



CDENF/Bu(2021)PV1  
10 February 2021

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

**2 February 2021**

### **Meeting report**

#### **1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the revised agenda**

1. The Bureau of the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) held its fourth meeting on 2 February 2021 (via videoconference).
2. The CDENF Chair, Ms Maria-Andriani Kostopoulou (Greece), opened the meeting and welcomed the other Bureau member. She officially communicated the departure of Matthew Vella (Malta) as a CDENF and Bureau member and confirmed the need to elect a new Bureau member at the next plenary of the CDENF. The revised draft agenda was adopted as it appears in Appendix I. The list of participants appears in Appendix II.

#### **2. Update by the Secretariat**

3. The Bureau heard an update by Ms Regina Jensdottir, Children's Rights Coordinator of the Council of Europe and Head of the Children's Rights Division, on the changes in the Council of Europe leadership following the appointment of the new Deputy Secretary General, Mr Björn Berge, and of the new Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), Ms Despina Chatzivassiliou - Tsovilis. Furthermore, she informed the Bureau about the latest changes in the team of the Children's Rights Division, in particular the arrival of the new Secretary of the CDENF, Ms Katrin Uerpmann.

#### **3. CDENF 2<sup>nd</sup> Plenary meeting**

4. The Bureau took note of the CDENF 2<sup>nd</sup> plenary draft meeting report to be adopted by the CDENF in plenary at its next meeting (18-20 May 2021) and the reminder presented by the Secretariat about the methodology to be followed by intergovernmental committees, which consists in adopting an abridged meeting report before the end of the meeting (that shall also

be shared with the Committee of Ministers), and in producing a more comprehensive meeting report for the CDENF.

#### **4. State of implementation of CDENF activities**

##### **4.1 Draft Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027)**

5. The Chair recalled that external and internal consultations for the new Strategy were being finalised and that the summary and overview of the recent survey results amongst CDENF members and observers would be presented to the CDENF at its next Plenary meeting in May, along with a first draft of the Strategy, following prior examination of the document by the Bureau.

6. The Bureau heard an update from the Secretariat on the current Strategy drafting process, which would take into consideration the key outcomes of the members and observers survey. A first glance at the results had revealed member states' overall determination in keeping the priorities of the current Strategy in place for the new Strategy, while adding some new challenges, and with different accents set according to standard-setting, experience-exchanging, and guidance-developing activities. The consultation process had also involved input from different services via the Council of Europe Inter-secretariat Task Force for the Rights of the Child and nine thematic discussions specially organised to this purpose. Both the surveys and the internal consultations would now feed into the drafting process for the Strategy and the accompanying Action Plan. The Bureau considered the identified priority areas appropriate and commended their adaptability and flexibility.

7. The Bureau took note of the state of play of the next steps of the Strategy drafting process, which would involve the upcoming child consultation process initiated in January 2021, scheduled to take place between February and June 2021 in up to 10-12 member states, and the analysis of data shared by other organisations having carried out child consultation processes on relevant topics most recently (i.e. EU, Unicef, Eurochild, SOS Villages, etc.).

##### **4.2 CDENF Updated workplan**

8. The Bureau examined the updated CDENF Workplan and noted the main changes made, which included the postponement of the CDENF webinar on COVID-19 and Education, respectively from 9 February to 22 March 2021 and of the plenary session dedicated to migration from the 22-23 March to 22-23 June 2021.

##### **4.3 Organisation of a regional discussion as a contribution to the 2021 UNCRC Day of General Discussion on children's Rights and alternative care**

9. The Bureau heard an update on the planned organisation of a regional discussion on alternative care to contribute to the 2021 UNCRC Day of General Discussion and several proposals for action. The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to organise the regional discussion in early June 2021, supporting the idea of involving a consultant for the organisation of the event and taking into account the following themes suggested by the CRC:

- historical abuse of children in care and the mechanisms to resolve this in European states as well as remedies/compensations;
- research findings on abuse within all care settings – in particular foster care, which appears to be under-researched;

- children with behavioural problems: family- and community-based programmes in European states with the aim of avoiding institutional placement.

