sup>** A guardian’s role is first to identify if a child could be awarded international protection, and to inform them about this right.

When a child turns 18, if the application has been submitted, the child will need to be prepared to take it forward for international protection without an appointed guardian as their legal representative. It is important that they understand the application, the international protection procedures they are engaged with, and how to work with key actors supporting them during the application, such as a lawyer.

**You can request international protection at any age, and it is preferable to start the process before 18, as soon as a need emerges.**

More information about international protection and the role of guardians during the procedure can be found in EUAA/FRA’s Practical Tool for Guardians on the Asylum Procedure and the Introduction to international protection.

### What does a guardian need to consider?

**If a child is considering applying for asylum and they are about to turn 18:**

- **Ensure that you, as the guardian, connect with social workers and lawyers** to support the child and ensure that they are informed about the procedure.
- **Ensure that the child knows that it can take a long time to receive a decision, and that they may receive it after turning 18.** Every case is different and decisions may come at different times for all children, even if they are from the same country.
- **Ensure that the child is informed about the Dublin regulation<sup>6</sup>** and how it may affect them, including their right to family reunification.
- **Ensure that the child is supported in all meetings** taking place before they turn 18.

### During the international protection procedure:

- **If the child turns 18 during the process,** you need to know what their rights will be: there may be some changes in housing, financial support, and their right to study or work.
- **If a child’s age was crucial** to their asylum application, it is possible that the status will not be granted. It is necessary to prepare the child for that outcome by explaining it beforehand.

### Preparing a child for receiving an official decision after they turn 18:

- **If the status is granted:** Ensure that the child knows that after turning 18, they will be responsible for the renewal of the status and any administrative process linked to it. You may also need to inform the child about the rights and responsibilities of refugees, for example, a refugee is able to apply for family reunification (**see page 14 for the chapter on Family Reunification**).
- **If the status is not granted:** Ensure that the child knows they can appeal the decision, how they can access legal aid, and where to find a qualified lawyer. It is important to keep in mind that there is a limited time to make an appeal.

## The Right to International Protection

A Legal Residence Status

Family Reunification

Protection against Trafficking and Exploitation

Housing

Healthcare and Physical Well-being

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Education

Vocational Training and Employment

Financial Literacy and Access to Financial Services

Aftercare Planning and Support

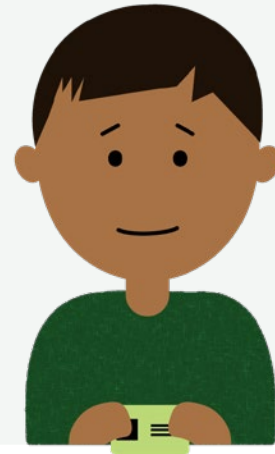
# The Right to A Legal Residence Status

## Gabriel

“I have a residence permit that will expire when I turn 18, and I was told that I need to apply for another residence permit. I don’t know what I need for that, and I don’t have any documents. How do I apply?”

**Gabriel is referring to the right to obtain a residence permit in a new country of residence.**

A residence permit is a document issued by the authorities of a State allowing a person from outside the European Union to stay legally on its territory.<sup>7</sup>



## What happens when a child turns 18?

When a child turns 18, they may need to “regularise their status,” which means that they need a permit or specific protection to stay in their country of residence. Without a valid legal status, a young person may no longer have the right to access public services (housing, financial support, vocational training, and education). They may also be at risk of being detained or sent back to their country of origin.

In some countries, unaccompanied children have a specific residence permit that is valid until they turn 18. A guardian is needed to manage the transition and the change in status before then.

Each country has different legal pathways, but a child may be eligible for a residence permit based on humanitarian grounds, length of residence in a country, or because a child is studying or working in a country. It will be important to seek advice from a lawyer on the options available.

## How do you, as a guardian, support a child who is turning 18?

As a guardian, your role is to inform the child about what a residence permit is, and how to obtain one within the timeframe set by national regulations. Most of the time, children will need to obtain a residence permit before they turn 18, or else they could be classified as undocumented, which puts them at risk.

**The Council of Europe’s Toolkit on Transition to Adulthood details the rights of young people turning 18 on the topic, and the options they have.<sup>8</sup>**

If a child has been in a country for several years legally, they may fit the criteria for naturalisation (where they can acquire citizenship). You can look it up and inform the child of this possibility.

## What does a guardian need to consider?

### If the child already has a residence permit:

- **You need to check if this permit is still valid after the child turns 18.** If it needs to be renewed, you have to ensure this process is started with the child, so that they understand it.
- **If the permit is not valid after 18, you need to ensure that you have assisted the child to obtain advice** on accessing another permit that can fit the child’s situation.

### If the child does not have a residence permit:

- **You need to ensure that you get advice on which residence permits could apply to the child’s situation,** and ensure the child is told about the available options so that an informed decision can be made about the best option for the child.
- **You need to ensure an application is prepared and submitted. In many cases, you will need to have the child’s proof of identity,** as well as other national documents that may take a long time to track down. It is also important to include time for the legalisation of these documents.
- **You need to ensure that the child’s permit matches their plan for their future.** (Please see the section on aftercare planning at page 30.)

