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Construire une Europe
pour et avec les enfants



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Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF)

Tenth plenary meeting Meeting Report

Strasbourg 3-5 December 2024

Prepared by the CDENF Secretariat and approved by the CDENF in written proceedings

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Meeting Report

1. Opening of the meeting

1. The Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) held its 10th plenary meeting in Strasbourg (France) on 3-5 December 2024, with Ružica Boškić (Slovenia) in the Chair. On 3 December 2024, the CDENF held a joint session with the European Committee for Legal Cooperation (CDCJ) in a hybrid format.

2. The Chair welcomed all members, participants and observers to the meeting, and invited new members of the CDENF to introduce themselves.

2. Adoption of the agenda and order of business

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

3. Statement of the Chair and Secretariat

4. Roberto Olla, Head of the Human Dignity and Gender Equality Department welcomed Delegations on behalf of the Secretariat and emphasised the topicality and relevance of the deliverables to be examined during this meeting, including the work on the best inferences of the child in parental separation and in care proceedings, which concludes a fruitful collaboration of the CDENF and the CDCJ, and the guidance note on Safeguarding children from the risks of accessing online pornographic content. The mid-term Conference of the Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027), hosted by the Luxembourgish Presidency to the Committee of Ministers in April 2025, will be a key opportunity for the CDENF and its partners to review progress, reaffirm commitment to the Strategy, and to look ahead. He further thanked all Delegations for their ongoing support of children's rights, including by having contributed to the project on promoting children's rights under the Strategy, which started operating this year (Andorra, Cyprus, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg).

4. Review of progress: CDENF workplan - Overview of main activities, priorities and meetings

5. The CDENF took note of and approved its workplan for 2024 – 2025, to be updated as appropriate by the Secretariat in advance of the next plenary meeting.

5. Implementation of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022–2027) - Mid-term review of the Strategy

6. The CDENF took note of the information provided on the Questionnaire for national follow-up to the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027), which has been circulated to CDENF members on 23 October 2024, with a deadline for national inputs by 16 December 2024 (extended to 31 December 2024 at the request of delegations).

7. The CDENF took note of the information provided on the progress of preparations towards the midterm review Conference of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022–2027) to be organised in Strasbourg on 3-4 April 2025 under the auspices of the Presidency of Luxembourg to the Committee of Ministers. In view of the busy period of the year, Delegations are invited to book accommodation early, if they have the opportunity to do so with a right to cancellation.

5.1 Strategic Objective 1: Freedom from violence for all children

5.1.1 Committee of Experts on the prevention of violence (ENF-VAE)

8. The CDENF took note of the information presented by Mária Vargová (Slovakia), Chair of the Committee of Experts on the prevention of violence (ENF-VAE), on the work of ENF-VAE, and welcomed the progress achieved. It also took note of the necessity to designate a new expert member following the departure of the national expert from Austria, instructed the Secretariat to launch a call among national delegations for the proposal of an expert to fill the vacancy and entrusted the Bureau to preselect the new member among the candidates for CDENF approval in written proceedings;

9. The CDENF examined and adopted the implementation review report of CM/Rec(2009)10 on Council of Europe policy guidelines on integrated national strategies for the protection of children from violence, prepared under the supervision of ENF-VAE, and instructed the Secretariat to submit the finalised report to the Committee of Minister for information.

10. The CDENF took note of a presentation of preliminary elements of a draft Recommendation on age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education to strengthen responses for inter-alia preventing and combating violence against children; and of the update of the [study on the Prevention of sexual violence and harmful or risky behaviour by children](#) and of its publication.

11. The CDENF also took note of the presentation by Sonia Vohito, “End corporal punishment”, of an information report on [Progress and delay in achieving universal prohibition and elimination of corporal punishment in Council of Europe member States](#), and held an exchange on progress achieved at national level toward the full prohibition of corporal punishment, and in the implementation on relevant provisions.

5.1.2 Thematic guidance note: Safeguarding children from the risks of accessing online pornographic content

12. The CDENF examined and reviewed a Thematic Guidance Note on “Safeguarding children from the risks of accessing online pornographic content” prepared and presented by Maree Crabbe, consultant, expressed its overall satisfaction with the content of the draft, instructed the Secretariat to integrate eventual last comments submitted by 15 January 2025, then to circulate the finalised text for adoption in written proceedings and proceed with the publication of the note.

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

13. The promotion of Equal opportunities and social inclusion for all children is a transversal objective informing all work of the CDENF. The CDENF did not discuss any separate issue under this objective during the present plenary meeting.

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

5.3.1 Draft concept note for future CDENF action in view of the feasibility, timeliness and pertinence of elaborating a CRIA on artificial intelligence

14. The CDENF took note of a presentation by the Secretariat of the Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAI) on the new methodology for the risk and impact assessment of artificial intelligence

systems from the point of view of Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (HUDERIA) adopted by the CAI in November 2024.

