

Objective 4: Child-friendly justice for all children



Session on advocating for the rights of children in contact with the law

Mid-Term Review Conference for the Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027)



Building a Europe
for and with children

Construire une Europe
pour et avec les enfants



PRÉSIDENTIE DU / PRESIDENCY OF
LUXEMBOURG
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE / COUNCIL OF EUROPE
11/2024 - 05/2025



Advocating for the rights of children in contact with the law

What if all children in contact with the justice system felt safe to participate in legal proceedings that affect them? What if they received support and protection of their rights in legal proceedings with dignity, equality and without discrimination?

Child-friendly justice for all children is the fourth objective of the [Strategy for the Rights of the Child](#) (2022- 2027), and a crucial component the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and of various policies and national efforts across Europe and the globe.

Child-friendly justice systems guarantee the respect and the effective implementation of children's rights at the highest attainable level, by providing justice that is accessible, age appropriate, speedy, diligent, child-sensitive and respectful of children's rights including the rights to due process, to participate in and to understand the proceedings, to respect for private and family life and to integrity and dignity.

It is essential that children in contact with the justice system feel safe to participate in legal proceedings that concern them. This is particularly important given the significant impact that judicial decisions can have on their lives and the trauma it may cause. It is encouraging to see that alternatives to detention and restorative approaches have become a part of pedagogical and child-friendly procedures, and it would be highly beneficial to further prioritise these in child justice.

Since 2010, the [Council of Europe Guidelines on Child-friendly Justice](#) have been instrumental in guiding Member States in adapting their justice systems to the rights and needs of children. Considering the progress achieved and the evolution of international and Council of Europe standards and jurisprudence over the past fifteen years, the Council of Europe is undertaking a thematic review. The aim of this review is to ensure that these Guidelines continue to lay the foundation for a justice system that is effectively responding to the rights and needs of all children in contact with the law.

Aim of the Session

This session will provide an opportunity to inform participants about the ongoing thematic review of the Council of Europe's Guidelines on Child-Friendly Justice, with a focus on enhancing their practical application and adaptation to current and emerging needs.

The session will also aim to raise awareness of key challenges, explore systemic deficiencies, and highlight principles of child justice and restorative justice approaches and strategies that help children rebuild their lives, and make positive contributions to society.

Practical information

Session	Advocating for the rights of children in contact with the Law
Strategic objective	Objective 4 - Child-friendly justice for all children
Day & time	Thursday 3 April, 14:30 - 17:00
Venue	Agora Building, Council of Europe
Room	G03
Languages	English and French

Draft programme

14h30	Introduction and moderation <i>Benoit Van Keirsbilck, Director of DCI Belgium, Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child</i>
14h35	I. Setting the Scene <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcoming remarks – <i>Ambassador Gabriel Revel, Permanent Representative of Monaco, Chair of the Committee of Minister’s working group on legal cooperation (GR-J)</i>
15h00	II. The Council of Europe Guidelines on child-friendly justice and its thematic review <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Council of Europe Guidelines on child-friendly justice fifteen years on - <i>Maria-Andriani Kostopoulou & Susanna Greijer, independent experts</i>• Emerging issues and existing gaps to be addressed in the thematic review
15h30	III. Towards a child justice system which guarantees the respect and the effective implementation of children’s rights <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effective participation of children in the justice system• Addressing the systematic barriers and challenges faced by children involved in legal proceedings• Effectively involving children in family law proceedings
16h15	IV. A Second Chance: How can restorative justice help children to learn, grow, and rebuild? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognising the benefits of restorative justice for children and exploring best practices• Challenges, systemic barriers and opportunities for implementing restorative justice
16h50	End of the session