10. The Bureau held an exchange of views on the focus areas for the thematic discussion and considered that some of the suggested themes could be addressed in the exchange itself, others might be proposed for the new strategy for the rights of the child. The Bureau favoured carrying out an analysis of the ECtHR jurisprudence related to alternative care, as suggested by the CRC, which could explain the positive and procedural obligations of member states, as well as a possible emphasis of a more specific issue, such as the analysis of family- and community-based programmes to avoid institutionalisation for children with behavioural problems. In addition, the Bureau considered that the organisation of the regional discussion should establish synergies with the work undertaken by the CJ/ENF-ISE, including through a contribution by the consultant supporting the CJ/ENF-ISE to the event.

11. In order to gather input and good practices from member states on the selected themes for the contribution, the Bureau expressed a preference for states to volunteer to respond to a questionnaire and pointed to the need for the questionnaire to be kept short, to ease the burden on states. Besides, Bureau members also suggested to extract information from the contributions provided by member states to the questionnaire already circulated by the CJ/ENF-ISE.

#### **4.4 CDENF Opinion on PACE Recommendation 2190 (2020) – “Effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated migrant children”**

12. The Bureau examined the draft Opinion and instructed the Secretariat to circulate it to all CDENF delegations for tacit approval through a written procedure within a three-week deadline, so that it could be communicated to the Committee of Ministers (CM) before the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 2021.

#### **4.4Bis Committee of Ministers adopted replies to PACE Recommendations**

13. The Bureau was informed about the CM replies to the PACE Recommendation 2169(2020) on International obligations concerning the repatriation of children from war and conflict zones and PACE Recommendation 2175(2020) on Addressing sexual violence against children: stepping up action and co-operation in Europe.

#### **4.5 Addressing welfare and child protection challenges related to child returnees**

14. The Bureau examined the paper resulting from the thematic exchange with experts held during the 2<sup>nd</sup> CDENF Plenary meeting on the welfare and protection of child returnees and postponed any decision for further action to be taken to the following Bureau meeting.

15. The Bureau was informed of the request by the CDCT to comment on the draft Recommendation on measures aimed at protecting children against radicalisation for the purpose of terrorism before the 15 of March 2021 and instructed the Secretariat to prepare draft comments to this text to be circulated to CDENF members for further suggestions and approval within a deadline of three weeks.

#### **4.6 New Priorities for the next CDENF Terms of Reference**

16. The Bureau took note of the new format for the programme and budget related to intergovernmental committees which will need to be planned for a period of four years, in line with the new Programme and Budget of four years. It furthermore instructed the Secretariat, in co-ordination with the Chair, to prepare a draft for the upcoming CDENF Terms of Reference

(2022-2025) in conformity with the priority areas and priority actions revealed during the current Strategy preparation process.

## **5. Work of the subordinate committee of experts and working group**

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

17. The Bureau heard an update on the outcomes of the second meeting of the CJ/ENF-ISE and took note of the conclusions of the meeting, including the decisions (i) to circulate an additional survey for practitioners to complement the information received from CDENF and CDCJ delegations and (ii) to postpone the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Committee of Experts to 14-15 April 2021.

18. The Bureau took note of the fact that the work of this Committee of Experts had proved to be more comprehensive than anticipated, due to its large scope and the substantial interest of member states in the issue. In this context, the Secretariat informed that the work of the CJ/ENF-ISE could potentially require an extension of its Terms of Reference (currently envisaged for 2020-2021). The Bureau considered that such an extension could be useful in order to produce high quality instruments or tools to have a relevant impact for the rights of the child in parental separation situations or care proceedings.

### **5.2 Working Group on responses to violence against children (CDENF-GT-VAE)**

19. The Chair informed the Bureau that Mr Matthew Vella's departure from the CDENF also left the VAE Working Group without a Chair; the Bureau agreed to the election of Ms Rosario Farmhouse to the function of Chair, as she had already chaired the two previous meetings of the Working Group in the Chair's absence.

20. The Bureau discussed the next steps ahead for the preparation of a draft Recommendation on national mechanisms for reporting violence against children, including the analysis of responses to the limited survey within the Working Group, and considered that the decision about an extended survey to all CDENF members should only be taken in the light of the results of the first survey and any gaps identified therein.

21. The Bureau took note of the UNSDGs document prepared by the Secretariat and approved the proposals for action to be taken to support the CDENF in reviewing progress made towards the UNSDGs and notably the organisation of an exchange of views with representatives of selected international organisations at the upcoming CDENF meeting.