### If the child has already applied for a residence permit but does not have a decision you need to:

- **Inform the child about the procedure,** and make sure they understand the next steps.
- **Ensure that the child knows if they can appeal a negative decision,** with the support of a lawyer. If needed, explain to them where they might find one.
- **Give the child all the information about their file,** and the contact information of the authorities and any other person working on their case, like a social worker or a lawyer.
- **The young person should be prepared for the fact that they may be returned,** and that other institutions or organisations will help them if that happens. They may also choose to return voluntarily to their country.

**In all cases, a child needs to understand that a residence permit is temporary and needs to be renewed periodically.**

International Protection

## The Right to A Legal Residence Status

Family Reunification

Protection against Trafficking and Exploitation

Housing

Healthcare and Physical Well-being

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Education

Vocational Training and Employment

Financial Literacy and Access to Financial Services

Aftercare Planning and Support

# The Right to Family Reunification

## Gabriel

“I just want my mum and little brother to come join me, but I don’t know how. I’ve heard it’s really hard, and I don’t even know if they are still at home. Would it even be possible?”

### Gabriel is concerned about the right to reunite with his family members.

States have a duty to prevent the separation of children from their parents, and when separation does happen, they must ensure the family is reunited in a “positive, humane, and expeditious manner” if this is in the child’s best interests.<sup>9</sup> Where a child does not know the whereabouts of their family, family tracing should be initiated.<sup>10</sup>



Mainly people with refugee status can apply for family reunification. Some countries allow people with other types of international protection to sponsor family members to join them, but the conditions are often stricter.

Some countries may have alternative pathways for family members to join their relatives if they do not meet the conditions of family reunification based on humanitarian reasons. Depending on the country, these can open up further pathways for unaccompanied children to be reunited with a broader group of family members and caregivers.

### What happens when a child turns 18?

If the young person turns 18 before they have been granted refugee status, they may not be allowed to keep the right to reunify with their family, or it may be limited. In some countries, young adults can only apply within a tight timeframe; this needs to be checked.<sup>11</sup>

If the young person turning 18 has been granted subsidiary protection, they face more restricted access to family reunification. Countries have the right to restrict family reunification rights for people with subsidiary protection.

**The best interests of the child is a fundamental consideration for family reunification and must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. It is key to ensure that the family was not one of the reasons that the child left their country and was not abusive and did not contribute to trauma in any way.**

You need to check the deadline to apply for family reunification. Some countries will allow it only in the three months following the decision to grant the status, while others will allow it for several years.

If the young person who is now 18 has no legal status, they are generally not eligible for family reunification, leaving them vulnerable at a time when they need legal and social support.

You should coordinate with the child’s lawyer and any social worker supporting them in their family reunification process so application materials can be gathered, prepared, and submitted in advance of turning 18 where possible.

### What does a guardian need to consider?

- **Explain what the impact of turning 18 will be on the possibility of reunification with family members** and consider whether any application needs to be made before they turn 18. They may face stricter rules regarding income, housing, and documentation evidence requirements for family reunification when they turn 18.
- **Ensure that you have discussed and verified family links** at the earliest opportunity and support family tracing and/or family reunification if this is in the child’s best interests.
- **Explain the application procedures, the conditions and rules that apply**, and the time it can take to the child. Many children do not realise how lengthy these processes can be, and that it can take years to reunite with family once an application is made.
- **Ensure that any necessary steps to initiate applications are undertaken** within any relevant time limits within national procedures.
- **Look up the needed documentation to apply for family reunification.** This will also require cooperation on the family’s side. The help of a lawyer may be needed.
- **Sometimes, the child can only be reunited with family members who were mentioned during the asylum application process.** Please check your national legislation on this point; a lawyer can assist.
- **Connect with authorities and relevant services to inform the child** about the procedures and ensure the due process of their request, especially if they are turning 18 soon.
- **Ensure that the authorities and services involved in any family reunification process are aware** of how to contact the young person after they turn 18.
- **Ensure the child has all information and documents related to the application**, as well as all contact information about the process.
- **Consider appointing a lawyer or another specialist organisation for the young person** if one is not already in place to ensure a continuity of support. Some civil society organisations specialize in family reunification and may be able to assist the person with this process.<sup>12</sup>

International Protection

A Legal Residence Status

### The Right to Family Reunification

Protection against Trafficking and Exploitation

Housing

Healthcare and Physical Well-being

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Education

Vocational Training and Employment

Financial Literacy and Access to Financial Services

Aftercare Planning and Support

# The Right to be Protected against Trafficking and Exploitation

## Gabriel

“When I left my country, everyone said I’d find a better life in Europe. The people who brought me here also took a lot of other young boys, and they kept our passports and money and asked us to work to pay back a debt we now owed for our travel. I did not trust them and managed to run away not long after arriving in Europe and I have been supported since. Some people I came with still work for them and tell me that they can get me a job working as a baker and a place to stay with these people when I turn 18.”

