

# INFO SHEET

## FOR UNACCOMPANIED MINORS FROM UKRAINE

GUARDIANSHIP SERVICE – FPS JUSTICE



FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE  
**JUSTICE**

# INFO SHEET

FOR UNACCOMPANIED MINORS FROM UKRAINE

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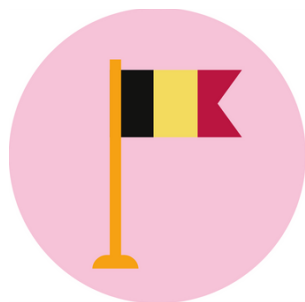
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# Who is an unaccompanied minor (UM)?



An unaccompanied minor is someone who:

- is **younger than 18 years** old;
- is in Belgium **without parents** or a person with parental authority;
- who **has fled or does not have valid residence documents**.

You may be considered an unaccompanied minor even if you are accompanied by an aunt or uncle, brother or sister, grandparent, etc.

Anyone can report an unaccompanied minor to the Guardianship Service. This is usually done by the Immigration Department (e.g. after registration for residence documents) or the police, but it can also be done by a school, the PCSW, etc.

## What does the Guardianship Service do and what does a guardian do?

The guardianship service is responsible for unaccompanied foreign minors (UFM) in Belgium. The Guardianship Service helps unaccompanied minors by appointing **a guardian**. There are certain things you cannot do in Belgium without your parents. That's why you need a guardian. For example, a guardian will help you find a school, open a bank account and so on. You cannot live with your guardian.

The Guardianship Service seeks guardians and trains them. Guardians know the rights of unaccompanied minors in Belgium and can therefore help them with papers, looking for accommodation, a school, etc.

This video provides you with more information on what a guardian does.

### A. Why don't I have a guardian yet?

Because so many unaccompanied minors have come to Belgium recently, it is difficult for the Guardianship Service to immediately provide them all with a guardian. **There are not enough guardians.**

In this info sheet, we explain the different solutions in more detail.



## B. Can the Guardianship Service still appoint a guardian if I wish for one?

If you are **all alone in Belgium** without any relatives (e.g. a grandparent, aunt or adult brother/sister) or someone to take care of you, you will still get a guardian more quickly from the Guardianship Service. In addition, the Guardianship Service can also provide you with a guardian if you need the help of a guardian. For example, when:

- You are pregnant;
- You want to live alone or don't feel well in the house where you live;
- You are a victim of violence or inappropriate behaviour;
- You have a disability or psychological problems;
- ...



If you would like a guardian or your family thinks it would be better for you, you can ask for a guardian.

The Guardianship Service will then contact you or your family and discuss it. You can reach the Guardianship Service at 0479/85.01.87 or 078/15.43.24 or at the e-mail address [voogdij@just.fgov.be](mailto:voogdij@just.fgov.be).

## C. Can anyone from my family become my guardian?

### The foster guardianship

No, but your aunt, grandmother, uncle, sister, brother, etc. can become **your foster guardian** if they wish. The procedure to become a foster guardian is not handled by the Guardianship Service. You can make the application to the justice of the peace at your place of residence. The Guardianship Service can help you with this if you wish.

Om de pleegvoogdij aan te vragen:

- You must have the written consent of your parents;
- Your prospective foster guardian must be older than 25;
- Ideally, you should be younger than 17 (as the procedure takes a long time).



Your foster guardian and your parents can discuss as to which decisions the foster guardian can make and what decisions your parents should make. The justice of the peace will forward your request to the family court, which will examine your situation. That is why, applying for foster guardianship can take a long time. Foster guardianship is a good solution if you would like to remain in Belgium for a long time without your parents and when you will still be under 18 years of age for some time.

## The civil guardianship

If you no longer have any contact with your mum or dad or if they have passed away, your aunt, grandmother, sister, brother, etc. can become **your civil guardian**. This procedure is also handled by the court. If you need help with applying for civil guardianship, you may contact the Guardianship Service.



