

Press Release

How the GUIDE project created support networks and trained hundreds of professionals supporting unaccompanied children across Europe

Palermo, 16 September 2026 – In just two years, the [GUIDE project](#) equipped hundreds of guardians and child protection professionals across Europe with practical skills, peer support and specialised tools, helping to address critical gaps in the support available to unaccompanied children.

Every year, thousands of unaccompanied children arrive in Europe seeking safety, making strong guardianship systems, well-trained professionals and effective cooperation essential to ensuring they receive the protection and care they need.

To respond to these challenges, the GUIDE (Supporting Guardians of Unaccompanied Children) project worked with professionals in **Bulgaria, Greece, Slovakia, Italy and Poland**, developing practical resources and recommendations to strengthen child protection and guardianship systems. These included service maps, national manuals, training programmes, peer-support Listening Circles, webinars and policy recommendations.

On 1 September, partners held a hybrid final event, Children navigating migration, at the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels to share testimonials from guardians and children and to explore how Europe can improve child protection systems. **While guardianship systems change from country to country, better coordination, stronger policies and funding, and greater government support are key** to improving systems across Europe.

After two years, the project has contributed to stronger support systems for unaccompanied children and those working to protect them. Here are **some of the achievements on the ground**:

- In **Bulgaria**, GUIDE helped create a sustainable professional support network, engaging nearly 100 practitioners in Sofia, Ruse, Burgas and Stara Zagora through training and peer-support initiatives that continue beyond the project's lifetime.
- In **Greece**, GUIDE trained 300+ guardians and professionals, nearly four times its national target, and strengthened cooperation between frontline services and public authorities. More than 60+ people attended the national event.
- In **Italy**, GUIDE supported more than 60 professionals and developed national recommendations, co-created with public institutions, civil society organisations, academics and experts, helping to advance more coordinated and effective guardianship practices across the country.
- In **Poland**, several participants reported that the training and certification helped them secure positions in residential care facilities, including homes supporting children evacuated from Ukraine. The project also established five support circles for guardians, fostering peer learning and collaboration so effectively that participants requested their continuation beyond the project's end.
- In **Slovakia**, GUIDE trained 50+ professionals, engaging 60+ participants through 36 peer-support Listening Circle sessions, and bringing together 70+ stakeholders through policy and awareness-raising events to improve coordination, training and long-term support systems.

This project demonstrates that **improving cooperation between stakeholders can make a meaningful difference in the lives of unaccompanied children**. All the GUIDE tools and resources will remain available to support future efforts to build more inclusive and effective child protection systems across Europe.

For further information, contact [Fabiana Adamo](#), Project Manager CESIE ETS.