**Gabriel has the right to be protected from human trafficking and exploitation which is a crime and a serious violation of fundamental rights under international and European law.<sup>13</sup>**



Child victims of human trafficking and exploitation have the right to access child specific protections and safeguards such as the appointment of a guardian, safe accommodation, and effective access to education, health care and legal assistance during any criminal justice process.

Children also should not be punished for illegal acts committed as part of their exploitation.<sup>15</sup> Child victims of trafficking may also be eligible for international protection ([see page 10 for the section on international protection](#)).

## What happens when a child turns 18?

There are groups of children and young people who are more vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation, including unaccompanied children transitioning to adulthood and those who have already experienced abuse, exploitation, and trafficking like Gabriel.

In addition, when turning 18, child-specific safeguards and protections may no longer apply but countries still need to ensure that young people like Gabriel are protected from trafficking and exploitation. As support ends, young people may have to manage independent living and their finances, and regularise their status without much guidance and support, making them vulnerable targets for fake offers of housing, employment, or other help. Those unsure of their legal status after turning 18 might feel forced to avoid authorities and may go missing.

**The FRA/EUAA Tool on the Asylum Procedure has a section on the role of a guardian in cases where children are at risk of abuse, trafficking, and disappearance.<sup>14</sup> This includes ensuring appropriate risk assessments are undertaken and that safeguards are in place and informing and liaising with law enforcement and other relevant child protection authorities.**

If a young person has shared details about being trafficked, or if you think they may have been, it is best to discuss it in a gentle, trauma-informed, and child-friendly way, without pressing for information: you need to follow their lead.

## How do you, as a guardian, support a child who is turning 18?

Steps must be undertaken to reduce a child and young person’s vulnerability to trafficking and exploitation, especially as they turn 18.

## How do you, as a guardian, support a child turning 18?

As a guardian, your role is to prepare a child to transition to adulthood by responding to, and mitigating, risks of future trafficking and exploitation. This includes making a child aware of these risks in a child-centred manner, facilitating access to future services and support, and ensuring they are aware of their rights so that young people will be able to better protect themselves as they transition to adulthood and know where to go for help.

## What does a guardian need to consider?

- **Inform them about the risks**, and how to prevent them, in a way they can understand. Trafficking can take many forms, and it is important that a child is aware of this.
- **Where a child has already been identified as a victim of trafficking, arrange for continued access to specialist support.** If the support needs to change because a child is turning 18, ensure coordinated and bridged access to the new services.
- **You may need to connect with the child’s lawyer and the authorities** to ensure the legal proceedings around the child’s case will be continued, and that the child is informed about next steps. If their age creates any changes, you need to inform them.
- **Check that the child has their lawyer’s contact information**, if they have one. You can explain to them that a lawyer can help them if anything concerning arises.
- **You may need to support the child in finding proper accommodation and a regular job/training.** Please refer to the corresponding chapters of this toolkit for more information.
- **Inform the child of the services that may be available to support them if they feel unsafe.** You may need to look up specific services or programs focused on both child and adult victims of trafficking (if they are separate) given these risks may occur after they have turned 18.
- **Inform the child about mental health services where they can be provided with support even after turning 18.** This can come from a public service agency or from a civil society organisation. A social worker can help you find this information.

**Please note that, as a guardian, it may be your role to report a trafficking risk or disappearance to law enforcement and child protection authorities. Social workers and lawyers can assist you in this process.**

International Protection

A Legal Residence Status

Family Reunification

**The Right to be Protected against Trafficking and Exploitation**

Housing

Healthcare and Physical Well-being

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Education

Vocational Training and Employment

Financial Literacy and Access to Financial Services

Aftercare Planning and Support

# The Right to Housing

## Lucia

“Do I need to start looking for somewhere to live before I turn 18? Who can help me find a place and will it be safe for me?”

**Children and young people have a right to appropriate, dignified, and safe accommodation which takes into account the specific situation of vulnerable people such as unaccompanied children and those with special needs.**

This right is supported under international and European law.<sup>16</sup>



## What happens when a child turns 18?

Before turning 18, unaccompanied children can be living in a reception facility, a care facility for children, with a foster family, in shared accommodation, or temporary housing. In most countries, accommodation is provided by the authority responsible for unaccompanied children.

When a child turns 18, they can be asked to leave their accommodation. That means that they will need to be prepared to live somewhere else, and have found a suitable option, often with the support of a social worker. In some countries, children may be able to continue to live in the same accommodation if they meet certain conditions often linked to their legal status and ongoing links to education or vocational training.

Children can be at risk of homelessness if their residence permit expires when they turn 18 and steps have not been taken to regularise their status (see chapter on regularisation of status).

Where a child lives when they turn 18 is key to their ongoing safety and integration in a community. This is a topic that must be considered and prepared for before a child turns 18.

## How do you, as a guardian, support a child turning 18?

As a guardian, your role is to connect the child with social workers or other relevant authorities to learn about the available options for children turning 18.

The first step is to learn about the possibility for the child to keep their accommodation after turning 18: some countries allow young people to stay to finish education or vocational training or until a certain age.

**Some European countries can be obligated to offer accommodation to young people leaving their care. Please seek advice from social workers or local authorities to confirm the child's options, if possible before they turn 18.**

In some countries, it is mandatory to provide housing to those granted a residence permit or refugee status – please check the national rules in your country.

