

Fundamental rights of children displaced in the EU following the Russian war of aggression

Finland

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1. Children fleeing Ukraine

1.1. Data on children fleeing Ukraine

Table 1 Children fleeing Ukraine

Category of child	Registration system Y/N	Number of children (as disaggregated as possible) (as of 30 April 2023 unless otherwise specified)
Overall number of children	Yes	15,537 Of Ukrainian nationality: 15,394 Age group 0–6: 4,902 Age group: 7–13: 6,938 Age group 14–17: 3,697 Boys: 7,911 Girls: 7,614
Arrived accompanied by mother, father or another legal guardian	Yes	14,811 Age group 0–6: 4,851 Age group: 7–13: 6,733 Age group 14–17: 3,227 Boys: 7,531 Girls: 7,268
Arrived without parents, but with other family members, neighbours or family friends	Yes	All children applying for temporary protection are registered. Children who arrive without parents or another legal guardian are treated as unaccompanied children.
Arrived unaccompanied	Yes	726 Age group 0–6: 51 Age group: 7–13: 205 Age group 14–17: 470 Boys: 380 Girls: 346 Of Ukrainian nationality: 724
Arrived within a group of children, as an organised evacuation from Ukrainian institutions or foster carers	Yes	No children have been evacuated to Finland in this category.

(with or without an appointed legal guardian)		
Arrived within a group of children, through private initiatives, such as football clubs (with or without an appointed legal guardian)	Yes	All children applying for temporary protection are registered. Data is not registered separately in this category. The Finnish Immigration Service reported one case where Ukrainian children have arrived in Finland through a private initiative. ¹

Source: Information obtained from the Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*) via email on 16 June 2023.

An application for temporary protection is submitted to the police or border guard and registered in an electronic information system, from which it is automatically transferred to the case management system for immigration matters, controlled by the Finnish Immigration Service. Data from the case management system can be disclosed to other authorities when the data is necessary for them to perform their tasks laid down by law, and they have a statutory right to obtain the data.²

¹ Information obtained from the Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*) via email on 8 June 2023.

² Finland, Personal Data Act in Immigration Administration ([laki henkilötietojen käsittelystä maahanmuuttohallinnossa/lag om behandling av personuppgifter i migrationsförvaltningen](#)), Act No. 615/2020, 21 August 2020. Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*), [Data protection](#), website, accessed on 13 June 2023.

2. Child protection – legal, policy framework and procedures in place

2.1. Responsibilities of child protection authorities

2.1.1. Individual children, including unaccompanied and separated children

In **Finland**, 21 wellbeing services counties (*hyvinvointialue/välfärdsområde*) and the City of Helsinki are in charge of child welfare/protection services as of 1 January 2023.³ Until a child obtains a municipality of residence, a professional in social work at the reception centre, where the child is registered, is providing social work and counselling to the child.⁴ In case the child is in need of child welfare measures beyond the support services provided by the reception centre, the wellbeing services county, where the reception centre is located, is obligated to assess the needs of the child and ensure that the child receives necessary support.⁵ According to the Child Welfare Act, staff members of the reception centre are obliged to notify the child protection authorities at the wellbeing services county of any child whose need for child welfare measures requires an investigation.⁶

A child, who has been granted temporary protection and has stayed in Finland for at least a year, can apply to the Digital and Population Data Services Agency (*digi- ja väestötietovirasto, DVV/myndigheten för digitalisering och befolkningsdata*) for a municipality of residence. The applicant also needs a Finnish personal identity code,

³ Finland, Act on Organising Healthcare and Social Welfare Services ([laki sosiaali- ja terveydenhuollon järjestämisestä/lag om ordnande av social- och hälsovård](#)), Act No. 612/2021, 29 June 2021, section 8.

⁴ Finland, Act on the Reception of Persons Applying for International Protection and on the Identification of and Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings (Reception Act) ([laki kansainvälistä suojelua hakevan vastaanotosta sekä ihmiskaupan uhrin tunnistamisesta ja auttamisesta/lag om mottagande av personer som söker internationellt skydd och om identifiering av och hjälp till offer för människohandel](#)), Act No. 746/2011, 17 June 2011, section 25.

⁵ Finland, Child Welfare Act ([lastensuojelulaki/barnskyddslagen](#)), Act No. 417/2007, 13 April 2007, sections 11 and 26.

⁶ Finland, Child Welfare Act ([lastensuojelulaki/barnskyddslagen](#)), Act No. 417/2007, 13 April 2007, section 25.

which can be applied any time at the reception centre or DVV.⁷ If a child's family member already has a municipality of residence in Finland, the child can apply for a municipality of residence at the same time when applying for temporary protection.⁸ Statistics Finland reports that 2,155 children of Ukrainian nationality have received a municipality of residence between January and May 2023.⁹ After obtaining a municipality of residence, all social services, including accommodation, are organised within the framework of the wellbeing services counties (and the City of Helsinki). The municipality is requested by law to draw up together with the wellbeing services county an integration plan for all children who arrive in Finland without a guardian.¹⁰ As of 1 March 2023, the Integration Act provides that unaccompanied children with temporary protection, who have received a municipality of residence, are entitled to the same housing and support services as unaccompanied children receiving international protection.¹¹ These services include social and healthcare organised by the wellbeing services county and educational and other services organised by the municipality.¹²

During the reception phase, a child can stay in a reception centre for children (so-called group homes), supported living units for young persons above 16 years of age, with adult relatives or other close persons in a reception centre or in private accommodation. The reception centre, where the child is registered, draws up a client plan for the child. The plan includes information on the responsibility of the care and upbringing of the child and possible support services offered by the reception centre or other service providers.¹³ No difference is made between children who stay with an adult relative or another close person.

