



Building a Europe  
for and with children

Construire une Europe  
pour et avec les enfants



Strasbourg, 25.03.2024

ENF-VAE(2024)PV01E

**Committee of experts on the prevention of violence  
(ENF-VAE)**

**Third Meeting (Strasbourg, Agora Building, Room G04)**

**(In person meeting)**

**11 – 12 March 2024**

**Meeting report**

*Prepared by the Children's Rights Division  
Council of Europe*

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[ENF-VAE](#)

### **Agenda item 1: Opening of the meeting**

1. The third meeting of the Committee of experts on the prevention of violence (ENF-VAE, hereafter the Committee) was opened by the ENF-VAE Chair, Mária VARGOVA (Slovakia), who welcomed all participants.
2. The Committee was then greeted by Anne KAYSER, Secretary to the Committee, who thanked colleagues for their support in the preparation of the meeting and looked forward to the work ahead.

### **Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda and order of business**

3. The Committee adopted the agenda as it appears in Appendix I.

### **Agenda item 3: Statement by the Chair and the Secretariat**

4. The Committee took note of the information provided by the Secretariat on the state of implementation of strategic objective 1 of the Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027, "freedom from violence for all children"), including relevant action of the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child ([CDENF](#)).
5. The Committee took note of the information provided by the Secretariat on the state of implementation of the ENF-VAE [Terms of Reference](#) as well as the [revised workplan](#) of the ENF-VAE.

### **Agenda item 4: Feasibility study on age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education to strengthen responses for - *inter alia* - preventing and combating violence, including risky or harmful sexual behaviour by children.**

6. Dr Catherine O'SULLIVAN, consultant, presented the main changes introduced in the draft since the second meeting of ENF-VAE in October 2023. The Committee took note of the presentation.
7. The Committee examined the revised draft feasibility study, held a discussion on the changes made to the draft and agreed on the substance of the draft and on the main elements of a draft recommendation on comprehensive sexuality education.
8. The Committee took note of the comments provided by the Observers and Participants of ENF-VAE, in particular of the presentation of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights' new report entitled: [Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Europe: Progress and Challenges](#). In her report, the Commissioner for Human Rights underlines the vital role of comprehensive sexuality education in promoting the health and wellbeing of children and preparing them for safe and fulfilling lives.
9. Among others, the following was pointed out:
  - Gender and Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) issues were considered to be well covered throughout the feasibility study. A definition of intersectionality and a list of grounds for discrimination should be added. The list of grounds cited in the recently adopted Council of Europe [Gender Equality Strategy \(2024-2029\)](#) would be a useful reference.
  - A clearer reference to all children in vulnerable situations, including children with disabilities and children living on the streets, should be included in various paragraphs throughout the feasibility study.
  - A terminological debate on the terms "gender-based violence" and "sexual violence" highlighted the need to define these terms. While recognising the prevalence of

"gender-based violence" against girls, boys should not be excluded as victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. "Sexual violence" should not be seen as a component of "gender-based violence", so the reference to "gender-based violence **and** sexual violence" should be maintained throughout the text.

- The "mandatory" nature of comprehensive sexuality education was discussed. It was recalled that the case law of the European Court of Human Rights provides that states may decide to make comprehensive sexuality education mandatory for all children. Concerns were raised about the risk that mandatory education could lead to conflicting situations for children in families with strong religious or cultural bias. While children need to be protected from feeling conflicted, the aim of comprehensive sexuality education is to provide a range of information to enable the child to make informed choices. It was suggested that the mandatory nature would prevent discussion of personal situations and protect the child from any negative repercussions. Others argued that it should be mandatory for states to provide comprehensive sexuality education rather than for children to receive it, balanced with a right for families to opt out. In any case, 'mandatory' should mean that comprehensive sexuality education is accessible to all children, including children with disabilities or in marginalised situations, who are most at risk of becoming victims of violence.
  - Education should not be limited to providing information. It should also include critical understanding and reasoning of the issue.
  - The importance of the impact that comprehensive sexuality education has on the right to health should be better highlighted. In addition to their right to information on sexual and reproductive health throughout their schooling, children should be provided with age-appropriate information on access to the relevant services (e.g. services providing contraception). Men and boys should be included in all sexual and reproductive health prevention programmes, as an integral part of the right to health.
10. The Committee agreed to finalise the draft feasibility study on the basis of their discussion and the references shared and written comments provided. It agreed to share it with the CDENF for adoption or approval during its next plenary meeting on 28-30 May, and for instruction on the way to proceed with this task under its mandate.
11. The Committee agreed to start the preparatory work to organise a hearing with key stakeholders to feed in with the work of the group.