## What does a guardian need to consider?

### If a child can stay in their current accommodation:

- **Make sure that the child** knows how long they can stay, and under what conditions.
- **Make sure that the child knows who they can reach out to** if they need support (a social worker, a service in charge of the accommodation, etc.).
- **If the child is being transferred to another accommodation** after turning 18:
  - **Check with the child to** determine if they have any specific needs, and if the accommodation meets them. This can be linked to location of the accommodation, a disability like Lucia's, or other specific factors.
  - **Make sure that the child** knows how long they can stay, and under what conditions.
  - **Make sure that the child** knows who they can reach out to if they need support (a social worker, a service in charge of the accommodation, etc.).

### When a child is not accommodated by the State:

- **Check with the child whether** they have any specific needs.
- **Check the financial capability and** residence status of the child, to assess their options.
- **Offer assistance to the child** in finding accommodation by connecting them with social workers, or other relevant services. Reaching out to a lawyer can be necessary if the child is being discriminated against or not receiving assistance from the authorities when they should provide it.
- **Ensure that, before turning 18,** the child understands what being responsible for a lease entails: paying rent, signing a contract, not damaging or altering property, and being responsible for any connected services (water, electricity, internet) ([see page 28 for the chapter on Financial Literacy](#)).
- **It is also important to explain the potential dangers** of certain options, such as being housed by strangers in a shared home or not having a contract/lease.

Sometimes, accommodation should be provided to young people according to national law and human rights standards, and it is not. This means that an appeal can be made with the help of a lawyer.

International Protection

A Legal Residence Status

Family Reunification

Protection against Trafficking and Exploitation

## The Right to Housing

Healthcare and Physical Well-being

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Education

Vocational Training and Employment

Financial Literacy and Access to Financial Services

Aftercare Planning and Support

# The Right to Healthcare and Physical Well-being

## Lucia

“I have to see the eye doctor every six months for my eyesight, but a social worker told me I would need to pay for that after my 18th birthday. If I do not have money, will I have to stop the treatment?”

**Lucia is referring to the right to health, which is the right to the highest standard of health care and having access to medical facilities.<sup>17</sup>**



## What happens when a child turns 18?

When a child turns 18, they can lose their right to free health care if they do not have a residence permit or other legal status. This means that any ongoing treatment could be suddenly stopped, or that the child could no longer receive consultations and medicine without paying. Some countries allow young people to have access to free health care only for emergency care.

## How do you, as a guardian, support a child turning 18?

As a guardian, your role is to ensure that the child is receiving appropriate care, and that the proper health assessments have been done. Some health issues can be missed for a long time with children, such as dental issues, poor eyesight, or physical pain. Health assessments are also the opportunity to check if the child has experienced any abuse or harm.

It is also important to note that unaccompanied children and young people can be discriminated against and refused care: please seek the advice of a lawyer if that happens.

**All human beings have the right to health, regardless of their residence status, gender, nationality, and ethnicity. If a child is denied that right, receiving poor care, or being discriminated against, they can appeal or file a complaint with a monitoring body with the help of a lawyer. The right to health also means having access to health-related education and information.<sup>18</sup>**

## What does a guardian need to consider?

### If a child turning 18 has ongoing care:

- **Ensure that the child understands why they need regular care**, and what it entails.
- **Connect with the relevant medical services, social workers, or other relevant actors to ensure that the child has proper support after turning 18**, including regular medical check-ups planned. It is important to connect the child with these actors to show that support is available.
- **Explain the national health care system** to the child.
- **Manage all processes regarding health insurance:** can the child access it, on what basis, is it free or do they have to pay, and if so, how much.

### After a child turns 18:

- **Ensure that the child understands that they will be in charge of making their own appointments** and taking care of their health autonomously.<sup>19</sup>
- **Ensure the child understands their needs**, if they have any, and who they can reach out to for support, for example, medical staff they have met before or social workers.
- **Help the young person understand how national health care works**, and how to obtain health insurance. If health insurance is required by law, please check with a lawyer how the child may obtain it.

In some countries, health rights are limited from the age of 16 or have specific limitations depending on the residence status of the person. Other countries may extend them to 25. Please check the rules in your country.

International Protection

A Legal Residence Status

Family Reunification

Protection against Trafficking and Exploitation

Housing

## The Right to Healthcare and Physical Well-being

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Education

Vocational Training and Employment

Financial Literacy and Access to Financial Services

Aftercare Planning and Support

# The Right to Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

## Gabriel

“I have trouble sleeping and loud sounds bother me. I don’t remember everything, but my brain suddenly replays the sounds of gunshots and shouting, my dad being hurt, and the moment I fled. Bad things happened on my journey here, too. I have a psychologist to help me, but I don’t know where to find one after I turn 18.”