15. The CDENF examined and approved a concept note for future action in view of the feasibility, timeliness and pertinence of elaborating a Child rights impact assessment tool on artificial intelligence presented by the consultant Andrea Tognoni, 5 Rights Foundation, agreed that the child rights impact tool to be prepared under its terms of reference should take the form of a (non-binding) tool ("CRIA +") as described in the concept note, which would complement the HUDERIA and contain the main elements described in the concept note. The CDENF instructed the Secretariat to take steps, with the appropriate support of consultants, towards the preparation of such tool, to be presented to the CDENF for adoption by the end of 2025.

16. The CDENF also took note of a Declaration on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by emerging technologies adopted by the Lanzarote Committee in November 2024 and of a presentation by the Digital transformation unit of the Education Department of the Council of Europe on relevant initiatives in the education sector, notably on how to regulate the use of AI systems in education.

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

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

17. During a joint session with the CDCJ, the CDENF carried out a last reading and review of the draft Recommendation on the protection of the rights and best interests of the child in care proceedings, in the light of comments submitted by Delegations in written form and during the session, approved the Recommendation, by consensus, and examined and adopted its draft explanatory memorandum, and the CDCJ did the same. Following a request by the Bulgarian Delegation, a statement made by the Republic of Bulgaria to the Draft Recommendation on the protection of the rights and best interests of the child in care proceedings is attached as Appendix II to this report.

18. Together with the CDCJ, the CDENF also examined and adopted the draft implementation tools for policy makers on the protection of the rights and best interests of the child in parental separation proceedings and in care proceedings.

19. The CDENF instructed the Secretariat to transmit to the Committee of Ministers, for adoption, the draft recommendation CM/Rec on the protection of the rights and best interests of the child in parental separation proceedings that the two steering committees approved in November 2023; and the draft recommendation CM/Rec on the protection of the rights and best interests of the child in care proceedings as approved during this session. The CDENF further instructed the Secretariat to transmit to the Committee of Ministers, for information, the explanatory Memoranda to the two above Recommendations and the implementation tools adopted during this plenary meeting.

20. The CDENF thanked the members of Committee of Experts (CJ/ENF-ISE) for their dedicated work and congratulated them on the successful completion of its mandate. The CDENF further thanked the CDCJ for the excellent cooperation throughout the elaboration process of this important document.

5.4.2. Thematic review of the Council of Europe Guidelines on child-friendly justice

21. The CDENF took note of the information provided by the Secretariat on first steps undertaken towards the thematic review of the Council of Europe Guidelines on child-friendly justice, notably in the form of the preparation of a report covering international and European law developments and case-law analysis with regard to child-friendly justice, to be presented to the CDENF and the other Committees taking part in this process (CDCJ, CDPC) in 2025.

5.4.3 Committee of Experts on access to child-friendly justice through multidisciplinary and Interagency services (ENF-JUS)

22. The CDENF designated the following eight experts proposed by national Delegations its subordinate body, the Committee of Experts on access to child-friendly justice through multidisciplinary and interagency services (ENF-JUS): Eliška Hronová (Czechia); Taina Laajasalo (Finland); Madeleine Schrade (Germany); Eftychia Katsigaraki (Greece); Páll Magnússon (Iceland); Liam Coen (Ireland); Beata Wojtkowska (Poland); Andrej Del Fabro (Slovenia) and instructed the Secretariat to take steps to initiate the work of ENF-JUS, in accordance with its terms of reference. The first two meetings of ENF-JUS are planned to take place in Strasbourg on 13-14 May and 14-15 October 2025.

5.5 Strategic Objective 5: Giving a voice to every child

23. The CDENF took note of the information provided by the Secretariat regarding two main deliverables due by the end 2026, namely the implementation review of Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)2 on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18 and Guidelines for developing a national children's participation Strategy. Concept notes proposing a methodology and outlining the work processes would be presented to the CDENF for approval in 2025.

24. The CDENF also took note of the information provided by the cooperation unit on activities involving children which will inform the upcoming implementation review.

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

5.6.1 Implementation review report of Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)11 on effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in the context of migration

25. The CDENF took note of the information provided on the process of reviewing the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)11 on effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in the context of migration. An exchange on the first draft had taken place during the 9th plenary meeting of the CDENF and the oral and written comments made by delegations had been duly taken into account. The CDENF agreed to include the report on the consultation of children and young people as an annex to the implementation review report and to refer to it in the implementation review report itself.

26. The CDENF adopted the Implementation review report and instructed the Secretariat to submit it to the Committee of Minister for information of Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)11 on effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in the context of migration.

