

Migrant Children: unaccompanied, separated or migrating with their parents or guardians*

Migrant children may be migrating on their own or not. They may be accompanied by their parents or family relatives. Each situation is different and further clarification is needed.

Unaccompanied children

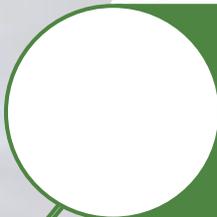
Unaccompanied children are those individuals below the age of 18 years **“who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.”** ([Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment N°6 \(2005\) Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children outside their country of origin](#))



Youssef, aged 15, is migrating all alone from Syria to Italy.
He is an unaccompanied child.



Juliette, aged 10, has just arrived with her brother, Joseph, aged 15, in Lesvos.
Both children are unaccompanied. The fact that one of them is older than the other and they are siblings has no significance for their legal status; the fact that the little girl is travelling with her older brother has no significance either.



Peter, aged 16, Paul, aged 17 and Matt, aged 17, are friends migrating together towards Germany.
All children are unaccompanied. The fact that all of them are adolescents and boys has no significance for their legal status; the fact that all three are travelling together has no significance either.

* Original drafting by Dr Kyriaki Patsianta. Co-created with Dr Ana Beduschi.

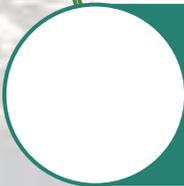
Separated Children

Separated children are those individuals below the age of 18 years **“who have been separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives”**; these may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members. ([Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment N°6 \(2005\) Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children outside their country of origin](#))



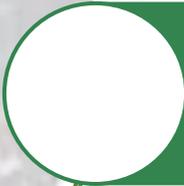
Mark and Arianne, aged 12 and 13 respectively, are migrating with their aunt Martha, aged 39, to Greece.

The children are separated. They are not travelling with their parents but with an adult family member, their aunt.



Aaron, aged 12, has arrived with his cousin, Askar, aged 19, to the United Kingdom.

The child is separated. He is travelling with an adult family member, his cousin.



Aaqila, aged 17, is migrating to Turkey with Jacob, aged 30, who is a family friend.

The child is unaccompanied. Jacob is not a family member.



Mariam, aged 16, started migrating alone from Syria to Germany. In Greece, she met with Malak, aged 25, and mother of two children. Malak would like to reach Germany as well; they decided to travel together. The child is unaccompanied. Malak is not a family member.

Children migrating with their parents or guardians

Migrant children can also be migrating with their parents or guardians. Note, a child cannot be considered as unaccompanied, even if he or she is being accompanied only by one of his or her parents.



Basra is being detained with her mother Cibaado in VIAL Hotspot, on the island of Chios, in Greece. Her father is waiting for them in Germany. The child cannot be considered unaccompanied or separated just because she is not accompanied by both of her parents.

All migrant children, whether refugees or not, unaccompanied, separated or migrating with their parents or guardians, need to be treated with respect and dignity; their rights must be fully protected. The Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to every child without discrimination of any kind (article 2).