**Gabriel is referring to the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of mental health.<sup>20</sup>**



Unaccompanied children should be able to have “access to specific care and psychological support.”<sup>21</sup> A child placed in care has the right to regular review of their mental health treatment, and the authorities are responsible for ensuring that the review occurs, similarly to regular medical check-ins.<sup>22</sup>

### What happens when a child turns 18?

Psychological support and counselling should be provided to unaccompanied children through national welfare systems in most European countries. However, this support is not assured when a child turns 18 and transitions into adulthood. This means that young people may not be able to reach out to the professionals who used to support them, and that they may be left to find and pay for a mental health specialist on their own.

In turn, the transition to adulthood phase can cause anxiety, both due to underlying trauma and concerns and vulnerabilities linked to leaving the accommodation settings, systems, and people that have cared for them if there are no aftercare plans in their country.

**It is important to continuously check-in with the child about their mental health. Sometimes, signs of trauma or pathologies can be less visible at the beginning of a process but get stronger over time.**

### How do you, as a guardian, support a child turning 18?

As a guardian, you act as a liaison with other actors and institutions supporting the child. Your coordination with the child’s support team<sup>23</sup> lets you share essential information without making the child retell it. You are also in charge of ensuring that all processes that the child enters are done with their consent and after receiving sufficient and accessible information, to make the process as comfortable as possible.

### What does a guardian need to consider?

- **Raise awareness with all professionals** around the young person’s trauma and needs.
- **Check the possibility of continuing care** with an existing therapist or counsellor if at all possible, and how that would be paid. Some countries provide support after 18, but some do not allow it.
- **If continuing care with existing providers** is not possible, you will need to find new providers who can take over when the child turns 18.
- **You can also look for NGOs or associations** that can offer mental health support when children turn 18. Some of these organisations provide the support for free, while others ask for a small fee.<sup>24</sup>

International Protection

A Legal Residence Status

Family Reunification

Protection against Trafficking and Exploitation

Housing

Healthcare and Physical Well-being

### **The Right to Mental Health and Psychosocial Support**

Education

Vocational Training and Employment

Financial Literacy and Access to Financial Services

Aftercare Planning and Support

# The Right to Education

## Lucia

“I love learning, and I started school here, but I’m really struggling. I have trouble reading at my classmates’ level because of my poor eyesight. There aren’t enough teachers at school to help me catch up. How can I get help with reading and learning the language, so I don’t fall even more behind?”

**Lucia is asking about the right to adequate education for children, which is a fundamental right for all children.**



Children transitioning to adulthood must have access to this right regardless of their immigration status.<sup>25</sup> This includes the school providing them with the assistance they need to succeed, including language lessons, help with schoolwork, and mental health support if they are struggling.<sup>26</sup> Schools also need to support children with special educational needs like Lucia.<sup>27</sup>

### What happens when a child turns 18?

In some countries, all children can access mandatory schooling while they are children. In other countries, it is only for children under 16. Once a child is older than the limit, they no longer can benefit from mandatory and free schooling. They may be asked to leave school even if they have not completed their education.

Stopping a child’s education may also lead to them not having learned the national language enough to feel comfortable engaging with it.

### How do you, as a guardian, support a child turning 18?

While children are guaranteed the right to an education, in practice, they face many challenges in accessing it in their new countries. Certain host countries will not recognize the education children received back home due to a lack of documentation. If the child’s rights are not upheld, it is very important to appeal the school’s decision to refuse to offer an adapted education to the child. This can be done with the support of a lawyer.

Some countries offer temporary residence permits for educational purposes.

In other cases, children arrive with differing education levels, some having received no formal education or lacking the ability to read. The host country school system may not be prepared to fill this gap with additional assistance.

As a guardian, you should ensure continuity in their education where possible once they have transitioned to adulthood. Some schools offer grants or have specific programs for young people that can be fully funded.

### What does a guardian need to consider?

- **Look for opportunities to extend** the young person’s education before they turn 18.
- **If the child is already in school**, check the requirements to continue their education after the child turns 18. Some schools will ask for a residence permit, and may require a fee. You should also explain to the child that it will be their responsibility to manage their education after turning 18.
- **If the child cannot stay in school**, or is not in school, you can check if certain schools offer specific funded programs or grants for young people.
- **With the support of a social worker**, you can contact local youth clubs, centres, NGOS, and other groups supporting young people, to learn about non-formal education opportunities.
- **If the child graduated from mandatory schooling**, they may be able to access further education. You should explore this possibility with the child, while keeping in mind that they may need to pay a fee for this.
- **Develop an educational plan** in consultation with the young person, accounting for possible challenges they might face.
- **Prepare to transition out of your guardian role** by communicating with any academic counsellors or NGO workers supporting the child with their educational needs.

Sometimes, countries will allow children and young people up to 25 years old to continue their state-funded education. Please look for any information in your country about this.

International Protection

A Legal Residence Status

Family Reunification

Protection against Trafficking and Exploitation

Housing

Healthcare and Physical Well-being

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

### The Right to Education

Vocational Training and Employment

Financial Literacy and Access to Financial Services

Aftercare Planning and Support

# The Right to Vocational Training and Employment

## Gabriel

“I’d like to become a baker. I’m enrolled in a program but still have another two years to finish my diploma. Will my 18th birthday stop me from continuing my training?”

