



Building a Europe  
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Construire une Europe  
pour et avec les enfants

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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## **Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF)**

**Seventh plenary meeting  
Meeting Report**

*Reykjavík, 28-29 March 2023*

Prepared by the Children's Rights Division

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## Meeting Report

### 1. Opening of the meeting

The Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) held its 7<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting in Reykjavik (Iceland) on 28-29 March 2023, hosted by the Icelandic Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, with Rosário Farmhouse (Portugal) in the Chair.

2. The Chair welcomed all members, participants and observers to the meeting, which was the first CDENF meeting outside of Strasbourg, and warmly thanked the Icelandic Presidency of the Committee of Ministers for hosting it, and for having organised the Conference on “**Investing in Children, the Key to Prosperity**”.

### 2. Adoption of the agenda and order of business

3. The CDENF adopted its agenda as it appears in the Appendix.

### 3. Statement of the Chair and Secretariat

4. The CDENF took note of the practical information provided by the Chair and the Secretariat, Regina Jensdottir, Head of the Children’s Rights Division, on the upcoming Council of Europe’s fourth Summit of Heads of State and Government on 16 and 17 May 2023 in Reykjavik, which will focus on reshaping the Council of Europe’s mission, in the light of current threats to democracy and human rights, and to support Ukraine and explained that, as a result, the Programme and Budget and the Terms of Reference of intergovernmental committees, including that of the CDENF, would have to be reviewed in the light of the strategic decisions adopted during the summit.

### 4. Review of progress

5. The CDENF exchanged on the updated CDENF workplan, including a new timeline on questionnaires and documents for comments to be circulated to CDENF Delegations, and on the proposed future priorities for 2024-2027.

6. The CDENF instructed the Secretariat to revise the current workplan in view of the strategic decisions to be taken, notably at and following the 4<sup>th</sup> Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe (Reykjavik, May 16-17, 2023).

### 5. Implementation of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022–2027)

7. The CDENF took note and exchanged on the information provided by the Secretariat regarding the timeline and outline of the first implementation report of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child, which will cover the period 2022-2023, and the development of the questionnaire to gather data from member States to include in the report, to be circulated towards the end of May, with a deadline for responses by early July. The questionnaire will address the overall impact of the Strategy as well as progress towards the specific strategic objectives in member States, including promising practices. The final report will also include action taken by other Council of Europe sectors, as well as synergies with other international and regional partners.

8. The CDENF took note of the information provided by the Secretariat on the availability of the child-friendly version of the Strategy in English, French and 3 Sami languages, as well as progress achieved towards its adaptation into German, Italian, Spanish and Ukrainian.

## **5.1 Strategic Objective 1: Freedom from violence for all children**

### **5.1.1 Draft Recommendation containing Guidelines on Strengthening reporting systems on violence against children and its draft Explanatory Memorandum (CDENF-GT-VAE)**

9. The CDENF examined and revised the draft Explanatory Memorandum of the Draft Recommendation on Strengthening reporting systems on violence against children in the light of comments received before and raised during the meeting, and agreed on a number of changes, notably in order to strengthen the reference to online forms of violence against children and to accommodate concerns about data protection and privacy.

10. The CDENF approved the draft Recommendation containing Guidelines on strengthening reporting systems on violence against children, adopted the draft Explanatory Memorandum to the draft Recommendation, and instructed the Secretariat to submit both texts to the Committee of Ministers for adoption of the draft Recommendation and taking note of its Explanatory Memorandum.

11. The Hungarian Delegation submitted the following statement to the draft Recommendation: *“Hungary remains dedicated to its commitments in the field of children’s rights. Hungary ensures these rights within the framework of its national legal system in accordance with internationally binding instruments. With regard to the international instruments listed in the preamble of the Recommendation, Hungary implements the obligations and commitments arising from those that Hungary has ratified.”*

### **5.1.2 Committee of Experts on the prevention of violence (ENF-VAE)**

12. The CDENF approved the list of eight members for its new subordinate body, the Committee of Experts on the prevention of violence (ENF-VAE), following the proposal made by its Bureau on the basis of the criteria laid down in the terms of reference of ENF-VAE, and in Article 6 of Resolution CM/Res(2021)3 on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods.

13. The CDENF took note of the information provided by the Secretariat on the proposed organisation of the upcoming work of ENF-VAE towards the elaboration of its main deliverables under its terms of reference, notably a study on age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education to strengthen responses for inter alia preventing and combatting violence against children, including sexual violence and harmful or risky behaviour by children and a draft recommendation on the same topic as well as the implementation review of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)10 on Council of Europe policy guidelines on integrated national strategies for the protection of children from violence.

