

Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2016-2021

In a nutshell



Strategy for the Rights of the Child: FIVE Goals

The new Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021) is the **third** children's rights Strategy of the Council of Europe. Bearing in mind the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the European Convention on Human Rights, and other Council of Europe legal standards, this new plan identifies five priorities for all 47 member states to guarantee the rights of the child:

- 1: Equal opportunities
- 2: Participation of children
- 3: A life free from violence
- 4: Child-friendly justice
- 5: Children's rights in the digital environment

The Strategy has been developed in an intergovernmental and truly participatory process with the involvement of governments, international organisations, civil society, experts and children.

The Strategy clearly defines expected impact and outcome under each priority area, so performance can be evaluated at regular intervals. The first evaluation will take place in three years' time.

1. Equal opportunities for all children

Children have the right to an adequate standard of living and to appropriate social and economic protection. However, too many children, even in richer countries, are affected by **poverty**. Certain groups of children, such as children "on the move" and affected by **migration**, are particularly vulnerable. Discrimination of children on the grounds of **gender, disability, or sexual orientation** is a reality in Europe. The Strategy calls on member States to change their legislation and policy relying on specific Council of Europe legal standards, such as the European Social Charter.

2. Participation of all children

Children have the right to be heard and participate in decisions affecting them. Their views should be given due respect in the development, implementation and evaluation of **child-related laws, policies and actions**. Member States should make sure that children are consulted in all contexts relevant for their rights. One way to achieve this is to use the Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool to measure the extent to which countries involve children in decision-making.

3. A life free from violence for all children

States must guarantee that children are protected against all forms of **violence**, including **sexual abuse** and exploitation. The Council of Europe is a pioneer in setting standards for protecting children against violence: it has such legal tools as the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention), the Convention on Domestic Violence and Violence against Women (Istanbul Convention), the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, and the Convention on Cybercrime. The Strategy also calls on member States to put an end to **corporal punishment** of children in all settings – schools, institutions and at home.

4. Child-friendly justice for all children

Many children come into contact with the justice system in one way or another. Sadly, justice systems in Europe are still **ill-adapted to the specific needs of children**. The Strategy calls on member States to implement the Council of Europe Guidelines on child-friendly justice, to ensure that primary consideration is given to the **child's best interest**, and to use **deprivation of liberty** only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time.

5. Rights of the child in the digital environment

Internet has become an integral part to children's lives. They have the right to learn, play and communicate online – and to be **protected from bullying**, hate speech, radicalisation, sexual abuse, and other risks of the "dark net". Guaranteeing the rights of the child in the digital environment is a key challenge all member States of the Council of Europe face, and the Strategy will help them provide children with practical knowledge of how to **be online and stay safe**.