

Guide for Children and Young People to the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027)



www.coe.int/children

Building a Europe
for and with children



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



Guide for Children and Young People to the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027)

This is a guide for children and young people from 12 to 17 years old to understand the main objectives of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027). If you want to check out the complete document, you will find it [here](#).



The Strategy includes some proposals from children and young people. If you want to know more, you can consult the [Report on child consultations informing the formulation of the Strategy for the Rights of the Child](#).





***What is the
Council of
Europe?***

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

A European organisation of 46 countries, called member States, based in Strasbourg, France.

It was set up to make sure that all these countries protect human rights, including children's rights, by supporting children and young people like you to develop their full potential, and by preventing any harm.

Council of Europe



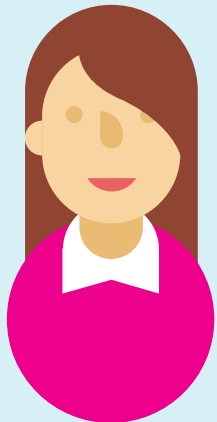
You can see the 46 member States on this map:

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Albania | Liechtenstein |
| Andorra | Lithuania |
| Armenia | Luxembourg |
| Austria | Malta |
| Azerbaijan | Republic of Moldova |
| Belgium | Monaco |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | Montenegro |
| Bulgaria | Netherlands |
| Croatia | North Macedonia |
| Cyprus | Norway |
| Czech Republic | Poland |
| Denmark | Portugal |
| Estonia | Romania |
| Finland | San Marino |
| France | Serbia |
| Georgia | Slovak Republic |
| Germany | Slovenia |
| Greece | Spain |
| Hungary | Sweden |
| Iceland | Switzerland |
| Ireland | Türkiye |
| Italy | Ukraine |
| Latvia | United Kingdom |

Check out our interactive map [here!](#)



What are children's rights?



Children's rights

are promises that governments have made to children and young people under the age of 18 to help them enjoy a good life in all places where they live, and to stay safe from any dangers.



[Passport to Your Rights](#)



[I have rights, you have rights, he/she has rights... An Introduction to Children's Rights](#)

Check this out!



What is the Strategy for the Rights of the Child and how was it prepared?

A strategy is a plan of action with long-term aims.

The Strategy for the Rights of the Child of the Council of Europe is the result of a long drafting process.

It involved:



The Governments of the member States

Represented by officials from the ministries of all Council of Europe member States who prepare laws and activities to protect children or who work on questions that are important for children and their rights.



International organisations

Institutions created by governments to work together to make the world a better place for children and adults. For example, most of the countries of the world belong to the United Nations and 27 European countries make the European Union.



Civil society organisations

Groups or associations set up to help children and others or to campaign for good causes like fighting poverty or climate change. They are also called non-governmental organisations or 'NGOs'.



Children and notably 220 children from across Europe

All persons under the age of 18.

Why do we need a Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child?

The Council of Europe and the Governments of its member States need to have a shared vision and common goals to work together on making children's rights a reality in Europe. The new Strategy will guide the work of **Governments and their partners** on children's rights over the next six years (2022-2027).

How is the Council of Europe working with the Governments?

Ways of working together at the **Council of Europe** include:

- * Agreeing on common rules for Governments to best support and protect children's rights.
- * Sharing information and learning from each other.
- * Training professionals who work with children.
- * Raising awareness about children's issues, their rights and the importance of child participation.

THE STRATEGY HAS 6 OBJECTIVES:

1 Keeping all children safe from violence



2 Making sure all children have equal opportunities and are included in society



3 Supporting children to have access to technologies and use them safely



4 Making justice proceedings more child-friendly



5 Giving a voice to every child



6 Supporting children in crisis and emergency situations



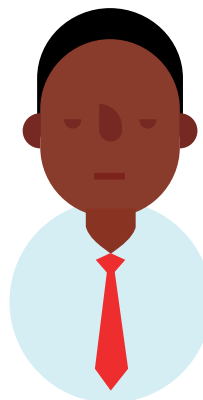


When working towards each of these objectives, we at the Council of Europe will make sure to:



Take into account gender issues, looking into the needs of the different genders and making special suggestions for each of them if necessary.

Example: boys and girls may be affected by different forms of violence and may need special protection.



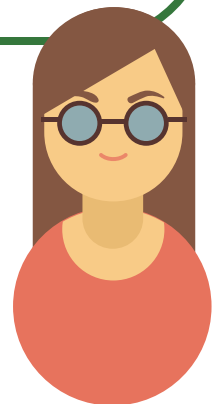
Think about how to prevent or fight discrimination, which is unfair treatment of people, and how to help children and young people in disadvantaged situations to be treated equally and have equal opportunities.

Example: some disadvantaged children need more support to go to school, for example they need textbooks, food, internet connection or bus tickets.