## **6. Update on recent implementation and co-operation activities and partnerships**

22. The Bureau heard an update on recent implementation activities related to the current Strategy and new tools produced, including the [Handbook for policy makers on the rights of the child in the digital environment](#), the leaflet [Learn about your rights in the digital environment](#) which is currently produced in eight further languages (after the six languages published in 2020), and the [Handbook on children's participation for professionals working for and with children](#).

23. The Bureau was also informed on the new co-operation activities supporting the implementation of CoE standards in relation to projects on preventing violence against children concerning policy making and addressing priority needs in legislative terms (Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) as well as technical projects to support the establishment of Barnahus (Slovenia and Finland). In addition, the launch of a new project in 2021 in Slovenia on juvenile

justice was announced, aimed at diverting children away from the justice system, when possible, and ensuring that imprisonment was used as a last resort only. Finally, the Bureau was informed of a new project on child participation in collaboration with the EU (CP4Europe) aimed at strengthening the involvement of children in decision-making in 5 member states (Czech Republic, Finland, Iceland, Portugal and Slovenia).

24. The Bureau heard an update on the recent partnership meetings of the Children's Rights Division with other international organisations including, *inter alia*, UNICEF and the OECD, which had given rise to new opportunities for collaboration, especially to address the issues of data collection and the development of child rights impact assessments (CRIA).

### **7. Upcoming events**

25. The Bureau approved the call for national good practices in response to challenges met under the COVID-19 pandemic in the field of access to education and authorised the Secretariat to circulate it among CDENF members in advance of the first CDENF webinar.

26. The Bureau appointed the Chair as CDENF representative at the 2<sup>nd</sup> CDADI meeting taking place in the same week, in particular to create synergies between the current Strategy drafting process and some of the priority actions pursued by the CDADI, with an emphasis on vulnerable children.

### **8. Date of the next Bureau meeting**

27. The Bureau agreed to hold its next meeting by videoconference in mid-April 2021, at a date yet to be agreed between Bureau members (following a written consultation).

### **9. Any other business**

28. Participants raised no other business.

## APPENDIX I – Agenda

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the revised agenda
2. Update by the Secretariat
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4. State of implementation of CDENF activities
  - 4.1 Draft Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027)
  - 4.2 CDENF Updated workplan
  - 4.3 Organisation of a regional discussion as a contribution to the 2021 UNCRC Day of General Discussion on children’s Rights and alternative care
  - 4.4 CDENF Opinion on PACE Recommendation 2190 (2020)  
– “Effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated migrant children”
  - 4.4 Bis Committee of Ministers adopted replies to PACE Recommendations
  - 4.5 Addressing Welfare and child protection challenges related to child returnees
  - 4.6 New Priorities for the next CDENF Terms of Reference
5. Work of the subordinate committee of experts and working group
  - 5.1 Committee of Experts on the rights and the best interests of the child in
  - 5.2 Working Group on responses to violence against children (CDENF-GT-VAE)
6. Update on recent implementation and co-operation activities and partnerships
7. Upcoming events
8. Date of the next Bureau meeting
9. Any other business

## APPENDIX II - List of participants / Liste de participants

### **BUREAU MEMBERS / MEMBRES DU BUREAU**

Ms Maria-Andriani Kostopoulou (Chair)  
Attorney at Law, Supreme Court of Greece

Ms Rosário Farmhouse  
President of the National Commission for the Promotion of the Rights and Protection of  
Children and Young People, Portugal

Ms Ružica Boškić - *excused / excusée*  
Secretary, Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Slovenia

Ms Hanna Vseviov – *excused / excusée*  
Head of Department, Children and Families Department Ministry of Social Affairs, Estonia

### **DGII – Directorate General of Democracy**

Ms Regina Jensdottir  
Children's Rights Co-ordinator, Head of the Children's Rights Division / *Cheffe de la Division  
des droits des enfants et Coordinatrice du CdE pour les droits de l'enfant*

Ms Katrin Uerpmann  
Secretary to the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child  
Programme Officer / *Responsable de programme*

Ms Maren Lambrecht-Feigl  
Co-Secretary to the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child  
Programme Officer / *Responsable de programme*

Ms Stéphanie Burel  
Senior Project Officer / *Responsable principale de projet*  
Children's Rights Division / *Division des droits des enfants*

Ms Maria Asensio Velasco  
Policy Officer / *Chargée de mission*  
Children's Rights Division / *Division des droits des enfants*

Ms Anna Bracco  
Policy Officer / *Chargée de mission*  
Children's Rights Division / *Division des droits des enfants*