### Gabriel is interested in the right to vocational training and employment.

Everyone has the right to an education, including access to vocational and continuing training.<sup>28</sup> The right to education is also interpreted by several international human rights instruments to include technical and vocational training.<sup>29</sup>



While the right to work is permitted in certain European states to children over 15, for unaccompanied children and young people, legal employment depends on having international protection or other regular residence status.<sup>30</sup> You can look at the section on [Residence Permits at page 12](#) for more information.

### What happens when a child turns 18?

When a child turns 18, they often face a new set of financial challenges, which can make it difficult for them to enter vocational training. If child protection services do not support the child anymore, the child may choose to stop their training and find a full-time job to support themselves.

However, in some countries, vocational training is often the key to getting a residence permit when they turn 18 if they cannot receive international protection.

Even after graduating from their training, young people may struggle to find a job because of their status. Some employers may be reluctant to hire someone relying on a residence permit; certain countries have rules to favour nationals for job opportunities. If a young person’s permit is tied to them having a job, it is crucial that they keep their employment or find a new job as soon as they can. Without a proper path to employment, young people are at greater risk of being exploited or trafficked as they have very few options to earn money and survive ([see the section on Trafficking at page 16](#)).

**A person can enter a vocational training program before 18, and that this should be considered in cases where their residence permit is tied to a program.**

### How do you, as a guardian, support a child turning 18?

Before the child turns 18, it is important to connect them with employment counselors, or social workers, to provide them with practical information about their labour rights, including legal working hours, annual leave, minimum wage rates, legal remedies in case of employer violations, termination, and more.<sup>31</sup>

It is also key to explore with the child their preferred occupation and set up a plan with them to achieve it. The child should be informed about their options and be actively involved in looking for a job or a training program.

### What does a guardian need to consider?

- **Ensure that the young person has a residence permit** or is in the process of getting one if it is needed.
- **Inform the young person** about their options after turning 18:
  - **Entering a training program**, but first checking for fees or entry requirements.
  - **Finding a job** in a certain field: you can help the young person get acquainted with job-hunting tools and connect them with job placement services if any exist in the region.
- **Ensure the young person understands** that, once they turn 18, they are in charge of checking their contract, ensuring that they are paid correctly, and reporting any problematic incidents that occur. You can give them information about services that could inform them about their rights as an adult worker and where to get help if they have any problems including from a lawyer.

International Protection

A Legal Residence Status

Family Reunification

Protection against Trafficking and Exploitation

Housing

Healthcare and Physical Well-being

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Education

**The Right to Vocational Training and Employment**

Financial Literacy and Access to Financial Services

Aftercare Planning and Support

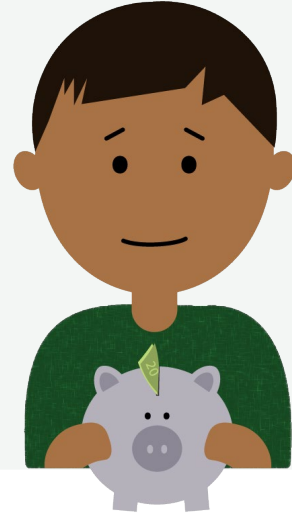
# The Right to Financial Literacy and Access to Financial Services

## Gabriel

“I recently started my baking apprenticeship, and I am very happy to be paid for it. However, I cannot open a bank account because I do not have a passport. Who can help me with this?”

### Gabriel is asking about financial literacy and financial services rights.

The right to financial literacy flows from other broad rights such as the right to a standard of living adequate for a child’s development,<sup>32</sup> and the right to survival and development.<sup>33</sup> Children also have the right to an education that prepares them for a responsible life in a free society.<sup>34</sup> This can be understood to include practical skills for daily life, such as managing finances.<sup>35</sup>



### What happens when a child turns 18?

Once a child turns 18, they will age out of child-friendly accommodation and child welfare services, and in many cases will have to get a job. They rapidly will be required to make decisions about how to manage finances. This will include opening and managing a bank account, arranging for rent and utilities to be paid, budgeting for transportation and food, and managing any income or grants to meet these targets.

### How do you, as a guardian, support a child turning 18?

As a guardian, it is critical to ensure that the child is given life skills training, including financial management and literacy. This should include ensuring that they understand how to pay for transportation, rent, and utility bills in a timely manner, and what happens if they do not; how to balance a budget, especially when income is inconsistent. This also includes how to open a bank account and make deposits and withdrawals, and pay any associated fees; and how to use ATM machines. Eventually, financial planning for the future may be discussed as well. Your role as a guardian is also to give tools to the young person to assess their needs and how to manage their costs. Sometimes, national authorities or civil society actors offer training on this topic: you can check if this is the case in your region.<sup>37</sup>

Gaining these independence skills will help the young person as they consider new housing options, new employment, and purchasing their own food and amenities.