Search for regular opportunities for children and young people to share their views, to be listened to and to influence decisions affecting their lives.

Example: the Council of Europe regularly suggests to the Governments to invite children to events or consult them about new laws or activities, and also invites children wherever it makes sense.





OBJECTIVE #1

Keeping children safe from violence

► Why are we at the Council of Europe concerned about this?

Because violence against children still happens **everywhere**, like in the home, in school, in sports and of course online, **and may affect children's well-being and safety.**

There are many **types of violence:**

- ★ **Physical:** when someone hurts your body, for example by hitting or by bullying you which is when children are mean or unkind to each other, not just once but again and again.
- ★ **Mental:** when someone shouts at you, threatens you or tells lies about you.
- ★ **Emotional:** when someone hurts a child's feelings again and again.
- ★ **Neglect or maltreatment:** when someone who is responsible for you does not take care of you or treats you badly.

- ★ **Sexual:** when someone tries to touch private parts of your body, to talk about or to show you things related to sexuality in a way that hurts, frightens or worries you.



► What are we going to do?

We are going to help Governments to:

- ★ Prepare their national plan to prevent violence against children, with the participation of children.
- ★ Raise awareness that violence against children must be stopped and what can be done about it.
- ★ End corporal punishment (when children are punished using physical force to make them feel pain, discomfort or humiliation) everywhere, including in schools and in the family.
- ★ Fight child sexual violence and follow what Governments are actually doing to protect children in their countries, including online.



[Kiko and the hand](#)



[So, this is sexual abuse?](#)



[Tell Someone You Trust](#)



OBJECTIVE #2

Making sure all children have equal opportunities and are included in society

► Why are we at the Council of Europe concerned about this?

Because there are children and families who live in **poverty** and have difficulties in going to school, finding a home, being cared for in hospitals, or being supported by social services.

This can be even more difficult in times of **economic crisis, pandemics (like COVID-19), migration, war** or events caused by environmental destruction or **climate change**.

Children are also experiencing **mental health** problems, worsened by difficult events like the COVID-19 pandemic, migration, or war.

► What are we going to do?

We are going to help Governments to:

- * Guarantee children's social rights (like going to see a doctor, getting help when your parents are without a job or are poor...), stop discrimination, offer mental health support, as well as get and keep children in schools.
- * Fight causes of poverty, preventing children being left out of society, and making institutions better react to poverty and social problems.
- * Protect children in disadvantaged situations, for example those living in care institutions, refugee or migrant children, children with disabilities, Roma and Traveller children, LGBTI children and their families, children suffering from addictions and children of parents using drugs.



[Children and Young People in Care.](#)
[Discover your rights!](#)



[Child-friendly DOSTA!](#)
[Campaign](#)





OBJECTIVE #3

Supporting children to have access to technologies and use them safely

► Why are we at the Council of Europe concerned about this?

Because **digital technology** is surrounding us everywhere, but it is not always designed in a way to make sure children's rights are respected and protected. It is also a problem that some children do not have **full access to technologies** and digital education is not sufficient at schools either.



[Kiko and the Manymes](#)



[Learn about your rights in the digital environment](#)

Also, there are **things which can make children feel scared, uncomfortable, and sad**, such as violent images or videos which children should not see, online bullying, hate speech (when someone talks badly or in an aggressive way about a particular group of persons), violations of their privacy and online sexual violence.

► What are we going to do?

We are going to help Governments to:

- * Make technology available for all children.
- * Create safe online spaces for children to search for information and share their views.
- * Improve teaching about technologies at schools.
- * Train teachers, inform parents and involve children in decisions which are related to technologies.
- * Make sure that the cases of online child sexual violence are reported to the police, investigated, the people who hurt children are punished and child victims are assisted.
- * Study and collect information about new problems impacting children's well-being such as online influencing and artificial intelligence (which copies human intelligence to drive the technologies of today).





OBJECTIVE #4

Making justice proceedings more child-friendly

► Why are we at the Council of Europe concerned about this?

Because children and young people can experience the **justice system** in many ways, for example if they fall **victim** of a crime or they saw it happening (**witness** a crime). It can also happen that there is a **suspicion or accusation that a child or young person committed a crime**. They might also be involved if the court makes a decision about their education or who they will live with when their **parents separate**. Children and young people may have troubles to seek justice and are not always explained what is happening or what rights and role they have.



 [Your Rights in Age Assessment Procedures](#)

► What are we going to do?

We are going to help Governments to ensure that all children can access the justice system and can have a lawyer representing them. It is also important that children and young people can participate in legal procedures, which means they receive information about their rights and role in the procedures and they are listened to by the professionals.