As to accommodation outside reception centres, the director of the reception centre decides on the placement of a child in private accommodation after hearing the child, the legal representative and the social welfare professional at the reception centre.¹⁴

⁷ Finland, Digital and Population Data Services Agency (*digi- ja väestötietovirasto/myndigheten för digitalisering och befolkningsdata*), [Instructions for those who have arrived in Finland from Ukraine](#), website, accessed 21 June 2023.

⁸ Finland, Digital and Population Data Services Agency (*digi- ja väestötietovirasto/myndigheten för digitalisering och befolkningsdata*), [Municipality of residence for a citizen other than an EU or Nordic citizen](#), website, accessed on 21 June 2023.

⁹ Information obtained from Statistics Finland (*Tilastokeskus/Statistikcentralen*) via email on 21 June 2023.

¹⁰ Finland, Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (Integration Act) ([laki kotoutumisen edistämisestä/lag om främjande av integration](#)), Act No. 1386/2010, 30 December 2010, section 15.

¹¹ Finland, Amendment of the Integration Act ([laki kotoutumisen edistämisestä annetun lain muuttamisesta/lag om ändring av lagen om främjande av integration](#)), Act No. 1083/2022, 20 December 2022, section 27.

¹² Finland, Government bill HE 135/2022 ([hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle laeiksi kotoutumisen edistämisestä annetun lain ja kansainvälistä suojelua hakevan vastaanotosta sekä ihmiskaupan uhrin tunnistamisesta ja auttamisesta annetun lain 14 §:n muuttamisesta/regeringens proposition till riksdagen med förslag till lagar om ändring av lagen om främjande av integration och 14 § i lagen om mottagande av personer som söker internationellt skydd och om identifiering av och hjälp till offer för människohandel](#)), p. 25.

¹³ Information obtained from the Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*) via email on 7 June 2023.

¹⁴ Finland, Reception Act ([laki kansainvälistä suojelua hakevan vastaanotosta sekä ihmiskaupan uhrin tunnistamisesta ja auttamisesta/lag om mottagande av personer som söker internationellt skydd och](#)

When a child stays in private accommodation, he or she is registered with a reception centre and has access to the same social support services that are offered to children in reception centres. The Finnish Immigration Service reports that the reception centre monitors that the client plan is carried out in private accommodation. It further notes that the child may always move back to the reception centre for unaccompanied children.¹⁵

The Finnish Immigration Service is responsible for overseeing the reception activities.¹⁶ Further, the reception centre is obligated to inform the wellbeing services county or City of Helsinki about children placed in private accommodation.¹⁷ The notification shall include information on the address of the child and assessments, carried out by the social worker at the reception centre and the child's legal representative, of the suitability of the private accommodation and the capacity of the adult(s) to care for the child. Both an adult relative and another suitable person, including the person who looked after the child when fleeing from Ukraine, can care for the child in private accommodation.

As to foster families, a child stays with a foster family, including a professional foster family, when the child welfare authority of the wellbeing services county establishes that there is a need for special child welfare measures.¹⁸ The wellbeing services county is obliged to guide service providers and to oversee that the placement in foster families is carried out in line with the Child Welfare Act.¹⁹ The Regional State Administrative Agency (*aluehallintovirasto/regionförvaltningsverket*) exercises oversight over social care, including foster care placements.²⁰ The supervision is triggered by the Agency's own observations, notifications from the public or other authorities, or complaints filed by members of the public. If deficiencies are found, the Regional State Administrative Agency may issue administrative guidance, including expressing an opinion on lawful

[om identifiering av och hjälp till offer för människohandel](#)), Act No. 746/2011, 17 June 2011, section 18.

¹⁵ Information obtained from the Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*) via email on 7 June 2023.

¹⁶ Finland, Reception Act ([laki kansainvälistä suojelua hakevan vastaanotosta sekä ihmiskaupan uhrin tunnistamisesta ja auttamisesta/lag om mottagande av personer som söker internationellt skydd och om identifiering av och hjälp till offer för människohandel](#)), Act No. 746/2011, 17 June 2011, section 8.

¹⁷ Finland, Reception Act ([laki kansainvälistä suojelua hakevan vastaanotosta sekä ihmiskaupan uhrin tunnistamisesta ja auttamisesta/lag om mottagande av personer som söker internationellt skydd och om identifiering av och hjälp till offer för människohandel](#)), Act No. 746/2011, 17 June 2011, section 18.

¹⁸ Finland, Child Welfare Act ([lastensuojelulaki/barnskyddslagen](#)), Act No. 417/2007, 13 April 2007, section 56 and Act on Family Care ([perheitoilaki/familjevårdslag](#)), Act No. 263/2015, 20 March 2015, sections 3 and 4.

