

Terms of reference of the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDEF)

Set up by the Committee of Ministers under Article 17 of the Statute of the Council of Europe and in accordance with [Resolution CM/Res\(2021\)3-consolidated](#) on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods.

Category: Steering committee
Duration: 1 January 2024 - 31 December 2027
Programme: Acting for equality, diversity and respect
Sub-programme: Children's rights

Main tasks

Under the authority of the Committee of Ministers, and bearing in mind the Council of Europe's legal standards, the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and the findings and recommendations of the relevant monitoring bodies, the CDEF guides the intergovernmental work in the field of the rights of the child and advise the Committee of Ministers on appropriate action to be taken in its field of competence.

In particular, the CDEF is instructed to:

- i. take due account of the Reykjavik Declaration¹, notably the Declaration on the situation of the children of Ukraine, in conducting its activities and submit proposals for its implementation as appropriate;
- ii. take account of the relevant key findings and challenges set out in the Secretary General's annual reports on the state of democracy, human rights and rule of law² and contribute, where relevant, to the process towards a New Democratic Pact for Europe;
- iii. oversee the implementation of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027), including through mid-term and final evaluation;
- iv. ensure that the rights of the child are mainstreamed into all relevant Council of Europe committees and bodies and support member States in mainstreaming children's rights;
- v. facilitate regular exchanges of knowledge, good practices and experiences among member States in the areas covered by the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (e.g. through thematic hearings, factsheets, policy briefs, handbooks and thematic visits);
- vi. provide expertise to member States on the development of legislation, policies, practice, training schemes and awareness-raising material to support implementation of international standards including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Council of Europe standards related to the rights of the child at national level;
- vii. advise the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General on appropriate action to be taken and provide advice as requested;
- viii. advise on the priority areas for the development of co-operation activities in the area of the rights of the child, notably follow and provide support to the work of the Consultation Group on Children of Ukraine (CGU);
- ix. follow the implementation of the non-binding instruments that it has prepared and, where appropriate, review the implementation of relevant Committee of Ministers' recommendations;
- x. continue work to enhance the implementation of international and Council of Europe standards on the protection of children from violence in member States, notably through the European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (18 November) and the development of non-binding instruments;
- xi. in close co-operation with other relevant Council of Europe committees, undertake actions for the development and promotion of activities and draft non-binding instruments in its fields of competence;
- xii. follow, without prejudice to the mandates of intergovernmental committees of the Council of Europe that already follow the work of monitoring mechanisms, the activities of the relevant monitoring and other bodies or convention mechanisms, in particular the Lanzarote Committee;
- xiii. ensure co-operation and synergies with relevant UN bodies, notably the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, as well as with the European Union and other relevant international organisations and civil society;
- xiv. orient and oversee the activities of its subordinate bodies (cf. separate terms of reference);
- xv. raise-awareness about Council of Europe standards and tools in its field of competence in the member States and beyond, through the neighbourhood policy and in other international and global fora where relevant;
- xvi. hold an exchange of views annually in order to evaluate its activities and advise the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General on future priorities in its sector, including possible new activities and those that might be discontinued;
- xvii. take due account of the following mainstreamed perspectives in the performance of its tasks: gender, youth, rights of persons with disabilities and of Roma and Traveller³ issues;
- xviii. where relevant, contribute to strengthening meaningful engagement with civil society organisations and national human rights institutions in its work;

¹ Reykjavik Declaration - United around our values.

² Cf. Secretary General's report 2025 "Towards a New Democratic Pact for Europe".

³ The term "Roma and Travellers" is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term "Gens du voyage", as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies. The present is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.

- xix. in accordance with decisions CM/Del/Dec(2013)1168/10.2 of the Committee of Ministers, carry out, at regular intervals, within the limits of the available resources and bearing in mind its priorities, an examination of some or all of the conventions for which it has been given responsibility,⁴ in co-operation, where appropriate, with the relevant convention-based bodies, and report back to the Committee of Ministers;
- xx. contribute to the achievement of, and review progress towards, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular with regards to Goal 1: No poverty; Goal 3: Healthy lives and well-being; Goal 4: Quality Education; Goal 5: Gender Equality; Goal 10: Reduce inequality and Goal: 16: Peace, Justice and Strong institutions.

Main deliverables

Under the authority of the Committee of Ministers, the CDENF is instructed to complete these deliverables, within the following deadlines:

	Priority ▼	Deadline ▼
1. Draft Recommendation on the protection of the best interests of the child in care proceedings (cf. terms of reference of CJ/ENF-ISE, jointly with the CDCJ)	1	31/12/2024
2. Implementation tool(s) on the protection of the best interests of the child in parental separation and in care proceedings (cf. terms of reference of CJ/ENF-ISE, jointly with the CDCJ)	1	31/12/2024
3. Implementation review report of Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)11 on effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in the context of migration	1	31/12/2024
4. Feasibility study on age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education to strengthen responses for <i>inter alia</i> preventing and combatting violence against children, including sexual violence and harmful or risky behaviour (cf. terms of reference of ENF-VAE)	1	31/12/2024
5. 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 (cf. terms of reference of ENF-VAE)	1	31/12/2024
6. Report on the rights of the child and artificial intelligence	1	31/12/2024
7. Subject to the results of the work of the CAI/CDNET and of main deliverable 6, child rights impact assessment tool on artificial intelligence	1	31/12/2027
8. Mid-term review of the Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027)	2	31/12/2025
9. Subject to the results of main deliverable 4, draft non-binding instrument on age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education to strengthen responses for <i>inter alia</i> preventing and combatting violence against children (cf. terms of reference of ENF-VAE)	1	31/12/2026
10. Implementation review report of Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)2 on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18	2	31/12/2027
11. Draft guidelines for developing a national children's participation strategy	2	31/12/2027
12. Draft Recommendation on multidisciplinary and interagency services for child-friendly justice, including operational guidelines (cf. terms of reference of ENF-JUS)	1	31/12/2026
13. Thematic review of guidelines on child-friendly justice (in co-operation with CDCJ and other committees as appropriate)	1	31/12/2027
14. Guidance on the prevention of sexual violence and harmful or risky behaviour by children (cf. terms of reference of ENF-VAE)	2	31/12/2027
15. Final implementation report on the Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027) and advice on the drafting of a new Strategy	1	31/12/2027
16. Two Thematic guidance notes on topical issues under the Strategy for the Rights of the Child	2	31/12/2027

Composition

• Members

Governments of member States are invited to designate one or more representatives of the highest possible rank in the field of children's rights.

The Council of Europe will bear the travel and subsistence expenses of one representative from each member State (two in the case of the State whose representative has been elected Chair).

Each member of the Committee shall have one vote. Where a government designates more than one member, only one of them is entitled to take part in the voting.

In accordance with decisions CM/Del/Dec(2013)1168/10.2 of the Committee of Ministers, in cases where there is no convention-based body including all the Parties, non-member States are invited to take part, with a right to vote, in the committee meetings pertaining to the conventions to which they are Parties.

• Participants

The following may send representatives, without the right to vote and at the charge of their corresponding administrative budgets:

- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe;
- Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;
- European Court of Human Rights;
- Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe;
- Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe;
- Committees or other bodies of the Council of Europe engaged in related work, as appropriate.

⁴ Cf. relevant decisions of the Committee of Ministers (CM/Del/Dec(2013)1168/10.2) and list of Conventions in document CM(2025)132.

The following may send representatives, without the right to vote and without defrayal of expenses:

- European Union (one or more representatives, including, as appropriate, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA));
- Observer States to the Council of Europe: Canada, Holy See, Japan, Mexico, United States of America;
- other international organisations including: United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR); World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children (UN SRSG VAC), United Nations Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, International Organisation of the Francophonie (OIF), Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS).

- **Observers**

The following may send representatives, without the right to vote and without defrayal of expenses:

- non-member States with which the Council of Europe has a Neighbourhood Partnership including relevant co-operation activities;
- States having been invited by decision of the Committee of Ministers to participate in the negotiations;
- interested organisations from Civil Society: the Council of Europe welcomes and promotes the widest participation of civil society, in line with the Guidance note on Civil Society Participation in the Intergovernmental Work of the Council of Europe CDDEM(2024)14, as Observers. Observer status may be requested in accordance with Article 8 of [Resolution CM/Res\(2021\)3-consolidated](#) on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods.

Working methods

The rules of procedure of the Committee are governed by [Resolution CM/Res\(2021\)3-consolidated](#) on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods. Online participation in meetings will be available.

	Plenary meetings ▼			Bureau meetings ▼		
	Members incl. Chair	Meetings per year	Days per meeting	Members	Meetings per year	Days per meeting
2024	47	2	3	5	2	2
2025	47	2	3	5	2	2
2026	47	2	3	5	2	2
2027	47	2	3	5	2	2

The CDENF will appoint from amongst its members up to 4 Rapporteurs on mainstreamed perspectives, including a Gender Equality Rapporteur.

Subject to the agenda, the chairs of its subordinate structures may be invited to attend the CDENF's Bureau and/or plenary meetings.

Subordinate structures

The CDENF co-ordinates, supervises and follows the work of its subordinate bodies:

- (2024) Committee of Experts on the rights and the best interests of the child in parental separation and in care proceedings (CJ/ENF-ISE, jointly with CDCJ) (cf. separate terms of reference);
- (2024-2027) Committee of Experts on the prevention of violence (ENF-VAE) (cf. separate terms of reference);
- (2025-2026) Committee of Experts on access to child-friendly justice through multidisciplinary and interagency services (ENF-JUS) (cf. separate terms of reference).

Budgetary information*

	Meetings per year	Days per meeting	Members reimbursed	Plenary in €K	Bureau in €K	Working groups in €K	Secretariat (A, B)
2024	2	3	47	130.0	-	-	1 A; 1 B
2025	2	3	47	130.0	-	-	1 A; 1 B
2026	2	3	47	129.7	-	-	1 A; 1 B
2027	2	3	47	129.7	-	-	1 A; 1 B

*The costs include the per diem, travel costs, interpretation, translation and document printing. These costs are calculated on the basis of standard costs.