27. The CDENF took note of information provided by the Secretariat of the Consultative Group on the Children of Ukraine (CGU) on recent CGU activities on guardianship for children in Ukraine, and by the Cooperation Unit of the Children's Rights Division on the ongoing cooperation project with Armenia on the rights of children displaced by the conflict and the development of a manual on effective guardianship in Armenia. Other participants and observers provided information on ongoing projects.

5.6.2 Children's Rights and the Environment

28. The CDENF endorsed the proposals contained in the discussion paper on children's rights and the environment prepared by its Bureau. The CDENF took note of the information provided on the process of elaboration of a Council of Europe Strategy on the Environment, examined the preliminary draft Council of Europe Strategy on the Environment and its draft Action Plan, welcomed the child-rights perspective contained in the text, and proposed some textual additions and amendments to further strengthen the text in this respect, notably by adding the notion of "particularly affected groups" along with the already existing reference to "vulnerable groups and to add the term "children" in certain places where reference is already made to "Youth" or "young persons" in order to emphasise the distinctive

circumstances of children in this context. The CDENF further instructed the Secretariat to share the proposals with the Ad hoc multidisciplinary group on the environment (GME) in view of the finalisation of this important document.

29. The CDENF heard a presentation by Leo Ratledge, Co-Director of the Child Rights International Network (CRIN), on results and recommendations stemming from research on children's access to climate justice, particularly in relation to the protection of the human rights of children within national law with regard to the environment, practical challenges and barriers for children and remedies available for rights violations.

6. Transversal issues

30. The CDENF Gender Equality Rapporteur, Panagiota Margaroni (Greece), informed the CDENF on the training of Council of Europe Gender Equality Rapporteurs organised by the Gender Equality Division in October 2024, and encouraged Delegations to follow the new Council of Europe Online HELP course on gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

31. The CDENF instructed the Secretariat, in close collaboration with the Bureau, to follow up on relevant transversal activities in the Council of Europe, notably in the areas of technologies and the environment.

7. Opinions requested by the Committee of Ministers

32. The CDENF took note of the replies adopted by the Committee of Ministers since its previous plenary meeting to Recommendations by the Parliamentary Assembly relating to children's rights.

8. Co-operation with other relevant Council of Europe bodies and other institutions and observers

33. The CDENF took note of the following updates on their respective activities by representatives of relevant Council of Europe bodies and observers:

- Georgios Nikolaidis, Committee of the Parties on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Committee), provided an update on its activities, including the adoption of an opinion on limitation periods in respect of sexual offences against children; the third round of monitoring of the implementation of the Lanzarote Convention in member States; and a survey on data collection mechanisms regarding data on child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse;
- Marie-Cécile Rouillon, Coordinator for the rights of the child of the European Commission, provided an update on the ongoing activities through the implementation of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, including the EU Children's Participation Platform and the Joint EU-Council of Europe Child-friendly Justice Project with Belgium, Poland and Slovenia as focus countries;
- Mieke Schuurman, Director of Child Rights and Capacity Building at Eurochild, presented an overview of findings in the report "Children's Realities in Europe: Progress & Gaps", highlighting findings and policy recommendations in relation to vulnerable children and the justice system; poverty and social exclusion; the European Child Guarantee; key needs in EU enlargement countries; child protection and alternative care; mental health, education and early childhood development;
- Léa Meindre-Chautrand, Missing Children Europe, provided an update on the organisation's upcoming projects and current priorities, including the implementation of the EU Migration and Asylum Pact and monitoring negotiations and ensuring the inclusion of grooming as a form of child sexual abuse.
- Ruth Allen, Vice-Chair of the Civil Society Committee on the Rights of the Child of the Conference of INGOs, provided an update on ongoing activities, including its Three-Year

Strategy (2024-2027) and its Youth Strategy with its objectives to engage, connect and empower young people through participation.

9. Evaluation of completed activities / Annual exchange of views to evaluate its activities and to advise the Committee of Ministers on future priorities in its sector, including possible new activities and those that might be discontinued

34. During its annual exchange of views to evaluate its activities, the CDENF welcomed the approval, jointly with the CDCJ, of the draft Recommendation on the Rights of the Child in care proceedings, along with first implementation tools on parental separation and on care proceedings, the adoption of the implementation review reports on Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)11 on effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in the context of migration and on Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)10 on Council of Europe policy guidelines on integrated national strategies for the protection of children from violence.

35. The CDENF agreed to propose to the Committee of Ministers, as a follow up to 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, to consider the update of the policy guidelines in the light of developments during the last fifteen years since the Guidelines were adopted, as well as shortcomings identified in the report. Such a revision could be considered under the CDENF's next terms of reference. The CDENF considered that proposals for further action could be formulated based on the outcome of the mid-term review of the Strategy for the Rights of the Child in April 2024.