**You can find many resources online to train and prepare young people to manage a bank account and earn money.**

If you would like to start learning about what the child needs to know, you can read the Financial Competence Framework for children and youth in the European Union, co-published by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development and the European Commission.<sup>36</sup>

### What does a guardian need to consider?

- **You can assist the young person with the necessary procedures to open a bank account** if one has not yet been opened. In the case of Gabriel, he needs proof of identity to open his bank account; the guardian should help with this.
- **Show them how to deposit and withdraw money, and how to use ATM machines** using a bank card to withdraw cash, and why it is important never to share their PIN.
- **Explain how they can save money**, and that there are accounts specifically made for this.
- **You will show them how to balance a budget** (income vs expenses) using very simple terms; how to handle a paycheck, how to understand their cost of living (practicing by creating an itemized list of probable expenses).
- **In discussion with each other you can discuss the kind of financial planning** they would like to use for the future.

It is important to discuss sending money abroad. In some cases, children want to send money to their families back home to support them. While this is very important to them, they also need to understand how to support their own needs, ensure that they are in a safe financial situation, and if they can afford to send money home.

- International Protection
- A Legal Residence Status
- Family Reunification
- Protection against Trafficking and Exploitation
- Housing
- Healthcare and Physical Well-being
- Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
- Education
- Vocational Training and Employment
- The Right to Financial Literacy and Access to Financial Services**
- Aftercare Planning and Support

# The Right to **Aftercare Planning and Support**

## Gabriel

“Another girl from my home country just turned 18 and told me everything changed then, and that I need to be ready for it. I have some idea of what life will be like, but not everything. Will there still be someone to help me when I need them?”

**Gabriel is referring here to receiving aftercare support, meaning support from national authorities after children turn 18.**



**Where there is no ongoing support and services once a young person turns 18, guardianship arrangements may cease and the young person will be responsible for their own care, education, and financial management. Some countries offer a period of transition and aftercare support to former unaccompanied children.**

Aftercare support can take different forms, including access to supported housing, continued education, and support to enter vocational training and the labour market.

Several European states have chosen to expand their care, for some until 25 years old. This means that young adults can benefit from continuity of care and have specialized professionals supporting them according to their situation and needs.

### What happens when a child turns 18?

When a child turns 18, they have three options:

- **Losing the support** provided by child protection services
- **Staying with child protection services** under specific criteria (being enrolled in a program or needing specific care for a health matter, for example).
- **Stay with child protection services** until a later age.

**It is important to explore with the child which jobs or housing options would suit them best, while looking for the safest options for them. Institutional services and specialized organisations can help.**

This depends on national and regional rules, so it is necessary to look up information about this.

In all cases, it is necessary for the guardian to plan ahead with the child and help them think through what they would like to do after turning 18, and access the relevant support to achieve their plans. If a child is unprepared for their transition, it can lead to struggles to find a job, or housing, which leads also to feeling abandoned by the system and the adults who supported them previously.

### How do you, as a guardian, support a child turning 18?

Your role as a guardian is to ensure the child has proper information about their options and is supported in making decisions about their future according to their goals and needs.

### What does a guardian need to consider?

- **Inform the young person as early as possible** about what will happen when they turn 18.
- **Help the child create a plan for their future** that includes housing, training or work, health care, and any other need. You need to look up what support can be provided by child protection services after 18. If no assistance is available, you can also look to social workers and civil society actors who may provide additional help.
- **Sometimes, the child's residence permit relies on certain things** like having a specific job or enrolling in a certain program; please check this beforehand to share this information with the young person.
- **It is important to give the child the time and space to think** about their options once they understand them, so they can make decisions for their future.
- **Coordinate all professionals working with the child** to ensure that they have proper support.

International Protection

A Legal Residence Status

Family Reunification

Protection against Trafficking and Exploitation

Housing

Healthcare and Physical Well-being

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Education

Vocational Training and Employment

Financial Literacy and Access to Financial Services

**The Right to Aftercare Planning and Support**

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. EGN (European Guardianship Network) (2021), [Children on the move: A guide to working with unaccompanied children in Europe.](#)
2. European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) (2024), [Guidance on Mental Health and Well-being of Applicants for International Protection: Part II – for those working in the first line.](#)
3. EUAA (European Union Agency for Asylum) – FRA (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights), [Practical Tool for Guardians: Temporary Protection for unaccompanied children fleeing Ukraine, November 2022.](#)
4. EUAA - FRA, [Practical Tool for Guardians: Introduction to international protection, October 2023.](#)
5. EUAA - FRA, [Practical Tool for Guardians: Asylum Procedure, October 2023.](#)
6. EUAA - FRA, [Practical Tool for Guardians: Transnational procedures in the framework of international protection, April 2024.](#)
7. FRA, [Guardianship for unaccompanied children – A manual for trainers of guardians, 1 March 2023.](#)
8. FRA, [Handbook on European law relating to the rights of the child – 2022 edition, 13 April 2022.](#)
9. FRA and European Commission, [Guardianship for Children Deprived of Parental Care – A handbook to reinforce guardianship systems to cater for the specific needs of child victims of trafficking, 2015.](#)
10. Council of Europe, [Toolkit on the transition of unaccompanied migrant children to adulthood, 2023.](#)
11. Council of Europe, [Turning 18 with confidence: A Practical Guide to the Council of Europe Recommendation on Supporting Young Refugees in Transition to Adulthood – CM/Rec\(2019\)4, 2023.](#)
12. European Guardianship Network, [ProGuard – The Pilot Assessment System, September 2019.](#)
13. Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants, [Turning 18 and undocumented: Supporting children in their transition to adulthood, 2022.](#)
14. Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants, [Stepping Up: A collection of projects and practices helping migrant children transition into adulthood, 2024.](#)



