

Key messages from the CGU High-level Stock-taking Session on the Situation of the Children of Ukraine: Council of Europe actions



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Presidency of Malta
Council of Europe
May - November 2025

Présidence de Malte
Conseil de l'Europe
Mai - Novembre 2025

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To mark the end of its first mandate (1 August 2023-31 July 2025), the [Council of Europe Consultation Group on Children of Ukraine \(CGU\)](#), in cooperation with the Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, held a high-level session on 9 July 2025 to take stock of the Council of Europe's efforts in upholding the rights of children of Ukraine during Russia's war of aggression and supporting accountability efforts and sustainable reconstruction.



Alain Berset,

Secretary General of the Council of Europe

"Thousands of children from Ukraine who have suffered deportation or are still displaced, the many who have lost years of education, and the far too many who have lost homes, families, limbs – even their lives."

■ The co-organisers of this high-level session, the [Maltese Presidency](#) of the Committee of Ministers, reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to keeping Ukraine and children's rights at the heart of its priorities.

Marja Ruotanen

Director General of Democracy and Human Dignity

"This event marks the conclusion of the CGU's first mandate and serves as a call to continue its vital work in a second mandate, while also supporting broader Council of Europe efforts to protect and assist all children of Ukraine during Russia's war of aggression."



■ During the opening the session, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Alain Berset, emphasised the importance of legal safeguards across borders, trauma-informed care, and mechanisms like the [European Court of Human Rights](#), the [Register of Damage](#), and the future [Special Tribunal](#) in achieving these goals. He also explained that the Council of Europe [Action Plan](#) for Ukraine "Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction" includes building capacity in education, child protection, and trauma-informed services, and highlighted the important work of the CGU.



Hon. Michael Falzon,

Minister for Social Policy and Children's Rights of Malta

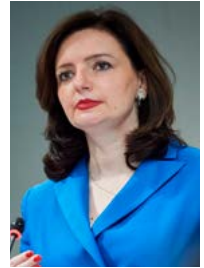
"This is a test for the whole continent, that we are able to show our political will and resolution to protect children in general and protect, in particular, children of Ukraine. We cannot just stand and talk. We must invest in our children, protect them, and include them in our discussions."

Ukrainian representatives strongly asserted that children must not be collateral damage, they must be protected in conflict situations and not exploited for political ends.

Mariana Betsa,

Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine

"There is one truth we must say loud and clear: Russia kills our children, deports them, indoctrinates them. Children are not negotiable. They cannot be part of any bargain."



As part of the Council of Europe's actions to protect the children of Ukraine, Thórdís Kolbrún Reykjadóttir, [Special Envoy](#) of the Secretary General on the situation of children of Ukraine, contributed to efforts to raise awareness and strengthen international cooperation.



Thórdís Kolbrún Reykjadóttir,

Special Envoy of the Council of Europe Secretary General on the situation of children of Ukraine

"Three and a half years is an eternity for a child. They have lost the carefree joy of youth, their birthright. The Russian Federation has not only been reckless regarding harm caused to children as the collateral damage of war. It is hurting children on purpose. Children are being killed and stolen. This war of aggression has revealed a shockingly strategic and systematic mistreatment of children. Russia aims to destroy Ukraine's identity and future."

Despite the ongoing full-scale war and the devastating toll it has taken on all aspects of life in Ukraine, speakers stressed that the Government of Ukraine remains deeply committed to advancing a comprehensive child protection and social services reform, with a strong focus on inclusive education, family-based care, and the long-term well-being of every child. Many speakers underscored that it is commendable that such far-reaching reforms, aligned with international and European standards are being pursued during active conflict, reflecting not only resilience but a clear intention to centre children's rights into the process of rebuilding a more inclusive, people-centred future.

“Children with disabilities and children in institutions are our priorities. We are building a system where every child can thrive in a family environment, inclusive education, early prevention, and trauma-sensitive reintegration.”

Iryna Postolovska, Deputy Minister of Social Policy of Ukraine

“The mission is clear: not just survival, but a future for Ukraine’s children.”

Olena Khomenko, Chair of the Parliamentary Network
on the Situation of Children of Ukraine

“Erasing identity, militarising minds, depriving childhood. We must act now, time is not on the side of Ukraine’s children.”

Oleksandra Matviichuk, Head of the Center for Civil Liberties

■ The Council of Europe is playing a vital role in supporting Ukraine’s reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts, with a strong emphasis on accountability and justice. The Register of Damage is an important mechanism in this architecture, focused on securing justice for children who have suffered immense losses, from the destruction of educational facilities to the abduction and indoctrination of children. This work goes beyond financial compensation; it is about restoring dignity, rebuilding lives, and reclaiming the childhoods stolen by war.

“No child chooses war, yet children bear its deepest scars.”

Markiyam Kliuchkovskiy, Executive Director, Register of Damage



Francesca Camilleri Vettiger,
Permanent Representative of Malta

“Today’s conversation must translate into action. Europe’s credibility depends on our action, and our humanity will be judged by our ability to protect those who depend on us the most.”



The CGU High-level Stock-taking Session showed that member states are committed to translating principles into action and compassion into practical support. Through sustained cooperation and unwavering commitment, the conference participants sent a clear message: children are not only the future, they are the key actors in the present. Ensuring the protection, dignity, and inclusion, is crucial to achieving a just recovery and to building a stronger, more united Europe wherein children's voices meaningfully inform future policymaking.

What Has the Council of Europe Done So Far?

A Summary of Actions and Developments

- ▶ The European Court of Human Rights has found multiple violations of the European Convention in the recent inter-state case of *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia*, including for the unlawful transfer of Ukrainian children to Russia¹.
- ▶ In September 2025, the [Register of Damage for Ukraine](#) officially launched a claims category for the forcible transfer or deportation of children, and plans to open claims categories for loss of access to education and health care.
- ▶ An agreement was signed at the Council of Europe by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Secretary-General, Alain Berset, in June 2025, [launching the creation of a Special Tribunal](#) to prosecute the crime of aggression against Ukraine.
- ▶ The Secretary General appointed Thórdís Kolbrún Reykþjard Gylfadóttir (Iceland) as his [Special Envoy](#) on the situation of children of Ukraine in February 2025.
- ▶ The [Parliamentary Network on the situation of the children of Ukraine](#), which raises awareness and ensures that the rights of children of Ukraine remain a priority on the political agenda, was launched in June 2024.
- ▶ The Council of Europe Consultation Group on the Children of Ukraine (CGU), which acts as a multilateral cooperation platform, peer-review and rapid response mechanism, was launched in November 2023.
- ▶ Other cooperation projects under the Council of Europe [Action Plan](#) for Ukraine "Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction" are dedicated to protecting the rights of children of Ukraine during Russia's war of aggression.

1. Applications Nos. 8019/16, 43800/14, 28525/20 and 11055/22,09.07.2025, para 1599.

How to get more information?

- ▶ CGU webpage: www.coe.int/cgu
- ▶ CGU Secretariat: cgu@coe.int

www.coe.int

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.



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