10. Appointments

36. The CDENF considered designating reference persons from among its members for specific transversal areas, and notably the rights of the child in the context of emerging technologies, including AI, and the environment, at one of its upcoming meetings.

11. Any other business

37. Participants did not raise any additional issues.

12. Date and place of next meetings

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

- 11th CDENF plenary meeting: Strasbourg, 1 – 2 April 2025
- Mid-term review Conference of the Strategy for the Rights of the Child under the auspices of the Luxembourgish Presidency of the Committee of Ministers: Strasbourg, 3 – 4 April 2025
- 12th CDENF plenary meeting: Strasbourg, 18-20 November 2025 (tbc).

13. Approval of the abridged meeting report

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

Appendix I

Agenda

1.	Opening of the meeting
2.	Adoption of the agenda and order of business
3.	Statement of the Chair and Secretariat
4.	Review of progress (updated workplan)
5.	Implementation of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022 – 2027) <i>Main deliverable 8 and main task (iii)</i>
5.1	Strategic Objective 1: Freedom from violence for all children
5.1.1	Committee of Experts on the prevention of violence (ENF-VAE) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Implementation review report of Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)10 on Council of Europe policy guidelines on integrated national strategies for the protection of children from violence <i>Main deliverable 5 and main task (ix)</i> b. Progress and delay in achieving universal prohibition and elimination of corporal punishment in Council of Europe member states (information report prepared by WHO End Corporal Punishment) c. Recommendation on age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education to strengthen responses for inter-alia preventing and combating violence against children <i>Main deliverable 9</i> d. Guidance on the Prevention of sexual violence and harmful or risky behaviour by children <i>Main deliverable 14</i>
5.1.2	Thematic guidance note: Safeguarding children from the risks of accessing online pornographic content <i>Main deliverable 17 and main task (v)</i>
5.2	Strategic Objective 2: Equal opportunities and social inclusion for all children
5.3	Strategic Objective 3: Access to and safe use of technologies for all children
5.3.1	Draft Concept note for future CDENF action in view of the feasibility, timeliness and pertinence of elaborating a Child rights impact assessment tool on artificial intelligence <i>Main deliverable 7</i>
5.4	Strategic Objective 4: Child-friendly justice for all children
5.4.1	Committee of Experts on the rights and best interests of the child in the context of parental separation and in care proceedings (CJ/ENF-ISE, jointly with the European Committee for legal cooperation (CDCJ))

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- a. Draft Recommendation on the protection of the rights and the best interests of the child in care proceedings and its draft Explanatory Memorandum
 - b. Implementation tool(s) on the protection of the best interests of the child in parental separation and in care proceedings
Main deliverables 1 and 2 and main task (xi)
-

5.4.2 Thematic review of the Council of Europe Guidelines on child-friendly justice
Main deliverable 13

5.4.3 Committee of Experts on access to child-friendly justice through multidisciplinary and Interagency services (ENF-JUS)
Main deliverable 12

5.5 Strategic Objective 5: Giving a voice to every child

- a. Implementation review of Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)2 on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18
Main deliverable 10
 - b. Guidelines for developing a national children's participation Strategy
Main deliverable 11
-

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

5.6.1 Implementation review report of Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)11 on effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in the context of migration
Main deliverable 3 and main task (ix)

5.6.2 Children's Rights and the Environment

6. Transversal issues:

- a. Mainstreaming of gender, youth, rights of persons with disabilities and of Roma and Traveller issues
main task (xvii)
 - b. Contribution to the UNSDGs
main task(xx)
-

7. Opinions requested by the Committee of Ministers

8. Co-operation with other relevant Council of Europe bodies and committees and other institutions and observers

9. Evaluation of completed activities / Annual exchange of views to evaluate its activities and to advise the Committee of Ministers on future priorities in its sector, including possible new activities and those that might be discontinued (main task xvi)

10. Appointments

11. Any other business

12. Date and place of next meeting

13. Approval of the abridged meeting report

Appendix II

***Statement by the Republic of Bulgaria
To the Draft Recommendation CDENF (2024)14prov on the protection of the rights and
best interests of the child in care proceedings***

Bulgaria attaches great importance to the topic of the protection of the rights and best interests of the child in care proceedings and therefore wishes to express its support for the Draft recommendation on the protection of the rights and best interests of the child in care proceedings and the Draft Explanatory memorandum thereto.

In 2018 and in 2021, the Bulgarian Constitutional Court adopted Decisions stating that the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence ("Istanbul Convention") promotes legal concepts related to the notion of gender that are incompatible with main principles of the Bulgarian Constitution. Therefore, in line with the above-mentioned Decisions of the Constitutional Court, the Republic of Bulgaria declares that the country cannot accept either the concept of gender or the gender-based approach of the Council of Europe's Convention or any other document that intends to differentiate between "sex" as a biological (women and men) category and "gender" as a social construct.