### **D. Can I also stay in Belgium without a guardian?**

Due to the long wait for receiving a guardian, it is **okay for the moment** to stay in Belgium without a guardian. If your family is with you and you have a social assistance to help you, you may stay without a guardian.

However, it is important **to know which rights you have** in Belgium. We therefore recommend that you read this document carefully. For example, are you receiving all the social support you are entitled to? Do you know how to go to the doctor and how he will be reimbursed?

You will notice that you can do most things in Belgium without a guardian. You may have problems in the future because you don't have a guardian. It is important to **contact the Guardianship Service** with these problems to see if we can help.

Finally, it is important to **keep the Guardianship Service informed** about your situation. It is necessary that you inform the Guardianship Service regarding changes in your situation. For example, a change could be the case when you move, your mum or dad comes to Belgium or you return home, etc. You may email this to the mail address [voogdij@just.fgov.be](mailto:voogdij@just.fgov.be). You can also call 078/15.43.24.



# What support can my host family receive?

If you stay in Belgium with a relative or someone else who takes care of you, your host family can become a **foster family**. No guardian is needed to start foster care.

Foster care has several advantages:

- + Your foster family will receive **help and guidance** from a foster care counsellor. The foster care counsellor can further help your foster family and you with seeking counselling, school, etc.
- + Your foster family will receive **financial support** because they care for you. The foster care allowance is €400 a month. The expense allowance supports the hostfamily in the daily expenses they incur for you such as food, internet, school fees or hobbies.



- For Flanders and Dutch-speaking Brussels: [Foster care Flanders](#)
- For Wallonia and French-speaking Brussels: [Mentor Jeunes](#)



## Foster Care Flanders

You can apply for help from Foster Care Flanders through your region's foster care service.

- East-Flanders: [onhaalteam@pleegzorgoostvlaanderen.be](mailto:onhaalteam@pleegzorgoostvlaanderen.be)
- Limburg: [info@pleegzorglimburg.be](mailto:info@pleegzorglimburg.be)
- Antwerp: [info@pleegzorgprovincieantwerpen.be](mailto:info@pleegzorgprovincieantwerpen.be)
- Flemish Brabant: [instroom@pleegzorgvbb.be](mailto:instroom@pleegzorgvbb.be) (and Brussels)
- West Flanders: [info@pleegzorgwvl.be](mailto:info@pleegzorgwvl.be)

## Mentor Jeunes

If you reside in Wallonia or Brussels, you can apply for support through the organisation Mentor Jeunes. You can contact them at the mail address [info@mentorjeunes.be](mailto:info@mentorjeunes.be)

# What things I can/can't do without a guardian?

## A. Registration in the municipality



It is important that you **register in the municipality** where you reside. After your registration with the Immigration Department (DVZ), the municipality will issue you an A-card. The A-card is an electronic identity card and proves that you are residing legally in Belgium. The A-card is valid for 1 year and is automatically extended until 4 March 2024.

You can register in the municipality without a guardian. You can let the Guardianship Department know if there are problems in registering with the municipality.

Only when you are registered in your municipality are you entitled to help from the municipality's PCSW, allowed to work and have access to health insurance. More info on this later.

## B. Enrolment in a school

Every child in Belgium has a **right to education**. From 5 to 18, you are subject to compulsory education, which means you must attend school. You can go to school or follow home schooling (e.g. Ukrainian distance learning).

If you would like to attend a school, you can usually should not have a problem enrolling without a guardian or parent. You may contact the Guardianship Service if you should have any problems. We will look for a solution.

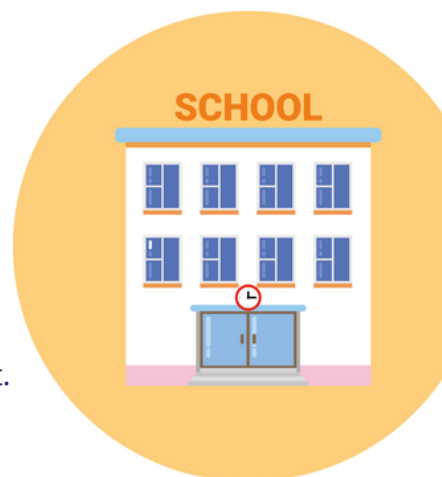
Depending on where you live, you can opt for a Dutch-speaking or a French-speaking school.