**Agenda item 5: Implementation review report on Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)10 on Council of Europe policy guidelines on integrated national strategies for the protection of children from violence**

12. The Committee took note of the information shared by the Secretariat on the state of play of the implementation review of Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)10, notably that 34 member states have to date replied to the questionnaire and that the consultant has started working on the report, in close co-operation with the Secretariat.

**Agenda item 6: Update on key developments and other events by members, participants and observers**

13. The Committee took note of the update of key activities related to the mandate of ENF-VAE as shared by its members:
- **Slovakia** has started to build four new Barnahus. The representatives would like to exchange experiences with countries where Barnahus has already been established and to visit Barnahus elsewhere. Slovakia also informed of the intention to strengthen helplines and integrate them into law to ensure financial support from the Government using Article 13 of

Lanzarote Convention as a legal basis. In 2025, Slovakia plans to establish a helpline for offenders with disorders in sexual object preferences.

- **Finland** referred to the 5 Barnahus units in Finland and to the Barnahus joint EU-Council of Europe co-operation project<sup>1</sup> which has just ended. The project supported the drafting process of a new law to be submitted next fall, and enhanced expertise through training. Some of the materials are in English and available to other countries.
- **Austria** underlined that the Federal Government has adopted a comprehensive package of measures for child protection. The package of measures is based on 4 pillars: Preventive and immediate measures, increased seducation, tougher penalties for perpetrators and increased victim protection. A comprehensive child protection campaign is being launched to raise public awareness of this issue. The campaign is being developed with the involvement of child protection organizations and children and young people.
- **Greece** underlined its efforts to combat juvenile delinquency by developing measures in sports programmes and seminars.
- Lanzarote Committee updated the group on child consultations to be carried out by the Committee and that could be linked to the work of ENF-VAE.

#### **Agenda item 7: Discussion on child participation process**

14. The Committee discussed the next steps regarding the child participation process on the elements of a draft recommendation on age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education.
15. The Committee agreed on the way forward and the timeline as suggested in the concept note prepared by the Secretariat.
16. The Committee instructed the Secretariat to launch the process in view of carrying out the child consultation based on the elements of a draft recommendation, as included in the feasibility study that will be revised after this meeting.
17. The Committee took note of the interest of several national partners (namely Spain, Greece, France and Finland) to conduct child consultations in view of informing the drafting of a recommendation on age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education.

#### **Agenda item 8: Election of the Chair and Vice Chair**

18. The Committee reelected Mária VARGOVA (Slovakia) as its Chair for a last term of office of one year, and Alina SEEL (Austria) as its Vice Chair for a last term of office of one year.

#### **Agenda item 9: Any other business**

19. No further issue was raised.

#### **Agenda item 10: Date and place of next meetings**

20. The Committee took note that the next meeting of ENF-VAE would be held, in person, in Strasbourg from 24-25 September 2024.

#### **Agenda item 11: Adoption of the meeting report**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/finland-barnahus>

21. The Committee agreed to approve the meeting report in written proceedings.

## Appendix 1

## Agenda and Order of Business

1.	<b>Opening of the meeting</b>	<u>Reference documents</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of participants - <a href="#">ENF-VAE(2024)LoP1</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">List of members</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Report of the second meeting - ENF-VAE(2023)PV02</a></li> </ul>
2.	<b>Adoption of the agenda and order of business</b>	<u>Working documents</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Draft agenda - ENF-VAE (2024)OJ1 prov E</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Draft annotated agenda - ENF-VAE(2024)OJ1ANN prov E</a></li> </ul>
3.	<b>Statement by the Chair and the Secretariat</b>	<u>Reference documents</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Terms of reference of the ENF-VAE</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027)</a></li> <li>• CoE Conventions and Recommendations – Key Resources for implementing the Strategy (2022-2027) <a href="#">CDENF(2023)INF2</a></li> <li>• Working methods and workplan - <a href="#">ENF-VAE(2023)01 rev3 E</a></li> </ul>
4.	<b>Feasibility study on age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education to strengthen responses for - inter alia - preventing and combating violence, including risky or harmful sexual behaviour by children</b> <i>(deliverable (1) of the terms of reference)</i>	<u>Working document</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft feasibility study - ENF-VAE(2023)04 rev1 E (restricted)</li> </ul> <u>Reference documents</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study on Sexual violence and harmful sexual behaviour displayed by children: Nature, causes, consequences and responses, Prepared by: Professor Simon Hackett, Durham University, United Kingdom - <a href="#">CDENF-GT-VAE(2020)04</a></li> <li>• Resources and excerpts of relevant international and European instruments on age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education – <a href="#">ENF-VAE(2023)02</a></li> </ul>
5.	<b>Implementation review report on Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)10 on Council of Europe policy guidelines on integrated national strategies for the protection of children from violence</b> <i>(deliverable (2) of the terms of reference)</i>	<u>Reference documents</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Table of replies from member States - ENF-VAE(2024)01</a></li> <li>• Questionnaire - <a href="#">CDENF(2023) 24</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">CM/Rec(2009)10</a> on Council of Europe policy guidelines on integrated national strategies for the protection of children from violence Methodology to conduct implementation reviews of Committee of Ministers' Recommendations - <a href="#">CDENF(2022)27</a></li> </ul>
6.	<b>Update on key developments and other events by members, participants and observers</b>	
7.	<b>Discussion on child participation process</b>	<u>Reference document</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concept note on child participation process - ENF-VAE (2024)02 (restricted)</li> </ul>