¹⁹ Finland, Act on Wellbeing Services Counties ([laki hyvinvointialueista/lag om välfärdsområden](#)), Act No. 611/2021, 29 June 2021, section 10 and Child Welfare Act ([lastensuojelulaki/barnskyddslagen](#)), Act No. 417/2007, 13 April 2007, section 79.

²⁰ Finland, Child Welfare Act ([lastensuojelulaki/barnskyddslagen](#)), Act No. 417/2007, 13 April 2007, section 79.

conduct, drawing attention to the appropriate organisation of activities or giving an admonition (*huomautus/anmärkning*).²¹

2.1.2. Children evacuated from Ukrainian institutions

In **Finland**, the Finnish Immigration Service reports that so far no children have been evacuated from Ukrainian child protection institutions to Finland.²² Despite plans to receive a group of children from Ukraine in the autumn of 2022, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health reports that Finland was not able to complete the plan.²³ Based on information obtained from the ministry, the media reports that the main reason for this was the differences between child protection legislation and practices in Finland and Ukraine.²⁴ Child protection institutions are small in Finland and it would not have been possible to place a group of around 100 children in the same unit, as requested by Ukraine.

With respect to the legislative framework, the Ministry of the Interior notes in its memorandum on displaced persons from Ukraine²⁵ that both Ukraine and Finland are parties to the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children.²⁶ This means that a decision on taking a child into care in Ukraine will be recognised in Finland without further confirmation. Thus, a child arriving from a child protection institution will be treated as a child welfare client under the Finnish Child Welfare Act. The Act is defined in the memorandum as *lex specialis* in relation to the Reception Act. In **Finland**, the City of Helsinki is responsible for arranging child welfare with respect to children arriving from Ukrainian institutions.²⁷

As noted in the memorandum of the Ministry of the Interior, all services under the Child Welfare Act are available to children from Ukrainian institutions, including support measures for non-institutional care, the placement of the child, the appointment of a social worker and the adoption of a client plan. It is further stated that a child welfare

²¹ Finland, Act on Organising Healthcare and Social Welfare Services ([laki sosiaali- ja terveydenhuollon järjestämisestä/lag om ordnande av social- och hälsovård](#)), Act No. 612/2021, 29 June 2021, section 43 and Administrative Procedure Act ([hallintolaki/förvaltningslag](#)), Act No. 434/2003, 6 June 2003, section 53c.

²² Information obtained from the Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*) via email on 7 June 2023.

²³ Finland, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (*sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriö/social- och hälsovårdsministeriet*) (2022), '[Ukrainian children in need of child protection services will not be evacuated to Finland](#)', press release, 19 October 2022.

²⁴ Finnish Broadcasting Company (*Yleisradio/Rundradion*) (2022), '[Ukrainalaisia lastensuojelulapsia ei evakuoitakaan Suomeen — iso osa lapsista sijoitettu jo muualle Eurooppaan](#)', YLE news, 19 October 2022.

²⁵ Finland, Ministry of the Interior (*sisäministeriö/inrikesministeriet*) (2022), '[Displaced persons from Ukraine: Residence in Finland](#)', Memorandum, VN/6332/2022, SM011:00/2022, 4 May 2022.

²⁶ World Organisation for Cross-border Co-operation in Civil and Commercial Matters, '[Convention on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition, enforcement and co-operation in respect of parental responsibility and measures for the protection of children](#)', 19 October 1996.

²⁷ Finland, Child Welfare Act ([lastensuojelulaki/barnskyddslagen](#)), Act No. 417/2007, 13 April 2007, section 17(1).

client cannot be kept in care and placed elsewhere than at a place of substitute care referred to in the Child Welfare Act. This means that ‘the group homes and supported living units referred to in the Reception Act are not places of substitute care under the Child Welfare Act’.²⁸ Consequently, children evacuated from Ukrainian institutions cannot be placed in reception centres for unaccompanied children. In **Finland**, the Finnish Immigration Service reports that there are no dedicated reception centres for children fleeing Ukraine.²⁹

²⁸ Finland, Ministry of the Interior (*sisäministeriö/inrikesministeriet*) (2022), [Displaced persons from Ukraine: Residence in Finland](#), Memorandum, VN/6332/2022, SM011:00/2022, 4 May 2022, p. 18.

²⁹ Information obtained from the Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*) via email on 7 June 2023.

3. Guardianship/legal representation arrangements for unaccompanied and separated children fleeing Ukraine

3.1. Arrived unaccompanied

In **Finland**, children fleeing Ukraine fall under the same representation arrangements (guardianship) as other third-country nationals in accordance with the Reception Act.³⁰ A representative is assigned without delay for each unaccompanied child under 18 years of age who arrives in Finland alone or in the company of a person who is not the parent or legal guardian. This applies to asylum-seeking children, children accorded temporary protection and victims of human trafficking who do not have a residence permit. The representative's task is to ensure that the child's best interests are considered, to assist the child and to act on behalf of the child in matters with authorities.