## Endnotes

- 1 Article 3(18) Regulation (EU) 2024/1347 (Qualification Regulation (QR)).
- 2 Standards based on provisions of the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. They can be found on the [European Guardianship Network's Website](#).
- 3 Article 1 of the Refugee Convention of 1951 and Article 18 of the European Union's Charter of Fundamental Rights.
- 4 Directive 2001/55/EC on Temporary Protection of July 20, 2001.
- 5 The toolkit on asylum procedure contains a section on what to do if the child's age is disputed and how to support them throughout the application process.
- 6 Regulation No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, 26 June 2013.
- 7 Regulation (EU) No 265/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 March 2010 amending the Convention Implementing the Schengen Agreement and Regulation (EC) No 562/2006 as regards movement of persons with a long-stay visa.
- 8 Council of Europe, Toolkit on the Transition of Unaccompanied Migrant Children to Adulthood (2023).
- 9 Articles 9 and 10 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, European Union Directive on Family Reunification. The national implementation plans for the new Pact on Asylum and Migration may add nuance to the content of this section.
- 10 The National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies can assist the child in tracing their family members and reuniting with them.
- 11 You can find more information about processes linked to family reunification on the United Nations's High Commissioner for Refugees' [website](#).

12 Amongst these organisations are the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Safe Passage, and organisations who form part of the Global Family Reunification Network (FRUN).

13 Where a child's age is disputed, they should be presumed to be a child and access these specific protection measures pending the age assessment process.

14 Practical Tool for Guardians – The asylum procedure, Fundamental Rights Agency and European Union Agency for Asylum, October 2023.

15 Several tools highlight the right to be protected against trafficking and exploitation: Article 5 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Article 4 of the European Convention on Human Rights, Article 83 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the United Nations' Palermo Protocol of 2000, and the EU's Anti-Trafficking Directive (revised) of 13 June 2024.

16 Article 11(1) of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 27 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. More information can also be found in the Directive 2024/1346 of 14 May 2024 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection.

17 Article 35 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, Article 168 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

18 Article 35 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, Article 168 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

You can learn more about the right to health in the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and World Health Organization [dedicated factsheet](#).

To learn more about health care for unaccompanied children, you can refer to the sixth chapter of EUAA's [Guidance on reception conditions for unaccompanied children](#).

19 Mohammed A, Nadeem M, Yousif T. Towards safe and effective transition from adolescence to adult care. *Sudan J Paediatr*. 2017;17(1):10-13

20 Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966.

21 Para. 54, Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families and Committee on the Rights of the Child, Joint General Comment No. 4 (2017) and No. 23 (2017).

22 Article 35 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, Article 168 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

23 Council of Europe, Toolkit on the Transition of Unaccompanied Migrant Children to Adulthood (2023).

24 Council of Europe, Toolkit on the Transition of Unaccompanied Migrant Children to Adulthood (2023).

25 The EU Charter guarantees that education is a right for everyone and that basic compulsory education must be free. The EU Reception Conditions Directive says that unaccompanied children should receive an education that suits their specific needs, and that they must not be treated differently because of their legal status. The Directive also prevents authorities from stopping someone's secondary education just because they turn 18 (Article 14 of Directive 2013/33/EU).

26 Council of Europe, Toolkit on the Transition of Unaccompanied Migrant Children to Adulthood (2023).

27 Council of EU Recommendation on Pathways to School Success, Article 2 of the First Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights.

28 Article 14 of the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights.

29 Article 13(2)(b) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966.

30 You can find more information in the European Union's EU [Reception Conditions Directive](#).

31 Council of Europe, Toolkit on the Transition of Unaccompanied Migrant Children to Adulthood (2023), page 50.

32 Article 27 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

33 Article 6 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

34 Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

35 In terms of accessing financial services, the child's right to development applies, as does the right to non-discrimination provided under Article 26 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and in the European Union, the Article 16(2) Payment Accounts Directive (PAD) 2014/92/EU.

36 [This document can be found on the website of the European Commission](#).

37 Initiatives like the [OECD's European Money Week](#) or [FINLIT YOUTH's e-learning platform](#) give examples of promising practices in this context.



Co-funded by  
the European Union

**Italian Council for Refugees,**  
[cir@cir-rifugiati.org](mailto:cir@cir-rifugiati.org)

**Kids in Need of Defense (KIND),**  
[infoeurope@supportkind.org](mailto:infoeurope@supportkind.org)

**European Lawyers in Lesvos,**  
[info@europeanlawyersinlesvos.eu](mailto:info@europeanlawyersinlesvos.eu)

**Alliance of Lawyers for Human Rights,**  
[info@aadh.fr](mailto:info@aadh.fr)

**Legal Center for Protection of Human  
Rights and the Environment,**  
[pic@pic.si](mailto:pic@pic.si)

