

Dear EGN Member/Partner

As we get started with our 2024 activities, I'd like to take the opportunity to share some thoughts about the main goals and activities for EGN in 2024.

First, let me start by thanking for your engagement and commitment to the EGN. Any Network is only as strong as its members and partners.

In 2023, together, we achieved a lot. Through our Network meetings in Athens and Brussels, our Thematic meetings, we had the opportunity to exchange on developments, experiences, and challenges. We also had the field and support visits to Ireland, Spain, Poland, Czech Republic, Greece and Austria and I know that our three working groups have also continued to work on key issues important for Network Members – cross border issues, child participation and our tool for self-assessing guardianship systems.

We were able to bring the needs of unaccompanied children and the importance of guardianship into the heart of a number of European and other regional events. For example, we talked about guardianship at the EU Network on the Rights of the Child and the EUAA meeting on the Protection of Children in transnational procedures, as well as at regional consultations on children from Ukraine, including at the Council of Europe. For me, a highlight of the year was bringing the experience of unaccompanied children to our policy event in the European Parliament. I was both impressed and inspired by the three young people who shared their messages and experiences. They are a shining example of why we do our work and why we should be supporting these young people when they join us in Europe.

This year, the completion of the reform of EU migration and asylum laws will bring new challenges to fulfilling the rights of unaccompanied children. More than ever, in a complicated and sometimes hostile environment, guardians will need to play a central role so that the best interests of the child is kept at the heart of all action. This will not be easy. Let's work closely together so that the EGN can continue to contribute to the ongoing regional exchanges and to support members' work with national stakeholders.

Looking further ahead, we are keen to develop a plan to strengthen and sustain the Network beyond 2025. In 2024, the project team will also work with you to develop our model of governance and we want the Network to continue to be an inclusive and engaging forum. The EGN is 'your' Network. I invite you to share with us how to strengthen its work and impact. We are excited to see Members increasing their involvement in the Network, whether it is participating in working groups, leading thematic meetings, or contributing to the Steering Group, and most members attending, in growing numbers, the Network Meetings.

As we go forward into this busy year, the most important thing we share is that we want to have a positive impact upon unaccompanied children. The EGN is determined, ambitious and forward looking in terms of what can be achieved. I look forward to working with you all.

See you in Rome at our next Network Meeting in April!



Tanno Klijn

Chair European Guardianship Network