According to the Reception Act, a representative for an unaccompanied child is appointed by the district court.³¹ An application for representation is lodged by the reception centre, after hearing the child. The director of the reception centre represents the child in matters concerning the child's person and property until a representative is appointed. The decision of the district court may be appealed to the court of appeal. According to information obtained from the Finnish Immigration Service, there is some regional variation in how long getting the decision on the appointment of a representative takes; usually the reception centres receive the decision in 2–14 days.³²

In **Finland**, there are no precise criteria regarding the competence of the representatives, other than the general requirement that they should be suitable adult persons who are able to perform the task in an impeccable manner, and who consent

³⁰ Finland, Reception Act ([laki kansainvälistä suojelua hakevan vastaanotosta sekä ihmiskaupan uhrin tunnistamisesta ja auttamisesta/lag om mottagande av personer som söker internationellt skydd och om identifiering av och hjälp till offer för människohandel](#)), Act No. 746/2011, 17 June 2011, sections 39, 40 and 41.

³¹ Finland, Reception Act ([laki kansainvälistä suojelua hakevan vastaanotosta sekä ihmiskaupan uhrin tunnistamisesta ja auttamisesta/lag om mottagande av personer som söker internationellt skydd och om identifiering av och hjälp till offer för människohandel](#)), Act No. 746/2011, 17 June 2011, section 39.

³² Information obtained from the Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*) via email on 8 June 2023.

to the task.³³ Persons, whose actual or potential interests could conflict with those of the child, cannot be appointed as guardians. In addition, the prospected representative's criminal record is reviewed before the appointment. The Finnish Immigration Service notes that there is a shortage of experienced representatives, and therefore the reception centres work actively to find suitable representatives, e.g., by contacting relevant NGOs active in the municipalities where reception centres are located.³⁴ All registered, unaccompanied, and separated children arriving from Ukraine have been appointed representatives. The Finnish Immigration Service further informs having arranged workshops on temporary protection and related matters for the representatives. Guidance notes on temporary protection have also been issued.³⁵

During temporary protection, unaccompanied children are placed in a group home or in support housing, which are units accessible to children only.³⁶ Group home and support housing services are provided by municipalities, companies and non-governmental organisations, such as the Finnish Red Cross, on the basis of contracts with the Finnish Immigration Service.³⁷ Unaccompanied children may also stay in private accommodation, if it is considered in the best interests of the child.³⁸ This requires a decision by the director of the reception centre, undertaken after hearing both the child, and the child's representative, as well as a social worker of the reception centre.

After having resided in Finland for one year an unaccompanied child may apply for a municipality of residence.³⁹ This is voluntary, and intended for persons who are likely to stay in Finland for the time being.⁴⁰ It means that the person receives a Finnish identity card and that he/she is entitled to the same municipal and wellbeing services county services as permanent residents. For a child at the age of 6–17 this also means that

³³ Finland, Reception Act (*laki kansainvälistä suojelua hakevan vastaanotosta sekä ihmiskaupan uhrin tunnistamisesta ja auttamisesta/lag om mottagande av personer som söker internationellt skydd och om identifiering av och hjälp till offer för människohandel*), Act No. 746/2011, 17 June 2011, section 40.

³⁴ Information obtained from the Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*) via email on 8 June 2023.

³⁵ Information obtained from the Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*) via email on 8 June 2023.

³⁶ Finland, Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*), [Accommodation of an unaccompanied minor asylum seeker](#), website, accessed on 26 June 2023.

³⁷ Finland, Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*) (2022), '[Operation of reception centres in several geographical areas put out to tender by the Finnish Immigration Service](#)', press release, 27 September 2022.

³⁸ Finland, Reception Act (*laki kansainvälistä suojelua hakevan vastaanotosta sekä ihmiskaupan uhrin tunnistamisesta ja auttamisesta/lag om mottagande av personer som söker internationellt skydd och om identifiering av och hjälp till offer för människohandel*), Act No. 746/2011, 17 June 2011, section 18.

³⁹ Finland, Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*), [Temporary protection and municipality of residence](#), website, accessed on 13 June 2023.

⁴⁰ Finland, Finnish Government (*valtioneuvosto/statsrådet*) (2023), '[Persons displaced from Ukraine begin registering municipalities of residence – greater role for municipalities and wellbeing services counties in providing services](#)', press release, 2 March 2023; and Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*), [Comparison between reception services and services of a municipality of residence](#), website, accessed on 28 June 2023.

he/she becomes subject to compulsory education.⁴¹ According to the Central Union for Child Welfare (*Lastensuojelun Keskusliitto/Centralförbundet för Barnskydd*), it may be challenging for the representative to assess whether applying for a municipality of residence is in the best interests of the child. The current forms of cooperation between municipalities and wellbeing services counties are still taking shape after the recent social and healthcare services reform. Staying as a beneficiary of the services and contacts provided for the child by the reception centres is a safe choice as compared to the process of applying for a municipality of residence and later, applying for services a resident is entitled to.⁴²

If a child who has been granted municipality of residence needs to be appointed a new representative, e.g. closer to the municipality in question, relevant provisions of the Integration Act become applicable.⁴³ The only difference in this procedure, as compared to the one established by the Reception Act, is that the wellbeing services county, in which the child's municipality of residence is situated, becomes responsible for lodging the application for representation. Usually, however, the representative appointed in the reception phase continues to act on behalf of the child also in the integration phase.⁴⁴

The Reception Act requires representation to be discontinued when the child returns permanently to his/her home country.⁴⁵ The Finnish Immigration Service reports of challenges in situations where children return to Ukraine temporarily, and there is uncertainty of their return to Finland, and, consequently, of the safety of the children and their continued need of representation.⁴⁶ Respectively, if the child's parent or guardian comes to Finland, the appointed representative will be discharged.⁴⁷

Guidance, planning and oversight of the representatives in the reception phase is the responsibility of the Finnish Immigration Service.⁴⁸ In the integration phase, the central

⁴¹ Finland, Finnish National Agency for Education (*opetushallitus/utbildningsstyrelsen*), [For Ukrainian refugees](#), website, accessed on 26 June 2023.