### **5.1.3 Exchange with Najat Maalla M'jid, United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children**

14. The CDENF held an exchange with Najat Maalla M'jid, United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children. The exchange covered topics such as the increase of children’s vulnerability to violence due to the pandemic, conflicts and natural disasters; the need to systematically engage children when designing any action and to strengthen the involvement of the private sector; the complicated balance between privacy of perpetrators and the rights of the child; and the importance to be practical in the implementation of standards to prevent and combat violence against children.

## **5.2 Strategic Objective 2: Equal opportunities and social inclusion for all children**

## **5.2.1 Mapping study on children's access to quality mental health care**

15. The CDENF took note of a first outline of a mapping study on children's access to quality mental health care; examined and approved the draft questionnaire to gather relevant information from member States, subject to last specifications to be inserted by the Secretariat as appropriate; and instructed the Secretariat to circulate the questionnaire among CDENF Delegations for replies by 2 June 2023. CDENF members were invited to co-ordinate with their counterparts of the Steering Committee for Human Rights in the fields of Biomedicine and Health (CDBIO) when filling out the questionnaire.

## **5.3 Strategic Objective 3: Access to and safe use of technologies for all children**

### **5.3.1 Report on the rights of the child and artificial intelligence**

16. The CDENF took note of the information provided by the Secretariat on progress achieved with regard to the preparation of a Report on the rights of the child and artificial intelligence and instructed the Secretariat to prepare a questionnaire to gather relevant information from member States, to be revised by its Bureau before being circulated among Delegations.

## **5.4 Strategic Objective 4: Child-friendly justice for all children**

### **5.4.1 Draft Recommendations on the rights and the best interests of the child in parental separation and in care proceedings (Committee of Experts CJ/ENF-ISE)**

17. The CDENF took note of the information provided by the Secretariat on the follow-up given by the Committee of Experts on the rights and the best interests of the child in parental separation and in care proceedings (CJ/ENF-ISE) to the joint guidance issued by the CDENF and the European Committee for Legal Co-operation (CDCJ), notably by developing a draft Recommendation on the rights and best interests of the child in parental separation proceedings, in view of its approval by the CDENF and the CDCJ at a joint plenary session on 16 November 2023, and a second draft Recommendation on care proceedings to be finalised in 2024, subject to extension of the mandate of CJ/ENF-ISE.

18. The CDENF took note of the dates of a written consultation of CDENF, CDCJ and selected stakeholders on the drafts of the Recommendation on separation proceedings and of its Explanatory Memorandum foreseen from May to June 2023; and welcomed that an invitation would be extended to CDENF members to join online the upcoming CDCJ plenary session dedicated to the examination of the draft Recommendation on parental separation proceedings (31 May or 1 June 2023).

### **5.4.2 Mapping study on the implementation and development of Barnahus structures in Europe**

19. The CDENF took note of and welcomed the promotional video of *Barnahus* as a model of child-friendly justice, produced with the support of the Icelandic Presidency of the Committee of Ministers; and took note of the information provided by the Secretariat on the finalisation of a mapping study on the implementation and development of *Barnahus* structures in Europe and its planned launch through a hybrid event in Strasbourg on 28 September 2023 (morning), in presence of the CDENF Bureau and with online participation of its other members. The event is co-organised by the CDENF and the Lanzarote Committee which is holding its plenary meeting on those days in Strasbourg.

## **5.5 Strategic Objective 5: Giving a voice to every child**

### **5.5.1 Guide on good practice concerning the participation of children in the decision-making processes on matters regarding their health (drafting group BIO/ENF-CP)**

20. The CDENF took note of the information provided by the two Co-Chairs of the Drafting Group BIO/ENF-CP, Joost Van Haelst (Belgium) and Ritva Halila (CDBIO), on the work carried out by the towards the finalisation of the Guide on good practice concerning the participation of children in the decision-making processes on matters regarding their health.

21. The CDENF took note of and commented on the draft guide in view of providing guidance towards its finalisation and agreed to send additional comments on the text, together with relevant examples of promising practices, in writing by 28 April 2023. The draft would then be examined by the CDBIO at its third plenary meeting (6-9 June 2023), followed by submission for adoption by both Steering Committees at their respective plenary meetings in November 2023.

