Mündel (Ward)

A minor, or a minor who is not under parental care and thus under guardianship, is referred to in the law as a ward. The fact that the parents cannot care for the child or the teenager may have various reasons (see parental care).

The word "Mündel" is rarely used, so many people don't even know it. It comes from a now-extinct noun "Munt" (hand, protection, shield), which is also contained in the word "Vormund". It has nothing to do with the body part "mouth", but derives from a very old term for "hand" and essentially means "to protectively hold something with one's hand".

The Munt is the precursor of our current guardianship law. The Muntherr (today's guardian) assumed the protection and liability of the Muntling (older forms of ward also include Mündling, Mundelin, Mündlin, and Mundilio).

According to Duden, the word 'Mündel' applies to all three genders, so one can say 'the Mündel', 'him/her', or 'it'. In colloquial language, 'Mündel' is more common, but in law, 'Mündel' is used for both male and female minors. The plural form is 'Mündel' and 'Mündeln'. Many people don't know what 'Mündel' means, and it can be strange for some to be referred to in this way. It has been suggested that in the future, the law should simply refer to 'children and adolescents', which would suffice in most cases. The Federal Forum for Guardianship and Foster Care also supports this view. However, old words are also interesting - especially if one knows their meaning.

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Dr. Nadja Wrede