		<u>Reference document</u>
8.	<b>Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of ENF-VAE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List of candidatures - <a href="#">ENF-VAE(2024)03 E</a></li> <li>Article 12 of <a href="#">Resolution CM/Res(2021)3 on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods</a></li> </ul>
9.	<b>Any other business</b>	
10.	<b>Date and place of next meetings</b>	24-25 September 2024, Strasbourg (in person)
11.	<b>Adoption of the meeting report</b>	

### ORDER OF BUSINESS

Date	Time (UTC+1)	Agenda items
11 March 2024	Morning 09.30 am -12.30 pm	Items 1- 4.
	Afternoon 2.00 pm - 5.00 pm	Item 4 (continued).
12 March 2024	Morning 09.30 am - 12.30 pm	Item 8, 7, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11

### GENERAL REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

<a href="#">Terms of reference of ENF-VAE 2024-2027</a>
Resolution <a href="#">CM/Res(2021)3</a> on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods

### MEETING REPORTS

<a href="#">ENF-VAE(2023)PV01</a>	Report of the first meeting of the ENF-VAE
<a href="#">ENF-VAE(2023)PV02</a>	Report of the second meeting of the ENF-VAE

## Appendix 2

### List of participants

#### MEMBERS

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##### **Austria**

*replaced by*

Barbara Reintjes-Wagner  
Legal Policy Officer  
Austrian Federal Chancellery  
Directorate General VI – Family and Youth – Department for Family Law Policies and Children's Rights

##### **Finland**

Malja Marjo  
Senior Ministerial Adviser, Social Affairs  
Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

##### **France**

Solenne Donal  
Juge des enfants  
Tribunal Judiciaire de Paris

##### **Greece**

Eftychia Katsigaraki  
General Director  
Ministry of Justice - General Directorate of Special Legal Affairs & Human Rights

##### **Hungary**

*Excused*

Viktoria Sebhelyi  
Independent consultant

##### **Slovakia**

Mária Vargová  
Director  
National Coordination Centre for Resolving the Issues of Violence against Children

##### **Spain**

Pepa Horno  
Independent consultant on childhood, affectivity and protection

##### **Sweden**

*Excused*

Ola Florin  
Deputy Director  
Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Division for Social Services and Disability Policy

#### PARTICIPANTS

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##### **Gender Equality Commission(GEC)**

*Excused*

Sara Slana  
Member in respect of Slovenia

##### **Conference of INGO**

Rú Ávila Rodríguez  
IGLYO Policy & Research Manager



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**OBSERVERS**

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**Missing Children Europe**

*Excused*

Theresa Ryan-Rouger  
Senior Policy Adviser

**CRIN**

Larisa Abrickaja  
Policy Adviser

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**CONSULTANTS**

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**Catherine O'Sullivan**

Lecturer  
School of Law, Centre for Criminal Justice and Human Rights, University College Cork

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**COUNCIL OF EUROPE SECRETARIAT**

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**DGII – Directorate General of Democracy**

**Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child**

Katrin Uerpmann  
Secretary of the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF)

**Cooperation Unit - Children's Rights Division**

Teresa Gil Ricol  
Project Officer

**Lanzarote Committee of the Council of Europe**

Naomi Trewinnard  
Legal Advisor

**European Space for Citizenship Education Unit**

Salvador Sala  
Administrator

**Gender Equality Division**

Cécile Gréboval  
Programme Manager  
Roza Cseby  
Trainee

**Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights**

Charlotte Altenhoener-Dion  
Advisor

**Parliamentary Assembly - Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development**

Jannick Devaux  
Secretary

**Violence against women Division**

Francesca Montagna  
Administrator

**Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics Unit**

Gabriella Calleja  
Senior Policy advisor

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**SECRETARIAT OF THE ENF-VAE**

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Anne Kayser  
Secretary to the ENF-VAE  
Children's Rights Division (DGII)

Audrey Winum  
Project Assistant  
Children's Rights Division (DGII)

Justine Vizier  
Trainee  
Children's Rights Division (DGII)

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**INTERPRETERS**

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Elisabetta Bassu  
Chloe Chenetier  
Morgane Lamothe