## **5.5.2 Report on children as defenders of human rights**

22. The CDENF took note of and exchanged on the information provided by the Secretariat on the methodology and timeline for the preparation of a report on children as defenders of human rights, including the process for child consultations. The CDENF examined a first outline of the report and agreed to send outstanding replies to the relevant questionnaire by 11 April 2023.

## **5.6 Strategic Objective 6: Children's rights in crisis and emergency situations**

### **5.6.1 Implementation review report on Recommendation CM/Rec(2019) on effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in the context of migration**

23. The CDENF took note of an intervention by and exchanged with Leyla Kayacik, Council of Europe Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees, who referred to the Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021-2025), and the main pillars of her mandate, including fact-finding visits to member States, internal co-ordination within the Council of Europe and co-operation with member States through the Network of Focal Points on Migration. She also commended the CDENF's initiative to cover the issue of the Russian's Federation continued aggression against Ukraine and referred to the need to assist children fleeing Ukraine. In this regard, she invited states to propose co-operation projects related to the strengthening of the national guardianship systems, including by training guardians.

24. The CDENF agreed on the specific methodology proposed for conducting the review of the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)11 on effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in the context of migration; examined the first outline of the report; and approved the draft questionnaire for collecting relevant data from member States subject to last comments to be submitted by 11 April 2023.

### **5.6.2 Draft Declaration on the Situation of Children of Ukraine affected by the Russian's Federation's continued aggression against Ukraine**

25. The CDENF reviewed and approved a draft Declaration on the Situation of Children of Ukraine affected by the Russian Federation's continued aggression against Ukraine, as a restricted document, and instructed the Secretariat to submit the finalised draft to the Committee of Ministers for further processing.

26. The CDENF acknowledged the proposal from the Ukrainian delegation on the need to facilitate exchange between states authorities as regards children of Ukraine through an appropriate co-ordination mechanism of national authorities. The Ukrainian delegation particularly underlined the need for collection and sharing of information about the location and status of Ukrainian children residing in member States as well as the exchange of information about the legal and policy frameworks regarding these children in receiving countries, in order to allow the Ukrainian authorities to understand more clearly the legislation and policy in place in the Council of Europe member States. The proposal found general support by Delegations and was taken into account in the preparation of the above-mentioned draft Declaration. It was further underlined that the working methods of such mechanism would need to be set up in accordance with all applicable national, European, and international legal frameworks. The following further issues were mentioned to be potentially included in the work of such mechanism:

- determining the needs and the state of play regarding access to services of Ukrainian children residing in member States, including their access to education, housing, and health services;
- providing information on existing alternative care arrangements;

- exchanging information on common positions on issues around guardianship systems in place, adoption procedures and children reaching majority;
- facilitating the sharing of relevant information and coordinating best interests' determination of children of Ukraine in national decision making, such as through developing model bilateral agreements;
- sharing information by the Ukrainian authorities on the upcoming child protection and care system reform in Ukraine and allowing Council of Europe member States to follow closely these developments, which would ensure a peer review and support to the Ukrainian authorities in the conduct of these reforms.

## **6. Co-operation with relevant Council of Europe bodies and other organisations**

27. The CDENF took note of the presentations by the representatives of the following bodies and organisations, who gave updates on their respective activities:

- a. Sevinj Fataliyeva, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), who informed about activities undertaken on a variety of topics (e.g. children in war, preventing addictive behaviours in children, children's mental health, children of Daesh foreign fighters, children held in arbitrary detention, etc.);
- b. Georgios Nikolaidis, Committee of the Parties on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Committee), referred to the revision of the rules of procedure to facilitate the work of the Committee and to the conclusion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> monitoring round on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by information and communication technologies (ICTs) and of the compliance procedure with respect to the follow-up given by 41 Parties to recommendations to enhance protection of children affected by the refugee crisis against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse;
- c. Marie-Cécile Rouillon, Coordinator for the Rights of the Child of the European Commission, updated on on-going activities through the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Rights of the Child, including a Children's Participation platform and the European Child Guarantee;
- d. Leo Ratledge, Child Rights international Network (CRIN), mentioned that recent research included topics such as children's rights approach to encryption and children's rights and national security, with a focus on counterterrorism; and
- e. Sigurveig Thórhallsdóttir, European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC), updated on activities related to children engaged in climate activism and on the European Network of Young Advisors (ENYA), a participatory project for children and young people.