⁴² Information obtained from the Central Union for Child Welfare (*Lastensuojelun Keskusliitto/Centralförbundet för Barnskydd*) via email on 14 June 2023.

⁴³ Finland, Integration Act ([laki kotoutumisen edistämisestä/lag om främjande av integration](#)), Act No. 1386/2010, 30 December 2010, sections 56 and 57.

⁴⁴ Information obtained from the Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*) via email on 8 June 2023.

⁴⁵ Finland, Reception Act ([laki kansainvälistä suojelua hakevan vastaanotosta sekä ihmiskaupan uhrin tunnistamisesta ja auttamisesta/lag om mottagande av personer som söker internationellt skydd och om identifiering av och hjälp till offer för människohandel](#)), Act No. 746/2011, 17 June 2011, section 43.

⁴⁶ Information obtained from the Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*) via email on 8 June 2023.

⁴⁷ Finland, Reception Act ([laki kansainvälistä suojelua hakevan vastaanotosta sekä ihmiskaupan uhrin tunnistamisesta ja auttamisesta/lag om mottagande av personer som söker internationellt skydd och om identifiering av och hjälp till offer för människohandel](#)), Act No. 746/2011, 17 June 2011, section 42.

⁴⁸ Finland, Reception Act ([laki kansainvälistä suojelua hakevan vastaanotosta sekä ihmiskaupan uhrin tunnistamisesta ja auttamisesta/lag om mottagande av personer som söker internationellt skydd och om identifiering av och hjälp till offer för människohandel](#)), Act No. 746/2011, 17 June 2011, section 39(4).

authority is the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (*elinkeino-, liikenne- ja ympäristökeskus/närings-, trafik- och miljöcentralen*), whose mandate has now been specified in the reformed Integration Act which enters into force on 1 January 2025.⁴⁹

3.2. Arrived without parents, but with other family members, neighbours or family friends

In **Finland**, a representative is appointed for all children not arriving in the company of their parents or legal guardians. Legal guardianship must be demonstrated by a court order or other relevant official documentation.⁵⁰ With reference to the Ministry of Justice, the Finnish Immigration Service reports that if documentation issued by competent authorities is presented, no separate decisions undertaken by Finnish authorities are needed, in accordance with the Hague Convention on Child Protection.⁵¹ Unofficial written authorisations from children's parents are not approved by the Finnish authorities.

In practice, there have been problems with verifying the validity of documents presented by persons travelling with Ukrainian children and claiming to be the children's authorized guardians. According to the Finnish Immigration Service, there have also been some cases where separated children's parents later arrive in Finland without documentation certifying their parenthood. To address these issues, the Finnish Immigration Service reports that a guidance note on the recognition of different type of guardianship documents issued by home country authorities is currently being updated.⁵² The practice has been that if any doubt arises about the authenticity of the presented documentation, a representative will be appointed for the child.

The Finnish Immigration Service further notes that Ukrainian relatives arriving with children cannot be appointed as the children's representatives, since Finnish legislation requires that there is no potential conflict of interest between the child and the representative.⁵³ It also needs to be ascertained that representatives have no criminal

⁴⁹ Finland, Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (*laki kotoutumisen edistämisestä/lag om främjande av integration*), Act No. 681/2023, section 36.

⁵⁰ Finland, Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*), [Who is the child's guardian?](#), website, accessed on 13 June 2023. See also European Migration Network (EMN) (2022), [Application of the Temporary Protection Directive \(Scope and Registration\)](#), EMN Inform, p. 5.

⁵¹ Information obtained from the Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*) via email on 8 June 2023.

⁵² Information obtained from the Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*) via email on 8 June 2023.

⁵³ Finland, Reception Act (*laki kansainvälistä suojelua hakevan vastaanotosta sekä ihmiskaupan uhrin tunnistamisesta ja auttamisesta/lag om mottagande av personer som söker internationellt skydd och om identifiering av och hjälp till offer för människohandel*), Act No. 746/2011, 17 June 2011, section 40.

background. Furthermore, dealing with the Finnish authorities necessitates a command of either Finnish or Swedish, as well as knowledge of relevant Finnish legislation.

As noted above, an unaccompanied or separated child may be accommodated with relatives at a reception centre for adults and families or in private accommodation if this is considered in the best interests of the child. This is the case with many Ukrainian children, since they, in fact, have arrived in the company of other family members, such as grandparents, or relatives who already have a residence permit in Finland on the basis of, e.g., seasonal work.⁵⁴ The Finnish Immigration Service reports that arranging meetings with the representatives has been challenging in situations where the children are accommodated far away from the reception centres.⁵⁵ To facilitate the meetings, representatives and reception centre officials have been arranging home visits and telephone meetings.

