



Consultation Group on the Children of Ukraine (CGU)

10th PLENARY MEETING followed by

THE SPECIAL HEARING on

Advancing Accountability, Protection and Remedies for Children Affected by Conflict-Related Sexual Violence

2-3 July 2026 (Strasbourg and via zoom for speakers intervening online)

Summary Note

Executive Summary:

- The Council of Europe Consultation Group on the Children of Ukraine (CGU) convened its 10th Plenary Meeting on 2-3 July 2026 in Strasbourg, followed by a Special Hearing on “Advancing Accountability, Protection and Remedies for Children Affected by Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV)”. In total, 112 CGU members and invited experts participated in the two-day event, including representatives of Council of Europe member States, international organisations, civil society organisations and independent experts, together with senior officials and experts from the Council of Europe.
- During the Plenary Meeting, participants reviewed progress across the CGU’s priority workstreams, focusing on safe return procedures, children with disabilities, documentation of violations in the temporarily occupied territories, access to education, trauma-informed psychological support, and strengthened cooperation among member states and Ukrainian authorities.
- The Special Hearing deepened discussions on accountability for CRSV affecting children, examining international and national legal frameworks, child-sensitive investigations and prosecutions, survivor-centred and trauma-informed responses, reparations, multidisciplinary cooperation and long-term recovery.
- Over the two days, participants reaffirmed the CGU’s role as an expert-led, multidisciplinary platform supporting practical cooperation and the development of child-rights-based

responses. Discussions highlighted the need to translate European and international standards into operational guidance and coordinated action while remaining in line with the Chatham House Rule and additional measures put in place to safeguard the confidence-building environment of the CGU.

Overview of the Plenary Discussions

1) Updates from CGU Members

Members updated the Consultation Group on developments concerning children of Ukraine in host states, including temporary protection, access to inclusive education, healthcare, psychosocial support and child protection. Discussions highlighted educational continuity, support for children with disabilities, trafficking risks, protection of unaccompanied children, and strengthened cooperation between host states and Ukrainian authorities for information exchange and future return procedures.

2) Strengthening Coordination and Cooperation in Child Protection Responses and Possible Return Procedures

Participants received an update on the work of the Core Group of Experts, including the finalisation of the Checklist for Host States Supporting Safe Return of Children from Ukraine, the Mapping of national focal points and the development of a Standardised information form. Discussions focused on strengthening cross-border cooperation, child-centred return procedures and continuity of support in line with the best interests of the child.

3) The Impact of War on Children with Disabilities

CGU members reviewed the recent work of the Advisory Group on the Impact of War on Children with Disabilities, including the meeting focused on emergency preparedness and response, and community-based support models. Discussions highlighted barriers to education, healthcare and rehabilitation, while emphasising the importance of inclusive services, support to families, improved data collection and continued de-institutionalisation efforts.

4) Documenting the Situation of Children in Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine

The need for ongoing efforts to document violations of the rights of children in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine is considered a priority and was discussed at the meeting, including challenges related to remote monitoring and verification. Particular concern was expressed regarding restrictions on access to Ukrainian education, indoctrination, militarisation and broader protection risks, underscoring the importance of continued documentation and accountability efforts.

5) Access to Education

CGU members and invited experts received an update on the work of the recently established Education Working Group and the development of practical guidance on educational engagement and well-being. Discussions addressed absenteeism, disruption of learning, teacher shortages, security challenges and the psychosocial impact of war, emphasising safe,

inclusive and trauma-informed learning environments and strengthened cooperation with Ukrainian and international partners.

6) Psychological Support and Trauma-informed Care

Participants reviewed the work of the Dialogue Group on Psychological Support and Trauma-informed Care, including its joint meeting on 23 June with the Education Working Group. Discussions focused on integrating trauma-informed approaches into education, strengthening school-based mental health and psychosocial support, and promoting multidisciplinary cooperation across education, child protection and healthcare.

7) High-level Tripartite Exchange of Views on the situation of children of Ukraine

Making an exemption from its usual Chatham House Rule, and inviting permanent representatives to the Council of Europe and members of the PACE, the Plenary included a high-level tripartite exchange of views with Thórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð Gylfadóttir, Special Envoy of the Council of Europe Secretary General on the Situation of the Children of Ukraine, Vanessa Frazier, United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and Carina Ödebrink, Special Envoy of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly on Russian Abductions and Deportation of Ukrainian Children. Discussions focused on the return of unlawfully deported and forcibly transferred children, accountability, documentation of violations, protection of children in the temporarily occupied territories, and recovery and reintegration, while reaffirming the importance of sustained international cooperation.

Overview of the Special Hearing on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV)

The Special Hearing examined international and national frameworks for addressing conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) affecting children, focusing on strengthening child-sensitive accountability, protection and access to remedies. Opening the Special hearing, Marja Ruotanen, Director General of Democracy and Human Dignity, and Kateryna Levchenko, Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy of Ukraine, stressed the devastating impact of CRSV on children and the need for coordinated, child-centred and trauma-informed responses. Ukraine presented recent efforts to strengthen its legislative and institutional framework, including enhanced interagency coordination, improved protection and access to justice, and measures supporting survivors, including children born as a result of CRSV.

Discussions reviewed international legal and policy standards, including relevant United Nations mechanisms, the Lanzarote and Istanbul Conventions, the European Convention on Human Rights and reparations frameworks. Participants emphasised child-friendly justice, trauma-informed and survivor-centred approaches, multidisciplinary cooperation and integrated models, such as Barnahus to prevent secondary victimisation and ensure comprehensive support for child victims.

The Hearing also examined Ukraine's experience in investigating and prosecuting CRSV crimes against children, highlighting challenges in documentation, recognising children as victims in their own right, and developing child-specific standards that prevent re-traumatisation. Civil society organisations shared practical experiences supporting survivors and stressed the need

for stronger cooperation between state authorities and civil society, expanded support services and accountability mechanisms that fully reflect the specific harm suffered by children.

Members and participants explored lessons from international criminal tribunals, evolving European Union standards and international support mechanisms to Ukraine, including the work of the Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group. Discussions highlighted child-sensitive investigations, evidentiary standards, reparations and the application of the "do no harm" principle throughout justice processes. The final session focused on existing international and national models and practices in providing remedies to children affected by CRSV.

Participants concluded that international standards must continue to be translated into practical measures that place the best interests of the child, trauma-informed practice and survivor-centred justice at the centre of accountability and recovery efforts.

Key Takeaways and Ways Forward

CGU members and experts identified the following priorities for follow-up:

- operationalising the Checklist for Host States and strengthening cross-border cooperation on safe return;
- advancing practical guidance through the Education Working Group and promoting trauma-informed educational environments;
- reinforcing multidisciplinary mental health and psychosocial support; inclusive support and family-based care for children with disabilities; and
- enhancing child-sensitive accountability for CRSV through coordinated investigation, prosecution, reparations and survivor support.

The CGU Secretariat will continue supporting implementation of these priorities through its thematic dialogue structures and in close cooperation with CGU member states, including the Ukrainian authorities, Council of Europe bodies, international partners (including CSOs), and independent experts.