Our work will also cover:

- ★ The needs of child victims and witnesses.
- ★ What is the best for children and young people when their parents separate or when a decision is taken to place them in a care institution.
- ★ What are the alternative measures for children and young people who break the law.
- ★ How to make procedures more child-friendly when children and young people need to leave their home country due to poverty, war, or fear for their safety with or without their parents.
- ★ Checking places where children and young people are deprived of their liberty and are not free to move around, for example in police stations or prisons.
- ★ Supporting children and young people to turn to the European Court of Human Rights, which is an international court making sure that the Governments of member States keep their human rights promises.



OBJECTIVE #5

Giving a voice to every child

► Why are we at the Council of Europe concerned about this?

Because children still need spaces and real opportunities to **share their opinion and to be heard** by adults, as they are not properly listened to or taken seriously by the adults making decisions affecting them.



[Make Your Voice Heard](#)



[School Factory](#)



[The right to be heard: child participation, a foundation for democratic societies](#)



[Charter for all](#)



► What are we going to do?

We are going to:

- * Encourage that children find safe, respectful, and meaningful opportunities to participate. To achieve that, we will make rules that will help adults make sure children are listened to and we will train professionals working with children.
- * Help governments to make national plans with goals and actions on child participation and be ready to answer and to change their practices if they fail to listen to children.
- * Promote children's participation in schools, through technologies, as well as in democracy and political life, for example by suggesting to the governments to think about lowering the voting age.
- * Continue to involve children in the Council of Europe work that affects them, listen to them, and give feedback on how we considered their views. We are going to look for opportunities to communicate directly with children and give spaces for activities designed and realised by them.



OBJECTIVE #6

Supporting children in crisis and emergency situations

► Why are we at the Council of Europe concerned about this?

Because when **something extraordinary happens**, like the COVID-19 pandemic, war or events caused by climate change, children are among **the most defenseless**. In crisis or emergency situations, **all children's rights are at risk** and the right to life, the right to education, the right to grow up in a family, the right to health care and social services, and the right to enjoy a healthy environment are often violated.

Check this out!



[Age assessment for children in migration](#)



It can also happen that children with or without their families are forced to **leave their home** and move to another safe place or country.

► What are we going to do?

We are going to help Governments to:

- * Protect children in economic and public health crisis, in war and in migration.
- * Make sure that children's right to a safe, clean and healthy environment is respected and they get education with respect for nature.
- * Help children seek justice if they are in danger or hurt because of environmental damage.
- * Be better prepared for future crisis or emergency situations and help Governments to build stronger child protection systems to deal with and respond to extraordinary events.

WHAT'S NEXT?


In the upcoming years, we are going to work together with our partners, the Governments of member States, international organisations, civil society organisations and even companies to make our Strategy happen and come to life. We will also continue involving children in order to better understand their needs and desires.

From time to time, we will stop and see what progress we made and what else we have to do.

We believe that everyone is responsible to make sure children's rights are protected and everyone has a role to play!

*Of course,
you can also
contribute!*



- * You can **find information** about the objectives of the Strategy and children's rights in your home country or hometown and **talk about it** with your friends, family, teachers, and adults responsible for decisions at your local authority or parliament.
- * You can use any opportunity that exists to involve children in decision making in your **school** (like student councils), in your **hometown** (like youth councils or public hearings) or on **special occasions** (like child or youth parliaments).
- * You can participate in and organise **events and discussions** about children's rights and the Strategy. If you see that children's rights are at risk or not respected, you can tell people about it and pursue them to take actions to make a positive change. This way you become a **human rights defender** yourself.
- * You can lead by example by **behaving respectfully towards others** and by supporting those who need help to be healthy and safe.
- * You can **follow us**  for updates about the Strategy and child participation opportunities at the Council of Europe. You can check all Council of Europe materials for children and young people **here**.





CHECK THIS OUT!

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OBJECTIVE #1
Keeping children safe from violence



[Kiko and the hand](#)



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OBJECTIVE #2
Making sure all children have equal opportunities and are included in society



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[Your Rights in Age: Assessment Procedures](#)



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This publication contains the child-friendly version of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027).

Thank you!



We would like to thank Zsuzsanna Rutai, international consultant, who helped us prepare this child-friendly version, as well as Defence for Children International (Italy) and the 220 children and young people who contributed to the development of the Strategy and particularly their delegates who were involved in finalising this version: Bárbara, Carlotta, Claudia, Eva, Francesco, Irene and Viktoriya. Thank you also to Andy at The Port Creative who has created the design and illustrations of this publication.

This publication was produced thanks to the special support provided by a number of Council of Europe member States through voluntary contributions.

The Council of Europe is a European organisation of 46 countries based in Strasbourg, France. It was set up to make sure that all these countries protect human rights, including children's rights, by preventing every kind of violence against them and by supporting children to develop their full potential.

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