Also the Central Union for Child Welfare observes the rather unusual situation of the Ukrainian children staying with their relatives, and based on information obtained from the representatives' interest organisation (*ETU – edustajat turvapaikanhakijalapsille ry./ ETU rf.*), notes that this may result in representatives remaining rather distant to the children.⁵⁶ Both the Finnish Immigration Service and the Central Union for Child Welfare further note that especially in the beginning there were issues of mistrust and misunderstandings related to the role of the representatives from the part of the children's relatives.⁵⁷

The Finnish Immigration Service also reports of challenges relating to situations where the children's guardians travel to Ukraine and there is uncertainty concerning their return to Finland.⁵⁸ The Finnish Immigration Service's recommendation has been that if the guardians stay away longer than two weeks and there is uncertainty about the date of their return, a representative will be appointed for the child.

⁵⁴ Information obtained from the Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*) via email on 8 June 2023. See also Martiskainen, T., Peltonen, R., *Lastensuojelun keskusliitto (2023), Ilman huoltajaa tulleiden edustajajärjestelmä: Katsaus nykytilaan ja kehittämisehdotukset*, Helsinki, Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö, kansallinen lapsistrategia, p. 10.

⁵⁵ Information obtained from the Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*) via email on 8 June 2023.

⁵⁶ Information obtained from the Central Union for Child Welfare (*Lastensuojelun Keskusliitto/ Centralförbundet för Barnskydd*) via email on 14 June 2023.

⁵⁷ Information obtained from the Central Union for Child Welfare (*Lastensuojelun Keskusliitto/ Centralförbundet för Barnskydd*) via email on 14 June 2023 and from the Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*) via email on 8 June 2023.

⁵⁸ Information obtained from the Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*) via email on 8 June 2023.

3.3. Arrived within a group, from Ukrainian institution or foster carers (with or without an appointed legal guardian)

In **Finland**, the Finnish Immigration Service reports that no groups of children from Ukrainian child care institutions have been received in Finland so far.⁵⁹ In autumn 2022, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health was preparing to receive a group of maximum 100 children evacuated from one Ukrainian institution, but the Ukrainian authorities withdrew from the initiative (please see above under 2.1.2). The Ukrainian foster carers with relevant documentation issued by the Ukrainian authorities were to accompany the children.

3.4. Arrived within a group, through private initiatives, such as football clubs (with or without an appointed legal guardian)

In **Finland**, the Finnish Immigration Service reports having knowledge of only one case where Ukrainian children have arrived in Finland through a private initiative.⁶⁰ As explained above, unless the guardianship documentation can be proven to be valid, a legal representative will be assigned for each unaccompanied child. According to information obtained from the Finnish Immigration Service, however, it is possible, that the same representative acts on behalf of several children in the same group.

⁵⁹ Information obtained from the Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*) via email on 8 June 2023.

⁶⁰ Information obtained from the Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*) via email on 8 June 2023.

4. Information and practical challenges in access to basic services for children fleeing Ukraine

4.1. General information and challenges

In **Finland**, the Finnish National Agency for Education reports that in April 2023 there were 1,728 children fleeing Ukraine in early childhood education and care, 474 children in pre-primary education, 5,856 in preparatory education for basic education, 618 in basic education and 102 in general upper secondary education.⁶¹ School attendance is voluntary for children fleeing from Ukraine if the children or their parents have not applied for a municipality of residence in Finland. For school-age children (6–17 years), who are municipal residents, school attendance is obligatory.⁶²

In **Finland**, under school-age children fleeing from Ukraine have a subjective right to early childhood education and care after they have been issued a municipality of residence. For a child who is not a resident, the municipality is required to arrange early childhood education and care only when the child's caregiver works or studies in the municipality, in urgent cases or if circumstances otherwise so require.⁶³ The Ombudsman for Children reports that the practice varies between municipalities.⁶⁴ The Deputy Parliamentary Ombudsman is concerned that this may jeopardize the realization of the rights of vulnerable children, including children fleeing from Ukraine.⁶⁵ The Ministry of Education and Culture has urged municipalities to arrange early childhood education and care for all children seeking temporary protection whether municipal residents or not.⁶⁶ In November 2022, the ministry granted some € 7 million to

⁶¹ Finland, Finnish National Agency for Education (*opetushallitus/utbildningsstyrelsen*), [Information on Ukrainian war refugees in ECEC, education and training in Finland](#), website, accessed on 13 June 2023.

⁶² Finland, Finnish National Agency for Education (*opetushallitus/utbildningsstyrelsen*), [For Ukrainian refugees](#), website, accessed on 13 June 2023.

⁶³ Finland, [Act on Early Childhood Education and Care](#) (*varhaiskasvatuslaki/lag om småbarnspedagogik*), Act No. 540/2018, 13 July 2018, section 6.

⁶⁴ Finland, Ombudsman for Children (*lapsiasiavaltuutettu/barnombudsmannen*) (2023), [Lapsen oikeus turvallisuuteen kolmois kriisin ajassa: Lapsiasiavaltuutetun vuosikertomus 2022](#) (Annual report 2022), Helsinki, Publications of the Office of the Ombudsman for Children 2023:5, p. 58.

⁶⁵ Finland, Deputy Parliamentary Ombudsman (*apulaisoikeusasiamies/biträdande justitieombudsman*), [Decision EOAK/1992/2022](#), 2 May 2022.

