

Dear EGN Member/Partner

As the year ends and as we are beginning to focus on next year's activities, I would like to take the opportunity to write to you about our Network.

Last year was a busy year for all of us. We held two very useful and engaging Network meetings in Rome and Dublin, and I thank our colleagues in Italy and Ireland for hosting us. These Network meetings and our Thematic meetings provided us with opportunities to share our practices, to support each other and to exchange on emerging trends and challenges. Our four working groups have also continued to work on the issues that are important for guardians. A major piece of our work this year has been responding to the reforms to the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). We created an internal working group on this issue, held thematic meetings and contributed to DG Home Expert meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> of October, providing a reflections [paper](#). We have sought to build knowledge by identifying issues and exchanging on the proposed changes; contribute expertise by participating in discussions at European level; and exchange good practice by sharing information to help you respond to national implementation plans.

We continued to bring the needs of unaccompanied children and the importance of guardianship to the attention of European and other regional stakeholders. For example, CBSS and their work around protecting children at risk of trafficking, EUAA's roundtable on developing guardianship in Lithuania, the EU Network on the Rights of the Child and the EUAA Vulnerability Experts Network meetings, as well as at regional consultations on children from Ukraine, including the Council of Europe's Consultation Group on the Children of Ukraine. We supported the half day dialogue about unaccompanied children hosted by the Belgian Government as part of their presidency of the EU and Terry helped our colleagues celebrate the great milestone of 20 years of guardianship for unaccompanied children in Belgium.

Looking ahead we will need to continue to put energy and resources into influencing the implementation of the CEAS reforms and the European Commission's Recommendations on Integrated Child Protection Systems. We will work together to improve the quality of guardianship offered to unaccompanied children and to strengthen the agencies who deliver guardianship. We have a significant role to play in raising the voices of unaccompanied children, defending their rights and in particular in strengthening their rights to skilled, engaging, accountable and competent guardians. In Rome and Dublin, I found it interesting to hear the messages from children and young people and we will consider how their thoughts and ideas can be reflected in our work going forward.

During the year we have seen the European Parliament elections, with inevitable changes in MEPs as well as a new Commission and indeed there are many new National Governments with whom our members are engaging. I said this last year, and I need to say it again, that in an increasing hostile and volatile environment, guardians have an essential role in promoting and defending the best interests of children and in ensuring that all actors involved in a child's life and care provision, keep the child's best interests at the heart of their work. We will need to stand together and to continue to support each other. Unaccompanied children represent the future, and it is the job of guardians to stand beside them.

In other areas we will be developing our work for the period 2026-2028 and securing the funds from the EU to deliver on an ambitious plan. With the support and engagement of our Strategic Steering Group we will continue to work on our structure and decision-making procedures, and I encourage you to think about how you and your organisation can contribute to our work and how you can be

more involved in the work of EGN. We want to build on your engagement in the Network and we hope that more of you will want to participate in our working groups, present and lead thematic meetings, continue to attend the Network meetings. I invite you to think of other, innovative ways, for you to be directly involved in the work of EGN.

Finally, I thank you for your engagement and commitment to the EGN and for the hard work you are undertaking in striving to improve the lives of unaccompanied children through the provision of quality guardianship to them. I look forward to working alongside you in 2025.

Best wishes,

Tanno Klijn

Chair European Guardianship Network