- [Here](#) you can find more information about the Dutch-language education (brochure in Ukrainian)
- [Here](#) you can find more information on French-speaking education

If you would like to follow **home schooling** and continue your classes from Ukraine, you need to fill out a form.

- [Form for Dutch-speaking schools](#)
- [Form for French-speaking schools](#)

We can help you if you don't have anyone to help you to fill out the document.



## C. Financial assistance

### Public Centre for Social Welfare (PCSW)

If you have been granted temporary protection status, you can go to the public centre for social welfare (PCSW) of your municipality.

The PCSW provides free help to those who have problems with food, housing, paying bills, heating, etc. The PCSW will help you even if you don't speak Dutch, French or English. There is no equivalent of the PCSW in Ukraine.

As an unaccompanied minor, you are also entitled to **financial assistance** from the PCSW. This is called **the equivalent living wage**. To receive this, you need to visit your local council's PCSW.

How much money you receive depends on your situation (do you live alone, with family, etc.). The PCSW will investigate and will determine the amount accordingly. The amount ranges from €740 to €1,500 per month

#### Flanders

[Click here](#) for the contact details of your local council's PCSW.

#### Wallonia and Brussels

[Click here](#) for more information in Ukrainian.

*You may let the Guardianship Service know if you have any problem applying for the equivalent living wage as a minor.*



## CHILD BENEFIT

Every child in Belgium receives a **monthly amount**. In Flanders this is called Growth Package, in Wallonia it is called Child Benefit. The rules for applying for this are different for Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels.

You can receive Growth Package/Child Benefit if you:

- Live in Flanders and have an A-card;
- Live in Brussels or Wallonia and have a Schedule 15 (sometimes payers still ask for the A-card).

In practice, it may take some time for an unaccompanied refugee minor to receive his/her child benefit/Growth Package. Therefore, we advise that you **submit the application** to one of the payers yourself. You can apply for the Growth Package/Child Benefit without a guardian. The payer will give the Growth Package/Child Benefit to whoever you live with. If you live all by yourself, the money goes to you.

#### Flanders

[Click here](#) for more info for Flanders.

#### Wallonia

[Click here](#) for more info for Brussels and Wallonia.



# OPENING A BANK ACCOUNT

You may not be able to open **a bank account**. This is because you are usually not allowed to open a bank account without a parent/guardian.

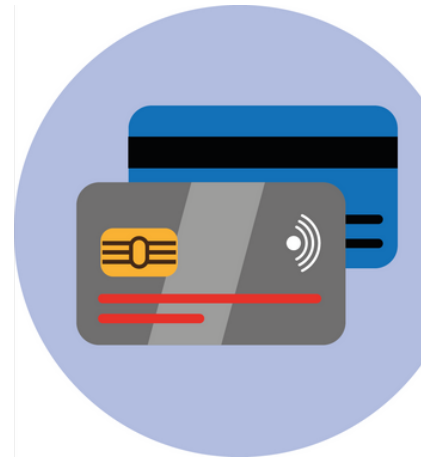
What can you do?

- If you are staying with a foster family, it is best to go to the bank **with an adult**. Ideally, you should go to the bank where the adult person also has an account.
- If the bank refuses, you can suggest submitting **written permission** from your parents. It is best to submit this written consent from your parents to the bank together with a copy of your parents' ID.
- You can also try at **another bank**. Depending on the bank (employee), you may still be able to open an account.

Do you want to open a bank account in order **to receive the equivalent living wage?**

Have you tried the above options and none of them work? You can also receive the equivalent living wage in another way.