⁶⁶ Finland, Ministry of Education and Culture (*opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö/undervisnings- och kulturministeriet*), [Valmistautuminen Ukrainasta paenneiden kotikuntaoikeuteen ja kasvatus- ja koulutuspalveluiden järjestämiseen](#), VN/34384/2022 VN/34384/2022-OKM-1, 9 January 2023.

compensate municipalities specifically for costs incurred in providing early childhood education and care for children seeking temporary or international protection and undocumented children.⁶⁷

In **Finland**, in a survey, commissioned by the Ministry of the Interior in the summer of 2022, Ukrainians fleeing the war expressed need for more information, in their own language, about social and healthcare services in Finland and the course of action to apply for services. The preferred channel for information is social media (Facebook and Telegram).⁶⁸ The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has encouraged the wellbeing services counties to step up the provision of information on access to social and healthcare services to Ukrainians who have been issued a municipality of residence.⁶⁹ Insufficient information may result in mistrust of public authorities. Regarding child protection, for example, appointing a legal representative for an unaccompanied child or the requirement that a child's placement in private accommodation is subject to the decision of the director of the reception centre have been misinterpreted as a preparation for taking the child into custody.⁷⁰ False assumptions increase the risk that a child fleeing from Ukraine is not registered as a client in a reception centre, thus hampering the child's access to services offered by the centre.

4.2. Challenges for children at multiple risk/disadvantage

In **Finland**, there is so far no comprehensive information or research in open-access sources specifically on the situation of children at multiple risk of exclusion due to, e.g., statelessness, ethnic background or disability. However, some of the challenges encountered by adults fleeing Ukraine also concern children. For example, a support centre for immigrants with disabilities (CSO) informs that persons with disabilities fleeing Ukraine have expressed a need for more information in their own language about the services they are entitled to, as clients in a reception centre or later, as

⁶⁷ Finland, Ministry of Education and Culture (*opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö/undervisnings- och kulturministeriet*) (2022), '[Yli seitsemän miljoonaa turvattomista oloista tulleiden lasten varhaiskasvatukseen](#)', press release, 23 November 2022.

⁶⁸ Svyrenenko, A., Koptsyukh, A. (2022), [The situation of Ukrainians in Finland who fled the war: Survey results](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry of the Interior 2022:34, p. 45, 51.

⁶⁹ Finland, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (*sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö/social- och hälsovårdsministeriet*), [Hyvinvointialueiden varautuminen tilapäistä suojelua saavien henkilöiden mahdollisuuteen hakea kotikuntaa](#), Ohjauskirje (guidance note), 6 February 2023.

⁷⁰ Finland, Ombudsman for Children (*lapsiasiavaltuutettu/barnombudsmannen*) (2023), [Lapsen oikeus turvallisuuteen kolmois kriisin ajassa: Lapsiasiavaltuutetun vuosikertomus 2022](#) (Annual report 2022), Helsinki, Publications of the Office of the Ombudsman for Children 2023:5, p. 57–58. Martiskainen, T., Peltonen, R., Lastensuojelun keskusliitto (2023), [Ilman huoltajaa tulleiden edustajajärjestelmä: Katsaus nykytilaan ja kehittämissuhteet](#), Helsinki, Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö, kansallinen lapsistrategia, p. 10.

municipal residents.⁷¹ While the reception centre offers essential social services only, as municipal residents beneficiaries of temporary protection have access to a wider range of needs-based social services, including services for persons with disabilities.⁷² Another challenge reported by the support centre is that the staff at reception centres do not always have the expertise needed to recognise special needs. Also, medical examinations or certificates issued in Ukraine are not necessarily automatically accepted in Finland. In order to gain access to support services, a disability or reduced functional ability is assessed anew by a Finnish physician.⁷³ A survey among persons who have fled from Ukraine to Finland shows that the waiting process for a doctor's appointment in reception centres is long and access to services is thus delayed.⁷⁴

In **Finland**, the Finnish Association of the Deaf (*Kuurojen Liitto/Finlands Dövas Förbund*) cooperates with the Finnish Immigration Service with the purpose of creating opportunities for deaf people fleeing Ukraine to stay in the Helsinki metropolitan area where, for example, sign language services and interpretation are more readily available as compared to the rest of the country.⁷⁵ The Finnish Association of the Deaf reports that the City of Helsinki has successfully placed deaf children fleeing from Ukraine in one and the same day-care centre. The children can thus communicate both directly with their peers and with sign-language skilled teachers. However, the service is only provided for children residing in Helsinki. In other municipalities within the metropolitan area, deaf children fleeing Ukraine are placed in the same day-care group with hearing children and communicate with a sign-language skilled assistant only.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Information obtained from Vammaisten maahanmuuttajien tukikeskus HILMA (Support centre for immigrants with disabilities or long-term illnesses) via email on 31 May 2023.

⁷² Finland, Ministry of the Interior (*sisäministeriö/inrikesministeriet*) (2023) [Selvitys tilapäistä suojelua saavien palveluista, kotikuntaoikeudesta ja tarvittavista muutoksista](#) [Study on the services, municipality of residence and necessary changes of persons with temporary protection], Memorandum VN/6332/2022 SM011:00/2022, 29 June 2023, p. 16–18.

