

EVALUATION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE SUB-PROGRAMME ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

March 2026



INTRODUCTION

The evaluation assessed the **key achievements and the interplay between the different workstreams of the sub-programme on children's rights** including the Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF), the Lanzarote

Committee, the Consultation Group for the Children of Ukraine (CGU) and the portfolio of projects on children's rights.

WHY THIS EVALUATION?

This evaluation sought to capture what has been achieved by the sub-programme and draw lessons and develop actionable recommendations to guide the development of the Council of Europe's work and future strategies on the rights of the child.

WHAT DID THE EVALUATION FIND?



Relating to the Strategy

Although the sub-programme does not cover equally the six thematic pillars of the Strategy, the strategic framework **focuses member state efforts and contributes to the mainstreaming** of children's rights across the Organisation. There is a lack of operational focus across the Strategy, including the human and financial resources needed for the sub-programme to implement it.



Efficiency and performance

The sub-programme's mechanisms combine their different thematic scopes well and enable **dynamism and flexibility to create new, agile instruments** such as the CGU. There are operational challenges affecting the Lanzarote Committee and information exchange across the Council of Europe.



Equality and inclusion

Equality and inclusion were promoted **mainly through principle-based approaches**, with targeted action and mainstreaming in crisis contexts. **Equality considerations embedded in project design, suffered in implementation** due to insufficient resources, political sensitivities, and limited data disaggregation.



Change in member States

The sub-programme **contributed to change in various capacities**, including as convener, standard-setter, and multiplier. Its influence has contributed to **legislative and policy reforms at national level, enhanced awareness of children's rights, and fostered peer learning among member states**. The extent of change in member states is dependent on broader political, economic and institutional environments.



Added value

The Council of Europe retains a **unique leadership role in the children's rights field**, complementing international actors such as the UN and EU. The Organisation needs to **constantly monitor impacts of social developments**, for instance, on the continued adequacy of the "tech-neutral" Lanzarote Convention.

LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICE



1. The Children's right Division championed child safeguarding and participation, boosting uptake across the Council of Europe in recent years.
2. The CGU, set up to address rights of Ukrainian children abroad, benefited from its informal, confidential platform for open discussion with equal voices.
3. The Sub-programme advanced child participation by creating child-friendly materials and consulting children on key documents.
4. Focusing on best practices like Barnahus¹ enabled diverse approaches and raised member state awareness.
5. A multi-stakeholder approach fostered sustainable, cross-sector change.
6. The Council of Europe built on UNCRC principles, complementing wider efforts on children's rights.

1. See: <https://barnahus.eu/barnahus/about-barnahus/>

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS



1. Revisit the scope of the Strategy to target three to four thematic pillars.
2. Focus children's rights mainstreaming efforts across the Council of Europe by prioritising specific action areas and defining the respective responsibilities of the Children's Rights Division and other Council of Europe bodies.
3. Enhance communication between the Children's Rights Division and key Council of Europe entities where overlaps exist to jointly address relevant issues in the most appropriate format.
4. Mainstream the needs of children in situations of vulnerability to a greater extent across interventions of the sub-programme according to the specific needs of different groups.
5. Further integrate the human rights approach into results-based reporting of co-operation projects within the sub-programme.
6. Continue strengthening actions to disseminate sub-programme outputs, including recommendations, studies, and reports, at member state level.
7. Commission an independent in-depth study on the scope of the Lanzarote Convention in light of evolving trends in child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.



HOW WAS THIS EVALUATION CONDUCTED?

START APRIL 2025 FINDINGS NOVEMBER 2025 PUBLISHED MARCH 2026



180+
documents
in-depth analysis



94
semi-structured
interviews with
key stakeholders



2 surveys with
123 respondents



Observation
of inter-sectoral
task force



6
country
case studies



2
field trips

Find OUT MORE



Report: www.coe.int/evaluation

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