- The PCSW can give the living wage to **the head of the family** in Belgium if any (e.g. your aunt, brother).
- The PCSW can grant the living wage via **an easycard**. This is a prepaid debit card from the bank.
  - [Via this link](#) you can find more explanation on this. You can send this information to the PCSW.
- The PCSW can open **a social assistance account**.
  - [Via this link](#) you can find more information on this. You can send this information to the PCSW.



## D. Health

It is important to be registered with **a health insurance fund** as soon as possible. This way, you have maximum access to medical care. If you are a member of a health insurance fund, you are entitled to partial reimbursement of medical expenses. You also receive discounts on public transport and at various leisure facilities. You can join a health insurance fund as soon as you have a certificate of temporary protection.

You can choose which health insurance fund you want to join. You can **register for free** with the [HZIV](#) or [CAAMI](#). The other health insurance funds require you to pay.



If you stay with relatives or in a foster home, the health insurance fund considers you as part of the family. They then refer to you as **a 'dependent'**. Normally, your guardian has to sign the registration in the health insurance fund, but in practice, the health insurance funds don't mind if this is not done.

Ask your PCSW assistant to help you with your registration.

You may need medical care at some point in which case they may **ask for your parents' consent**. You can then try to obtain a signed consent from your parents in Ukraine. Be sure to include a copy of your parents' passport as well.

## E. Housing

Many young people from Ukraine stay **with family or friends**. If that is not possible in your case, you can also live somewhere else. You can live with another **Ukrainian or Belgian host family**, for example, or you can live alone. Discuss this with your PCSW assistant, someone from your municipality or the Guardianship Service.

If you are **not happy** with where you are staying, you may contact the Guardianship Service. We will work with you to find a solution.



In Belgium, there is also 'youth aid'. These are different places where minors can go if things are not going well with them or if they are not happy in the house where they live.

There is directly accessible and non-directly accessible youth aid.

- **Directly accessible youth aid** is accessible and approachable for everyone. Examples include CLB, CAW, JAC and the Centres for Mental Health Care (CGGZ).
- **Non-directly accessible youth aid** is more invasive and specialised. You have to register first. You cannot do this on your own. A counsellor should help you with this.

If you need youth aid, it is best to do this with a guardian.

If you do not have a guardian, please contact the Guardianship Service. We will help you further.

## F. Work

Your A-card allows you to work as a student from your 16th birthday. A student job means that you mainly study and work at a job in your spare time and after class hours. Important to note here is that you pay less taxes if you work less than 475 hours a year. If you work more than 475 hours a year, you have to pay the normal tax rate. Note! This could be a lot of money.

You can also work **as a volunteer**. This can be done as of the age of 15. You may be compensated for this, but this is not always the case. You also have to pay taxes if you earn above a certain amount in volunteer compensation.



## G. Return or relocation



What should you do if you want to return to Ukraine or move to another country?

- Request your parents for a permission to return.
- **De-register in the municipality** where you reside. You or an adult you are staying with can do this.
- **Let the Guardianship Service know when** you will be leaving.
- If someone will be picking you up, ask for **a copy (or photo) of the passport of your parents or the person** who will pick you up. If they have a birth certificate ask for it too. Send this to the Guardianship Service.
- Afterwards, **send confirmation to the Guardianship Service** that you have arrived safely in Ukraine or another country. Proof of registration in the school, municipality, an email from your parents, etc.

## H. Tracing missing family members



You do not know where your family is, or have you lost contact with them?

You may contact [Restoring Family Links](#) of Red Cross Flanders. It is **a free service that helps you search for missing relatives and restore contact** with family members. They cooperate with Red Cross societies in other countries.

Each application is treated confidentially, respecting your personal situation and cultural context.

If you need help with this, you may contact the Guardianship Service.

# CONTACT DETAILS OF THE GUARDIANSHIP SERVICE

The Guardianship service can be reached **every working day from 8am to 5pm**. For urgent questions, the Guardianship Service is also available in the evenings until 10pm and at weekends.



**078 15 43 24** or via Whatsapp **0479 85 01 87**



**voogdij@just.fgov.be**