⁷³ Information obtained from Vammaisten maahanmuuttajien tukikeskus HILMA (Support centre for immigrants with disabilities or long-term illnesses) via email on 31 May 2023.

⁷⁴ Svyrenko, A., Koptsyukh, A. (2022), [The situation of Ukrainians in Finland who fled the war: Survey results](#), Helsinki, Publications of the Ministry of the Interior 2022:34, p. 35, 50.

⁷⁵ Finland, the Finnish Association of the Deaf (*Kuurojen Liitto/Finlands Dövas Förbund*), [Ukrainian deaf refugees in Finland](#), website, accessed on 16 June 2023.

⁷⁶ Information obtained from the Finnish Association of the Deaf (*Kuurojen Liitto/Finlands Dövas Förbund*) via email on 16 June 2023.

5. Policies in place

5.1. Dedicated action plan and/or integrated measures

In **Finland**, there is no dedicated policy or action plan addressing children fleeing Ukraine. Instead, measures are integrated in general instructions covering various fields and authorities. In the beginning of the war, the Ministry of the Interior published two memoranda on the residence of displaced persons from Ukraine.⁷⁷ With respect to children, the memoranda cover the issues of unaccompanied children, tracing of parents, family reunification, early childhood and basic education, child health-clinic services and child welfare. After the publication of the memoranda, the Aliens Act has been amended, affecting the rights of unaccompanied children. As from 1 February 2023, sufficient financial resources are no longer a requirement in situations where a child is the sponsor for family reunification.⁷⁸

In addition, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health published in February 2023 a guidance note on the preparation of wellbeing services counties for the expected increase in persons obtaining a municipality of residence. The ministry addresses the transfer of the obligation to organise accommodation for children from the reception centre to the wellbeing services county, the collaboration with municipalities in establishing housing units for children and the recognition of the number of children and their status and need of support in the negotiations between the wellbeing service counties and the reception centres. Other authorities, such as the Finnish Immigration Service, the Finnish Social Insurance Institution, the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, and the Finnish National Agency for Education, have published instructions in Ukrainian for people fleeing Ukraine on their websites.⁷⁹ These include information on child benefits, mental health services for traumatised children and youth, and the effect of obtaining a municipality of residence on the exercise of educational rights.

⁷⁷ Finland, Ministry of the Interior (*sisäministeriö/inrikesministeriet*) (2022), [Displaced persons from Ukraine: Residence in Finland](#), Memorandum, VN/6332/2022 SM011:00/2022, 4 May 2022 and [Selvitys tilapäistä suojelua saavien palveluista, kotikuntaoikeudesta ja tarvittavista muutoksista](#) [Study on the services, municipality of residence and necessary changes of persons with temporary protection], Memorandum VN/6332/2022 SM011:00/2022, 29 June 2023.

⁷⁸ Finland, Act amending the Aliens Act ([laki ulkomaalaislain muuttamisesta/laq om ändring av utlänningslagen](#)), Act No. 1167/2022, 20 December 2022, section 114.

⁷⁹ Finland, Finnish Immigration Service (*maahanmuuttovirasto/migrationsverket*), [Printable instructions for people fleeing Ukraine](#), website; Finnish Social Insurance Institution (*Kansaneläkelaitos/Folkpensionsanstalten, KELA*), [How the war in Ukraine affects the benefits available from Kela](#), website; Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (*Terveyden- ja hyvinvoinnin laitos/Institutet för hälsa och välfärd*), [Supporting the health and well-being of refugees from Ukraine](#), website; and Finnish National Agency for Education (*opetushallitus/utbildningsstyrelsen*), [For Ukrainian refugees](#), website. All websites accessed on 31 May 2023.

5.2. European Child Guarantee

In **Finland**, the national action plan implementing the European Child Guarantee was launched on 25 April 2022. While the plan includes a reference to the war in Ukraine, it does not introduce new measures targeting children fleeing Ukraine.⁸⁰

5.3. Budget

In **Finland**, the national state budget applies child-oriented budgeting. This means that all expenditures directed at children are listed and described in a separate chapter of the budget proposal. The 2023 budget allocates in total € 202 million for displaced children from Ukraine.⁸¹ The sum includes € 22 million for reception activities, € 60 million for early childhood education and € 120 million for preparatory education, which prepares children from Ukraine for basic education in Finland. Following the parliamentary elections of 2 April 2023, the new government will decide on the next General Government Fiscal Plan and budget proposal in the autumn.⁸² Consequently, no information is yet available on the 2024 budget.

⁸⁰ Finland, Finnish Government (*valtioneuvosto/statsrådet*) (2022), [Eurooppalainen lapsitakuu – Suomen toimintasuunnitelma](#) [European Child Guarantee – Finland’s action plan], Helsinki, Publications of the Finnish Government 2022:35.

⁸¹ Finland, Ministry of Finance (*valtiovarainministeriö/finansministeriet*) (2022), [Talousarvioesitys 2023](#) [Budget proposal 2023], 19 September 2022.

⁸² Finland, Ministry of Finance (*valtiovarainministeriö/finansministeriet*) (2023), [‘Technical General Government Fiscal Plan for 2024-2027 published’](#), press release, 23 March 2023.