28. The CDENF also heard a presentation by the Secretariat of the on-going projects on child participation, child-friendly justice and fighting violence against children, including:

- a. CP4Europe – Strengthening National Child Participation Frameworks and Action in Europe (2021-2023);
- b. Juvenile justice in Slovenia (2021-2023);
- c. Ensuring child-friendly justice through the effective operation of the Barnahus-units in Finland (2021-2024);
- d. Strengthening child-friendly justice through effective co-operation and coordination among different Barnahus-type services in the regions of Spain (2022-2024);
- e. Support to the implementation of the Barnahus model in Ireland;
- f. Norway Grant/EEA Project on Support for Barnahus implementation in Latvia (advisory role by the Children's Rights Division);
- g. Andorran National Action Plan on Children and Adolescents (finalised);
- h. Combatting Violence Against Children in Ukraine (2022);
- i. Combatting Violence Against Children in Moldova (2022-2023); and
- j. Combatting Violence Against Children in Georgia (2022-2023).

## 7. Opinions requested by the Committee of Ministers

29. The CDENF reviewed and adopted its Opinion on PACE Recommendation 2244 (2023) – “Addressing the issue of Daesh foreign fighters and their families returning from Syria and other countries to the member States of the Council of Europe” and instructed the Secretariat to submit it to the Committee of Ministers.

## 8. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair

30. The CDENF re-elected, by secret ballot,
- Rosário Farmhouse (Portugal), as its Chair for a second term of office of one year, beginning in July 2023; and
  - Ružica Boškić (Slovenia), as its Vice-Chair for a second term of office of one year, beginning in July 2023.

## 9. Any other business

31. Participants did not raise any additional issues.

## 10. Date and place of next meetings

32. The CDENF took note of the following dates of the upcoming meetings:

### CDENF

- **31 May/1 June 2023** (date and time tbc, online): Joint plenary session with the CDCJ on the Draft Recommendation of the protection of the rights and best interests of the child in parental separation proceedings;
- **28 September 2023**: Launching event of the mapping study on Barnahus (online for CDENF members);
- **14-16 November 2023, Strasbourg**: 8<sup>th</sup> CDENF plenary meeting (joint session with CDCJ on 16<sup>th</sup> November);

### CDENF Bureau

- 28-29 September 2023, Strasbourg, Bureau meeting

### Subordinate bodies

- 16-17 May 2023, Strasbourg, First meeting of ENF-VAE
- 4-6 October 2023, Strasbourg, 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of CJ/ENF-ISE

## 11. Approval of the abridged meeting report

33. The CDENF adopted the abridged report of the meeting at the end of the meeting.

**Appendix****Agenda**

<b>1.</b>	<b>Opening of the meeting</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Adoption of the agenda and order of business</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Statement of the Chair and Secretariat</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Review of progress</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Implementation of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022–2027)</b>
<b>5.1</b>	<b>Strategic Objective 1: Freedom from violence for all children</b>
5.1.1	Draft Recommendation containing Guidelines on Strengthening reporting systems on violence against children and its draft Explanatory Memorandum (CDENF-GT-VAE)
5.1.2	Committee of Experts on the prevention of violence (ENF-VAE)
5.1.3	Exchange with Najat Maalla M'jid, United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children
<b>5.2</b>	<b>Strategic Objective 2: Equal opportunities and social inclusion for all children</b>
	Mapping study on children's access to quality mental health care
<b>5.3</b>	<b>Strategic Objective 3: Access to and safe use of technologies for all children</b>
	Report on the rights of the child and artificial intelligence
<b>5.4</b>	<b>Strategic Objective 4: Child-friendly justice for all children</b>
5.4.1	Draft Recommendations on the rights and the best interests of the child in parental separation and in care proceedings (Committee of Experts CJ/ENF-ISE)
5.4.2	Mapping study on the implementation and development of Barnahus structures in Europe
<b>5.5</b>	<b>Strategic Objective 5: Giving a voice to every child</b>
5.5.1	Guide of good practice concerning the participation of children in the decision-making processes on matters regarding their health (drafting group BIO/ENF-CP)
5.5.2	Report on children as defenders of human rights



<b>5.6</b>	<b>Strategic Objective 6: Children’s rights in crisis and emergency situations</b>
5.6.1	Implementation review report on Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)11 on effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in the context of migration
5.6.2	Draft Declaration on the situation of children of Ukraine affected by the Russian Federation's continued aggression against Ukraine
<b>6.</b>	<b>Co-operation with relevant Council of Europe bodies and other organisations</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Opinions requested by the Committee of Ministers</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair</b> <i>- for terms of office from July 2023 to July 2024 -</i>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Any other business</b>
<b>10.</b>	<b>Date and place of next meeting</b>
<b>11.</b>	<b>Approval of the abridged meeting report</b>